

The Leveson Inquiry into the Culture Practices and Ethics of the Press

Witness: Jonathan STODDART  
Occupation: Chief Constable, Durham Constabulary  
Address: c/o Aykley Heads, Durham City

I believe the facts stated in this witness statement are true

Signed.......... Dated..... 20/2/12.....

1. Who you are and a brief summary of your career history:

I am Jonathan STODDART, Chief Constable of Durham Constabulary and have been so initially in temporary then substantive form since 12 December 2005.

I joined the police service on 4 October 1982 and spent my first sixteen years with Northumbria Police. My service was largely operational and I spent substantial spells within the CID at different ranks and was an Area (Borough) Commander for three years.

I became Assistant Chief Constable Operational and Crime with Lincolnshire Police in March 1999 and was promoted to Deputy Chief Constable in Durham Constabulary in February 2003.

As well as being a serving Chief Constable for Durham Constabulary I have national lead for the police service on alcohol harm reduction, and have been chairman of the ACPO Homicide Working Group and another associated major crime group called HOLMES (the national IT server application used in the indexing of complex and major crime).

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I have been chairman of these latter two groups for ten years. Partly because of this and my experiences as a detective, I have been asked to personally lead on a number of major crime reviews and/or investigation in other force areas. These include assisting Her Majesty's Inspector of Constabulary, Sir Denis O'CONNOR, when a constabulary was experiencing unprecedented gun crime and murders; reviewing the murder of a British National in Kenya (Julie WARD murder); reviewing the murder of Holly WELLS and Jessica CHAPMAN in Soham; reviewing the phone hacking inquiry Operation WEETING, and providing advice to other forces experiencing significant difficulties.

**2. What were your first impressions, upon taking office as Chief Constable of Durham Constabulary about the culture of relations with the media which you had inherited?**

On becoming Deputy Chief Constable of Durham I had the strategic lead for the management of the Force Media and Press Office. Durham is a relatively small force and staffing within the Department small in number. The professional lead had been in post for twenty years and had joined Durham Constabulary following experience as a news reporter with local daily newspapers.

His deputy was a professionally trained and qualified press officer who had no journalistic experience and there were two other staff providing support and administration.

My initial impressions of the department were good. Relationships with local newspapers were positive and very healthy. They respected our approach which was open and transparent and of mutual benefit. By that I mean we could rely on the press to cover important launches or events aimed at

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improving community confidence and cohesion, and they were confident in relation to our briefings and communications. Press appeals for information in relation to crime were fair, balanced and proportionate.

**3. Describe the personal contact which you currently have with the media. The Inquiry would like an overall picture of the type, frequency, duration and content of your contact with the media during your tenure as Chief Constable of Durham Constabulary. The Inquiry would like to know about your contact with both local and national media:**

I have very little personal contact with the national media, either the written press or national radio and/or television. Occasionally there is national interest in incidents within Durham, for example on New Year's night this year we had a triple murder and suicide through the use of a firearm. There was significant interest in the event for weeks. This was principally handled by my Assistant Chief Constable and media department without anything untoward of note occurring.

In thirteen years as a Chief Officer I have had one dinner with national media. This was with my Deputy Chief Constable, Mike BARTON, and was really part of an ongoing operation to raise national and local interest into an impending operation into an Organised Crime Group. As I recall the Deputy and I took three journalists for a curry and we paid for the meal. They in turn paid for the drinks. This was declared in the Force Executive hospitality register.

As regards local media, I am on first name terms with the editor of the Northern Echo, Peter BARRON, and the local BBC Crime Reporter, Chris STEWART. I have met both at local events, been interviewed by them and have a good relationship with both. I have never socialised with them privately

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but went to a luncheon with Chris STEWART where he was after-lunch speaker.

**4. Describe what you are seeking to gain for Durham Constabulary through your personal contact with the media:**

I have already mentioned that my ambitions for contact with media are to further good relations and help promote community confidence, cohesion and assist in raising the profile and local reputation of the Force. My professional position adds significance to media releases and, locally, I am a reasonably high profile figure on television and have been for many years.

**5. Describe in general terms and using illustrative examples what you consider the media have been seeking from you in your personal dealing with them during your time as Chief Constable of Durham Constabulary:**

The media locally are similarly minded. They need to sell newspapers and/or air time and clearly the police service is potentially filled with "good copy".

The written media in particular are always after competitive edge over their rivals and try to obtain inside lines and leads. In my experience Durham Constabulary do not "leak" stories to the press. I cannot think of one instance where the organisation has been harmed by people within actually surreptitiously briefing the media.

The media not unnaturally prefer access to the most senior officer possible. During a murder or other critical incident as well as requiring the Senior Investigating Officer to front a press conference – it is now seen as good practice for ACPO officers including Chief Constables to share that responsibility. Recently the North East forces launched the non-emergency

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101 contact number. A number of chief officers attended the press conference and this included me. I feel that it adds authority, visibility and reassurance to a TV or radio launch like this.

When there is a service failure it is often my role to lead the press response, to explain any failings, accept responsibility and provide the public with reassurance that any mistakes will be rectified.

**6. Have you ever had "off the record" conversations with the media? If so, please explain why and give examples:**

I have had many off the record briefings with the press. These include setting certain parameters in lines of questioning which it would not be appropriate to disclose publicly. It is common for example for SIOs to publicly withhold whether someone is a suspect or not even though the media may have that knowledge already. I regularly tell media I am not prepared to answer certain questions either because they may prejudice a judicial inquiry or they may be very sensitive and not in the public interest.

**7. What are your views of the practice of police officers and police staff having "off the record" conversations with the media?**

I believe this is absolutely appropriate, assists the press in doing their job and prevents both parties from making mistakes. In court proceedings for murder investigations I have briefed all of the written media in advance of the verdict. This is simply to enable effective management in the often frenetic minutes around the verdict when management of relatives and witnesses and their story often takes precedence. I would expect my staff to brief off the record in line with the same principles – namely the rationale for the conversation is to ensure an effective investigation. It is a fine balance between freedom of press to report and the consequences of reporting on that basis.

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8. To what extent have you accepted hospitality from the media whilst Chief Constable?

9. Insofar as you have accepted hospitality from the media, what has been the nature of hospitality you have accepted?

10. To what extent have you provided hospitality for the media on behalf of Durham Constabulary whilst Chief Constable?

11. Insofar as you have provided hospitality to the media, what has been the nature of hospitality that you provided?

I have covered these in detail in my previous replies. In Durham Constabulary force area because it is very local, the media and police have to work on a basis of mutual trust. I have never been approached to provide information for favours and part of this is my own personal firm stance, and partly in truth because the local media are not thriving and have never offered a fiscal or other inducement to me or in return been invited to have hospitality at the force's expense.

12. What mechanisms are in place to monitor and record hospitality as between the Chief Constable and the media?

All hospitality offered, accepted and rejected is recorded in the Executive hospitality register. Up until October 2011 this was a manual system maintained by the Executive Office Manager, which was then updated to a spreadsheet system.

13. What mechanisms are in place to monitor and record meetings with the media generally?

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The policy for contacting and maintaining relations with the media is enclosed. Certain meetings with the media are recorded as part of operational procedures where the meetings are recorded as part of policy and process, for example the running of a major crime investigation or murder, a critical incident or major incident. In general, however, there is nothing in place to record all meetings with the media as this takes place on a daily basis from my level right through to PCSO.

My Neighbourhood Inspectors all have Facebook and/or Twitter accounts which are accessed by the communities and read by the media. Clearly there is no way that I would wish to constrain this contact as it provides vital information, requests for help, and is useful to our many local partners. This system works very well and has as yet caused no problems to the organisation, community or individual. Some Inspectors use social media to hold virtual community fora – these are monitored by the press.

In relation to the written media there is coverage of public interest stories with quotes and interviews from constables, PCSO's upwards. All are unfettered – all to date seem to provoke little or no adverse reaction.

Because of the vast number of contacts these are not recorded locally or centrally. I am, however, aware that the press office maintains a database of all their daily contacts with the media.

**14. Do you ever discuss the media, or media coverage, with politicians?  
If so, how important is such communications and why?**

I have regular contact with local councillors and MPs. Generally there is little discussion about the media, unless we have a disagreement about a particular perspective, comment or story run by one of the parties. Politicians

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are legitimate democratically elected stakeholders and as such are bound to have an interest in policing stories that affect them. We may not always agree but I have never been unduly influences to change a perspective by a politician unless for a completely legitimate reason.

**15. Have you ever known, or sensed, that a politician has put pressure on you to take a particular course of action as a result of lobbying or influence exerted on that politician by the media? If so, please explain (although you need not identify the politician at this stage if you do not wish to do so).**

I have thought hard about this and sounded out my ACPO colleagues and can say that I do not know of any cases where the media have put any pressure on a politician.

**16. Has the prominence which politicians have given to subjects ever given rise to pressure to alter policing priorities so as to allocate more priority to the subject being given prominence by the politicians? If so, please explain:**

Pressure from politicians and from any influential stakeholder is a daily occurrence for all Chief Constables and reporting through the media is just one of those avenues. Local politicians legitimately raise issues of concern about policing practice and may use the media to further this particular cause. This may be direct or through the Police Authority. My Police Authority is very supportive and if they feel the issue is more appropriately dealt with by them then following consultation they may take the lead.

Any item raised through the press would naturally lead the police to review our practices or, if appropriate, respond. This is an entirely legitimate use of the media to hold the police to account. The recent police staff redundancy

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process is an example of where questions were raised in the media and the Police Authority responded as the employing body rather than myself. Other minor examples have been where the closure of front office counters in police stations has led to local politicians challenging our options through the media. The issue of Force amalgamation has always been very taxing and politicians have used the written media and T.V. and radio to propose or object to particular courses of action.

Although some of the media coverage may be difficult or unpleasant, it hasn't ever been what I thought of as inappropriate or dishonest.

**17. Set out your understanding of the type of contact which Durham Constabulary personnel have with the local and national media covering nature, extent, frequency and (in general terms) topics / content.**

I believe this has already been partly covered previously but I have consulted around the Force such as time constraints permit. My police officers at neighbourhood level engage with the media – nearly always by phone and usually at Inspector level – on a daily basis. This is to cover local community matters and they are empowered to do so. This is supported by my press office who are utilised in respect of pre-planned operations, more serious offences and spontaneously larger scale or major incidents.

Calls are received to the Force Communications rooms (there are 2) from the media often trying to glean information. They will be referred to the appropriate contact as required.

Responses are co-ordinated in conjunction with SIOs, media bronze commanders, press releases and the use of the voicebank. Although I have referred to my own use of 'off the record' briefings and their legitimacy, I know

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that all neighbourhood policing teams have received advice from the press office not to use this tactic and their default position is that everything said is, 'ON THE RECORD'.

**18. Is contact with the media restricted to certain staff or are all staff able to deal with the media?**

As a general rule any operational staff can speak with the media.

**19. What do you expect Durham Constabulary to gain from such contact with the media?**

**20. What do the media seek from such contact with your personnel?**

The whole purpose of this contact is to help to inform our communities and to provide information in an objective and transparent equitable manner. As a general observation I think the local media need the police more than we need them however, we clearly need them on a regular basis to inform, make appeals and provide accountability. They, in turn, have an important social role in holding us to account and challenging poor practice, improper conduct or malfeasance.

**21. What hospitality are your personnel permitted to accept from the media? *Inter alia*, are they entitled to accept a meal or a drink from a journalist?**

As a rule there is no contact between my officers that occurs outside the working environment as this is almost conducted entirely over the phone or in a police station. Senior officers, ACPO rank and those leading inquiries, again as a rule, only conduct business in an official or legitimate location. I have mentioned the one occasion as Chief Constable that I socialised with

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members of the media. I have asked all other of my senior officers (Chief Superintendent and above), none meets socially with members of the media. If they did accept hospitality it would be declared and recorded. As a rule it simply isn't a part of our daily thinking to socialise with the media.

**22. What hospitality are your personnel permitted to afford to the media?**

**23. What mechanisms are in place to record hospitality as between the media and your personnel?**

**24. How (if at all) is hospitality between Durham Constabulary (including you) and the media controlled and/or regulated?**

I have covered this in my previous answers.

**25. Are the hospitality rules governing contact between Durham Constabulary personnel (including you) and the media different from those covering contact with other third parties? If so, what are the differences?**

Some hospitality is offered and accepted by senior officers, especially ACPO officers as part of our civic and community responsibility. For example, Local Authority awards evenings, High Sheriff's dinners and some functions involving national bodies including the medical profession. In addition I attend conferences hosted by other police forces, government departments and some limited commercial bodies. All are considered carefully for potential compromise and should be included in the hospitality register. This includes some which are declined or, through other circumstances, not attended.

**26. What policies and procedures are in place to record contact between:**  
**(a) you and the media; (b) senior managers and the media; (c) other**

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**personnel and the media? Please answer in relation to both formal and informal communications.**

The Force has a policy regarding any contact with the media which was put in place in early 2011. In conjunction with this is a detailed media guide which is widely circulated internally, and provides practical advice to all officers considering using the media.

No formal record is maintained, for individual officers, for routine day to day communications with the media, however the media department hold their own record of communications which is used to track their work and ensure a constant response and approach is maintained. For major crime and other critical incidents, records are held by the investigation team for disclosure purposes and for the development of suspect and witness interview strategies.

**27. Are records of hospitality and other contact with the media audited and/or policed and, if so, how and by whom?**

Records of hospitality are scrutinised by the Police Authority and subject to audit internally and externally. The media department's record of interactions with the media is available for scrutiny but this is not routinely done. All other records made during the course of investigations are subject to the scrutiny of the criminal justice system.

**28. In your opinion are the policies and procedures described above: (a) working effectively; (b) sufficient; and (c) capable of improvement?**

Whilst they do work efficiently, all recorded contact depends upon accurate record keeping and personal integrity. Any system depends on these two

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factors, however, there is less awareness of the policy and procedure below Superintendent level and we could potentially improve upon this.

**29. What systems, policies and procedures are in place in Durham Constabulary to ensure that all members of the force (including civilian employees) know what is and what is not appropriate contact with the media? Do they follow/reflect the ACPO guidance on this subject?**

This has been answered previously and they follow ACPO guidance.

**30. Are you satisfied that the policies and procedures described above are sufficient and working effectively? Do you consider that they are capable of improvement?**

I am as satisfied as I can be, subject to outliers of any corrupt officers who the Organisation is not aware of, that our practice and policies, to date, have been effective. The area of real potential concern is in the proliferation of social media and blogging. This is a challenge in relation to any media regulation.

Force policy in relation to media interaction was reviewed and updated in 2011 and the media team offer regular advice to police officers and try to incorporate both ACPO and local advice and good practice. The policy covering inappropriate associations is in the process of being reviewed, and will include guidance on what is, and what is not an appropriate relationship with a member of the media. Clearly these reviews have taken consideration of the Filkin and HMIC reports, and will be suitably updated to reflect recommendations made by Lord Justice Leveson.

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**31. What training is in place in Durham Constabulary to ensure that all members of the force (including civilian employees) know what is and what is not appropriate contact with the media? Do they follow/reflect the ACPO guidance on this subject?**

Training is given to staff in specific roles, such as initial recruit, newly promoted Sergeant and Inspector training. Further handling of the media training is incorporated into role and rank specific training, firearms command, Senior Investigating Officer, public order, major incident training.

The media department provide advice and guidance to neighbourhood policing teams on request and monitor Twitter accounts. Training needs to be enhanced and standardised. As a result of recent events we perhaps need to review and reconsider the level of media training provided.

**32. To what extent have leaks from Durham Constabulary to the media and/or private detectives been a problem during your tenure as Chief Constable?**

We have no knowledge of any leaks to private investigators. There have been no known leaks from Durham Constabulary staff to the media.

**33. Insofar as applicable, what do you consider were the driving forces behind, or the main causes of, leaks from Durham Constabulary?**

Not applicable.

**34. When systems and procedures are in place to identify, respond to and detect the source of leaks?**

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Durham Constabulary has a very open relationship with local media which we have benefitted from. I have worked in three Forces and we are very discreet and do not leak as a rule. As a result we do not have specific systems in place to monitor the press and identify leaks and my Professional Standards Department have a dedicated (but small) Counter Corruption Unit and there is a confidential reporting system for all staff.

**35. How many investigations have been conducted into actual or suspected leaks from Durham Constabulary to the media and/or private detectives during the last 5 years and how many have led to the successful identification of the source of the leak? What was the outcome of the other investigations?**

**36. Has disciplinary action been taken against any member of staff (whether civilian or police officer) for leaking information to the media during the last 5 years? If so, please identify the number of cases and their outcome. There is no need to identify the person or persons the subject of the disciplinary process.**

There have been no investigations into actual or suspected leaks from Durham Constabulary; however, in 2010 my Professional Standards department conducted a joint review with the audit team at Durham County Council into a document that was leaked from the offices of the Police Authority. This document was legally privileged material seeking advice into a crime prevention strategy targeting a local Organised Crime Group. Excerpts from this document appeared in a local newspaper.

**37. What payments (if any) are considered to be legitimate financial transactions between Durham Constabulary personnel and the media?**

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No payments have ever been applied for, made or authorised.

**38. What policies and/or guidance are in place in relation to financial transactions between Durham Constabulary personnel and the media?**

There are no policies or guidance in place for financial transactions between Durham Constabulary and the media. Anything received by members of the organisation from the media, or anyone else, would be subject to the policy in relation to hospitality and gratuity, and must be recorded.

**39. To what extent do you believe bribery of personnel by the media to be a current problem for Durham Constabulary (if at all)?**

We have had no known issues within Durham Constabulary during my service. That said, it must be recognised that County Durham and Darlington have little of significant local and national press interest to motivate such behaviour from the press or my staff.

**40. What steps are taken: (a) to educate your personnel about bribery; (b) otherwise to prevent the bribery of your personnel; (c) proactively to detect bribery; (d) retrospectively to investigate bribery; and (e) to discipline personnel (if any) who are found to have accepted bribes from the media?**

It is recognised that officers and staff are more vulnerable to bribery if they are suffering from financial difficulties. The Counter Corruption Unit within my Professional Standards department regularly advise staff on how to avoid unmanageable debt and support networks are provided to staff through the Police Federation, other staff Unions and welfare departments. Individuals within the organisation who are identified of interest are proactively monitored

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by the Counter Corruption team in order to minimise risk. There have been no identified cases of bribery within Durham Constabulary within the last five years.

**41. Does Durham Constabulary have a press office? What role does it fulfil? If it does have such an office, what is the media's attitude towards the press office? In particular, are they satisfied by the provision of information and the routing of communications through your press office or do they prefer direct contact with individual personnel within the Durham Constabulary?**

I have touched on this already. As a small force we have a very small but very good press office (media department). The principal press officer has been with us for two years, prior to that she was a press officer with another force for nine years. Local neighbourhood contact of a straightforward nature is handled directly with neighbourhood personnel – not necessarily only inspector level. The press office would provide advice and support if required.

For larger force wide issues, critical incidents and multi-force events the press office would oversee, advise and prepare the press in advance including potential off the record briefings or "no go areas".

The media in general view Durham Constabulary as scrupulously fair, honest and transparent. My media principal has assured me that the vast majority of journalists do not seem to have any issues about routing their enquiries through the Media and Marketing Team, but equally there is an open relationship with officers, as the two are not mutually exclusive.

**42. What limitations, if any, are there on staff from Durham Constabulary leaving to work for the media and vice versa?**

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There are no limitations on staff leaving to work for the media. Similarly there are no limitations on former members of the media joining Durham Constabulary. I expect the same highest standards of integrity from all my staff irrespective of where they have worked.

**43. Are records kept of those who join Durham Constabulary from the media, or go on to work for the media after leaving Durham Constabulary? If so, please describe the system in place:**

No records are kept *per se* of previous professions. Two members of the media department were formerly journalists. This is commonplace within the police service. I know of one Inspector who was employed by a newspaper twenty five years ago.

**44. To the best of your knowledge are there any discernable patterns in the movement of personnel from the media into Durham Constabulary and *vice versa*?**

None.

**45. What limitations, if any, do you consider there should be on police officers and police staff leaving the Police Service to work for the media and *vice versa*?**

I am unsure whether this would be either lawful or proportionate. Restrictions aren't placed on other professions and traditionally police officers work after retirement in other fields such as Community Safety, security and ICT for example.

**46. What levels of awareness and experience are there in Durham Constabulary of "media crimes" and in particular: (a) unlawful**

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interception of communication (including the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000); (b) bribery of officials by the media; (c) blackmail; (d) harassment by paparazzi and journalists; (e) traffic and/or public order offences committed by photographers and journalists pursuing stories; (f) inciting officials to communicate confidential information held by Durham Constabulary / conspiring with them to obtain such information; and (g) crime within media organisations other than the foregoing (e.g. dishonest expense claims):

I would say that there is a low level of awareness of all these offences a) to g). I am taking steps to address this.

**47. What sort of priority is given to, and what level of resources are available to deal with, the above?**

This type of offence is not acknowledged under our threat assessments, therefore is not a current priority. At present there are no reactive or proactive resources dedicated to this issue, however if this threat assessment changed, we have the capability to put in place overt and covert assets on a local and regional level through collaboration with our neighbouring forces.

**48. What is your current impression of the culture within Durham Constabulary in relation to its dealings with the press?**

Our culture is healthy, open, honest and transparent. My experience is that officers will only discuss areas within their expertise and experience.

**49. The enquiry would like to understand the progress which you and Durham Constabulary are making on Operation Océangrove (insofar**

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as you are able without prejudicing the investigations that you are independently reviewing):

The commissioner of the Metropolitan Police Service asked me to conduct an independent review into Operation WEETING as is best practice in cases of such a vast scale and complexity. This encompassed leadership, governance, lines of enquiry and resourcing. The review commenced in September 2011, an interim report being submitted on 29<sup>th</sup> September 2011, and was completed by December 22<sup>nd</sup> 2011. A number of recommendations were made and presented to Commissioner Bernard Hogan-Howe. Deputy Assistant Commissioner Sue Akers is leading Operation WEETING and is ensuring that the recommendations are carefully considered and implemented where it is helpful to the investigation to do so.

50. What is your view of the recommendations contained in the HMIC's recent report "*Without Fear or Favour*" insofar as they concern relations between the media and the police?

The HMIC review suggests national standards for meetings between police employees and the media. Whilst this recommendation is useful, it is qualified by suggesting that all interactions with the media should be recorded in a detailed way and be subject to audit. This is an onerous task and in my view could well be counter productive and overly bureaucratic, especially considering the increased use by my officers of social networking and online meetings where members of the press are represented.

My Professional Standards and Counter Corruption and Integrity Unit began addressing the points raised in the HMIC report in December 2011. Durham Constabulary already complied with the majority of recommendations, including having hospitality and gratuities registers. We have a notifiable

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association policy which is being reviewed to include members of the press, and a more streamlined approach for recording hospitality.

**51. What is your view of the recommendations contained in Elizabeth Filkin's report "*The Ethical Issues Arising from the Relationship between Police and Media*"?**

Whilst this report was specifically written for the Metropolitan Police Service there is a great deal of parity with the HMIC report. I welcome Ms Filkin's suggestion that more and not less contact with the media should be the outcome of her review. The suggestion of recording meetings with the press in an informal way, for example in pocket note books, is more realistic and less bureaucratic than the process recommended by HMIC.

The report reflects a realism that relationships with the media need to be forged upon trust and mutual understanding and not reward and exclusivity. The report provides useful ideas for practical guidance, including common sense approaches for managing interactions, using self judgement and avoiding, wherever possible, alcohol during interactions with the media.

**52. Do you consider that there are different or further steps which could and/or should be taken to ensure that relationships between the police and the media are and remain appropriate? Please explain when answering this question what you consider to be appropriate contact between the police and the media in a democratic society:**

The media have an important role within the context of policing and holding the service to account. Investigative journalists have an important role in the pursuit of justice, challenging authority and ensuring that uncomfortable questions are asked (whistle blowers).

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It would appear that a few police officers, nationally, have formed relationships, with members of the media, which are inappropriate and for their own ends. This can never be absolutely eradicated because there is no legitimate or proportionate means of stopping unauthorised contact between police officers and media representatives.

As already discussed Durham Constabulary has gone some way to address concerns raised with the HMIC report and is in the process of reviewing internal policy and procedure to reflect inappropriate associations with the media.

**53. What different or further changes do you consider should be made, for instance to systems, policies, procedures and training, to ensure that the relationship between the police and the media, locally and nationally, operates in the public interest? Please explain when answering this question what you consider to be "in the public interest":**

Successful and productive relationships between the police and media are essential in the public interest, which I would define as protecting public safety, improving public relations and helping to promote community confidence, cohesion and assist in raising the profile and local reputation of the police service. There is a danger, in response to recent events, of over legislating and putting in place unnecessary internal bureaucratic hurdles which could provide a barrier to achieving these goals.

As already discussed Durham Constabulary are effective in training specific roles. There is however a recognition that a skills gap exists within the lower ranks where the organisation has been fortunate to have been able to rely on a positive culture and proactive media team. A number of media training events are being planned for 2012 under the supervision of my principal

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media officer to address the identified skills gap. This training will aim to compliment the current culture within Durham Constabulary of empowering officers to build relationships in a positive way based upon the principles of the HMIC and Filkin report.

**54. How do you consider the Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) could or should help to ensure that relationships between the police and the media, both locally and nationally, are appropriate and operate in the public interest? Do there need to be changes to its role and responsibilities?**

Advice to police forces has been provided by ACPO for a number of years in the form of the Communication Advisory Group (CAG) which is chaired by Chief Constable Andy Trotter. Detailed guidance was distributed in 2010 which outlines advice on how to interact with the media in many given scenarios. More recent guidance was produced in August 2011 advising improved recording of interactions between police staff and the media.

The current role and responsibility of ACPO, and in particular, the CAG is fit for purpose. New national guidance should be produced which takes cognisance of the HMIC recommendations, Filkin report and the recommendations to be made by Lord Justice Leveson. Any such guidance should be capable of adaptation to suit the geographical and demographic nature of the individual force.

Until the CAG is in a position to do so, I believe the below statement made by Andy Trotter within the 2010 guidance is, to coin the phrase used by Elizabeth Filkin in her report, 'a good place to start'.

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*“Some information is supplied essentially on trust – for instance pre-trial briefings, under embargo. This is a measure of the robust health of the relationship. Such pre-briefing –*

- Highlights good work and reassures the public.*
- Sheds light on technique or noteworthy interagency cooperation.*
- Deters future offenders and prevents crime.*
- Helps to manage media needs for high profile cases.*
- Encourages accuracy in complex cases.*
- Counters anticipated criticism of police post-trial.*

*Accurate record keeping is vital. This should not mean a major bureaucratic burden, but forces will be able to explain and justify more easily if they have a clear audit trail.” (CC Andy Trotter, ACPO CAG guidance 2010).*

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