



Inspecting policing  
in the public interest

# Equal opportunities in the police service

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# 1. Introduction

## HMIC Policy

Our aim is to ensure that forces have implemented, or are actively implementing, effective equal opportunities policies broadly in line with Home Office Circular 87/1989 and subsequent progress reports; to ensure that this is monitored and strategic action is taken in all relevant areas; to provide a working grievance procedure; to ensure that all officers are aware of their rights and responsibilities under the policy and to ensure they are selected and treated properly to the benefit of the individual and the organisation.

1.1. In November 1989, fourteen years after the Sex Discrimination Act and thirteen years after the Race Relations Act 1976, Home Office Circulated guidance to police forces on equal opportunities in the police service. Since then the Inspectorate has been closely involved with forces during their implementation of the advice. In addition there have been three national seminars and three progress reports addressed to each Chief Constable by the Home Office. This agenda has been concerned exclusively with the internal aspects of equal opportunities as they apply to members of police services throughout England and Wales.

1.2. Two national surveys in 1991 by the Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) and Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC) established all forces have published equal opportunities policies and associated grievance procedures. However, significant tribunal cases during this period indicated that, despite published policies, there was evidence of lack of achievement and commitment in some forces. As a result of routine inspections HMIC became increasingly concerned about uneven levels of achievement and the need for a national audit became more urgent. It was decided that Her Majesty's Inspector with functional responsibility for equal opportunities, Mr D Elliot, CBE QPM, would carry out a thematic inspection, assisted by the Assistant Inspector of Constabulary, Miss S Hubbard.

## Methodology

1.3. The inspection in depth of 434 forces would not be a practical proposition. Twelve forces (see Appendix A), two per Inspectorate region, with a total strength of 35,049 officers were selected to ensure a wide representation of different sizes, structures and stages of development. Following a visit to each of the forces by the Staff Officer (Community & Race Relations) assisted by regional HMIC staff, a report of each force was prepared and an inspection of the force was then conducted by Mr Elliot or Miss Hubbard.

1.4. During the Inspection interviews were held in divisions and sub-divisions with police officers and civilian support staff of all ranks and grades. The level of awareness, the effectiveness of training, the knowledge of procedures and the confidence in equal opportunities were examined at length

and in depth. These interviews provided valuable insights into progress being made in establishing equal opportunities.

1.5. The experience gained from these Inspections and during the wider Inspectorate activity forms the basis of the Thematic Report.

1.6. Equal opportunities is not a subject which can be addressed in isolation. For practical reasons the Inspection covered personnel management issues addressed by other Home Office Circulars. In addition to making specific recommendations, the Report proposes a police specific equal opportunity check list of essential elements against which forces should measure their current policies and achievements (Appendix B). The Inspectorate aim is to establish fair and equitable treatment of all members of the Service, which in turn will enhance the external quality of service delivered to the public.

## 2. Equal Opportunities in the Police Service

### Attracting the Right People

2.1. Recruiting future police officers and members of civilian support staff is a key activity which varied widely in the forces inspected, both in the extent of good equal opportunity practice and in the level of responsibility. The latter reflected the size of the force and varied between a dedicated chief inspector with full-time staff to a sergeant working part-time in the training department. Recruiting was in some cases an intermittent activity due to financial cutbacks. However, there is currently no shortage of good quality recruits, both as police officers and members of the civilian support staff, and it was acknowledged by most forces that recruiting practices must ensure the best are chosen against objective criteria.

2.2. The Inspection found no evidence of unofficial height or age limits being maintained, but did reveal inappropriate paper screening criteria being used in an attempt to make the numbers of applicants more manageable. Some of these have indirect discriminatory effects, e.g. restricting recruitment to people residing in the force area. Further examples include maximum levels of debt, bias towards sporting interests and inappropriate dictation tests, all of which may have indirect discriminatory effects. There is a clear need for research to establish better screening out parameters, possibly using biodata to profile the ideal recruit.

2.3. The recruiting data included in HMIC annual statistical returns can be used as a base for a system to monitor the outcomes of a force recruiting process. This was not generally the case, however, and in one instance the information was not collected. Using HMIC data, it was found that in another force a wide disparity between failure rates for male (56.6%) and female (73.2%) applicants was identified. Of equal concern, the force was unable to offer any explanation for this. However, on examination of the current year's figures the discrepancy had disappeared! This poor management of a key activity, where unexplained variations may be evidence of discrimination which the force has a duty to prevent, was not untypical.

2.4. Not only the outcomes of recruiting practices need to be measured. Performance measurement is necessary to indicate whether individuals involved in the selection processes for recruiting, particularly in systems using peer assessors, are fair and non-discriminatory. **It is recommended that computer driven packages which allow monitoring of each stage of the recruiting process should be a priority for all forces.**

2.5. In addition, application rates for women and ethnic minorities should be carefully examined by forces and compared with the local labour force profile. Rates for women applicants varied from 17.3% to 30.7% of total applicants (average for the twelve forces was 23.3%). In all, 352 women officers were appointed in the twelve forces in 1991, representing 23.9% of the total intake. An examination of recruiting literature revealed a considerable domination of white male images. **Where the proportion of women and ethnic minority**

**recruits is below average, it is recommended that forces should seek to establish reasons for this.**

2.6. The service nationally continues to emphasise the need to recruit ethnic minority officers; between November 1989 and October 1992 there was a net increase of 429 officers. In the forces inspected there was little evidence of special effort or pro-active strategies being employed to encourage ethnic minorities to join the Service. One force identified the need to follow up lapsed applications from ethnic minority applicants, and this is a matter of good practice which should be adopted by all forces.

2.7. Home Office guidance on ethnic minority recruitment into the police service, based on national research and circulated in 1990, indicated the need for persistence in recruiting in ethnic minority recruiting initiatives. Short term or one off initiatives are of little value. There is merit in giving local police commanders the responsibility for increasing the number of applicants of ethnic minority origin, both to the regular force and to the civilian support staff.

2.8. In the twelve forces the proportion of ethnic minority applicants was 3%. The achievements of forces with a good record of ethnic minority recruiting offer some evidence that the proportion of ethnic minority applicants will increase as their representation in the Service grows. As already stated, this emphasises the need for positive images of ethnic minority officers in force recruiting literature and publicity material. In total, 54 officers of ethnic minority origin were appointed in the twelve forces in 1991, representing 3.7% of total recruitment. **It is recommended that the small sums of money spent by the Home Office on national ethnic minority recruiting campaigns in ten selected forces should continue, even during periods of low recruitment.**

2.9. The redesigned Police Initial Recruitment (PIR) test has not assisted forces in screening recruits. Except for one force, the failure rates were below 1%. The setting of high pass marks for the PIR test, as suggested by all forces inspected, should be resisted. In one force this has led to a disproportionate failure rate of ethnic minority applicants. The problems encountered reinforce the need for urgent national research into recruitment profiles to aid screening and ensure candidates of ethnic minority origin are not discriminated against. **It is recommended that research should be commissioned by the Home Office on behalf of forces to establish a recruiting profile and suitable screening out criteria for use through England and Wales.**

2.10. Where examined, the profile of ethnic minority civilian support staff was worse, or at best no better than police officers. Most civilian support staff are recruited locally rather than centrally at headquarters. In addition, fewer are recruited from outside force boundaries. Good recruiting procedures with well publicised monitoring standards will avoid local variations in practice detrimental to ethnic minority applicants.

## **The Right Person for the Job**

2.11. Equal opportunities procedures have widened the range of policing tasks undertaken by women and resulted in better selection procedures for specialist posts. The Inspection found no evidence of any specialist posts being

officially closed to women or to officers of ethnic minority origin. However, women continue to be under-represented in areas such as Traffic (3.9%) and Training (8.3%), and there is a tendency for them to be over-represented in certain Community Relations tasks such as Juvenile Liaison.

2.12. Women appear to be well represented in CID (12% in forces inspected). On closer examination, women are seriously under-represented in mainstream CID posts. In a force with 14% women in total, women represented 15.76% in CID overall, but only 8.8% were carrying out general operational detective duties. Women tend to be employed in Crime Support and Child Protection roles which restrict the opportunity to obtain detective experience. The lowest representation overall was 6.6% in a force where women represent about 14% of the force strength.

2.13. As a consequence of the tribunal involving PC Singh of Nottinghamshire Police, the principles to be applied to selection procedures for all specialist posts were widely circulated to forces in a Home Office letter to Chief Officers in December 1990. It was made clear that the principles suggestion for selection to CID were equally valid for selection procedures for all specialist posts.

2.14. In a number of forces the principles outlined in that letter have not yet been adopted even for the selection of CID officers. There can be no justification for forces retaining selection systems for any specialist department which are not independent or fair.

2.15. A number of forces have included assessment processes for suitability for specialist posts which involve personnel development profiles, as used in the probationer training system. This is a matter of good practice which can be used wherever there is an assessment of performance whilst on attachment to a specialist post. **It should be the aim of all forces to have selection systems based on advertised opportunities; objective job related criteria; a selection process involving, but not controlled, the specialist department; and monitored for fairness and consistency.**

2.16. Some forces have individual job descriptions and personal skill specifications for all posts, police and civilian, others do not. Fair and objective selection and performance appraisal is not possible without having first defined the qualities of the postholder and the extent of the role. This will not only aid selection and appraisal procedures but will assist in determining training needs leading to greater economy and effectiveness in training. **It must be an absolute priority for forces to establish job and person specifications for all police and civilian support staff posts.**

2.17. All forces inspected had published policies about advertising specialist posts. The need now is to establish the credibility of those policies, which will not be achieved whilst breaches of policy are allowed or even encouraged.

2.18. Blatant breaches of force policy, too often instigated or defended by chief officers, have a destructive effect on the confidence and belief in force policies. Examples of postings as head of specialist departments without any selection process, the allocation of civilian support staff posts without formal procedures, and promotions to senior ranks without publicised selection

procedures contrary to published force policies were noted during the Inspection.

2.19. These examples may be an indication of the conflict perceived by some senior officers between equal opportunities and the right of management to manage. This extends to a tension between equal opportunities and the concept of career development as a way of directing individual careers or managing the workforce. Fair and objective selection procedures enhance the ability of management to manage and to find the right person for the job.

2.20. Forces need to be more active in encouraging women and ethnic minority officers to put themselves forward for selection where they are under-represented on training courses, in specialist posts or supervisory ranks. Only by routinely monitoring applications, career development recommendations and training provision will under-representation be identified. No examples were found of forces using the provisions of Sections 47 and 48 of the Sex Discrimination Act and Sections 37 and 38 of the Race Relations Act to provide training and encouragement for officers where they are under-represented. It was noted, however, that some forces include in the advertisements for specialist posts, encouragement to eligible women and ethnic minority officers to apply.

2.21. The number of officers selected for specialist posts often exceeded the anticipated demand. 'Pools' of officers with no realistic chance of achieving their desired specialism due to over-selection still exist. When more recently selected and better candidates are preferred to existing 'pool' candidates, it leads to a perception of inequality. The establishment of a tenure of post policy will ensure that turnover in specialist departments is more easily calculable and ensure more realistic estimates of future vacancies. **When tenure of post policies have been implemented and selection systems based on the Singh principles are in place, existing pools of selected officers should be disbanded and advised to reapply, notwithstanding the likely disappointment for some.**

2.22. The principles of tenure of post policies are generally accepted in the Service and there is growing support even within specialist departments. Only by ensuring a tenure policy is rigid in principle but flexible in application within strictly controlled limits will their fairness be established. Policies which call for a review at the end of the stipulated tenure period have generally less credence than policies which clearly specify the time the officer will spend in the department. The teething problems associated with the introduction of such policies call for fairness and flexibility in the introduction, particularly in the case of officers who are reaching the end of their service.

2.23. There can be no justification for any specialist department, CID and Road Traffic being exempted from tenure of post policy. Though there may be short term costs for additional training, greater numbers of trained and experienced specialists at time of heavy demand is a long term benefit well worth promoting.



## Staff Appraisal and Career Development

2.24. All forces were developing staff appraisal systems in line with the good practice guidance circulated to forces by the Home Office in 1991. Nationally identified core qualities should be a feature of all appraisal and career development schemes. The best schemes incorporated personal development action plans which identified training needs and allowed officers to take responsibility for the direction of their own careers. The expectations of individuals are raised by such schemes and opportunities for upward and lateral development must be advertised widely and allocated fairly by objective selection systems.

2.25. Confidence in staff appraisal and career development policies will be enhanced by totally 'open file' policies and procedures. Some procedures seen in forces allowed comment at senior level which would not be seen by the appraisee. Those forces who have adopted 'open' policies have had few problems but many benefits, not least in equal opportunity terms; people with discriminatory remarks on their records now have the opportunity to challenge and correct them.

2.26. Staff appraisal and career development systems are equally relevant to civilian support staff and most forces are researching their implementation. Resistance to staff appraisal schemes is due to the link with performance related pay, often exacerbated by absence of a career development system or development opportunities for civilian support staff. Creating a corporate identity for forces will increase the opportunities for advancement or lateral development within the police service for civilian support staff members. As with police officers, there is likely to be an increased training demand which will enhance the skills of the work force and thereby improve the quality of the service delivered.

2.27. The Inspection found that forces are developing computer based monitoring systems which identify bias or inconsistency on the part of the appraisers. This good practice enhances confidence in the system by ensuring consistency and preventing manipulation by supervisors. More worryingly, it was found that two-thirds of forces inspected gave no additional training in appraisal to supervisors. In addition there was scant advice and information available to employees about career development. **Before introducing new career development and appraisal systems there should be training and published advice and guidance to ensure consistency of practice across the force.**

2.28. It was found that, where advertising and selection for posts was a devolved function, widely differing criteria existed for the same post in the same force. Published job descriptions and person specifications available to supervisors and managers should reduce the inconsistencies evident during the Inspection. In most forces, however, there was good liaison between the Career Development Unit and divisions/sub divisions or their equivalent.

2.29. The concept of career development pre-dates the establishment of equal opportunities in the police service. Advertised posts and open selection

procedures now enable officers to make more direct career choices. This contrasts with the concept of career management still evident in some forces. Directing officers arbitrarily from post to post in order to develop their careers is in conflict with equal opportunity principles. All employees should have the opportunity to develop and progress their careers in competition with others. **The role of the career development unit should be one of advice and consultancy for individuals and human resource planning on behalf of the force.**

2.30. The Inspection revealed that progress has been made in forces in the area of career development as a result of the Home Office guidance. However, there is now a need to update the guidance in the light of the achievement of the past three years. The requirement to ensure potential future managers are identified early in their careers is acknowledged, but the development of the 'highlighted officer' scheme requires careful management to ensure that it does not override equal opportunity policies. **It is recommended that the Home Office should seek to consolidate advice about equal opportunities and personnel management issues in a new circular.**

## Promoting on Ability

2.31. Promotion is the goal for many people in the Service. It is therefore one of the most crucial tests of an equal opportunity policy. 'A constable wants to know his/her bosses got there on merit' was a view heard more than one during the Inspection. The traditional role of the Chief Constable as the promotion authority is not challenged by equal opportunity policies. On the contrary, since candidates for promotion are tested and assessed against agreed criteria, they assist chief officers in the selection of the best candidates.

2.32. In two forces the Inspection found pools of officers with differing grades of promotion approval and with little realistic chance of gaining promotion. This traditional approach as an attempt to maintain morale or commitment to officers is unfair when over-selection is a deliberate policy and successful candidates who are not promoted within a specified period are then deselected. **The number of candidates for promotion should equate as closely as possible to likely vacancies over a specified period.**

2.33. Promotion selection should be for the rank, not for the rank in one specialism as was the case in one force. Tenure of post policies make this a poor investment if the officer does not have the general ability to be selected in open competition for that rank. Likewise, candidates should be told they are selected or not selected for promotion. A force that had a multi-graded promotion selection system was criticised by its officers for unnecessary ambiguity and uncertainty.

2.34. In three forces promotions had been made outside the established and published policy. As highlighted in 2.18 et seq, the effect of this practice is lack of confidence at all levels in both equal opportunities and the commitment of senior management to operate fair and equitable policies. Lack of confidence is often expressed at lower levels in the Service, though its most telling effect is among those people who have been deprived the opportunity to compete. With numbers of opportunities for advancement likely to decrease as a result of

changes in the Service, adherence to a well founded and fair promotion policy will be ever more important.

## Training Issues

2.35. Training in equal opportunity awareness ranged from none at all in two forces to a major commitment in two others where all employees, both police and civilian support staff, were given a full day's training or more on equal opportunity issues. The difference raising awareness makes was evidenced in that during discussions in a force which had not undertaken training, negative and inappropriate language was heard from managers and constables alike. Good training raises the understanding and expectations of all staff and allows issues of unfairness and personal disappointment to be dealt with more easily. The absence of training allows negative messages, often arising from tribunal cases or publicised grievance procedure cases, to hold sway. This leads to the impression that equal opportunities is an issue only for women or people of ethnic minority origin or is an issue concerned with correction and punishment. The positive benefits equal opportunities policies bring to all members of the Service are therefore lost.

2.36. All forces had in place training for people involved in selection and assessment procedures. A range of outside bodies had been involved in the training programmes. Despite this effort, numerous examples of senior officers without specific training in equal opportunities bring involved in selection procedures were noted during the Inspection.

2.37. The role of the Specialist Support Unit at Turvey, Bedfordshire, is to train police trainers in issues of community and race relations and equal opportunities to establish training expertise within forces. Recent evaluation of the Specialist Support Unit noted poor use of many of these trained trainers. This was also apparent during the Thematic Inspection. Only three forces were able to present coherent training strategies in support of the equal opportunity initiative. In one force the training strategy was based on a survey that established the extent of existing knowledge or lack of it. This is a matter of good practice.

2.38. Of major concern was the very varied level of knowledge found amongst probationer constables. Some probationers, trained within the last two years, professed no knowledge at all of equal opportunities. The policy in probationer training is to ensure these issues are an integrated thread which trainers are expected to weave into training. Sadly the policy appears to be failing. The importance of effective evaluation of equal opportunity where issues are 'threaded' into the training curriculum cannot be too strongly stressed.

2.39. In addition, there is evidence that the somewhat regimented regime of most district training centres may negate any training input on equal opportunities. Many of the standing orders and practices highlighted by probationer constables during the Inspection convey negative messages and are possibly discriminatory. **It is recommended that District Training Centres standing orders are examined to ensure the absence of direct/indirect discrimination.**

2.40. Of equal concern was the widely varied quality of equal opportunity training for officers taking up supervisory and managerial responsibilities. Sergeants and inspectors, who had recently attended regional training, indicated that, where these issues were addressed, they were often peripheral to the training provided. A number of forces were totally reliant on regional training of newly promoted sergeants and inspectors to ensure that they had the requisite level of knowledge of equal opportunity issues. Without a review of these courses to ensure that the training being given to newly promoted sergeants and inspectors is relevant and that the quality and content is appropriate, this cannot be assumed to be the case. **It is recommended that a thematic inspection of regional training for the newly promoted sergeant and inspector courses should be undertaken to establish that appropriate training in equal opportunities is given.**

2.41. The recent move to include equal opportunity issues in OSPRE (the qualifying examination for sergeants and inspectors) is noted and welcomed. The ability to understand and operate equal opportunity procedures is a professional requirement for all police officers and civilian support staff. Recently, training for both promotion and specialist skills has increased in importance. If advertising specialist posts is a sound equal opportunity practice, then ensuring fairness in the allocation of specialist training is equally important. Only rigorous monitoring can ensure fair treatment for all.

2.42. Whenever entry to a specialist department is dependent upon receiving training, access to the training should not be in the gift of the specialist department. The Inspection revealed that even where forces have changed their procedures for the selection of specialist in accordance with the recommendation of the Singh Tribunal, prior allocation by the specialist department of the requisite skills training undermined the procedure.

2.43. Despite data required in HMIC annual statistical returns regarding training in major specialisms, such as CID and Driver and Road Traffic Law Training, there was little evidence of routine and effective monitoring of the fairness of training provision. Differential pass rates for women drivers compared to male drivers on driving courses was not picked up by one force, though it was evident to anyone analysing HMIC annual returns received from the force. It is vital to ensure officers of ethnic minority origin and women officers have equal access to training. Specialist training, such as public order training, driver training and in some cases CID training, is not always managed by the Training Department. **As a matter of good practice, the Training Department, as a service provider to the force, should be given responsibility of monitoring the fairness of all training allocation. It is equally important to ensure that the results of training are rigorously audited to ensure that any variations in outcomes are understood and validated.**

## Retaining People

2.44. It was not surprising to find that the effect of the recession makes retention of police officers and civilian support staff easier. However, equal opportunities are important to ensure that, when the employment climate changes, high calibre staff recently recruited will be retained. Confidence in the

commitment of the Service to treating people fairly and awarding opportunities on merit is essential to create a feeling of loyalty to the Service.

2.45. The Inspection looked at the high proportion of women retiring early from the Service. The choice after maternity leave, of returning to work too early or not returning at all due to the inflexible requirement to work full time, often in a rigorous shift situation, is faced by many women police officers. Of the twelve forces involved in the Inspection only West Midlands is part of the part-time working and job sharing experiment, but others were keen to become involved.

2.46. All forces were operating or developing career break schemes which may lead to a reduction of high sickness rates and medical retirements among women police officers to the obvious benefit of the Service. It was also pleasing to note developments in most forces to provide information and support to serving women officers who are taking maternity leave. It is equally important to provide supervisors and manager with advice, or access to it, about the force policy in this regard. A number of cases where supervisors acted contrary to force policy, leading to grievance cases being raised, were identified. Flexible working arrangements for women returning to work full-time after maternity leave were a feature of good practice in a number of forces.

2.47. For similar reasons connected with the recession, the retention of officers of ethnic minority origin does not appear to be a major issue for the Service at the moment. Better quality ethnic minority recruits may find it easier to succeed in the Service and there is evidence that the lessons of tribunal cases are leading to better internal relationships and a recognition of the need for fair treatment.

2.48. All forces were interviewing personnel leaving the Service and this will assist management in dealing with issues of equal opportunities. The benefits of doing this, particularly for women officers and officers of ethnic minority origin, may add to the current national research on the retention of ethnic minority officers. **It is recommended that all forces should adopt a system which requires interviews between three and six months after leaving the Service in order that real issues for retirement may be discovered.**

## Monitoring Achievement

2.49. The Inspection revealed little evidence of routine, systematic monitoring of key activities as recommended in Home Office guidance circulated to forces in 1989. Often lack of computer technology was quoted as the reason. The data in HMIC annual statistical returns provides forces with minimum essential levels of management information.

2.50. Two forces have established computer systems which allow the performance of appraisers to be compared with the force average. This will allow training or advice to be given to those who consistently assess higher or lower than their colleagues. Similar systems can be applied to recruiters, promotion assessors, interviewers and selectors.

2.51. Ignorance of differential success rates for female and male applicants to join the force indicates a lack of awareness by management of essential

activities, which places the force and individuals at risk. Forces not being able to provide HMIC with the data required for annual statistical returns again indicates a lack of awareness. Equality of opportunity can only be achieved when information about both the process and outcomes in key activities is collected and analysed, and variations from expected outcomes identified and explained. **All forces should establish regular personnel audit procedures to provide chief officers with information about the force achievements in establishing equal opportunities based on the advice in Home Office Circulars 87/1989 and 70/1992, 'Implementing Section 95 of the Criminal Justice Act 1991 and Ethnic Classification'.**

## Redressing Grievances

2.52. The majority of forces inspected have had few or, in some cases, no grievances recorded. Not requiring formal recording at the first stage of the grievance procedure may have been important to establish informality. However, not recording at the first stage of the grievance procedure at the first stage results in lack of management information about issues which persistently occurring throughout the force.

2.53. It is clear from HMIC monitoring data that the majority of grievances are concerned with non-selection for particular posts and promotion or, in the case of civilian support staff, about grading procedures. The fact that a force has a large number of grievances recorded not based on issues involving unlawful discrimination may be an indication to the force that procedures laid down by the force are being operated in an inconsistent way. It was noticeable throughout the Inspection that where training had been given in equal opportunities, increased awareness of the existence of the system led to a greater use of the procedure accompanied by an increase in confidence in its purpose and usefulness.

2.54. In three of the forces inspected women officers had grievances registered at industrial tribunals based on sex discrimination. This is a worrying indication of a residual problem for the Service, of which there is evidence elsewhere. Sickness records for women officers, the experiences of force medical officers, and the experiences of women police officers met of the Inspection reveal a background level of persistent low level harassment which is unchecked by supervisors. Two women officers seen during the Inspection indicated they had been the subject of serious sexual harassment but had no confidence in the procedures or the senior officers who would operate them. As victims they saw the grievance procedure as failing to protect them from further victimisation and isolation by their colleagues.

2.55. The forthcoming advice on grievance procedures will be welcomed by the Service. In the twelve forces visited there was little experience of serious conflict between disciplinary and grievance procedures. Senior officer expressed a lack of confidence in their own understanding of equal opportunity cases and their ability to deal with equal opportunity issues outside the discipline procedure. Grievance procedures are too readily seen as an alternative form of discipline rather than an opportunity to right flaws in force procedures or to redress personal grievances at an early stage, to the benefit of the Service and aggrieved party. **Sources of informal, confidential advice**

**and support should be available to anyone considering raising a grievance, together with support for the aggrieved who take their cases beyond the first stage.**

## **The Culture of Equal Opportunities**

2.56. Success in equal opportunities is achieved when chief officers are supportive and openly express their support. Progress is slower where it appears that chief officers are not committed and where their actions sometimes conflict with their equal opportunities policies. In the three years since the issue of the Home Office Circular there are evident changes in the systems being operated in recruiting, advertising and selecting for specialist posts, promotion procedures and in training. The task now is to harness those procedures to ensure they have a beneficial effect and impact upon a residual police culture which is mainly centred on traditional white male values. Equal opportunities is a non-reversible process and chief officer should be aware that equal opportunities is not just a policy requirement from the top by an increasing demand and expectation from all employees at all levels in the Service.

2.57. Many officers and civilian support staff spoken to during the Inspection expressed scepticism, even cynicism, about the force commitment to equal opportunities. Too many were able to give recent examples of breaches of published force policies. Only by example and demonstrated commitment will the rhetoric of policy be converted into the reality of achievement. Only evidence of achievement by regular auditing and monitoring of equal opportunities procedures will convince the waverers and convert the opponents of equal opportunities.

2.58. During the Inspection three element of the traditional culture were recurring themes in meeting with constables, sergeants, inspectors and member of the civilian support staff. These issues are sometimes referred to as the 'canteen culture' but are in effect the police culture, and involve the relationship between police officers and civilian support staff, the acceptance of racial stereo-typing and the treatment of women, particularly women police officers.

2.59. The Inspection revealed that the increasing use of civilian support staff, particularly in roles similar to the police, such as reception counter and control room staff, is overcoming the 'only a civvy' attitude. However, from the evidence of civilian support staff spoken to at all levels the tendency to devalue their contribution persists, especially at headquarters rather than at local stations. It was also more evident in those forces with little overall equal opportunity achievement.

2.60. Most civilian support staff clearly identify with and are loyal to the police service, no matter who their employer happens to be. Those forces who are developing appraisal and career development systems to reward and develop good employee will no doubt benefit, and all forces should seek to follow this example. **It is recommended that grievance procedures should apply to all staff, both police and civilian support, to create a sense of corporacy.**

2.61. Of forces inspected, only three chief officers had made a specific statement about racist/sexist language and behaviour. In forces with good representation of ethnic minority officers racial banter, allegedly humorous or not, is less likely to be acceptable. Many of the officers spoken to identified this shift in attitude as the most obvious evidence of the achievement of equal opportunities in the past three years. However, during meetings with officers, including supervisors, it was obvious that an underlying level of racist banter was accepted; supervisors were unprepared to challenge or, worse, were prepared to join in. **The key role of sergeants and inspectors in challenging unacceptable language and behaviour in relation to both race and gender issues cannot be too heavily emphasised. Chief Constables should stress this key role in a clear and unequivocal statement about their requirements in this respect.**

2.62. There was strong evidence that women police officers were suffering persistent low level harassment unchecked by supervisors. There was evidence of personal physical harassment which had been brought to the attention of supervisors and had not been dealt with. Some senior managers were not prepared to recognise this as a problem. It was also noted that the language of senior officers remained mainly exclusionary.

2.63. In contrast, a small number of women met during the Inspection thought the pendulum of equal opportunities had swung too far and that men were being discriminated against, particularly in terms of promotion. However, there is no evidence of this nationally in the data supplied to the Inspectorate. It is pleasing to note that women officers were generally confident they would not be discriminated against in selection for specialist posts. This shift in perception is a major achievement which needs to be underpinned by sustaining good practice and ensuring monitoring procedures provide continuing evidence.

2.64. Nonetheless, the differences in levels of ambition between male and female officers were quite marked. The current management profile of the Service presented to new and ambitious women recruits quickly adjust their ambitions and sets their goals. Although qualifications and length of service are essential factors in establishing this profile, it was of concern during the Inspection that in most forces the numbers of women taking and passing promotion exams were substantially lower than that which could be expected. In one force there were only three women who would be eligible for promotion to sergeant. Of equal concern was the fact the force did not know and had not researched the reason for this.



### 3. Recommendations

#### **Recommendation 1:**

Computer driven packages which allow monitoring of each stage of the recruiting process should be a priority for all forces.

(Para 2.4 refers)

#### **Recommendation 2:**

Where the proportion of women and ethnic minority recruits is below average, it is recommended that forces should seek to establish reasons for this.

(Para 2.5 refers)

#### **Recommendation 3:**

The small sums of money spent by the Home Office on national ethnic minority recruiting campaigns in ten selected forces should continue, even during periods of low recruitment.

(Para 2.8 refers)

#### **Recommendation 4:**

Research should be commissioned by the Home Office on behalf of forces to establish a recruiting profile and suitable screening out criteria for use through England and Wales.

(Para 2.9 refers)

#### **Recommendation 5:**

It should be the aim of all forces to have selection systems based on advertised opportunities; objective job related criteria; a selection process involving, but not controlled, the specialist department; and monitored for fairness and consistency.

(Para 2.15 refers)

#### **Recommendation 6:**

It must be an absolute priority for forces to establish job and person specifications for all police and civilian support staff posts.

(Para 2.16 refers)

#### **Recommendation 7:**

When tenure of post policies have been implemented and selection systems based on the Singh principles are in place, existing pools of selected officers should be disbanded and advised to reapply, notwithstanding the likely disappointment for some.

(Para 2.21 refers)

**Recommendation 8:**

Before introducing new career development and appraisal systems there should be training and published advice and guidance to ensure consistency of practice across the force.

(Para 2.27 refers)

**Recommendation 9:**

The role of the career development unit should be one of advice and consultancy for individuals and human resource planning on behalf of the force.

(Para 2.29 refers)

**Recommendation 10:**

It is recommended that the Home Office should seek to consolidate advice about equal opportunities and personnel management issues in a new circular.

(Para 2.30 refers)

**Recommendation 11:**

The number of candidates for promotion should equate as closely as possible to likely vacancies over a specified period.

(Para 2.32 refers)

**Recommendation 12:**

It is recommended that District Training Centres standing orders are examined to ensure the absence of direct/indirect discrimination.

(Para 2.39 refers)

**Recommendation 13:**

A thematic inspection of regional training for the newly promoted sergeant and inspector courses should be undertaken to establish that appropriate training in equal opportunities is given.

(Para 2.40 refers)

**Recommendation 14:**

As a matter of good practice, the Training Department, as a service provider to the force, should be given responsibility of monitoring the fairness of all training allocation. It is equally important to ensure that the results of training are rigorously audited to ensure that any variations in outcomes are understood and validated.

(Para 2.43 refers)

**Recommendation 15:**

It is recommended that all forces should adopt a system which requires interviews between three and six months after leaving the Service in order that real issues for retirement may be discovered.

(Para 2.48 refers)

**Recommendation 16:**

All forces should establish regular personnel audit procedures to provide chief officers with information about the force achievements in establishing equal opportunities based on the advice in Home Office Circulars 87/1989 and 70/1992, 'Implementing Section 95 of the Criminal Justice Act 1991 and Ethnic Classification'.

(Para 2.51 refers)

**Recommendation 17:**

Sources of informal, confidential advice and support should be available to anyone considering raising a grievance, together with support for the aggrieved who take their cases beyond the first stage.

(Para 2.55 refers)

**Recommendation 18:**

It is recommended that grievance procedures should apply to all staff, both police and civilian support, to create a sense of corporacy.

(Para 2.60 refers)

**Recommendation 19:**

The key role of sergeants and inspectors in challenging unacceptable language and behaviour in relation to both race and gender issues cannot be too heavily emphasised. Chief Constables should stress this key role in a clear and unequivocal statement about their requirements in this respect.

(Para 2.61 refers)

## 4. Conclusions

4.1. There is no doubt in the past three years the police service has made tremendous efforts to establish equal opportunities policies and the achievements deserve recognition. It is clear, however, that the Service generally is still divided about the benefits of equal opportunities policies. Some see them as a challenge to the established order involving a handing over of power; others see it as an opportunity to change for the better, using equality of opportunity as the foundation on which to build new procedures.

4.2. HM Inspectorate of Constabulary expects forces to have in place equal opportunities policies and personnel management procedures which follow Home Office advice circulated in 1989 (equal opportunities in the Police Service) and 1991 (career development of police officers – guidance on good practice). It expects the operations of these policies will stand scrutiny and that forces will be able to assure both themselves and the Inspectorate that the results of the operation of the policies sustain the policy aims and objectives. It expects that the benefits of equal opportunities will result in better levels of service delivery from a well motivated and highly skilled work force.

4.3. From the many people at all levels in the Service spoken to during the Inspection it is increasingly clear that equality of opportunity is not a requirement imposed on the Service but a demand and expectation from the people who work in the Service. The able people recruited into the Service at these times of great change are entitled to feel that they will be given the opportunity to fulfil their own potential in fair competition with others. It cannot be repeated too often that if we expect employees of the Service to deliver a quality service then we must provide a quality organisation to which they can belong. In the future, when opportunities for advancement are likely to be reduced, their confidence in the fairness of selection procedure will be essential to overcome personal disappointment whilst maintaining commitment and loyalty to the organisation.

4.4. The Service needs to ensure the best people are recruited into the Service and the best of those people rise in influence and responsibility. The Service has made great strides in ensuring people of ability are not excluded from the Service and must continue to strive to ensure that opportunities within the Service are allocated on merit.

4.5. The Inspection revealed some chief officers and others not committed to equal opportunities. Where chief officers have expressed commitment to achieving equality of opportunity, senior managers not committed to equal opportunities will increasingly become isolated and less influential. Without commitment at the highest level some senior managers will continue to frustrate progress in establishing and operating procedures designed to bring about fair change for all. The report includes a check list (Appendix B) of essential elements against which forces will be inspected. The features suggested in the check list are a minimum requirement and will assist in identifying inappropriate procedures. They will not in themselves bring about equal opportunities; only the people involved in all aspects of personnel management, selection and appraisal can do that.

4.6. There is evidence of change in what is known as the canteen culture or, more properly, the police culture. It is the culture of predominantly white male values, not deliberately harmful but nonetheless impacting on women and persons of ethnic minority origin and, indeed, others not conforming to the majority norms. There was evidence in the Inspection of changes, particularly in race relations issues. It is becoming unsafe for prejudiced officers to articulate or act upon their prejudices.

4.7. In the case of women the effects of the white male culture is not as clearly understood. There is a serious problem of sexual harassment of women, particularly police officers, in the Service. There is no evidence that women are institutionally barred from opportunities, but their expectations may be restricted by the existing culture. Male senior officers frequently were more ready to deny issues of sex discrimination than racial discrimination. This is most probably due to a lack of understanding or familiarity with difficult gender issues which have not until recently received the same emphasis that race relations have had for the past twenty years. It is clearly the duty of chief officers to address the problem of both sexual and racial discrimination in the Service, personally and specifically. Current and future research is to be welcomed, and the Service should continue in its efforts to train all officers in equal opportunity issues in order to bring about a wider understanding of prejudice and discrimination.

4.8. This particularly applies to sergeants and inspectors, who are the models from whom younger members of the Service gain their values. Regional training of sergeants and inspectors appears to be failing the service in preparing these key people for their new responsibilities. A thorough review of that training, to ensure a consistency across England and Wales, is essential. HM Inspectorate will continue to regard equal opportunities as a strategic theme in the Inspection programme. This is necessary to ensure the Service continues to develop good human resource management practices based on equality of opportunity leading to beneficial changes in service delivery,

4.9. The last three years have established the apparatus of equal opportunities policies. This an achievement of which the Service can be justly proud. The task now is to gain the confidence of all members of the Service in the efficacy of those procedures and the commitment of chief officers and senior management to the operation. That confidence is not evident at the present. On the contrary, there is a great deal of scepticism which will only be overcome when evidence gained by routine monitoring proves without doubt that members of the Service are treated fairly and rewarded on merit. Evidence of that confidence will be sought in a further thematic inspection in two years' time and in the interim by HM Inspectorate of Constabulary in their routine liaison with forces.

## Appendix A: Forces Involved in the Thematic Inspection

Avon and Somerset Constabulary

Bedfordshire Police

City of London Police

Devon and Cornwall Constabulary

Lancashire Constabulary

South Wales Police

Staffordshire Police

Surrey Constabulary

Sussex Police

West Mercia Constabulary

West Midlands Police

West Yorkshire Police

# Appendix B: Equal Opportunities Check List

## Recruitment

1. Are the criteria used to screen out applicants relevant and non-discriminatory?
2. Are there auditing procedures to ensure that screening out procedures are fair?
3. Are assessments and interview based on relevant and non-discriminatory criteria?
4. Are the outcomes of selection procedures routinely monitored?
5. Are the performances of assessors and interviewers routinely audited?
6. Have all interviewers and others involved in selection procedures been trained for their roles?
7. Is supervision of the recruitment process the responsibility of the senior personnel manager?
8. Does the recruiting process find the 'right person for the right job'? How is this assessed?

## Selection

1. Are there job descriptions and person specifications for all posts both police and civilian?
2. Are vacancies for specialist posts and individual postings routinely advertised?
3. Do advertisements encourage under-represented groups to apply?
4. Are advertisements based on relevant criteria consistent across the force?
5. Are applications and selections routinely monitored?
6. Are specialist departments involved but not in control of the selection process?
7. Have all interviewers and other involved in the selection process procedures been trained for their roles?

8. Are outcomes of the selection process routinely monitored?
9. Is the force profile routinely monitored to assess the effects of selection for specialist posts and individual postings?

## **Promotion**

1. Are promotion selection opportunities advertised regularly?
2. Is selection for promotion based on ability to perform in the rank?
3. Are the assessment criteria based on core qualities which are published?
4. Are the numbers selected based on projected vacancies over a given period?
5. Is the promotion selection procedure routinely monitored?
6. Have all interviewers and other involved in the promotion selection procedures been trained for their roles?
7. Are the performances of assessors and interviewers routinely audited?
8. Are all candidates offered feedback?

## **Tenure**

1. Are all specialist posts, including CID and traffic, covered by tenure of post policy?
2. Are the recommended periods of tenure included in job descriptions and advertisements for posts?
3. Is the implementation of the tenure of post policy resulting in changes to the force profile routinely monitored?

## **Staff Appraisal and Career Development**

1. Do career development policies cover all employees, police and civilian support staff?
2. Are all police officers up to the rank of Deputy Chief Constable subject to annual appraisal procedures?
3. Have all supervisors received training in the operation of appraisal procedures and aspects of equal opportunities?



4. Are appraisal systems completely open?
5. Does the force operate an open policy in respect of personal files?
6. Are the performances of appraisers routinely audited?
7. Are the recommendations of appraisal reports, including training recommendations, routinely monitored?

## **Retention**

1. Are all employees who leave the forces interviewed at point of leaving and again later if they agree?
2. Is career advice and information given to pregnant officers also available to their supervisors and managers?
3. Are career breaks available?

## **Training**

1. Is all training provision routinely monitored by the Training Department to ensure fairness in allocation and equality in representation?
2. Are the pass/failure rates of training courses routinely monitored to identify and remove bias?
3. Are training opportunities regularly advertised or circulated for the information of all personnel?
4. Does the training curriculum support the equal opportunity strategy and provide awareness training for all employees?

## **Grievances**

1. Has the grievance procedure been widely circulated and is written guidance or informal advice readily available?
2. Is the use of the grievance procedure and the outcome grievances regularly analysed to identify equal opportunity issues?
3. Have supervisors and managers been trained in the operation of the procedure?
4. Are informal and confidential sources of advice and support available to anyone considering using the grievance procedure?

## Monitoring

1. Is routine monitoring information collected and presented to chief officers?
2. Are detected variations in the results of key activities investigated by the head of the department and are causes identified?
3. Is data collected about key activities an integral and routine part of the force management information process?
4. Do the ethnic minority classification systems conform with the advice in Home Office Circular 70/1992 'Implementing Section 95 of the Criminal Justice Act 1991 and Ethnic Classification'?