



HM INSPECTORATE OF CONSTABULARY

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HMIC Focused Inspections of Professional Standards Departments 2005

Briefing Paper

1. Purpose of this briefing

- 1.1. During October and November of 2005, HMIC will be carrying out a programme of focussed inspections of Professional Standards within all forces in England & Wales. This represents a major opportunity, not just to gauge the performance of individual forces but also to assess the 'state of the nation' in respect of the whole area of Professional Standards in policing.
- 1.2. The purpose of this briefing paper is to inform chief officers, officers and staff working in professional standards of the background to the inspections and to describe the scope and scale of the forthcoming programme.
- 1.3. In addition, there is an opportunity for all recipients of this paper to contribute to the format and focus of the inspections by providing comments and suggestions either as part of the interactive element of the Professional Standards Conference or subsequently, direct with the programme design team.

2. Why are we undertaking the inspections?

- 2.1. In addition to the general statutory responsibility to inspect police forces for efficiency and effectiveness, HMIC has a unique interest in complaints and misconduct issues. Section 77 of the Police Act 1996 and section 15 of the Police Reform Act 2002 impart a specific statutory responsibility on HM Inspectors to keep themselves informed as to the handling of complaints in forces. No other individual area of policing is highlighted in this way and hence HMIC has always paid particular attention to complaints issues.
- 2.2. Prior to HMIC's Baseline Assessment approach to measuring police force efficiency and effectiveness, all forces were subject to focussed inspections of PSDs whenever they underwent a full force inspection (usually every 2-3 years, and for some annually). The results of PSD inspection were then published as part of the force inspection report.

- 2.3. Baseline Assessment has replaced the routine cycle of force inspections with a programme of focussed activity, tailored specifically to each force and offering the possibility that some forces may earn an ‘inspection holiday’. Within this regime, it is recognised that PSDs would not necessarily receive the previous degree of scrutiny, presenting a potential barrier to HMIs’ knowledge of complaints handling within forces.
- 2.4. It was encouraging that in the 2003/04 Baseline Assessment, professional standards received high graded scores in most forces, with the majority being marked “excellent” or “good”. Despite this, during 2004/05 the service received considerable criticism from the three public inquiries into discipline matters (the CRE, Morris and Taylor Inquiries) and particular recommendations were made for HMIC to apply a more robust and inclusive inspection regime.
- 2.5. In addition, 2004/05 saw the first year of operation for the Independent Police Complaints Commission (IPCC), further changing the professional standards landscape and presenting additional challenges to the service.
- 2.6. In light of these major developments, HMIs felt that it was important to establish a comprehensive assessment of professional standards across England & Wales which would both reflect the much-changed national scene and provide a robust baseline for future, on-going risk assessments.

3. What Will This Inspection Look Like?

- 3.1. As with general Baseline Assessment, the process will start with a self-assessment questionnaire but then each force will receive a fieldwork visit from an HMIC inspection team, led by the dedicated HMIC Lead Staff Officer for that force.
- 3.2. There will be three main products from the inspection programme, namely:
- a. ‘Baseline plus’ inspection reports on each force PSD;
 - b. Baseline Assessment grading; and
 - c. A national inspection report on a thematic scale.
- a . ‘Baseline Plus’ inspections*
- 3.3. Inspections will be conducted using a revised HMIC PSD inspection ‘protocol’ setting out a range of questions under the familiar EFQM¹ headings. This framework of questions will be forwarded to forces in advance, requesting self-assessment and submission of relevant evidence and supporting documentation. This material will be analysed and then followed by HMIC inspection teams visiting forces to carry out validation checks and supplementary interviews of key players.

¹ EFQM – European Foundation for Quality Management

- 3.4. In addition to PSD members, interviews will be undertaken with lead chief officers, relevant police authority members and the local IPCC commissioners. Staff associations and local staff support groups will also be offered an opportunity to contribute their views.
- 3.5. Evidence will be gathered, consolidated and reported upon in Baseline Assessment format. Efforts will be made to avoid unnecessary duplication of information requests but it will be in forces' interest to ensure that the evidence used for the report and grading is as up-to-date as possible. Reports will be published on HMIC's website following the normal process for drafting and finalisation.

b. Baseline Assessment grading

- 3.6. Whilst the 'professional standards' framework remained within the Baseline questionnaire for 2004/05, grading in respect of PSDs has been deferred until the outcome of the focused inspections. Provisional grades will be subject to a moderation process (as with other Baseline gradings) and are expected to be published in January 2006. Grading will be measured against set 'Specific Grading Criteria' which will have been previously agreed by ACPO, IPCC and the APA.

c. National inspection report on a thematic scale

- 3.7. The programme provides an unprecedented opportunity to assess a single element of police service delivery in every force in England & Wales. In effect, it represents the largest 'thematic' inspection ever undertaken by HMIC and will result in a consolidated report of national significance.
- 3.8. The thematic report will seek to focus on transferable good practice and the main national or generic issues facing forces in respect of professional standards. Such issues may transcend PSDs into other aspects of policing such as the handling of grievances, employment tribunals and civil claims. It will also focus on the respective and complementary roles of police authorities, HMIC and the IPCC in oversight and inspection.

4. How can you contribute at this conference?

- 4.1. Throughout the planning to date, there has been close engagement with key stakeholders such as the IPCC, APA, Home Office and ACPO. Staff and support associations will also have been consulted in advance of the inspections taking place.
- 4.2. With so much energy and resource devoted to this unique programme of inspection, not least within force themselves, it is important that the focus is absolutely right and the best possible outcome is achieved. To achieve this focus, your views as professional standards practitioners are absolutely vital.

- 4.3. HMI Denis O'Connor will be speaking on day 2 of the conference about his recent work on police collaboration and strategic alliances ('Mind the Level 2 Gap'). He has been asked by organisers to suggest how this approach may impact on PSDs.
- 4.4. A central element of the 'Mind the Level 2 Gap' methodology requires a high level 'statement' of intent supported by identification of 'Pulse Points', which are the critical indicators that provide a 'health check' for whatever service or subject is being addressed. These are then further supported by a more detailed framework of supplementary questions which hit at the heart of the subject and allow a more definitive assessment of performance.
- 4.5. In the interactive element of Denis O'Connor's presentation, he will invite you to contribute by commenting on, challenging and/or proposing additions or amendments to draft versions of the above elements for Professional Standards. Whether or not the full methodology is finally applied to PSDs, the discipline of identifying the most appropriate 'pulse points' and the full range of supporting questions will significantly influence the focus of the inspections. ***This is where you come in!***
- 4.6. To assist with your understanding and contribution, an example of previous application of the elements of the methodology is attached as Annex A to this paper. This example is based on tackling major crime (e.g. homicide).
- 4.7. Annex B to this paper contains the first draft of the statement of intent and pulse points for professional standards.

5. How else can you contribute?

a. 'Working Hypotheses'

- 5.1. When HMIC carry out a thematic inspection, an important way of focussing attention on generic or themed issues is to establish some 'working hypotheses' against which to test out the reality on the ground. Such hypotheses are normally targeted at key areas where there is believed to be either a good story worth telling or a significant barrier to overcome.
- 5.2. Examples of some working hypotheses used in the recent thematic on call handling and contact management are:
- The public do not like interacting with an automated response; and
 - There is no career structure for call handlers.
- 5.3. The current list of working hypotheses for the inspection of PSDs is attached at Annex C to this paper. ***You are asked to provide us with any comments you may have on the validity of those selected or indeed any additional hypotheses you believe are appropriate.***

b. Good practice and barriers

- 5.4. Every force will be asked to put forward examples of good practice, and in particular any where it is believed it may be beneficial on a national scale. They will also be asked to identify any major barriers to performance.
- 5.5. You don't need to wait to be asked – ***let us know direct*** of any areas of creative, innovative or imaginative practice worthy of consideration and further research and any issues which would be worthy of examination and flagging which are barriers to success, even if they would require changes in legislation.

c. Other issues

- 5.6. HMIC are particularly interested in examining any issues with implications for diversity, any that relate to specific types of complaint or behaviour and any other area of business that is felt to be of importance to the practitioner community. ***Let us know what these issues are.***

6. How can you contact us?

- 6.1. The initiative is being led by Assistant HMI Peter Todd and Supt. Neville Pinkney both of HMIC based at:

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