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POLICE FORCES MUST WORK TOGETHER IN THE PUBLIC INTEREST

Forces in England and Wales must radically rethink the way they operate to guarantee the public receives a high standard of service wherever they live - according to Denis O'Connor, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Constabulary.

A new HMIC report shows that members of the public are not getting a good deal, in terms of crime fighting and financial efficiency, for the substantial amounts of taxpayers' money spent on policing.

Getting Together, which is published today, discloses that police forces with the most effective joint working arrangements across traditional force boundaries are getting the best results on organised crime. HMIC found they mount full-scale operations against four times as many crime gangs, including drug traffickers, compared with forces that do not collaborate.

Some forces and authorities spend more than twice as much on human resources as others. Average police spending in this area is above the rest of the public sector, where collaboration is more advanced. There are similar variations in costs for finance services.

Some of the 43 forces in England and Wales also fail to get the best deal from the money they spend each year on procuring goods and services, though the potential for better value is clear and the Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) has been working on this. One force saved £144,000 a year alone on DNA sample submissions by taking part in a multi-force forensic collaboration.

The HMIC report argues that these wide variations in operational effectiveness and costs must be reduced. It calls for greater collaboration to make the public safer and get better value for money.

Mr O'Connor said: "The police must get the best deal for the public. People want to know how their money's being spent, particularly in the current climate.

"We've found that forces and authorities support the idea of collaboration in principle but find the practice harder. That needs to change. The fact is that joined-up working is a win-win situation – it's more effective against organised crime and, in areas of finance, it avoids duplication and creates savings that can be ploughed back into front-line policing."

HMIC research has found that collaborative work is already taking place, but much is *ad hoc* and short-term, rather than systematic. Many forces complained of a 'dearth' of information about successful collaboration.

Getting Together proposes a robust, transparent, market-style system to help police forces overcome barriers to collaboration. A new 'Informed Choice Model' (ICM) will give senior

officers and authorities information on the range of costs and risks and where the best option can be found for the public by collaboration or other means.

HMIC believe collaboration works best on a voluntary basis but warns that forces must account for continued variations in crime risks or costs.

The ICM provides a five point sliding scale of support for police forces, ranging from the most current information on the benefits of collaborating - "a nudge" - to being mandated to work together when the Home Secretary feels it's the best option for the public.

Forces will be required to spell out their collaborative work in annual reports and the public will be able to judge the cost and quality of policing in their areas.

Ends –

NOTES TO EDITORS

1. The report "Getting Together - a better deal for the public through joint working" is published on 11 June 2009 and can be viewed at www.inspectorates.homeoffice.gov.uk/hmic

2. The report was commissioned by the Minister for Policing in November 2008. Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC) undertook the review as part of its role to ensure police forces secure the best deal for the public in terms of preventing serious crime and ensuring value for money.

3. Denis O'Connor was appointed Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Constabulary (HMCIC) in May 2009. He took over the role from Sir Ronnie Flanagan.

4. HMIC is an independent inspectorate. It is a fierce advocate for the public interest and rigorously examines the effectiveness of police forces and authorities to tackle crime and terrorism, improve criminal justice and raise confidence.

5. HMIC inspects and regulates all 43 police forces in England and Wales together with other major policing bodies such as the Serious Organised Crime Agency, the Police Service of Northern Ireland and the British Transport Police.

6. Further information on the role of HMIC can be found at www.inspectorates.homeoffice.gov.uk/hmic

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