

Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary



Inspection of Cambridgeshire Constabulary

Professional Standards

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INSPECTION OF PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS 2005

A - INTRODUCTION AND METHODOLOGY

1. Introduction

'Professional standards' within the policing context has evolved significantly in recent years, following the HMIC thematic 'Police Integrity' (1999), the establishment of an ACPO Presidential Taskforce to tackle corruption and the introduction of the ACPO Professional Standards Committee. Since 2000, virtually every force in England and Wales has significantly expanded the activities of pre-existing Complaints and Discipline Departments to include an element addressing anti-corruption, including covert investigation. These larger units are generically known as Professional Standards Departments (PSDs).

The issue of complaints holds a unique importance for HMIC in that legislation¹ creates a responsibility on Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMIs) to 'keep themselves informed' as to the handling of complaints in forces. Traditionally this has involved inspection of individual forces on a rolling programme. The advent of HMIC's annual Baseline Assessment (from 2003/04), the establishment of the Independent Police Complaints Commission (IPCC) in 2004, and a series of public inquiries have changed the professional standards landscape significantly. In view of this, HMIC decided to carry out a simultaneous programme of inspection of professional standards in all 43 English and Welsh forces to provide a comprehensive picture of current performance and identify any issues of national importance.

2. Inspection scope

While this national programme of inspection of 'Professional Standards' has focused primarily on the operation of the PSDs, and their sub-sections, it has also examined issues of professional standards in the wider policing context, and therefore touched on other departments and areas of responsibility, for example Human Resources (HR). The core elements identified nationally for examination were:

Professional Standards Department

- The umbrella department within which all 'professional standards' activities are delivered, including the investigation of complaints and misconduct and proactive anti-corruption work.

Complaints and misconduct unit

- Responsible for reactive investigations into public complaints as well as internal conduct matters.

Proactive unit

- Responsible for the intelligence-led investigation of vulnerability to or allegations of corruption.

Intelligence cell

¹ Section 15(1) of the Police Reform Act 2002

- Responsible for:
 - Overall intelligence management
 - Analysis
 - Field Intelligence
 - Financial Investigation
 - Managing risks and grading threats

Handling of civil claims, security management and personnel vetting

- Individuals or units responsible for identifying risks to the integrity of the police service manifested within civil actions, civil claims, employment tribunals, breaches of security and infiltration of the service by inappropriate personnel.

Handling 'Direction and Control' Complaints

- Processes for handling complaints relating to:
 - operational policing policies (where there is no issue of conduct)
 - organisational decisions
 - general policing standards in the force
 - operational management decisions (where there is no issue of conduct)

Impact of unsatisfactory performance and grievance

- Relevant personnel within HR and operational departments, to establish that processes exist to identify any conduct issues or organisational lessons.

NB: The above list is not exhaustive nor does every force have each of these units or responsibilities as separate functions. The inspection sought to examine as many of the identified activities as are relevant to each force.

3. Methodology

Since 2003/04, HMIC's core methodology for assessing force performance has been Baseline Assessment (BA), which consists of a self-assessment process supported by visits to forces for validation and quality assurance. BA assesses performance annually across 27² areas of policing via a framework of questions for each area. The mainstream BA process for 2004/05 was completed during spring 2005 and the results published in October 2005.

Professional Standards is one of the BA frameworks and would normally have been included in the mainstream BA activity. With the full programme of professional standards inspections scheduled for October and November 2005, however, the assessment of this framework was deferred to await their outcome.

The programme of inspections has been designed to:

- Provide a full inspection of professional standards in all England & Wales³ forces;
- Gather evidence for Baseline Assessment reports and grading of professional standards in all forces; and
- Identify key issues, trends and good practice that may have implications for professional standards on a national basis.

² Number of frameworks in the 2004/05 assessment

³ Also including British Transport Police and Ministry of Defence Police

The standard format for each inspection has included:

- The completion of self assessment questionnaires by all forces;
- Examination of documents;
- Visits to forces with group and individual interviews;
- Consultation with key stakeholders; and
- Final reports with grade.

4. Baseline Assessment grading

HMIC applies a qualitative grading to the inspection of Professional Standards. These grades are:

- Excellent
- Good
- Fair
- Poor

In allocating individual force grades, HMIC assesses all the available evidence and identifies how well the force matches an agreed set of Specific Grading Criteria. To ensure fairness and transparency in the grading process, HMIC worked with key partners in the APA, IPCC, the Home Office and ACPO to develop and agree these Specific Grading Criteria for Professional Standards.

The criteria set out expectations for a “Good” force. Grades of Fair, Good and Excellent all represent acceptable performance levels but indicate the degree to which the force has met the grading criteria. An Excellent grade indicates ‘benchmark’ performance including significant implementation of good practice.

The full grading criteria are set out in HMIC’s website at:
www.inspectorates.homeoffice.gov.uk.

The key elements appear under four headings, namely:

- **Intelligence** - *what a force knows about the health of professional standards*
- **Prevention** - *how the force tries to improve and prevent the abuse of standards*
- **Enforcement** - *its effectiveness in dealing with emerging problems*
- **Capacity and Capability** – *having the resources and skills to address reactive and proactive challenges (including timely and proportionate response to lapses in professional standards)*
- The remainder of this report is set out under these headings, for ease of reference to the evidence presented.

B - Force Report

Force Overview and Context

Cambridgeshire is effectively a 'hub' county acting as a gateway to the East Midlands and East Anglia by virtue of its extensive motorway network, north/south rail links and the cross country A14 connecting the east coast freight ports with the rest of the country. Perhaps more significantly Cambridge has an international reputation with its ancient university drawing students and academics from across the globe. The cultural aspects of the county, numerous market towns and thriving technology and knowledge based industries further contribute to the county's popularity and prosperity. The county's population is expected to grow significantly over the next decade with housing developments anticipated throughout the eastern region. The two main population centres are Peterborough and Cambridge, with several smaller key towns and a host of rural villages, indeed 13% of households in the county are situated in rural areas.

The force area is divided into three basic command units (BCUs) or geographical commands with a headquarters facility at Hinchbrook on the outskirts of Huntingdon. Specialist policing services are provided by the investigations directorate and the safer communities' directorate. The chief officer team comprises of an acting chief constable (A/CC), acting deputy chief constable (A/DCC) and acting assistant chief constable (A/ACC). Selection processes to install substantive appointments began in October 2005.

Professional Standards

The A/DCC is the force ACPO lead in professional standards (PS). The Professional Standards Department (PSD) is headed by a detective superintendent, with extensive experience of PS investigations. The department has an investigation side headed by a Detective Chief Inspector (DCI) and is split into volume and serious misconduct investigations, each being led by Detective Inspector (DI) investigating officers (IOs). There is a covert/pro-active investigation unit with an intelligence unit modelled on NIM divisional intelligence units, also led by a DCI. In total there are 28 officers and staff in Cambridgeshire Constabulary's PSD. Investigators tend to be experienced detectives, and there are police staff in specialist roles dealing with vetting, security management, financial investigation and intelligence analysis.

GRADING : FAIR

Findings

Intelligence - *what a force knows about the health of professional standards*

Strengths

- PSD has pursued a course of NIM adherence in its intelligence and performance management regime, basing its practices on those found on BCUs. Both DCIs meet with the head of PSD on a bi-weekly basis and contribute to the level 1 tasking and co-ordinating document. The head of PSD follows this meeting with a one-to-one meeting with the A/DCC. As a matter of course, PSD is not represented at the force level 2 tasking meeting, relevant issues are effectively transmitted via the A/DCC and briefing notes.

- The force produces target profiles in relation to misconduct and corruption risks according to NIM products. The NCIS template assessment of vulnerability to corruption indicated that, for a force the size of Cambridgeshire Constabulary, they could expect 20 risks within the workforce. Research has currently exposed six such cases.
- Cambridgeshire Constabulary is fully involved in regional PSD meetings. The head of PSD recently assumed the chair of the regional heads of PSD group, which the A/DCC attends to take PSD issues to the regional ACPO meeting. Good practice and contemporary issues are also discussed at the regional ACPO Counter-Corruption Advisory Group (ACCAG) meeting for investigative practitioners.
- There is a suite of NIM products consisting of regular tactical assessments, a strategic assessment and related control strategy. The current strategic assessment and control strategy are dated September 2004 and are scheduled for re-issue in April 2006 to align with the force planning cycle. The documents have been amended periodically to extend their operational life.
- In February 2004 the force conducted a risk assessment of integrity and vulnerability to corruption. This was forwarded to the National Criminal Intelligence Service (NCIS). The issues highlighted were information leakage, criminal association and organisational culture. Substance and alcohol abuse did not appear in this assessment, but there is now a heightened awareness of this threat to the force, to the extent that new joiners are briefed regarding the potential consequences of abuse. A substance and alcohol abuse policy has been drafted but has yet to be implemented.
- PSD has a dedicated intelligence analyst producing a range of NIM badged intelligence products. These include target and problem profiles. The work of the pro-active investigations unit is all intelligence led and conducted within auditable and established systems.
- PSD has a secure and sterile channel for RIPA applications. These are quality checked and screened to accepted standards, but are only handled by nominated individuals *en route* to the director of intelligence. Hard copies of applications and authorities are stored in suitable secure furniture.

Areas for Improvement

- There is a regional PS strategic assessment, however this is a compilation of the strategic assessments of the six forces and requires further refinement to make the exercise distinctive and pertinent.
- Cambridgeshire Constabulary has a liberal policy regarding serving officers having business interests. There are no prohibited occupations or trade lists and decisions are made on a case by case basis with a presumption in favour of the applicant. Permissions are reviewed every three years and there are approximately 200 authorisations force-wide. The process has recently moved under the responsibility of PSD.

Recommendation 1

Her Majesty's Inspector of Constabulary recommends that the Force reviews their business interest policy to determine whether it meets their requirements in relation to corruption vulnerability.

Prevention - *how the force tries to improve and prevent the abuse of standards*

Strengths

- Awareness of ethics, integrity and expected conduct has been elevated by the A/DCC commissioning the 'Standards of Behaviour' document. This outlines the force's approach to fairness at work and PS and has been supplied to all staff. There is a good level of understanding of this document amongst the workforce and examples of this document prompting officers and staff to challenge behaviour.
- The force and PSD in particular are trying to establishing a learning based culture where individuals are allowed to reflect upon and assimilate lessons arising from complaints and misconduct. This requires cultural shift and overcoming of barriers, as historically complaints and discipline procedures have been conducted on the adversarial basis.
- HR has managed the grievance procedure since January 2005, there have been fourteen grievances recorded until the inspection in October 2005. Twelve of these were resolved at stage one and the remaining two at stage two. There is an appreciation that instances of staff adopting the procedure are low and work is underway to establish levels of confidence in grievance handling.
- There are several routes for officers and staff to contact PSD, including a direct line into the department (see AFI below), however the greatest level of awareness was found in relation to the intelligence submissions system which enables direct and secure input to PSD. An external company is due to provide a confidential reporting line before the end of 2005.
- There is a dedicated IT security manager within PSD. Individual system managers monitor usage and bring potential transgressions to the notice of the security manager. There are programs in place to monitor internet and e-mail traffic. An internet access policy, describing four excluded types of website, exists but staff are not compelled to read it before using the Internet.
- There is a comprehensive policy for physical security and protection of material assets. The entire estate is controlled by electronic access with differentiated levels of authorisation to ensure that personnel are excluded from sensitive areas. There is also a comprehensive inventory of secure cabinets and effective support to manage security compromises. The security management team have reciprocal arrangements with neighbouring forces for penetration testing.

- Standards and ethics are promoted to new officer recruits in week two of their training through a joint presentation from the head of investigations and the Police Federation. Contemporary issues like substance and alcohol abuse and vulnerability to corruption are discussed.
- The force is cultivating the learning organisation ethos in relation to PS (as mentioned above) this manifests itself in a 'Hotspot' group reporting to the Diversity and Integrity Steering Group. This consists of representatives from PSD, HR and the Diversity Unit sharing information on officers and staff appearing repeatedly on departmental monitoring systems so that errant behaviour can be spotted and patterns of behaviour discerned. The potential benefits of this are undermined by the informal nature of its meeting, reporting and recording keeping.

Areas for Improvement

- UPP has not been widely used within the force; in fact it has only been used on three occasions. Two of these were resolved at stage two and the third case was coupled with wider employment relations matters and ceased when the subject left the force. There is little understanding amongst supervisors of how to effectively use UPP; the preferred option has been to wait for a misconduct to occur before taking action. The chief officer group is conveying the message that this is wrong and espousing UPP as an early intervention.
- On 1st January 2005, the management of grievance procedure transferred to the HR department to better reflect the intention of conflict resolution. The GP is based on the ACAS model and is supported by a database for recording cases, which also records data for proportionality and monitoring purposes. During this period there have been 14 GPs commenced, two of which have not been formalised. The force has a number of advocates and grievance handlers, but there appears to be problems marketing the procedure and a negative perception amongst staff which is restricting its application.

Recommendation 2

Her Majesty's Inspector of Constabulary recommends that the Force conducts an internal marketing exercise to develop in-house confidence in fairness at work procedures.

- As a whole the force is developing a critical incident culture supported by NIM processes. However, there is little appreciation of human or internal critical incidents, which can be invoked by PSD investigations and activity. In particular the use of cross disciplinary involvement in both reactive and pro-active investigations and consideration of gold groups to provide oversight and policy advice. Organisational risk is prioritised above all else.
- A confidential reporting line was maintained by the former Chief Constable, but this fell into disuse. There is a direct line into PSD for officers and staff, but awareness of this is very limited, indeed PSD had only one example of this facility

being used in the last year. An independent company is due to start providing a confidential reporting service before the end of 2005.

- It is incumbent on officers and staff subject to criminal convictions, findings of guilt in misconduct and discipline proceedings to self declare for the purposes of disclosure in proceedings. The organisation does not have a method to ensure compliance with this arrangement and is exposed to risk. This is openly acknowledged in the force, as are the complexities of introducing an effective system to accurately capture historical findings.
- There is already considerable vetting knowledge and experience vested in the force security manager, but in order to realise the full benefits of vetting procedures earmarked vetting posts will need to be filled and the draft policy implemented.
- The Government Protective Marking Scheme (GPMS) is only partially implemented. Many document templates carry GPMS headers, but this does not necessarily mean that the document concerned is handled appropriately. However, the force security manager is acutely aware of the shortcomings in this area and has a clear vision of compliance, but realisation will require management board commitment.

Recommendation 3

Her Majesty's Inspector of Constabulary recommends that the force develops and publishes a timed action plan for the full introduction of the GPMS across all business areas.

Recommendation 4

Her Majesty's Inspector of Constabulary recommends that the force develops and publishes a timed action plan for the full implementation of a vetting policy

- PSD has no conduit for external consultation; accordingly the extent to which PS as a protective service is influenced by public expectation is limited. This is illustrated by the NIM strategic assessment and NCIS vulnerability to corruption assessment being conducted free of an external perspective. This situation is further exacerbated by the current lack of an IAG, although it is recognised that the force is in the process of developing an independent advisory network.

Enforcement - *its effectiveness in dealing with emerging problems*

Strengths

- A pilot project is underway on central division where a nominated inspector handles complaint recording and local resolution (LR) in the event that duty managers and section sergeants are unable to deal with the matter. This does not absolve supervisors of responsibility for dealing with complaints and local resolutions, but does provide a failsafe mechanism and contributed dramatically to increases in LR at a local level.
- The management of civil actions has been significantly streamlined by the use of external solicitors contracted to the force. There is a reduced number of staff retained by PSD to deal with the administrative tasks associated with these actions, the investigations DCI maintains oversight of the business area. The force has gained substantial experience from defending operations in relation to animal rights extremism at a research facility.
- A service level agreement (SLA) is in place between the force and regional CPS office. This undertakes a 28 day turnaround of cases referred to the CPS.
- IPCC complaints information leaflets are available via front counters and agency points of contact. Station reception officers are aware of the need to contact supervisors in the event of a complainant visiting the station. However, such staff are often the only contact a complainant will have during their initial visit and counter staff are insufficiently prepared to manage a complainant's allegation.
- Cambridgeshire Constabulary and the IPCC have established strong links and meet regularly on an informal basis. The force intends to cultivate stronger links and a formalised meeting structure. They have also demonstrated openness to the new arrangements by voluntarily referring cases to the IPCC.

Areas for Improvement

- Direction and control complaints are routinely assessed by the head of PSD, with the DCC being appraised of those that may have serious consequence to the force. Where they are linked to civil actions the retained contracted solicitors deal with the matter. Whilst this system appears to work, there is no proof that lessons learned from minor direction and control complaints are captured by the organisation or that communication channels with solicitors extend to management lessons.
- The Constabulary uses both suspension and restrictive duties during the management of misconduct investigations. The terms for invoking these measures is decided on a case by case basis, this has caused some ambiguity and uncertainty both within PSD and the wider constabulary when there has been inconsistent application. However, conditions are monitored and reviewed regularly by the A/DCC as part of the NIM/performance management regime.
- Decisions in relation to modes of investigation, sanction, suspension and restriction are taken on a case by case basis. There is acknowledgement that suspension is less frequently used recently, however there is little guidance and policy to assist in objective decision making. Guidance that does exist is open to

interpretation and this, coupled with the bespoke nature of decision making, risks anomalies.

- All supervisors have access to the complaints recording database, however it is apparent that complainants making contact with the force are often afforded low priority and can leave the station without seeing a supervisor to await a call back. Whilst it is acknowledged that extreme operational conditions may justify this there is no proof that a public complaint is otherwise given primacy to engender public confidence. Such deferment also neglects the opportunity for early local resolution.
- There is no policy or guidance regarding disposal routes for offences, which could be dealt with either criminally or via misconduct proceedings. Referral to the CPS is done on a case by case basis, the rationale being that if a member of the public could be charged on the same facts the CPS should adjudicate. This has created a perception that cases which are suitable for full powers misconduct proceedings are routinely referred to the CPS, who invariably recommend charging. This is construed as interagency delegation.
- UPP is under used. The established method of dealing with cases that might be suitable for UPP is to attempt an informal intervention in minor cases and/or wait for a suitable opportunity to invoke misconduct proceedings. This form of suppression/upward delegation to avoid UPP is indicative of inadequate awareness and lack of training in UPP of supervisors. This is acknowledged by the force, who intend to ensure that such issues are resolved at the lowest appropriate level.

Recommendation 5

Her Majesty's Inspector of Constabulary recommends that the force finds ways of enhancing the capabilities of their first line supervisors to ensure a more proactive initial response to the local resolution of public complaints, UPP and fairness at work.

Capacity and Capability – *(Having the resources and skills available to address the reactive and proactive challenge and providing a timely and proportionate response to lapses in professional standards)*

Strengths

- Cambridgeshire Constabulary is a relatively small force that does not enjoy the resourcing advantages found in larger forces. However, PSD have used the force surveillance team and have ready access to technical support. A mutual aid protocol has existed between regional partners since 2002, this is seldom invoked as informal contacts and arrangements cater for eventualities. This is evident in the provision of staff for test purchase/under cover and cross border surveillance operations.
- The head of PSD and both DCIs are SIOs, which provides considerable resilience and scope in major investigations. Additionally other SIOs in the organisation with suitable experience have been identified who could assume a PSD investigation should the need arise. There is a broad spectrum of experience within the two investigative units of PSD, with most staff coming from detective backgrounds. Those that do not have such a background undergo suitable training.
- Mutual aid is provided for by a regional protocol, additionally there is a regional buddy system, which pairs Cambridgeshire and Bedfordshire Constabulary in a supportive relationship. Contingencies are established for back-filling and recovery in the event of excessive demand or catastrophic circumstances befalling a PSD.
- Regular and informal meetings are held between the A/DCC, head of PSD and regional IPCC commissioner. The force has demonstrated it is receptive and supportive of the IPCC, this is demonstrated by seven voluntarily referrals. In total the IPCC has managed one case and supervised five in Cambridgeshire Constabulary. The relationship could be further enhanced by formalising the interaction between the two bodies, a situation which it is anticipated will be arrived at soon.
- The IPCC have participated in training for members of misconduct panels.
- There is acute awareness amongst all officers and staff engaged in PSD of the need to maintain the highest levels of integrity. This is evident by the appreciation that within a small force PSD officers are more likely to encounter allegations against friends and acquaintances. To maintain the impartiality of potential investigations officers and staff declare relations which could cause conflict.
- Cambridgeshire PA has a PS lead member who exercises oversight on behalf of the authority. There is a quarterly PA Professional Standards Committee, which receives performance data from the force on UPP, misconduct, grievance procedures and monitoring in relation to gender and ethnicity proportionality. There is a good relationship authority and force, but this could be enhanced by the force giving early notice of emerging issues.

Areas for Improvement

- Recruitment into PSD is via open invitation to all officers for 'expressions of interest,' candidates are then handpicked based on their suitability to work in PSD. Senior posts are personally selected by the A/DCC. It is obvious that staff selection is according high priority, however the lack of a clear selection criteria and postings policy deprives the process of transparency.

Glossary

ACC	Assistant Chief Constable
ACCAG	ACPO Counter-Corruption Advisory Group
ACPO	Association of Chief Police Officers
ACPO PSC	ACPO Professional Standards Committee
BA	baseline assessment
BCU	basic command unit
CPS	Crown Prosecution Service
DCC	deputy chief constable
HMIC	Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary
HR	human resources
IAG	independent advisory group – a body advising a force or BCU on race and diversity issues
IPCC	Independent Police Complaints Commission
LR	local resolution
NCIS	National Criminal Intelligence Service
NIM	National Intelligence Model
PA	police authority
PS	professional standards
PSD	professional standards department
RIPA	Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act, 2000
SLA	service level agreement
UPP	unsatisfactory performance procedure

