

View of the Future

Thomas P Winsor, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Constabulary

Speech to the Police Federation Conference – 15 May 2013

Introduction

1. Thank you for this opportunity to address you. HMIC has a long history of working with the Federation for the benefit of the police service and the public. I am pleased to be able to continue this tradition – especially as I am clear that Federation members, along with the public, are and should be the prime beneficiaries of HMIC's work.
2. The theme of this brief speech is my view of what the future of policing will be. But I should like to start by saying a few words about four important things which have not changed – not amidst the reconfigurations of the policing landscape over the last few years, nor indeed over the last century or more.

Section 1: The past – what hasn't changed

3. The first of these constants is the bravery, professionalism and dedication of those called to policing, and the demands, difficulties and dangers of the work you do. It is right to pause here, with the terminology of professionalism, dedication and courage close by, to pay tribute to all those officers who have lost their lives in the last 12 months. These individuals, epitomise the enduring bravery and sacrifice of the service.

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4. Yours is a complex and demanding job. You frequently deal with the public at their worst, and need to make vital decisions at pace, often against a background of long shifts and weekend work; and, like the rest of the public sector, you are having to do more with less.
5. Moreover, much of your work is unseen and unheralded. Of course, examples of the successes and bravery of individual officers are sometimes picked up by the media, and publicly celebrated – quite rightly so. But I fear another thing that will not change is that public appreciation and approbation for much of your work will be late, generic, or nonexistent.
6. The Inspectorate does have a role to play in improving this: our inspection reports shine a light on and so publicise the good as well as the bad (notwithstanding that examples of good practice can sometimes prove less appetising to certain parts of the press). I'd like to take this opportunity again to recognise the work you did on the Olympics and Jubilee celebrations, and for the work you will do on G8, as well as the much lower profile but equally important work which officers do every day, to keep people safe.
7. The second unchanging element is that you stand by the principles of policing established by Sir Robert Peel in 1829, the first of which is that “the basic mission for which the police exist is to prevent crime and disorder”.
8. Third: since 1919 there has been a Federation, dedicated to representing the interests of all police constables, sergeants and inspectors.
9. And lastly: for more than 150 years there has been an inspectorate of constabulary, charged by Parliament with inspecting and reporting upon the efficiency and effectiveness of the police.

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Section 2: The present – what has changed/is changing

10. So as we have seen, the core roles of the police, the Federation and HMIC are unchanged.
11. However, it is obvious that this stability is by no means the norm across the service. I don't need to tell you of the considerable changes across the policing landscape which have occurred over the last few years, the repercussions of which are still being felt, and will be for many years to come. Police and crime commissioners, the College of Policing, the National Crime Agency, the review of pay and conditions, and the Government's decision about which of the recommendations to implement... I could go on, but these changes are well-known.
12. Also well-known is the fact that these are tough economic times. Difficult budget decisions, job losses and changes to pensions and pay form the structure of a story being told across the public sector.
13. Whilst HMIC's remit is the same, we have also changed: we are now by statute more independent of the Home Office and Government. We report to Parliament, and as you know I am the first HMCIC who does not come from an operational policing background.
14. The effect of this is that HMIC is now more staunchly independent of both the police and Government – and we will not flinch from saying what we find and what we believe if it is in the public interest. One of our key principles is fairness. Some of our inspection findings will be unpopular with you, some with

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your senior management, some with the Home Office or other stakeholders.

Section 3: The future – Prevention and HMIC's inspection programme

15. We have looked (or at least touched on) policing past and present. What of the future?
16. I and the other four HMIs – Zoë Billingham, who joined HMIC from the Audit Commission, Dru Sharpling, previously Chief Crown Prosecutor for London, and Roger Baker and Stephen Otter, former chief constables of Essex and Devon and Cornwall respectively – are as a group clear that the police's main focus should be the prevention of crime.
17. This of course is not a new proposition: the draft instructions on establishing the Metropolitan Police Service in 1829 includes the principle that *'It should be understood, at the outset, that the principal object to be attained is "the prevention of crime". To this great end every effort of the Police is to be directed.'*
18. Neither does a focus on prevention preclude you from catching criminals as well. Policing is not an either/or decision, and catching offenders is one of the best ways of preventing future crimes, provided the offenders are punished appropriately, and that includes rehabilitation wherever that is possible. But in a police service with 43 different mission statements (this was another finding of *Taking Time for Crime*), it needs saying that the prevention of crime is a core and unifying aim.

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19. We also are clear that HMIC's role should be to help your senior teams, police and crime commissioners and the Government to make the right decisions so that your time is freed up to do this work.
20. This agreed clarity on our role and your focus was the starting point for establishing HMIC's programme of work for the coming months; and I'd like to end by summarising four elements of this programme which should be particularly pertinent to your work.
21. First, a word on how we identified these elements: as I said before, along with the public Federation members should be the prime beneficiaries of HMIC's work. A consideration of how our inspections can best serve your needs, as the key interface with the public we both serve, was therefore at the heart of our deliberations around what we should inspect.
22. So over the coming months we propose to look at (among other things):
 - how the police can make better use of technology. I know from meeting officers up and down the country that some of you feel you are effectively handcuffed by the IT available to you. [anecdote – 20 seconds]
 - second, through our joint inspection work, we will look at how cuts to other parts of the public sector are increasing the burden on the police. For instance, together with Her Majesty's Inspectorate of the Crown Prosecution Service we are about to publish a report on the use of section 136 of the Mental Health Act 1983: officers told me repeatedly in my trips around the country that helping people with mental health needs consumes a vast and increasing amount of some officers' time with examples of two constables being taken from their other duties for upwards of eight hours at a time in

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order to escort a person with mental health problems to hospital. I am clear that health professionals must fulfil their obligations in this regard, particularly as undiagnosed or untreated mental illness can, as we know, lead to the commission of serious violent crime. The other HMIs and I will work on your behalf with the Home Office and other Government departments on this issue, to ensure that each service fully and properly discharges its responsibilities, rather than abdicating duty in favour of the one public service which will never say no. In this and so many other respects, police and crime commissioners have a very significant part to play.

- third, we will look at prevention. Prevention offers a vital way of saving time and money in the criminal justice system, both of which are mostly spent downstream of an offence taking place: but far more importantly, an offence prevented means a victim avoided. Yet HMIC's 2012 report, *Taking Time for Crime*, found that crime prevention constitutes only one of the 190 modules constables receive in their initial training.
- lastly: I and all my colleagues are astutely aware of the tough economic times, and that there is a bill to be paid associated with prevention work, new technology and so on. Our valuing the police programme looks at the decisions your senior teams are making to meet the budget requirements, and at the impact this has on three things: their ability to free up your time; your working conditions; and the service received by the public for whom we all work.

23. I also wanted to mention our work on crime data integrity, which I know has been a topic much debated during this Federation conference. Accurate figures

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are critical to the decisions that need to be made - information is the oxygen of intelligence. Because of what has been said here at the conference, because of media stories on this subject and the damaging effect on public confidence, because of concerns raised with HMIC by the public and the service, HMIC will conduct an all-force inspection of crime data integrity over the coming months.

Conclusion

24. To conclude, when I look into the policing future, I see a police service better equipped, better and more sensitively managed, with bureaucracy and red tape kept to the irreducible minimum, forming part of a criminal justice system which operates in the public interest as a single system, with the respect and willing assistance of the public and the absence of unnecessary obstacles to police officers doing the job – fulfilling and discharging the vocation – which they want to do and have been called to do. That requires the leaders of the police service to lead by example, always with the constable – what he and she does and what he and she needs to do the job – uppermost in their minds.
25. That future requires the Inspectorate to work with you – always to listen to you, the front-line officers doing the job day in and day out – to help ensure that systems, processes and equipment are in place, and sensible decisions are made, so that the service is in the best possible shape to face whatever challenges (old or new) it encounters, while staying efficient and effective.
26. I read somewhere that police officers make their own luck. Through our inspections and recommendations, I and my fellow HMIs will try to load the dice

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in your favour, by ensuring you have more time to focus on doing what you joined the service to do.