

Devon and Cornwall Police Authority Human Resources Committee  
27 January 2009  
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Report of Director of Human Resources

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## Alcohol and Drugs: misuse and testing policy – update report

### Recommendations:

- (i) The committee receives a summary of the review of the Alcohol and Drugs misuse and testing policy as requested following 12 months since its implementation.

### Introduction / Summary

1. The Police (Amendment) Regulations 2005 introduced legislation enabling the testing for substance misuse of certain members of the force. Firearm officers, high-speed pursuit trained traffic officers, police divers and search teams are specifically mentioned in the legislation as well as new recruits and probationers. The Chief Officer may also identify other groups within the force as being in sensitive or vulnerable roles due to the nature of their work or a specific responsibility for dealing with drugs, e.g. undercover officers and test purchase officers.
2. A force policy (D311) was prepared following wide consultation and was implemented in October 2007 following approval by this committee on 19<sup>th</sup> September 2007. The policy applied to police officer posts only. Police staff were not initially included pending agreement at the national Police Staff Council. This was achieved and joint circular no 51 was received in April 2008.
3. The Police Authority have received 6 monthly update reports leading up to and following the implementation of the policy and requested a full review after 12 months. This report provides a summary of the review findings.

### Background Information

#### 12 month review of policy since full implementation:

4. The testing of new police officer recruits and police community support officers (PCSO) commenced with the October 2007 intake. This category includes officers returning from career breaks and also police officer transferees. The testing of new recruits to the special constabulary commenced in April 2008 when the new centralised recruitment process was introduced. To date a total of 472 pre-employment tests have been conducted using hair samples. There has been one positive result for cocaine although a number of persons have withdrawn from the application process when advised that a drug test was mandatory. Pre-employment testing is a preventative measure and all force recruitment material advises applicants of the drug test requirement.
5. The random alcohol and drug testing of police officers, (Firearms, high speed pursuit, divers, search team, under cover officers and test purchase officers, commenced in October 2007. Arranging for a 'sampler' to arrive unannounced at locations around the force at a time/date when there are sufficient numbers of the officers in the above groups available for testing proved

logistically difficult. To date 428 random tests have been conducted with the provision of urine samples and all tests have been negative.

6. New procedures have been implemented with regard to 'with cause' drug testing, this is where intelligence suggests an officer may be using drugs. Since October 2007 three such tests have been completed, two tests were negative and the other positive. These matters are currently subject of professional standards investigations.
7. Between October 2007 and November 2008 the cost of testing including laboratory analysis and samplers was just over £63,000.
8. The introduction of alcohol and drug testing to the force has been met with full co-operation and indeed welcomed by operational units and specialists. There has been some consternation by new recruits required to provide a hair sample for pre-employment testing but they have been reminded that they are seeking to join a disciplined service.
9. The force drug testing arrangements were featured in an article in 'Police Professional' magazine following comments on good practise being made by Her Majesty's Inspector of Constabulary (HMIC).

#### **Inclusion of police staff in drug testing policy**

10. Prior to the implementation of the force policy on alcohol and drugs testing for general police staff there was considerable consultation with trade unions. They were generally supportive of the policy but were unable to formally endorse its implementation in relation to police staff until the result of a Police Staff Council project was known. The project was examining the whole area of employee substance abuse testing and was due to report its findings in early 2008. It was decided to implement the force policy in respect of police officers only rather than delay the whole issue whilst the result of the project was awaited.
11. On 17<sup>th</sup> April 2008 a joint circular document No.51 was received informing forces that the Police Staff Council now fully endorses the substance misuse and testing guidance document on which the force alcohol and drugs policy is based. It is now necessary to include general police staff in the policy and all new police staff recruits will be subject to a pre-employment drug test in order to bring them into line with police officers, police community support officers and specials. This will initially focus on specialist roles. The current low level of recruitment of new police staff will involve minimal additional funding albeit there may be some logistical difficulty. The current criteria for random alcohol/drug testing are roles occupied by police officers only unless the groups subject to random testing is reviewed and changed.
12. It is intended that the groups of officers and staff liable to random testing should be increased but this is being examined in the light of budgetary constraints and may be the subject of a separate report to the Authority in due course.

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