


Diverse agenda

 The long awaited Morris Inquiry report into professional standards and employment matters in the Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) came out on 14 December. The inquiry was set up in January by the Metropolitan Police Authority as a result of concerns about unfairness, disproportionality and discrimination in the way some types of employment matters were dealt with by the MPS. There were particular concerns about extensive investigations of officers ending up with no, or trivial findings, of wrongdoing. The inquiry team was Sir Bill Morris, former general secretary of the Transport and General Workers Union (TGWU), Sir Anthony Burden, former chief constable of South Wales Police and Anesta Weeks QC, a barrister specialising in criminal and employment law. They heard evidence from over 100 people, considered over 1,400 documents and visited forces in Birmingham, Liverpool and Manchester as well as London.

The report is called *The case for change*, and sets out a template for reform of the way the MPS is managed. It highlights poor, inconsistent, knee-jerk practices of managers and supervisors when dealing with people management issues of all sorts, likening them to "rabbits frozen in the headlights" when dealing with all matters of diversity, not just issues of race.

The report makes over 100 separate recommendations under 35 headings. Some are directly related to the situation in the MPS:

- Developing a new procedure for resolving workplace disputes to replace the *Fairness at Work* procedure which involves conciliation and arbitration;
- Employing a Childcare Co-ordinator to improve support to officers with caring responsibilities;
- Employing a new senior man-



Sir Bill Morris headed the inquiry

agement police staff post at Deputy Commissioner level responsible for all support services.

Others will have direct relevance to the police service nationally:

- Preserving the office of constable while bringing police officers under the wider protection of the employment legislation. Police officers would be able to claim unfair dismissal, but would not be allowed to strike;
- Getting rid of the Regulations concerning complaints and discipline and substituting a system based on the ACAS Code of Practice;
- Extending the Code of Conduct to include specific reference to issues of discrimination;
- Delaying attestation to later in probation;
- Improving the experiences of suspended and investigated officers by addressing their welfare needs, improving case management, and lia-

ing with the officer before involving the media;

- Encouraging the development of multi-point entry to the Service.

It is clear that many of the recommendations will be welcomed by the Home Office as fitting with similar recommendations in the new Government White Paper, *Beating Crime, Building Communities*, as well as the HMIC report on *Modernising the Police Service*. However, changing procedures will do nothing to improve the situation without a change in the way the procedures are operated. Managers and supervisors need to be trained and supported to operate any new procedures fairly, consistently and quickly.

The Morris Inquiry has called for better training of officers and a workplace culture that supports diversity, but it is also clear that many of their recommendations have been made before and not followed through at a senior level.

Jan Berry, chairman of the Federation, welcomed the report, saying: 'I am pleased that Sir Bill Morris has taken on board many of the points the Federation has made relating to national policing issues, especially his recommendation that the office of constable should be maintained, however, it is unclear how many of the report's recommendations will actually improve the employment situation for police officers.'

'The report gives numerous examples of poor management practices. To dismantle the employment protections that officers currently have under the existing Regulatory Framework, without first improving the expertise of managers and supervisors would be a recipe for disaster. It would lead inevitably to more, not fewer, employment tribunal cases.'

'The Police Federation has long fought for improved national grievance and discipline procedures and is a firm advocate of resolving issues at an early stage. We were instrumental in getting together the *Learning the Lessons from Employment Tribunals Toolkit*, which sets out a framework for resolution that can be adopted by all forces. Regrettably, only a few chief officers have responded positively to the Toolkit since its launch in May. Many of the Toolkit's recommendations feature in the Inquiry Report, and I am disappointed that the Inquiry team have not advocated its use by all forces. The Toolkit is a valuable aid to resolving workplace disputes, and its adoption by all chief officers would greatly improve the working lives of all police officers.'

Mrs Berry added: 'It is abundantly clear that chief officers now need to sit up and start taking responsibility for managing a diverse workforce, and not just pay lip service to the wider diversity agenda.'

