



John Giblin, chairman of the Sergeants' Central Committee

Pivotal point

The pivotal importance of the sergeant rank is highlighted in three fundamentally impactful recent reports: Sir Ronnie Flanagan's *Review of Policing, Leading from the Frontline: HMIC Thematic* and the Home Office's *From the Neighbourhood to the National: Policing our Communities Together*. All three emphasise the importance of effective, efficient and robust supervision, leadership and professionalism of the sergeant rank in maintaining standards and improving policing. They also indicate that sergeants would need to be supported through better training and a stronger focus on their development.

We particularly welcome the HMIC Thematic as the catalyst for real and progressive change in valuing, appreciating and respecting the importance of the rank and its role within modern British policing.

Sir Ronnie stated the role of the frontline sergeant is critical to public reassurance and safety. The rank who lead, 24/7, and who make a fundamental difference to the quality of service experienced by local people in communities when they call upon the police for help. Similarly, the document reinforces the key role of the frontline sergeant in translating vision and strategic intent into day-to-day policing reality. The quality of leadership provided by frontline sergeants to their teams is the one key factor that makes the difference.

The Sergeants' Central Committee is pushing to develop further stakeholder work on clarifying the role of sergeant, promotion, performance and development reviews, standards, training and critical incidents. We will continue to work with the government, HMIC, ACPO, NPJA, Skills for Justice, Superintendents' Association and Sergeant Branch Board colleagues to improve the lot of sergeants as a consequence of these reports and in particular the momentum the thematic has created in enhancing and professionalising the role of the sergeant.

In terms of what we have achieved we could not speak about issues impacting on sergeants without referring to Sections 120 and 121 of the Serious Organised Crime and Police Act 2005, which included the designation of powers to Police Authority employees to act as custody sergeants with all the responsibilities and duties of that role. The

fact that the police minister repealed it back in July was a victory for policing and the judicial system as a whole. This showed that not only did the minister listen to the concerns of the many bodies involved in this important piece of work including the Federation, Superintendents' Association and the Federation's National Custody Forum, but it marked a significant and commonsense move towards recognising the extremely important work the custody sergeant does.

However, we are concerned by some aspects of the PACE (Police and Criminal Evidence) Review. Whilst we welcome that custody sergeants will remain in charge of custody units we remain suspicious that there are those who wish to civilianise the role of custody sergeant by the back door. We maintain that only the custody sergeant should have the power to authorise detention, carry out risk assessments of detainees and decide on matters regarding charge or bail and we will make sure our views are heard on your behalf.

Members of the Sergeants' Central Committee are also very active in many other different areas with key stakeholders at all levels, especially in the work of the various sub-committees in representing our male and female members.