

From punishment to improved performance

The introduction of the new police misconduct and performance procedures later this year will aim to shift the emphasis from punishment to professional development. Det Ch Supt Hamish Campbell of the Met's Directorate of Professional Standards (DPS) talked to Carol Jenkins about the implications of the Taylor reforms.

Det Ch Supt Hamish Campbell is instantly recognisable as the senior officer who led the Jill Dando murder investigation – one of the most high profile and talked about cases of the 1990s.

In the face of much speculation about who was responsible for the *Crimewatch* presenter's death, Det Ch Supt Campbell (right) steered the complex and often controversial investigation to its conclusion with the conviction of Barry George.

It seems fitting then that he is the officer who has been chosen to front the Met's response to the Taylor reform of police conduct procedures, due to be implemented in the autumn.

The reforms are to be introduced following the review of the Police Disciplinary arrangements which were announced in May 2004. The Home Office appointed former chief HMI for Scotland and City of London Commissioner Bill Taylor to head the review into the current system.

His recommendations form the basis of the forthcoming Police (Conduct) Regulations 2008 and Police (Performance) Regulations 2008.

The regulations introduce three significant elements:

- new national standards of professional behaviour,



The Taylor review also concluded there was a need to change the current poor performance procedures. The emphasis will be on encouraging and supporting an improvement in performance rather than again, seeking to blame an officer.

- the re-introduction and re-invigoration of the Unsatisfactory Performance Procedures,
- new procedures for addressing misconduct in the police service.

The Met's Directorate of Professional Standards (DPS) is leading on the work for the force and has established a project team to successfully implement the changes.

Det Ch Supt Campbell – who has been an operational detective for nearly 20 years – has been working on the project since April last year. Prior to this, he was on secondment to the anti-corruption commission in Sierra Leone for 15 months.

Despite the fact his career has been punctuated with many high profile roles, he admits that his current role is his most challenging and probably the most important of his career to date.

It isn't hard to see why when he reveals that professional standards costs the Metropolitan Police Authority (MPA) a staggering £43m every year.

He acknowledges that the cost to the organisation's reputation and credibility among the public and its own officers is far greater, and that the need to learn lessons from past cases is a key driver for this work.

"As an organisation there have been

so many cases such as Dizaei, Viridi, and numerous cases relating to female officers that we didn't seem to have managed properly.

"I am the first to acknowledge that we have to learn lessons from our past. We've got to stop spending so much public money on matters that can be dealt with at management level."

Central to the Met's interpretation of the Taylor reforms is the need to shift the way it deals with discipline issues in the organisation. Det Ch Supt Campbell admits that in the past there has very much been a blame culture and that the origins go back to a time when the police and the military were

inextricably linked.

"In the past our senior officers were all from the military and that old style cultural ethos of 'let's reduce people in rank' is very much a military punishment."

He hopes that the ethos will change from one of blame to finding out the reasons an officer has made a mistake, and then supporting that officer through training or other means.

It stems from the idea that the majority of incidents in relation to unsatisfactory performance can be dealt with at management level. At present, the service as a whole acknowledges that far too many cases

of unsatisfactory progress end up going through the disciplinary process to a discipline board, where the officer is dealt with by a written warning.

"My view is why do we spend valuable time and effort on issues that when they reach a panel of ACPO officers are dealt with by a written warning? Most of these cases could have been dealt with much earlier at chief inspector level," he explained.

"Take for example issues such as the failure to complete crime reports or lower level misuse of our computers. Yes they are both serious issues, but they are more appropriately dealt with by supervisors."

Crucial to this idea is to provide the supervisors – sergeants and inspectors – with the training and organisational support to allow them to deal with these issues at a local level.

All of the Met's 5,000 sergeants will be given training in order for them to be able to fulfil this new responsibility. In the short term the DPS and the HR department will be conducting training, but in the longer term it will be an integral part of training for all officers.

Det Ch Supt Campbell acknowledges that this new approach will bring about a cultural change in the service that won't happen over night. He likens the approach to "following the ACAS model" which is already used by police staff.

"The irony is that it is already done with our own police staff. Yet when it comes to dealing with issues involving our officers we still conduct interviews under caution on tape for matters which are primarily internal matters of performance."

He is a firm believer that this blame culture can inhibit performance because officers can sometimes be too frightened to make decisions for fear of being blamed. The time currently taken to investigate and conclude complaints can also be lengthy, and can sometimes alienate and de-motivate officers as a result.

The new procedures aim to develop the police organisation by managing people in a way that enjoys the



Det Ch Supt Campbell believes that too many cases of unsatisfactory progress end up in front of a discipline board.

confidence of all groups of staff and is even-handed and proportionate.

As well as providing support for sergeants and inspectors, the DPS will also appoint and train up to four champions in each OCU and borough. Their role will be to deal with the management meetings on their OCU and – with the support of the DPS – make a conscious effort when complaints come in from the public to deal with them at a local level.

“The service has got to move very dramatically from always seeing who it can blame. I believe passionately about this in terms of allowing officers to work in an environment that is free from accusation, blame and fault finding.”

The first question they will have to address is whether the issue they are dealing with is a case of misconduct or gross misconduct? If it is deemed to be misconduct then it will be dealt with at a local level, while if it is gross misconduct it will be dealt with by the DPS.

The force is keen to emphasise that this won't lead to a drop in standards and that all issues of gross misconduct will be dealt with in a robust manner. Det Ch Supt Campbell is also keen to point out that only a small minority of officers are involved in issues which are deemed gross misconduct – something he believes the organisation as a whole can often lose sight of.

“The majority of officers can look at the Taylor reforms and codes of practice and be reassured that they won't be affected by them,” he explained. “However, the small band of officers who do behave badly and are plain corrupt need to be concerned because they will be dealt with by the DPS.”

The Taylor reforms will also introduce a new code of standards of professional behaviour which all

officers have a duty to observe. They are intended to be a ‘yard stick’ by which the conduct of police officers can be assessed, both for addressing unsatisfactory performance and for determining the level at which misconduct is addressed.

For the first time the new codes will address the importance of minimum standards of behaviour for officers when they are off-duty. They will be expected to behave in an appropriate manner at all times when off-duty.

The review also concluded there was a need to change the current poor performance procedures. The emphasis will be on encouraging and supporting an improvement in performance rather than again, seeking to blame an officer.

The Met recognises that the greatest challenge across all levels of the service

will be to demonstrate the leadership and the willingness to use these new procedures in the way both as the working party intends and in a way that meets the needs of the service and the workforce of the 21st Century.

It is a challenge that Det Ch Supt Campbell hopes the entire service will rise to and embrace.

“When a plane crashes you don't go to the pilot if he survives and blame him for the accident,” he said. “You want to know the reasons why the plane came down and learn lessons from it.

“Similarly, the service has got to move very dramatically from always seeing who it can blame. I believe passionately about this in terms of allowing officers to work in an environment that is free from accusation, blame and fault finding.”

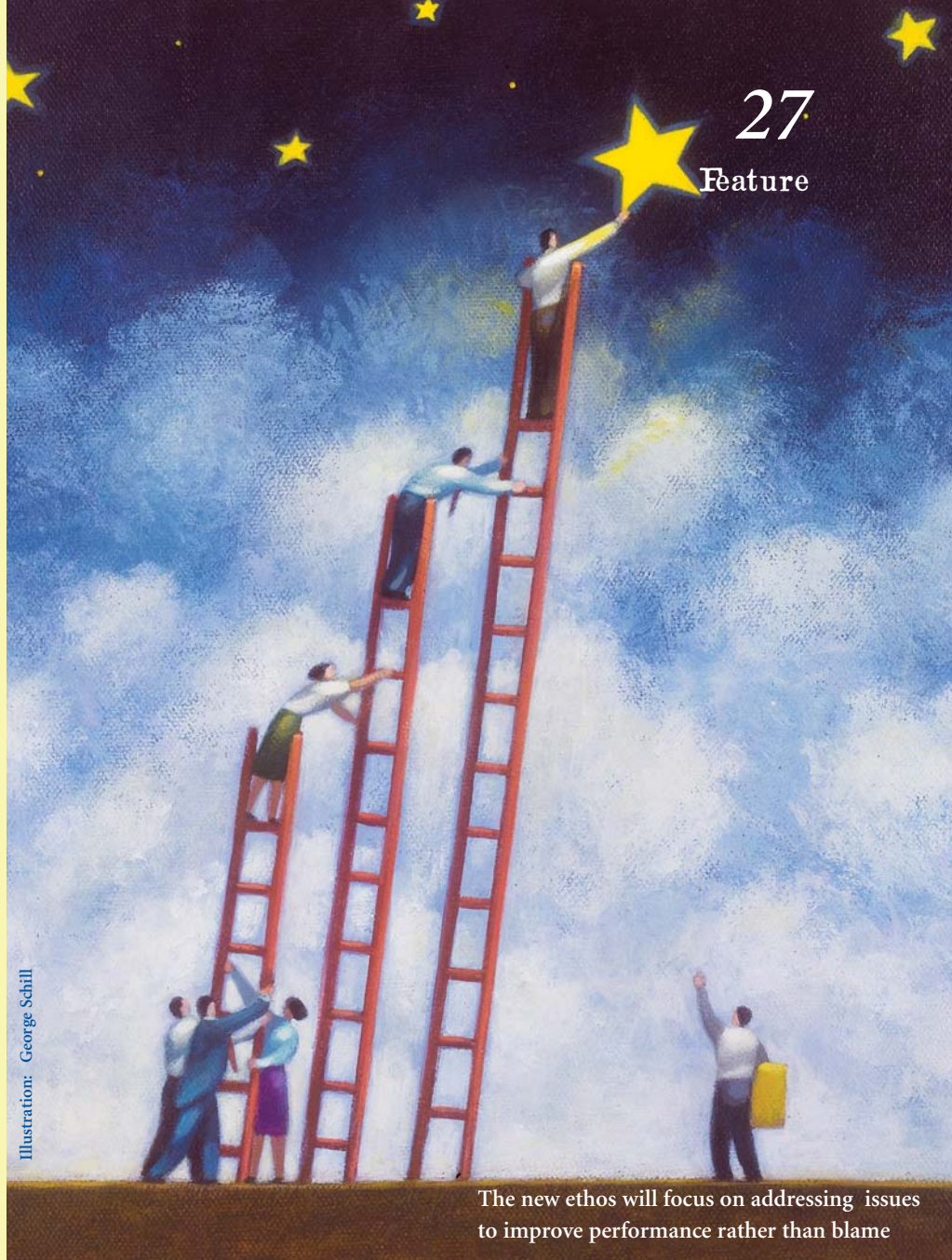


Illustration: George Schill

The new ethos will focus on addressing issues to improve performance rather than blame