



STARR Example

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QUESTION

Give me an example of a time when performance data showed a persistent problem across several of your inspector-led teams that none of them had escalated to you.

SITUATION

Six months into my tenure as Chief Inspector with responsibility for a territorial policing district, I conducted a quarterly deep-dive into our divisional performance data. I was reviewing grade 2 attendance time compliance when I identified a pattern that concerned me. Four of my five inspector-led response teams had missed the force target for six consecutive months, with the position worsening each quarter. The data had been visible in the monthly performance pack distributed to all inspectors. None of the four affected inspectors had raised it with me, flagged it at the weekly briefing or proposed any form of intervention. One inspector had submitted positive monthly performance notes during the same period.

TASK

I recognised I had two distinct problems to address. The first was the performance issue itself. Grade 2 attendance is a public-facing commitment and persistent non-compliance carries risk to public confidence and officer safety. The second, and in my judgment the more significant, was understanding why four experienced inspectors had watched the position deteriorate without escalating it. I took personal ownership of both. I was not going to task an inspector with reviewing the data in isolation. I needed to understand the root cause myself before deciding on any response, and I needed to be visible and accountable in doing so.

ACTION

My first step was individual one-to-one conversations with each of the four affected inspectors before raising the issue in any group forum. I asked each of them to walk me through their own data and tell me what they saw. The conversations were revealing. One inspector had a genuine resourcing issue; two officers had been on long-term sick leave for three months and she had flagged the abstraction through the HR process but had not connected it explicitly to her attendance compliance figures. The other three inspectors had, to varying degrees, normalised the drift. Two told me they assumed the position was force-wide. One told me directly that he had not wanted to raise a problem without having a solution ready.

I addressed the resourcing gap immediately by requesting a temporary cross-posting from a neighbouring district, which I secured within the week. For the three inspectors who had normalised the position, I was direct. I made clear that I needed performance concerns escalated to me regardless of whether a solution existed, and that bringing a problem early was not a failure of leadership. I followed those conversations with revised performance expectations documented in their monthly one-to-one records.

I then made two structural changes. I introduced a standing fifteen-minute data review at the start of each weekly inspector briefing, where each inspector presented one performance indicator and what they were doing about any movement in it. I also reported the issue proactively to my Superintendent before she identified it herself. I did not wait to be asked.

RESULT

Within eight weeks, grade 2 attendance time compliance across all five teams returned to target and held there for the following two quarters. The inspector with the resourcing issue performed strongest once the abstraction was resolved. Across the other three teams, performance recovered within four weeks of the structured conversations. At the following

quarter's command team review, my Superintendent noted that the district had moved from third to first in the force for grade 2 compliance. More meaningfully, in the three months following the intervention two of my inspectors proactively escalated emerging performance concerns before they became trends. That had not happened once in the previous six months.

REFLECTION

The experience changed how I approach performance leadership at Chief Inspector level. I had assumed that visible data would prompt escalation. It did not, and that told me something important about the culture I had inherited and, to some extent, had allowed to continue. Inspectors were treating performance slippage as a personal failure to be managed quietly rather than a shared problem to solve together. I now build psychological safety around performance explicitly in every one-to-one. I ask each inspector directly: what does your data concern you about this month. That single question has changed both the quality of information I receive and the speed at which I can act on it.

AI BOARD REVIEW

689 words

5 min 31 sec spoken

On target

5/5

OVERALL SCORE

5/5 - GREEN

This is an outstanding answer — one of the strongest Chief Inspector-level responses to a 'We Take Ownership' question that a panel is likely to encounter. The candidate demonstrates genuine strategic ownership from the first sentence: they identified the problem themselves through proactive data analysis, took personal responsibility for both the performance failure and the cultural conditions that allowed it to persist, and made structural changes that outlasted the immediate fix. The strongest moment in the answer is the Reflection — the insight that 'inspectors were treating performance slippage as a personal failure to be managed quietly rather than a shared problem to solve together' is exactly the kind of cultural diagnosis a Chief Inspector is expected to make, and the follow-through ('I now ask each inspector directly: what does your data concern you about this month') shows that the learning was translated into a concrete change in leadership practice. The one area worth developing further is the proactive inclusion of organisational or force-wide context — the answer is excellent at the district level but a panel at Chief Inspector would be further impressed by any acknowledgement of how this pattern might reflect a wider organisational accountability gap, and what the candidate did to share learning beyond their own command.

RANK CALIBRATION

On Target

The answer reads convincingly at Chief Inspector level throughout. The candidate operates as a manager of managers — they do not step in to fix the operational problem themselves but instead diagnose root causes, make structural changes to inspector-level accountability, and proactively brief upward to the Superintendent before being asked. The decision to hold individual conversations before any group forum, the introduction of a standing data review, and the framing of escalation as a cultural rather than individual failure all reflect the strategic and systemic thinking expected at this rank. The answer would be even stronger if it demonstrated any cross-district or force-wide influence — for example, whether the structural changes were shared with peers or recommended upward — but this is a refinement rather than a gap.

CVF Descriptor Scores

Descriptor 1

4/5 · GREEN

I delegate appropriately by giving clear direction that recognises people's strengths and potential to achieve more.

The candidate demonstrates differentiated delegation clearly: they identify that the inspector with a genuine resourcing issue 'performed strongest once the abstraction was resolved' and respond accordingly by securing a cross-posting, rather than applying a blanket intervention. The phrase 'I made clear that I needed performance concerns escalated to me regardless of whether a solution existed' shows direction that is calibrated to the specific failure mode each inspector had exhibited. The documented revised performance expectations in monthly one-to-one records further evidence that direction was given with clarity and accountability. The answer would reach a 5 if it more explicitly described how the candidate recognised and built on individual strengths — for example, whether the strongest-performing inspector was given any additional responsibility or development opportunity as a result.

Descriptor 2

5/5 · GREEN

I monitor progress of my team and work to ensure deadlines are met and my team are clear on their objectives.

This descriptor is exceptionally well evidenced. The candidate identifies the problem through their own 'quarterly deep-dive into divisional performance data' — proactive monitoring, not reactive response. The introduction of 'a standing fifteen-minute data review at the start of each weekly inspector briefing, where each inspector presented one performance indicator and what they were doing about any movement in it' is a structural monitoring mechanism that ensures ongoing clarity of objectives. The quantified outcome — 'grade 2 attendance time compliance across all five teams returned to target and held there for the following two quarters' — confirms that the monitoring translated into sustained performance improvement. The candidate also tracks the cultural shift: 'in the three months following the intervention two of my inspectors proactively escalated emerging performance concerns before they became trends', demonstrating monitoring of both performance and behaviour.

Descriptor 3

5/5 · GREEN

I take ownership of individual and team performance, not leaving it to others to address problems.

This is the central theme of the answer and it is evidenced with exceptional clarity. The phrase 'I was not going to task an inspector with reviewing the data in isolation. I needed to understand the root cause myself before deciding on any response' is a direct and explicit statement of personal ownership. The candidate conducts individual conversations with each affected inspector personally, secures the cross-posting themselves, and reports proactively to the Superintendent — 'I did not wait to be asked.' The dual framing in the Task section — 'I recognised I had two distinct problems to address' — shows the candidate taking ownership not just of the operational failure but of the cultural conditions that produced it. This is ownership at the level expected of a Chief Inspector.

Descriptor 4

5/5 · GREEN

I take personal responsibility for seeing events through to a satisfactory conclusion and dealing with any problems both promptly and openly.

The candidate demonstrates both promptness and openness explicitly. The resourcing gap was 'addressed immediately' with a cross-posting 'secured within the week.' The proactive briefing to the Superintendent — 'I reported the issue proactively to my Superintendent before she identified it herself' — is a textbook example of dealing with problems openly rather than managing them quietly. The Result section confirms the conclusion was satisfactory: the district moved 'from third to first in the force for grade 2 compliance' and the Superintendent formally noted this at the command team review. The candidate sees the issue through to both a performance outcome and a cultural shift, evidencing the full scope of this descriptor.

Descriptor 6

5/5 · GREEN

I promote a culture of personal accountability in teams so that people strive for high standards of sustainable and ethical performance.

Cultural accountability is the explicit focus of the answer's most powerful passages. The phrase 'bringing a problem early was not a failure of leadership' reframes accountability as a shared professional norm rather than an individual burden — this is culture-building, not just performance management. The structural change of the standing data review embeds accountability into the weekly rhythm of the inspector team. The Reflection confirms the cultural shift was sustained: 'I now build psychological safety around performance explicitly in every one-to-one.' The candidate also evidences the ethical dimension implicitly — grade 2 attendance compliance is framed as 'a public-facing commitment' carrying 'risk to public confidence and officer safety', grounding the accountability culture in service to the public rather than internal metrics alone.

Descriptor 7

5/5 · GREEN

I put in place measures that will allow others to take responsibility effectively and support them to improve their performance.

Two concrete structural measures are described: the standing fifteen-minute data review at weekly inspector briefings, and the revised performance expectations documented in monthly one-to-one records. Both are designed not to take responsibility away from inspectors but to create the conditions in which they can exercise it more effectively. The phrase 'each inspector presented one performance indicator and what they were doing about any movement in it' is particularly strong — it builds inspector ownership into the structure of the meeting itself. The outcome confirms the measures worked: 'two of my inspectors proactively escalated emerging performance concerns before they became trends' — a direct behavioural change attributable to the structural intervention.

Descriptor 8

4/5 · GREEN

I take an organisation-wide view, acknowledging where improvements can be made and take responsibility for making these happen.

The candidate demonstrates an organisation-wide view within their district command — identifying that the problem was systemic across four of five teams, not isolated to one inspector, and making structural changes accordingly. The proactive briefing to the Superintendent before being asked shows awareness of organisational accountability beyond the immediate team. The phrase 'the district had moved from third to first in the force for grade 2 compliance' situates the improvement in a force-wide context. However, the answer does not evidence whether the candidate shared the structural changes (the standing data review model, the revised escalation norms) with peer Chief Inspectors or recommended them upward — which would be the clearest evidence of a truly organisation-wide view. This keeps the score at 4 rather than 5.

Descriptor 9

5/5 · GREEN

I promote a culture that responds to mistakes with learning rather than with blame.

This descriptor is evidenced with exceptional depth, particularly in the Reflection. The candidate explicitly diagnoses the cultural failure: 'inspectors were treating performance slippage as a personal failure to be managed quietly rather than a shared problem to solve together.' The response to this is not disciplinary but developmental — individual conversations, revised expectations, and a structural forum for shared data review. The Reflection's closing practice — 'I ask each inspector directly: what does your data concern you about this month' — is a deliberate, ongoing mechanism for normalising the surfacing of problems without blame. The phrase 'bringing a problem early was not a failure of leadership' is a direct, explicit statement of a learning-over-blame culture, delivered in the moment of the intervention itself.

Descriptors not demonstrated in this answer (1)

These descriptors would need a more developed example to evidence — this is normal. No single answer is expected to cover the full CVF value.

Descriptor 5: I am proactive in supporting actions that tackle the bias or prejudice that may be experienced by some groups of people.

STARR Structural Assessment

Situation

5/5 · GREEN

The Situation is precisely calibrated — it provides enough context to understand the stakes (six consecutive months of missed targets, worsening each quarter, one inspector submitting positive notes during the same period) without becoming the story itself. The detail about the data being 'visible in the monthly performance pack distributed to all inspectors' is particularly effective: it immediately signals that the problem is cultural as well as operational, which sets up the Task and Action sections perfectly. No over-elaboration.

Task

5/5 · GREEN

The Task section is outstanding. The candidate explicitly names two distinct problems and takes personal ownership of both — 'I took personal ownership of both.' The phrase 'I was not going to task an inspector with reviewing the data in isolation' is a direct statement of personal accountability that distinguishes this answer from one where the candidate delegates the investigation. The framing of the cultural problem as 'the more significant' of the two issues is exactly the kind of strategic prioritisation a Chief Inspector panel would want to see.

Action

5/5 · GREEN

The Action section is the strongest part of the answer and accounts for approximately 50% of the total word count — well within the target range. It is written in consistent first-person voice with specific, verifiable actions: individual conversations before any group forum, a cross-posting secured within the week, revised performance expectations documented in one-to-one records, a standing data review introduced to the weekly briefing, and a proactive briefing to the Superintendent. Each action is accompanied by a rationale ('I asked each of them to walk me through their own data and tell me what they saw' — diagnostic before prescriptive). The differentiation between the four inspectors — one with a genuine resourcing issue, two who had normalised drift, one who feared raising a problem without a solution — shows nuanced leadership rather than a blanket response. No collective voice issues; 'I' dominates throughout.

Result

5/5 · GREEN

The Result section is quantified, specific, and multi-layered. Grade 2 compliance returned to target within eight weeks and held for two further quarters. The district moved from third to first in the force — formally noted by the Superintendent at the command team review. Three teams recovered within four weeks. Most compellingly, the cultural shift is evidenced behaviourally: 'two of my inspectors proactively escalated emerging performance concerns before they became trends — that had not happened once in the previous six months.' This is a measurable cultural outcome, not just a performance metric, and it is exactly what a Chief Inspector panel would want to see.

Reflection

5/5 · GREEN

The Reflection is genuinely exceptional and elevates the entire answer. The candidate does not simply say they learned from the experience — they diagnose the cultural assumption they had made ('I had assumed that visible data would prompt escalation. It did not') and connect it to a concrete, ongoing change in leadership practice. The question 'what does your data concern you about this month' is a specific, replicable behaviour that shows the learning has been institutionalised. The acknowledgement that the candidate had 'allowed' the culture to continue is a rare moment of genuine self-accountability that a panel will find compelling and credible.

HMICFRS Grounding

The Nottinghamshire PEEL inspection (2023–25, published July 2024 — now approximately 22 months old) identified a cause of concern around leadership and force management, and noted that some inconsistency in officers following cases through to resolution was creating scope to strengthen personal accountability for victim outcomes. The candidate's answer directly addresses the accountability gap that HMICFRS identified at force level: four experienced inspectors had watched grade 2 attendance compliance deteriorate for six consecutive months without escalating it, which is precisely the kind of personal accountability failure the inspectorate flagged. The candidate's structural response — a standing data review, revised escalation expectations, and proactive upward briefing — maps directly onto the HMICFRS finding that the force should make sure its leaders are visible to personnel at all levels so that they are appropriately supported and encouraged to improve performance. The answer would be further strengthened if the candidate referenced the force-level context explicitly — acknowledging that the accountability culture they were addressing in their district reflected a wider organisational challenge that HMICFRS had identified, and framing their structural changes as a contribution to addressing that challenge at scale. Given the age of the inspection data, candidates should treat these findings as context rather than current fact, but the thematic relevance remains strong.

National Policing Context

State of Policing 2024-25 · HMICFRS

The HMICFRS State of Policing 2024–25 report identifies poor supervision, inconsistent escalation of performance concerns, and a failure of personal accountability as systemic national failures — findings that sit directly behind the scenario this candidate was asked to address. The candidate's diagnosis that 'inspectors were treating performance slippage as a personal failure to be managed quietly rather than a shared problem to solve together' mirrors precisely what HMICFRS describes as a national accountability gap: officers and supervisors managing problems downward rather than surfacing them for organisational resolution. The candidate's structural response — embedding data review into the weekly briefing rhythm and explicitly normalising escalation without a solution — is the kind of supervisory and cultural intervention the national report calls for when it states that forces must strengthen leadership, supervision and training. A panel would find it compelling if the candidate could articulate awareness that this pattern is not unique to their district or force, and that the approach they developed has relevance to the national challenge HMICFRS has identified.

State of Policing 2024-25: Contains public sector information licensed under the [Open Government Licence v3.0](#). Source: [HMICFRS](#).

I Improvement Priorities

1 Extend the organisational view beyond the district boundary

The answer is excellent at the district level, but a Chief Inspector panel would be further impressed by evidence that the candidate considered whether the structural changes they made had value beyond their own command. The standing data review model and the revised escalation norms are genuinely transferable — a panel would find it compelling if the candidate described whether they shared this learning with peer Chief Inspectors, raised it at a command team meeting, or recommended it to the Superintendent as a force-wide practice. This would strengthen the 'organisation-wide view' descriptor and signal the kind of systems-thinking that distinguishes a strong Chief Inspector from a very good one.

Example: For example, something like: 'I shared the standing data review format with two peer Chief Inspectors at the next district commanders' meeting and suggested it might be worth piloting force-wide — the Superintendent subsequently asked me to present the model at the next performance governance board' would add a meaningful organisational dimension without lengthening the answer significantly.

2 Name the inspector who submitted positive notes during the same period

The answer mentions that 'one inspector had submitted positive monthly performance notes during the same period' — this is a striking detail that is introduced and then never returned to. A panel would naturally wonder: what did the candidate do about this? Was this addressed in the individual conversation? Was it treated as a performance or integrity concern, or as a misunderstanding of what the notes were for? Developing this thread would strengthen the 'taking ownership of individual performance' and 'responding to mistakes with learning rather than blame' descriptors further, and would show the candidate's willingness to address the most uncomfortable dimension of the situation.

Example: For example, something like: 'The inspector who had submitted positive notes during the same period was the most challenging conversation — I was direct that the notes did not reflect the data, and we worked together to understand whether this was a gap in her analytical confidence or something else. It turned out to be the former, and we addressed it through coaching rather than formally' would show the candidate handled the full complexity of the situation.

3 Briefly acknowledge the candidate's own role in the conditions that allowed the drift

The Reflection touches on this — 'a culture I had inherited and, to some extent, had allowed to continue' — but the phrase 'to some extent' slightly softens what could be a more powerful moment of self-accountability. A panel at Chief Inspector level is looking for leaders who can be genuinely honest about their own contribution to a problem, not just the team's. The answer would be strengthened by a slightly fuller acknowledgement of what the candidate would do differently from the start of a new tenure — for example, how they now establish performance escalation norms in the first weeks of taking command, rather than discovering the gap six months in.

Example: For example, something like: 'I now make it an explicit priority in my first week with any new team to set the expectation that escalating a problem without a solution is not a failure — it is what I need from them. I did not do that clearly enough at the start of this tenure, and that is something I have carried forward into every command since' would turn a good Reflection into an exceptional one.

Panel Probe Questions

“You mentioned that one inspector had submitted positive monthly performance notes during the same period that her team’s compliance was declining. How did you handle that specific conversation, and what was the outcome?”

Why a board asks this: A board would want to understand how the candidate navigated what is potentially the most sensitive dimension of the situation — an inspector whose reporting did not reflect the data. This gives the candidate an opportunity to demonstrate how they balance accountability with fairness, and how they distinguish between a performance concern and an integrity concern. A strong response would show the candidate was direct, curious rather than accusatory, and that the conversation led to a clear and proportionate outcome.

“You introduced a standing data review at your weekly inspector briefing. How did you ensure that forum didn’t become a blame culture in itself — where inspectors felt exposed rather than supported?”

Why a board asks this: A board would want to understand how the candidate managed the tension between transparency and psychological safety in a group setting. This gives the candidate an opportunity to show that the structural change was designed thoughtfully — not just imposed — and that they actively modelled the learning-over-blame culture they were trying to build. A strong response would describe specific facilitation choices: how the candidate framed the first session, how they responded when an inspector raised a problem, and how the tone of the forum evolved over time.

“Looking back, what would you do differently from day one of a new command to prevent this situation from arising in the first place?”

Why a board asks this: A board would want to understand whether the candidate has translated the learning from this experience into a replicable leadership approach — not just a response to a specific incident. This gives the candidate an opportunity to demonstrate forward-looking, systemic thinking: how they now establish performance escalation norms, build psychological safety, and create early-warning mechanisms from the outset of any new command. A strong response would be specific and practical, showing that the candidate has genuinely changed how they lead rather than simply reflecting on what went wrong.