

# **An inspection of the Royal Navy Police's performance inspection process**



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## Summary

Section 4 of the Armed Forces Act 2011 places a statutory duty on Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) to inspect and report to the Secretary of State (Defence) on the independence and effectiveness of investigations carried out by the Royal Navy Police (RNP). This is our second statutory inspection of the RNP. The terms of reference for this inspection were to examine the professional performance oversight arrangements of RNP investigations.

The RNP was established by the Armed Forces Act 2006 and replaced the Royal Navy Regulating Branch. In 2009, the RNP subsumed the Royal Marines Police. The RNP professional standards unit (PSU) was established in 2009. This unit conducts a programme of inspections of RNP headquarters, the RNP Special Investigation Branch, shore establishments and ship-based units. These policing performance inspections (PPIs) examine the performance of the RNP against various professional standards.

We found the PPI process provides the Provost Marshal (Navy), RNP headquarters officers and regional Naval Provost Marshals with the assurance they require that the activities of RNP units meet legal and professional standards.

The scope of the PSU inspection – outlined in a formalised PPI matrix – is appropriate and covers the full range of duties conducted by the RNP. The PSU team, which is responsible for conducting the inspections, has the necessary personnel and expertise to undertake the number of inspections required.

The PPI process is valued by the units being inspected and is subject to moderation to ensure its graded judgments are consistent. The inspection process checks compliance with previous PPI recommendations and observations. Lessons learned and good practice are publicised throughout the RNP.

We did not find any significant deficiencies in the PPI process, so we have no recommendations. However, our inspection has found four areas for improvement. We set these out on the next page.

## Areas for improvement

- The RNP should ensure that its senior leaders and the professional standards unit receive annual reports outlining the results of self-inspections of land-based units. The RNP should determine whether moving to an annual inspection cycle or enhancing the current self-assessment model would be the best option to provide the assurance required while not impeding land-based units' capabilities.
- The RNP should include a question relating to personnel wellbeing in the policing performance inspection (PPI) matrix, to ensure this important matter is addressed in all PPI visits.
- The RNP professional standards unit should review principal documents produced by the inspected unit in advance of its policing performance inspection visits, to focus its questions and potentially reduce the length of such visits.
- The RNP professional standards unit should amend the policing performance inspection (PPI) methodology to include liaison with regional crime managers and regional intelligence officers before PPI visits, to supplement the information used to develop its lines of enquiry.

# Introduction

## About HMICFRS

Section 4 of the Armed Forces Act 2011, which came into force on 4 June 2014, places a statutory duty on HMICFRS to inspect and report to the Secretary of State (Defence) on the independence and effectiveness of investigations carried out by each service police force: the Royal Navy Police, the Royal Military Police and the Royal Air Force Police.

We are independent of government and the police. HM Inspectors are appointed by the Crown and are not employees of the police service or government.

We decide on the depth, frequency and areas to inspect, based on our judgments about what is in the public interest.

In making these judgments, we consider the risks to the public, the risks to the integrity of policing, service quality, public concerns, the operating environment, the burden of inspection and the potential benefits to society from the improvements that may follow inspection.

Our annual inspection programme is subject to the approval of the Home Secretary in accordance with the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011.

## About the Royal Navy Police

The Royal Navy Police, which we also refer to in this report as ‘the RNP’ and ‘the force’, is led by a Royal Navy officer of Commander rank, who holds the title Provost Marshal (Navy) and is the Chief Officer of the RNP. He is responsible solely to the Admiralty Board of the Defence Council for the conduct and direction of all RNP investigations, which are to be conducted independently of the chain of command.

The RNP has 299 personnel, including those of the Royal Marines Police Troop. RNP personnel are deployed to naval vessels and shore bases in the United Kingdom and worldwide.

The RNP in the United Kingdom is made up of the RNP national headquarters, regional headquarters in the north, west and east of the UK (each led by a Naval Provost Marshal at Lieutenant Commander rank) and the Special Investigation Branch.

## **Our commission**

### **Terms of reference**

This is our second statutory inspection of the RNP. The terms of reference for this inspection were to review the RNP's policing performance inspection (PPI) regime.

### **Methodology**

This inspection took place in March 2018.

We reviewed PPI reports and other documents provided by the RNP that described the PPI process.

We visited shore bases at Portsmouth and Plymouth and observed PSU personnel while they conducted a PPI visit to the RNP unit on HMS Defender, which was docked at Portsmouth. We conducted a series of interviews and focus groups with RNP and other Royal Navy personnel.

We are grateful to the RNP personnel who contributed to this inspection and to other Royal Navy personnel for their time and support during the inspection process.

## Background

### History and purpose of the RNP's policing performance inspection (PPI) process

Since 1958, Royal Naval vessels have been subject to technical evaluation by Royal Navy Flag Officer Sea Training (FOST) while undergoing operational sea training before deployment. FOST's technical evaluations are wide ranging. They evaluate the physical condition of the ship and the preparedness of the crew to ensure the vessel is seaworthy and crew fully trained and ready to deploy. These evaluations include an examination of the RNP unit on the ship.

In 2005, the Vice Chief of the Defence Staff reviewed the RNP and established that it did not have a quality-assurance mechanism. In response to this, the force established a PSU at Provost Marshal (Navy) Headquarters (HQ PM(N)). The new unit was required to undertake a programme of quality-assurance inspections of all RNP units, both ship-based and shore-based.

The new programme, called the policing performance inspection (PPI) regime, was based on FOST's technical evaluations, but designed to allow a more detailed examination of the full range of policing and non-policing activities (the latter referred to as 'executive duties'<sup>1</sup>). The PPI measures RNP units against the minimum policing standards set out in:

- the RNP's Technical Instructions;<sup>2</sup>
- the Manual of Service Law;<sup>3</sup>
- the Service Police Codes of Practice;<sup>4</sup>
- the National Intelligence Model framework;<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The RNP on ships also has non-policing duties to ensure the smooth running of the ship. Such executive duties can include steering the ship and crewing the flight deck.

<sup>2</sup> Unpublished.

<sup>3</sup> *Manual of Service Law*, Ministry of Defence, 2017. Available from: [www.gov.uk/government/collections/manual-of-service-law-msl#manual-of-service-law:-jsp-830](http://www.gov.uk/government/collections/manual-of-service-law-msl#manual-of-service-law:-jsp-830)

<sup>4</sup> *The Service Police Codes of Practice*, Ministry of Defence, 2017. Available from: [www.gov.uk/government/publications/jsp-397-service-police-codes-of-practice](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/jsp-397-service-police-codes-of-practice)

<sup>5</sup> *National Intelligence Model*, Home Office, 2015. Available at: [library.college.police.uk/docs/npia/NIM-Code-of-Practice.pdf](http://library.college.police.uk/docs/npia/NIM-Code-of-Practice.pdf)

- the Code of Practice for Victims of Crime;<sup>6</sup> and
- Core Investigative Doctrine<sup>7</sup> and other College of Policing doctrine and guidance.

In developing the PPI, the PSU also drew on the technical evaluation processes developed by other service police forces.

After establishing the PPI regime, the RNP also introduced a performance monitoring process, based on UK policing's National Intelligence Model. This created a structure of regular meetings at regional and national levels – including daily management meetings and tasking and co-ordination meetings. These meetings seek to provide the Provost Marshal (Navy) and regional Naval Provost Marshals with information to evaluate continuing performance and how well the force's strategies and priorities are being met.

The RNP's National Intelligence Model structures provide the Provost Marshal (Navy) and regional commanders with continuing oversight of the performance of its units, so we examined whether this duplicates the role of the PPI regime and whether PPI is still required. During our inspection, we found that the PPI programme complements rather than duplicates the wider performance monitoring structures.

PPI provides the RNP with the means to test the knowledge of RNP personnel, observe processes in operation, quality assure the maintenance of logs and conduct other reviews that cannot be assessed through the more distant performance management processes. We found a consensus among RNP officers that the PPI remains an essential tool to provide assurance that units are acting professionally and conducting their activities to the required standard and in line with legal, policy and procedural requirements.

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<sup>6</sup> *Code of Practice for Victims of Crime*, Ministry of Justice, 2015. Available from: [www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-code-of-practice-for-victims-of-crime](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-code-of-practice-for-victims-of-crime)

<sup>7</sup> *Practice Advice on Core Investigative Doctrine*, National Centre for Policing Excellence, 2005. Available at: [library.college.police.uk/docs/acpo/core-investigative-doctrine.pdf](http://library.college.police.uk/docs/acpo/core-investigative-doctrine.pdf)

# Findings

## Frequency of PPIs

We found that the PPI programme ensures that all ship-based RNP units are inspected regularly. Such units are subject to an annual formal inspection by either the PSU or FOST. Additionally, the PSU conducts advisory inspections of the RNP on vessels coming out of refit, before ships are inspected by FOST and deployed on operations. Advisory inspections have the same methodology and scope as formal PPIs, but do not produce formal outcomes or apply gradings on the inspected unit. Under the PPI programme, the PSU is required to conduct a formal PPI within six months of any advisory inspection.

While PPIs of ship-based RNP units take place yearly, the RNP's land-based units are subject to PPI assessment every second year. Given that RNP personnel change posts regularly, a significant proportion of a shore-based unit's staffing will change every year. Therefore, within a year of a PPI report, its findings would not necessarily reflect the knowledge, working practices and performance of the unit's personnel.

To address this, the RNP requires its land-based units to conduct a full self-assessment inspection, based on the PPI methodology, in the intervening year between PPIs. During our inspection, we found that the PSU is not routinely informed of the findings of these self-assessments. Consequently, the PSU is unable to review any activity the units undertake to address recommendations made in these assessments and does not quality assure the assessments to ensure they are conducted effectively.

We also found that senior officers at HQ PM(N) are not informed of the findings of the biennial self-assessment inspections. Consequently, in the year between PPI visits, the RNP lacks a robust mechanism to assure HQ PM(N) that its land units are complying with the range of standards inspected under the PPI regime.

Given the factors detailed above, the RNP should ensure that its land-based units are subject to annual inspection and that the findings of such inspections are provided to the PSU and HQ PM(N). PSU personnel we interviewed confirmed that they are able to undertake an annual PPI programme for land-based units. However, we are aware that some senior RNP officers are concerned that annual inspections could create a burden on land-based units and might have a negative effect on their operational capability.

### **Area for improvement**

- The RNP should ensure that its senior leaders and the professional standards unit receive annual reports outlining the results of self-inspections of land-based units. The RNP should determine whether moving to an annual inspection cycle or enhancing the current self-assessment model would be the best option to provide the assurance required while not impeding land-based units' capabilities.

## **Structure of the PPI process**

The PPI process has six stages. The PSU:

1. notifies the RNP unit of the date for its PPI.
2. sends the RNP unit a PPI self-assessment matrix for the unit to complete and return before the PPI visit.
3. reviews the completed matrix and undertakes pre-inspection review and analysis.
4. visits the unit and conducts the inspection.
5. submits a report of its inspection findings.
6. reviews the unit's progress against any observations or recommendations highlighted in the report.

This is a logical, systematic process. We now examine these stages in more detail.

## **Notification of upcoming PPIs**

We found that the PSU usually provides RNP units with about three months' notice of an upcoming PPI. The date of the inspection visit is agreed between the PSU and the unit, taking into consideration the availability of PSU personnel and the unit's planned duties. This amount of notice is necessary because of the nature of Royal Navy vessels' duties and global deployments, and the PSU's resources. However, having three months' warning of a PPI could, in theory, mean the RNP personnel on ships relax the standards of their activity, knowing they have considerable time to make changes before the inspection. We are aware that units are sometimes given less notice for FOST and PSU advisory inspections. We found that in such cases the short notice still allowed enough time for the unit to complete the PPI self-assessment matrix and prepare for the PPI. The RNP could therefore consider reducing the standard notice period given to units in advance of PPIs.

We were pleased to find that the PPI process allows for urgent risk-based inspections to be undertaken. The RNP's performance monitoring and National Intelligence Model processes can highlight areas of concern about a unit's performance or capability. In such circumstances, the Provost Marshal (Navy) can instigate an urgent PPI and the PSU has the capability to start the inspection visit within 24 hours. During our inspection, we were provided with details of recent examples of urgent short-notice PPIs.

## **PPI matrix**

The PPI process assesses RNP units against consistent inspection frameworks. The PSU has produced a PPI matrix, which sets out the scope for inspections of land-based units and the principal questions the inspection seeks to answer. A subset of this matrix is used for inspections of ship-based units.

The matrix has been revised several times since the PPI regime was introduced. At the time of our inspection it consisted of 150 questions under six headings:

- personnel and training;
- conduct and supervision of investigations (which includes a section on the treatment of victims of crime);
- proactive policing;
- reactive policing;
- post-investigative actions; and
- executive functions (including customs duties, adherence to standards in relation to protective supervision, lost property, alcohol control and management of identity cards).

During our inspection, we interviewed senior RNP officers at HQ PM(N) and regional headquarters who had responsibility for the units subject to PPI. They agreed that the scope of PPI is appropriate, as it covers the full range of duties that RNP personnel are expected to perform in ship-based and land-based units. Other recipients of PPI reports include FOST and Commanding Officers on the inspected vessels, who also felt PPIs covered the correct areas.

Although we agree that the matrix covers the range of units' duties, we feel that it could also focus on the wellbeing of personnel on ship-based units. As outlined above, RNP personnel on ships are responsible for conducting a range of executive

roles as well as policing duties. While RNP regional crime managers<sup>8</sup> oversee their policing role, personnel on ships are line-managed by the ship's chain of command. This can lead to competing pressures for their time and to them working excessive hours, which can negatively affect their wellbeing. Although the RNP's performance management processes monitor indicators of staff wellbeing, including sickness absence data, wellbeing did not feature in the PPI matrix at the time of our inspection.

### **Area for improvement**

- The RNP should include a question relating to personnel wellbeing in the policing performance inspection (PPI) matrix, to ensure this important matter is addressed in all PPI visits.

Shortly before our inspection, the PSU produced a revised version of the PPI matrix. The questions in the new matrix have been reworded and it now asks units to provide evidence in support of their answers, rather than simply answering yes or no. HQ PM(N) and the PSU had delayed ratifying the new draft until we had inspected the PPI process. We found the matrix to be comprehensive and fit for purpose. The reframed questions should enhance the PPI process by providing additional evidence to inform the PSU in advance of its PPI visits.

We found that the comprehensiveness of the PPI matrix also resulted in other benefits. RNP personnel on new or refitted ships use the matrix as a blueprint from which they build their new RNP unit. Personnel in other ship-based units use the matrix as a framework for regular training and self-assessment.

## **PPI self-assessment**

The matrix forms the basis of a self-assessment template. The PSU usually sends this to an inspected unit approximately 60 days before the PPI visit, although sometimes the template is sent as little as two weeks before a non-urgent PPI or advisory inspection. During our inspection, we interviewed RNP personnel who were subject to recent PPIs. They agreed that there was ample time to complete the self-assessment. They also agreed that the scope of the self-assessment was relevant and the questions it asked were clear and easy to answer because "it focuses on the things we need to do, for us to do our job" and "if you are not doing this [the things covered by the matrix] you're not doing a job properly".

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<sup>8</sup> Officers or ratings at regional headquarters who act as the primary link to the RNP on ships and who manage investigations conducted by ship-based personnel.

## Preparatory activity before PPI visits

We found that the PSU undertakes a range of evaluation and analysis before visiting a unit subject to PPI, to inform the focus of its visit. The unit's completed PPI self-assessment matrix is an important document in this process, because it provides an indication of a unit's compliance. The new draft version of the matrix should produce a fuller picture of this compliance.

We found that the PSU does not ask for supporting documents to be provided before the visit. As a result, during visits significant time is taken reading documents that could have been examined in advance. If principal documents were read during the planning stage, this could reduce the length of visits and therefore reduce the burden on the inspected unit. This could also inform the PSU's lines of enquiry. We raised this concern with the PSU during our inspection and were pleased to see that it incorporated this change in its methodology within one week.

### Area for improvement

- The RNP professional standards unit should review principal documents produced by the inspected unit in advance of its policing performance inspection visits, to focus its questions and potentially reduce the length of such visits.

Another important element of the pre-visit phase of the PPI process is the audit of investigation case files. We found that these audits are comprehensive in their scope and covered a range of subjects, from assessing investigatory strategies, lines of enquiries, interview plans and treatment of victims to checking for evidence of desk officers' robust oversight of investigations and compliance with legal requirements. On occasion, such as following a refit, a unit subject to PPI will not have conducted any investigations between PPI visits. In such circumstances, officers' knowledge of investigatory processes is tested through scenario-based questioning.

The PSU also conducts other analysis to inform its lines of enquiry. This includes examining bi-monthly reports received from units, analysing discipline reports and checking the RNP's electronic investigation management system to see whether investigation stages have been completed for all closed investigations. However, the PSU does not attend the force's performance meetings. It therefore does not see the wealth of information about a unit's performance that is addressed in the meetings. There is also no requirement for the PSU to liaise with regional crime managers and regional intelligence officers before a PPI visit. In addition to attending the performance meetings, these personnel have an overview of the investigations conducted by the units and the intelligence that relates to them, so this is not routinely being used to inform PPI.

### Area for improvement

- The RNP professional standards unit should amend the policing performance inspection (PPI) methodology to include liaison with regional crime managers and regional intelligence officers before PPI visits, to supplement the information used to develop its lines of enquiry.

## PPI visits to units

During our inspection, we observed the PSU conduct a PPI visit to the RNP unit on HMS Defender. The ship's Commanding Officer and executive officer were not on the ship during the PPI visit. The PSU team was therefore unable to speak with them on the day, to triangulate the evidence provided by the RNP unit. Members of the team had, however, spoken to the executive officer in the week before the visit to get his perspective on the RNP unit's activities.

The PSU team spoke with the RNP, tested staff competency and tested the evidence contained in the unit's self-assessment. The team also spoke with crew members during the visit to gather evidence and gauge the relationship between the RNP and the crew and to triangulate evidence.

During our inspection, other RNP personnel who have recently been subject of PPI stated that this had also formed part of the assessment process. If corporate processes are perceived by personnel as equitable and supportive, this can have a positive effect on morale and organisational effectiveness.

The RNP personnel we interviewed agreed that a recent change in approach has improved the way PPI visits are conducted. We were told that, until recently, PPI visits had been conducted in a confrontational manner, a "blame culture" pervaded the process and PPIs were "something to be feared". This has been replaced by a more supportive approach that focuses on improving standards through coaching and mentoring, rather than criticising bad practice.

RNP personnel who had been subject to a recent PPI explained how, on the day of the visit, the PSU had provided them with advice about how to resolve any problems found. We witnessed a similar approach during the PPI visit to HMS Defender, with the PSU inspectors praising good practice and providing guidance to help improve the unit's performance where problems were found.

At the end of PPI visits, the PSU debriefs the inspected unit with its findings.<sup>9</sup> We were told by RNP personnel who had recently been subject to PPI that they felt

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<sup>9</sup> In land-based units, the unit's Commanding Officer is debriefed at the end of the inspection. In inspections of ship-based units, the RNP unit is debriefed.

confident to raise any concerns at the debrief if they disagreed with the PSU's findings or wanted to contextualise their activities. The inspected unit also has opportunities to challenge the PSU's facts and accuracy once the inspection report has been completed.

## **PPI reports**

Following the inspection visit, the PSU produces a short inspection report and an action grid, which lists any observations and recommendations made. We found that the reports provide sufficient information to inform RNP officers about the unit's performance. The reports also consider the local context in which the unit operates, such as the implications of RNP officers' secondary duties on their capability to conduct their policing responsibilities.

In the report, the PSU grades the inspected unit using a six-point scale,<sup>10</sup> which aligns with the grading scale used by FOST and the rest of the Royal Navy. To ensure consistency throughout inspections, the grade and the report are subject to a moderation process, with quality assurance from the PSU staff officer and the Deputy Provost Marshal.

## **Monitoring of units' responses to PPI reports**

The inspected units are held responsible for complying with the observations and recommendations made in the action grid. We found that the PPI includes mechanisms to check compliance. Inspected units have 28 days to take action and desk officers and the PSU provides assistance if required.

Procedures are in place to re-inspect poorly performing units. If a unit is graded 'below satisfactory' or lower, the PSU conducts a follow-up PPI within six months (although this is not always possible for overseas land-based units or ship-based units on distant deployments).

## **Lessons learned**

We found that problems and themes uncovered during PPI assessments are disseminated throughout the force and, where appropriate, raised with other Royal Navy units. The PSU has recently introduced monthly presentations, which include links to new policies and findings from PPIs. These are posted on an intranet site, available to all RNP personnel. Although we were shown such information, throughout our inspection RNP personnel who were not based at RNP headquarters said that there was little information about lessons learned or good practice from

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<sup>10</sup> The gradings are: very good/good/very satisfactory/satisfactory/below standard/unsatisfactory.

PPIs of other units, especially extra-regional ones. The PSU may wish to re-notify RNP personnel about where this information can be found.

## **The PSU's capacity and capability to conduct PPIs**

We found that the PSU has the capability to conduct the PPI programme effectively. Although PSU personnel do not receive specific training to conduct PPIs, accredited competency in conducting major investigations is a prerequisite for joining the PSU. In addition to this formal entry requirement, the RNP works with Royal Navy drafting officers to select individuals with experience relevant to the PSU role.

The current members of the PSU have all performed the RNP role on ship-based units. During these postings, they were responsible for the range of responsibilities assessed by the PPI and were subject to PPI themselves. We found that they are confident that this provides them with the skills and experience to conduct the inspections. They also understand the importance of conducting the PPIs in a supportive and developmental manner, and that it is important these aptitudes, in addition to the investigative experience, form the main competencies for the role. During our inspection, the other members of the RNP we interviewed agreed that the PSU has the requisite knowledge to conduct PPIs.

## Conclusion

We found that the PPI is a good process that fulfils the purpose for which it was designed. The intended audience of PPI inspection reports, including the Provost Marshal (Navy), RNP headquarters officers and regional Naval Provost Marshals, were confident it provided them with the assurance they require that RNP units' activities meet legal and professional standards.

The scope of the inspection – outlined in a formalised PPI matrix – is appropriate and covers the full range of the RNP's duties.

The PSU team, responsible for conducting the inspections, has the necessary personnel and expertise to undertake the number of inspections required.

The PPI process is valued by the units being inspected and is subject to moderation to ensure its graded judgments are consistent. The inspection process checks compliance with previous PPI recommendations and observations.

Lessons learned and good practice are publicised throughout the RNP.

We did not find any significant deficiencies in the PPI process, so we have no recommendations. However, our inspection has found four areas for improvement:

### Areas for improvement

- The RNP should ensure that its senior leaders and the professional standards unit receive annual reports outlining the results of self-inspections of land-based units. The RNP should determine whether moving to an annual inspection cycle or enhancing the current self-assessment model would be the best option to provide the assurance required while not impeding land-based units' capabilities.
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