



Inspecting policing
in the **public** interest

Delivering the Policing Pledge

Early Findings

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Foreword

The Policing Pledge aims to ensure that the public have responsive policing, placing the “citizen” at the heart of those services.

Simply put, this represents a “deal” between the police and the public they serve. The pledge sets out what the public can expect, in terms of fairness, access, local policing, response to calls, support and information for victims, and dealing with dissatisfaction. The overall aim is to drive up satisfaction and ultimately confidence in policing services.

HMIC has a clear remit - inspecting policing in the public interest. I am determined that HMIC will act in the public interest. It was clear to me and my colleagues that early work was needed to learn early lessons given that the service had agreed in the summer to have the Policing Pledge in place by the end of December 2008.

The attached report is the outcome of HMIC’s early testing of pledge implementation. It is intended to provide some initial guidance for the public, and police practitioners on how well the service is responding, and also to flag where, frankly, improvement is necessary. The report captures major issues arising from testing of websites, of response to calls, and visits to seven forces. The findings at this stage are mixed. There was considerable enthusiasm and commitment to the pledge clearly in evidence. Overall policing in neighbourhoods was also encouraging, with good visibility of and access to neighbourhood teams. However there were some “gaps”. Meetings held with local people were of a very varied standard, feedback to victims also emerged as patchy; and work so far has emphasised the need for partners in local authorities and others to be even more fully engaged to support and secure even higher levels of confidence.

HMIC has now embarked on inspection of all forty three forces in England and Wales. A substantial element of our work will be on reality testing the service as experienced by the public. The results of this next phase will be available later this year. Meanwhile the attached report offers some early insights into progress so far. I urge forces to utilise it to enhance current delivery.



Denis O'Connor CBE QPM
Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Constabulary

The Policing Pledge

The Police Service in England and Wales will support law-abiding citizens and pursue criminals relentlessly to keep you and your neighbourhoods safe from harm. We will:

1. Always treat you fairly with dignity and respect, ensuring you have fair access to our services at a time that is reasonable and suitable for you.
2. Provide you with information so you know who your dedicated Neighbourhood Policing Team (NPT) are, where they are based, how to contact them and how to work with them.
3. Ensure your NPT and other police patrols are visible and on your patch at times when they will be most effective and when you tell us you most need them. We will ensure your team are not taken away from neighbourhood business more than is absolutely necessary. They will spend at least 80% of their time visibly working in your neighbourhood, tackling your priorities. Staff turnover will be minimised.
4. Respond to every message directed to your NPT within 24 hours and, where necessary, provide a more detailed response as soon as we can.
5. Aim to answer 999 calls within 10 seconds, deploying to emergencies immediately, giving an estimated time of arrival, getting to you safely and as quickly as possible. In urban areas we will aim to get to you within 15 minutes and in rural areas within 20 minutes.
6. Answer all non-emergency calls promptly. If attendance is needed, send a patrol giving you an estimated time of arrival, and:
 - if you are vulnerable or upset, we will aim to be with you within 60 minutes; and
 - if you are calling about an issue that we have agreed with your community will be a neighbourhood priority and attendance is required, we will aim to be with you within 60 minutes.
 - Alternatively, if appropriate, we will make an appointment to see you at a time that fits in with your life and within 48 hours.
 - If it is agreed that attendance is not necessary, we will give you advice, answer your questions and/or put you in touch with someone who can help.

7. Arrange regular public meetings to agree your priorities, at least once a month, giving you a chance to meet your local team with other members of your community. These will include opportunities such as surgeries, street briefings and mobile police station visits which will be arranged to meet local needs and requirements.
8. Provide monthly updates on progress, and on local crime and policing issues. This will include the provision of crime maps, information on specific crimes and what happened to those brought to justice, details of what action we and our partners are taking to make your neighbourhood safer and information on how your force is performing.
9. If you have been a victim of crime, agree with you how often you would like to be kept informed of progress in your case and for how long. You have the right to be kept informed at least every month if you wish and for as long as is reasonable.
10. Acknowledge any dissatisfaction with the service you have received within 24 hours of reporting it to us. To help us fully resolve the matter, discuss with you how it will be handled, give you an opportunity to talk in person to someone about your concerns and agree with you what will be done about them and how quickly.

We want to do our best for you, but if we fail to meet our Pledge we will always explain why it has not been possible on that occasion to deliver the high standards to which we aspire and you deserve.

Executive Summary

The Policing Pledge – and the role of HMIC

The background to the Policing Pledge

The Policing Pledge is part of a radical programme of reform set out in the Government's Policing Green Paper, *From the Neighbourhood to the National*.

The Pledge explains what the public can expect from the police in a 10-point framework of national policing standards. The Pledge can also be tailored to meet the needs of local neighbourhoods.

There is more about the background to the Policing Pledge and a link directly to the Pledge itself at: <http://campaigns.direct.gov.uk/policingpledge/>

Our role at HMIC

HMIC has a role to play in letting the public know how far the Policing Pledge has become a reality, and between April and October 2009 all 43 police forces in England and Wales will be inspected on how they are delivering the Pledge.

In the meantime we have also done some work to assess the progress that is being made, including:

- reviewing police force websites;
- conducting 'reality checks' on how the Pledge is working in practice; and
- visiting seven forces:
 - Avon and Somerset Constabulary;
 - Cumbria Constabulary;
 - Essex Police;
 - the Metropolitan Police Service;
 - Northamptonshire Police;
 - South Wales Police; and
 - West Yorkshire Police.

This work has helped to answer the question, 'Is the Policing Pledge being delivered to local people?'

The Policing Pledge in more detail

Fairness, dignity and respect

Pledge Point 1 is about always treating people fairly, and with dignity and respect, ensuring that they have fair access to services and at a time that is reasonable and suitable.

Our findings so far

Pledge Point 1

All seven police forces we visited had a clear direction from chief officers, together with a set of values that help underpin their commitment to provide a highly professional service. The forces all had clear diversity and equality strategies in place.

The forces had also carried out a range of reviews to assess and improve access to services.

We found some good examples of effective partnership approaches. These included:

- the use of the Single Non-Emergency Number by South Wales Police and Cardiff Council;
- the Southwest One initiative in Avon and Somerset – a joint project between the police, local councils and a private company which aims to provide shared and more accessible services for the public;

- the establishing of third-party reporting centres in Cumbria, which give local people more opportunities to report crime and raise community concerns; and
- the installation by some forces of automated translation services in a number of languages.

While forces are beginning to employ more sophisticated techniques to identify what customers actually want, there is a need to demonstrate more obviously and effectively that they are providing fair access and that they are taking account of the needs of diverse communities.

So although there were some good examples of getting through to harder-to-reach groups, there was little evidence of:

- the Pledge itself being translated into other languages; and
- formal consultation with minority groups or independent advisory groups on the Pledge itself.

The Independent Police Complaints Commission (IPCC) has identified incivility as one of the highest causes of customer dissatisfaction.

We have **not** found very effective practice in responding to dissatisfaction, nor evidence of any considerable capacity to capture, analyse and learn from experiences to support organisational learning.

Creating better local policing websites

The local police force website is a way of engaging more effectively with local people and key to providing better access to information.

We are aware that there are real improvements in the look of many websites. However, at the time of the review, there were relatively few examples of:

- websites with strong visual impacts;
- easy-to-navigate websites; and
- good links.

Community engagement and consultation

A major part of the Pledge relates to community engagement and consultation.

Pledge point 2 refers to making sure that local people:

- know who their dedicated Neighbourhood Policing Team are;
- where they are based; and
- how to contact them.

Pledge point 3 refers to making sure that local teams are visible and are not abstracted unnecessarily.

Pledge point 4 indicates that Neighbourhood Policing Teams will respond to every message within 24 hours.

Pledge point 7 relates to arranging regular public meetings to agree priorities at least once a month.

Pledge point 8 refers to providing monthly updates on progress on local crime and policing issues, including providing:

- crime maps; and
- details of what action local police and partners are taking to make neighbourhoods safer.

Our findings so far

Pledge point 2

We found strong evidence during our visits and on the websites about information being given on Neighbourhood Policing Teams. The work and role of the teams is generally well explained, often accompanied by messages from senior officers promoting and supporting Neighbourhood Policing.

Pledge point 3

Visibility in local areas proved rather more problematic in terms of assessing the amount of time teams spend in neighbourhoods.

Clear evidence was found of abstraction policies in all the forces we visited, but issues remain about:

- what counts as an ‘abstraction’; and
- how to monitor compliance.

While enthusiastic staff were often very positive about the time they were able to commit to their neighbourhoods, HMIC will take a robust look at this during our inspections in order to reassure the public that forces are delivering on their promise that staff should spend most of their time visibly working in neighbourhoods, or on work directly related to the neighbourhood.

Pledge point 4

There was evidence of a real commitment on the part of staff to get back to members of the public quickly. However, it is also true that this is a difficult area to monitor. Essex Police is making good use of ‘mystery shoppers’ to improve performance. Elsewhere it is clear that staff are trusted to deliver. It makes sense that the organisation can confirm in a non-bureaucratic way that this commitment is being realised.

Pledge point 7

We saw good evidence of meetings taking place but considered that there was still a wide variation in terms of how the meeting was run.

Running better meetings

Better meetings can demonstrate some or all of the following:

- the meeting is well attended having been advertised effectively;
- introductions are made, the purpose of the meeting is explained and the meeting is well structured;
- an easily accessible location with suitable facilities;
- professional, smart appearance and conduct of all police attending;
- a clear agenda and some formal record taken;
- the person chairing the meeting has the necessary skills to do so;
- literature is provided that includes information about partners as well as policing issues;
- systems or approaches for agreeing priorities are fair and transparent;
- there is effective report back on agreed priorities; and
- crime updates are provided with a clear context and commentary with actions on key themes.

We concluded that it was important for forces to be quite innovative in terms of working with partners and to use other meetings such as local surgeries, street briefings and even mobile police stations to meet local needs and requirements.

It is essential that whoever runs the meeting has the skills to do so. We witnessed meetings at both ends of the spectrum: one ran the risk of leaving people deflated and perhaps unlikely to offer information and support in future, whereas the other was an inspiring and productive event.

Pledge point 8

We found from the website reviews and visits that all forces have introduced crime mapping and some good practice exists, such as the e-cops electronic update in Cambridgeshire, in terms of providing updates on crime and policing issues. However, once again, this is an area for development, particularly with regard to consistency and sophistication.

Contact management and response

Pledge points 5 and 6 relate to the way forces manage external contact with callers, ensuring that their personal needs are assessed and managed.

Specific standards are set, for example aiming to answer 999 calls within 10 seconds, and giving explicit commitments about getting to people within 15 minutes in an urban area and 20 minutes in a rural area.

Pledge point 6 refers to answering all non-emergency calls promptly. There are some additional commitments:

- if attendance is needed, to send a patrol giving an estimated time of arrival; and
- if an individual is vulnerable or upset, aiming to be with them within 60 minutes.

Likewise, if the individual is calling about an issue which has been agreed as a local Pledge priority, attendance would be ideally within 60 minutes. Advice may be given or an appointment offered at a time that suits the caller.

Improving feedback of information about crimes

An area for improvement is undoubtedly the need to have systematic ways of feeding back information on specific crimes, including:

- what has happened to those brought to justice; and
- details of what action partners are taking to make areas safer.

Our findings so far

We identified a very strong customer service ethos among staff who deal with calls from the public on a daily basis.

Our visits revealed that staff have a good knowledge of the Pledge and an understanding of the key role they have to play in delivering it. All seven forces we visited demonstrated that they have a well-developed performance monitoring regime within contact management centres and a strong commitment to improving performance was very apparent.

Significant progress is being made in some forces on managing the demand of calls and introducing and marketing a Single Non-Emergency Number.

Detailed data will be examined during the forthcoming inspection work but for the year 2007/08, the average performance among the 41 forces where there are figures available was to answer 91.56 per cent of emergency calls within 10 seconds. This is a more tried and tested area of the business and, overall, most forces are performing reasonably well in answering emergency calls.

Pledge point 5: a more problematic area with point 5 is that of providing an estimated time of arrival. This is an area which will be subject to significant review during inspections.

Pledge point 6: we found some good work being done in respect of advice and guidance to staff concerning vulnerable or upset members of the public.

We also identified some excellent processes within contact management centres to ensure that neighbourhood priorities were instantly flagged to the staff. However, areas of challenge remain, including:

- a force being confident in estimating the time of arrival for a response unit;
- ensuring that calls relating to agreed neighbourhood priorities are responded to within the 60-minute target; and
- appointment systems, where they exist, are somewhat embryonic.

This is a critical area of work for forces as they develop their delivery of the Pledge and will be subject to further reality checking by inspection teams later this year.

Some forces have an advantage where they have developed software packages to support the flagging of pledge priorities and the tracking/monitoring of performance.

It would be extremely helpful if the National Policing Improvement Agency, supporting the Association of Chief Police Officers, could share best practice as soon as possible.

Victim and customer care

Pledge points 9 and 10 relate to victims of crime and customer care. The Pledge sets out that victims of crime have the right to be kept informed of progress and to agree how often this should take place, but certainly at least every month if they so wish and for as long as is reasonable.

Pledge point 10 refers to the commitment to acknowledge any dissatisfaction with the service an individual has received, within 24 hours of reporting it. An opportunity should be provided for anyone who is dissatisfied to:

- talk in person to someone about their concerns; and
- agree what will be done about these concerns and how quickly.

If the Pledge is not fulfilled, there is a commitment to provide an explanation as to why it has not been possible to deliver the high standards of policing to which the service aspires on that occasion.

Our findings so far

We found some very good examples of the care and approach to victims. One force visited holds Beacon status in delivering the Victims' Charter.

Supervisors monitor the victims' code of practice and some forces have implemented clear standards of performance conduct and professional behaviour. There was also evidence of holding teams and individuals to account if necessary. We are also aware of some developing ideas such as 'customer contact contracts'.

Overall, we found that there was a clear commitment, once a person had been charged, to provide continuing contact with victims and generally high levels of service were provided by victim care units. However, there appears to be a lack of consistency or effective arrangements to monitor compliance earlier in an investigation.

A few forces which are particularly strong in terms of their approach to Citizen Focus policing encourage feedback from the public and use that feedback to improve their services. Critical to this approach is that the public can make their comments relatively easily, for example by using weblinks from the police force home page, from quality of service pages or from the Pledge itself.

There are some examples of forces taking quick action to address any dissatisfaction or concerns. HMIC found that while all forces have well-established systems for dealing with what has been traditionally referred to as 'complaints against the police', there was little evidence of a systematic approach to managing general dissatisfaction.

We found it particularly challenging to find any robust evidence of forces acknowledging dissatisfaction with the service within 24 hours of it being reported. This will be a further area for testing during inspection but it is felt at this stage that where any systems exist, they are currently embryonic.

It is important that the service recognises that as long as this remains the case, forces are missing an opportunity.

About half of all complaint allegations relate to incivility, yet it was apparent from some focus groups run by HMIC that there was little local awareness about which issues were being raised by local people in terms of dissatisfaction – or how to resolve them.

It is important that this information is available to front-line officers and communicated quickly in order that they may respond and improve the levels of service and the perceptions of policing.

Overall context

Leadership and governance

The commitment to the Policing Pledge was given in 2008 that it would be delivered by the end of December 2008. The Association of Police Authorities (APA) and police authorities locally have an important role in holding forces to account and in encouraging partnership support.

We found that there was strong leadership and personal commitment to the Pledge at chief officer and operational level.

Communication about the Pledge was introduced very rapidly so it is not surprising that some gaps in delivery were identified.

The service is now measured against one key target: increasing public confidence that the police and local councils are dealing with crime and anti-social behaviour. Delivering on the Policing Pledge is identified as an important step towards realising improvement in confidence. It is important that forces understand the progress they are making and some form of monitoring of each aspect of the Pledge is therefore essential. So far, few are monitoring delivery of what has been pledged.

Progress would be even faster, if forces learn from each other – an example would be that of using common IT programmes to support the monitoring of the Pledge.

There was considerable variation about the overall governance arrangements. Again, it is important that police authorities are able to hold their force to account and likewise, within the force, it is important that the Pledge is not seen to be only for Neighbourhood Policing staff or contact management centres – it needs to be fully integrated across all business areas.

Although the title is ‘Policing Pledge’, it is absolutely critical in terms of overall confidence that partners are brought into all the work associated with making neighbourhoods safer. This is an area of work that is currently under-developed.

Strategy and policy

Comprehensive communication strategies were evident in all the forces we visited, often co-ordinated with recent national publicity under the ‘Justice Seen, Justice Done’ programme. Awareness and understanding of the Pledge varied. Contact management and Neighbourhood Policing staff were very knowledgeable and enthusiastic. Elsewhere in the organisation, awareness levels were below acceptable.

Communications targeted at the public were quite proactive in some areas but remain to be fully exploited in others, and this will be tested during inspection.

Forces would be advised to check their overall communications strategy and processes for monitoring delivery of the Policing Pledge.

Early conclusions

The Policing Pledge is a promise to the public about the standards of service they can expect.

The Police Service is already starting to implement the 10 points of the Pledge – but as we point out, awareness, understanding and implementation of the Pledge does vary across the seven police forces visited.

We found that many staff were extremely enthusiastic and committed.

However, there are a number of areas that need to improve, including:

- having a proper consistent communications programme for the public;
- using reality testing and sharing best practice much more dynamically;
- assessing and assuring the amount of ‘visibility’ time that policing teams spend in neighbourhoods;
- better contacts with victims before an alleged suspect is charged (although higher levels of service were provided post-charge); and
- better local awareness about issues raised locally as priorities and the reasons for dissatisfaction – also feedback on how they have been resolved.

The Policing Pledge is a commitment to the public. Early signs from HMIC scoping work are encouraging; however, there is no room for complacency. Forces need to ‘step up a gear’ and focus their efforts to ensure that the Pledge becomes a reality.

Introduction

The Policing Pledge is part of a radical programme of reform set out in the Government's Policing Green Paper, *From the Neighbourhood to the National*.^{*} Designed as a national framework, it can be tailored locally to meet the needs of neighbourhoods. Simply put, it is a 'deal' that explains clearly what the public can expect from the police.

Aimed at increasing public confidence and building on a citizen-focused policing approach, it sets standards for how much time will be spent on the beat, easy ways to contact local neighbourhood teams and clear response times to calls and incidents.

Through engagement at local meetings and provision of information on crime and policing issues, it will give people a greater voice in how crime is tackled in their area and the ability to hold their police more to account.

Following negotiations between the Home Office and the Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO), Chief Constables agreed that all forces would sign up to these minimum standards of delivery by 31 December 2008.

To measure performance, one top-down central target – 'to increase public confidence that the police and local council are dealing with local crime and anti-social behaviour' – is being introduced.

The recently launched public information campaign under the banner 'Justice Seen, Justice Done' aims to raise public awareness about the service provided by the police. The Police Service therefore needs to ensure that, having committed itself to the aims of the Pledge, it can deliver against them.

Methodology

In January 2009 HMIC started a dynamic programme of work to assess progress made by forces on delivering their Policing Pledge. The first stage comprised:

- a desk-top review of force websites;
- telephone and email contact with Neighbourhood Policing Teams (NPTs), professional standards departments (PSDs) and contact centres; and
- telephone calls to chief officer 'leads' in all forces.

^{*} Home Office, *From the Neighbourhood to the National: Policing our Communities Together* Government Green Paper July 2008. Available at: http://police.homeoffice.gov.uk/publications/police-reform/Policing_GP

This was followed up with visits to seven forces: Avon and Somerset Constabulary, Cumbria Constabulary, Essex Police, the Metropolitan Police Service (MPS), Northamptonshire Police, South Wales Police and West Yorkshire Police.

To enable lessons to be learned and to encourage the spread of good practice, this document outlines some broad general findings and emerging themes from this early work. Highlighting strengths, work in progress and areas for development, it has informed the development of the methodology for an inspection of all 43 forces between April and October 2009. Later work will provide for a more in-depth inspection and assessment of whether and to what extent the Pledge commitments are delivered in reality.

Report Findings

The Policing Pledge points are considered from page 30. The scoping work also reviewed aspects considered essential for the Policing Pledge to be understood and delivery sustained in the long term. These are leadership and governance, strategy and policy, to include communications and use of resources, and performance management and monitoring.

Leadership and Governance

Delivery of the Policing Pledge will not be achieved without leadership at all levels driving introduction, embedding its philosophy and ensuring the necessary cultural and organisational change to meet the standards set. Robust and accountable governance arrangements with clear chief officer leadership and police authority oversight are essential, as is commitment from strategic partners.

Strengths

- Against a backdrop of tight timescales and using initial ACPO guidance, forces have adopted and published their Pledge and in most forces this is clearly displayed. Chief officer leads have been appointed and their priority has been to introduce and communicate the Pledge. Forces visited have undertaken gap analysis, implemented action plans and started diagnostic work around monitoring and review. Forces acknowledge that they are not yet 100% compliant but are working towards that aim.
- There is clear strategic 'buy-in' and an understanding about the Pledge. The website review revealed examples of strong leadership and personal commitment to the Pledge. High-profile launches, use of video and press releases, personal statements by Chief Constables and police authority chairs and signed Pledges were all in evidence, helping to mark the significance of providing, for the first time, information on exactly what the public can expect from their police service.
- Visits to seven forces reinforced the commitment evidenced in the website review, where strong Chief Constable support and clear direction was apparent, evidenced by:
 - Chief Constables' personal commitment through presentations to staff;
 - clear governance arrangements through established boards and groups;
 - detailed project plans in place with clear timelines, milestones and progress reports;
 - regular meetings with police leads and stakeholders; and
 - close alignment with force mission and values.
- Telephone calls to ACPO leads ascertained that, across the 43 forces, a range of governance arrangements are in place. Fourteen forces have established new working groups specifically to address the Pledge while ten use existing structures, usually

Citizen Focus or Neighbourhood Policing groups, to deliver and monitor progress. Six forces have used a 'phased' approach, establishing new groups to ensure implementation by the deadline date, with these now being absorbed into existing governance arrangements or moved into an 'embedding' phase.

- Police authority involvement and oversight varied across the seven forces visited. The more engaged police authorities displayed a range of strengths to include:
 - joint chairing of strategic programme boards by ACPO and the police authority;
 - representation on delivery groups and attendance at joint action groups;
 - monitoring of Pledge performance through performance and audit committees;
 - regular discussions between chief officers and chairs of police authorities;
 - the Policing Pledge visible on the police authority website and/or joint badging of the Pledge;
 - strong ACPO/police authority support for the confidence agenda and the transition from neighbourhood policing to neighbourhood management; and
 - commitment to the Pledge and customer service by both police and the authority in strategic plans for 2009 to 2012.
- A few effective strategic partnership approaches are in evidence. For example, in Northamptonshire,

negotiation by chief officers with local authority chief executives has resulted in a county-wide agreement to adopt the police and local council confidence target and actively work together to achieve it.

Work in progress

- A variety of governance approaches was evident. Forces use a range of overlapping programme boards covering diversity issues, Neighbourhood Policing and Citizen Focus, which makes for a 'crowded' arena. In three of the forces visited (Essex, MPS and Avon and Somerset), there is a move towards establishing overarching 'confidence' boards into which various work streams can be fed, and this has the potential to provide for greater clarity and a more consistent approach.
- Introduction of the Policing Pledge has provided opportunities for collaboration. Following a co-ordinated joint launch of the Pledge by the five East Midlands forces (Leicestershire, Lincolnshire, Derbyshire, Nottinghamshire and Northamptonshire), a peer review group has been established to review implementation. They will establish progress in developing a monitoring regime of each Pledge element and will identify good practice across the region.
- In South Wales, the introduction of 101 – the single non-emergency number – exemplifies the work of a strategic partnership which is delivering a joined-up service, providing easily accessible advice, action and information to the public on

community issues. Cardiff Council has worked with South Wales Police to receive non-emergency calls direct from the public, with a commitment to it being rolled out more widely across South Wales in 2009/10, providing for much improved service on neighbourhood priorities.

Areas for development

- A silo approach to implementing the Pledge was often evident. Some forces have divided the Pledge into its constituent parts and made relevant departments responsible for delivery, while others have viewed it as 'business as usual' and have not developed specific delivery mechanisms nor an overarching action plan.
- The website review showed links between nearly all force and police authority websites but, on most police authority websites, reference to the Pledge was hard to locate and confined to inclusion within reports, in minutes of meetings or in other documents. Publication of and visible support for the Pledge was demonstrated on a minority of police authority websites. Websites could be used to better demonstrate how the authority will scrutinise forces and for greater engagement with the public about the police services they want to see delivered.
- There was little evidence of active strategic engagement on the Pledge between forces and partners. During the visits to forces, chief officers spoke of efforts to inform and engage partners to support delivery of the Pledge and to embrace the confidence agenda. There are isolated pockets of good practice as shown above, but getting 'sign-up' from local authorities is a significant challenge.
- It is apparent that the Pledge is yet to be fully integrated across business areas. Public-facing documents contained different promises to those in the Pledge, for example in respect of responding to messages to NPTs and to expressions of dissatisfaction within 24 hours: comments such as 'we will respond as soon as possible' or 'we will respond within five days' and warnings saying 'this site is not monitored 24 hours a day' were found.

Overall, while there was good evidence of commitment by chief officers and police authorities, leadership and governance is not currently integrated across business areas at every level or engaging all parts of the organisation. Police authority scrutiny must be robust and consistent and the greater engagement of partners needs to be secured. The service will need to encourage that demonstrable commitment.

To quote one senior officer:

"The Pledge hasn't arrived with local authorities yet."

The officer added that any tangible examples of the Pledge being taken forward by Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships or Community Safety Groups through joint problem solving were "in their infancy".

Strategy and Policy

A clear strategy is necessary to deliver the Pledge – one that is communicated effectively both internally and externally. Staff need to have a good understanding of their role and be confident, demonstrating the necessary skills to deliver Pledge promises.

Strengths

- The Policing Pledge is a national Pledge, intended for local delivery, and forces have developed it in a range of ways to address local needs. In the main, forces have used the ACPO ten-point Pledge, either in its entirety or with some modification. Good examples include:
 - incorporating force and police authority crests, straplines and action shots of police and staff in the community, to provide impact (Leicestershire);
 - placing the ten points of the Pledge within themes, therefore improving understanding (West Mercia);
 - expressing the Pledge in terms of what it means for the public and how the force is going to deliver it (Lancashire);
 - integrating existing initiatives into the Pledge, notably the force 'discretion' project, and using the Pledge to encourage communities to get involved (Surrey);
 - use of a range of hyperlinks to web pages for NPTs, contact management, performance information, victims of crime and complaints, providing clear signposting and serving to integrate the Pledge across business areas (Hampshire); and
 - adding further Pledges. In response to poor customer satisfaction, MPS has introduced an additional Policing Pledge of its own 'to contact people who have been involved in a road traffic collision within ten working days'.
- In all the forces visited, procedures for consulting and engaging with communities and individuals to help inform service delivery were evident. Use is being made of the National Policing Improvement Agency (NPIA) *Citizen Focus Policing Hallmarks* guidance to help draw together a framework to provide a more structured approach to customer-focused delivery. Northamptonshire has recently completed a major

consultation exercise asking specific questions about the Pledge.

- Comprehensive communications strategies were evident in all the forces visited, often co-ordinated with recent national publicity for the 'Justice Seen, Justice Done' programme. Use has been made of a wide range of communication methods to publicise and raise awareness of the Pledge – for example, posters, in-force newspapers, attachments to pay slips and through the intranet, and externally through press releases, via the internet, within published police plans, at public

meetings, and, in one force (West Yorkshire), by buying advertising space on local buses.

Work in progress

- The development of local police Pledges will provide a higher level of engagement and greater understanding. Essex, one of the first forces to launch its Pledge, was distributing its local Pledges at the time of the HMIC visit. Avon and Somerset is not far behind and, in South Wales, local Pledges can be viewed on the community portal, ourbobby.com.

Developing practice

Essex Police – development of local Pledges

Essex Police has introduced a local Pledge. A four-page leaflet/mail shot containing photos and names of NPT staff, a 'contact us' section and a section seeking comments and concerns has been published and was being distributed during the HMIC visit. The back page outlines the full Policing Pledge. Innovative ways of ensuring that the leaflets are kept up to date with team changes, progress on priorities and introduction of new priorities are being considered.

Areas for development

- Staff awareness and understanding of the Pledge varied across the forces visited with generally high levels of awareness among staff in communication centres and NPTs. Elsewhere, knowledge about the Pledge was mixed and there was little understanding of how delivery of the Pledge will impact on confidence levels and, in turn, on levels of engagement with and support for police.
- Skills levels varied considerably. It was evident from focus groups and visits to community meetings that skills such as organising and running meetings, the ability to present and how best to communicate on the web – for example, writing blogs, newsletters and updates – need to be further developed. At one meeting, a younger attendee provided NPT staff with some written community intelligence which, had it not been for HMIC intervention, would have been left in the hall at the end of the meeting.

- One officer had been appointed as a neighbourhood specialist with just three months' service. In another force, there was no training day scheduled for NPT staff and no training needs analysis apparent. Performance and development review objectives did not necessarily reflect the NPT staff community role, having a balance between a more qualitative community focus and the more quantitative crime reduction and detection requirement. In response to a negative comment in one focus group about NPT staff having to get detections, a neighbourhood sergeant who clearly understood this summed it up by saying:

"You can walk and chew gum"

suggesting to the group that as a neighbourhood officer you can be community focused but also crime minded.

- Much use is made of the intranet and the internet to communicate internally and externally, and the website review noted a wide range in the standard of design of websites. While some are impressive, others are poorly signposted, lack visual images or interactive tools, contain out-of-date information and are just not 'user friendly'. Websites need to be more sophisticated, easier to navigate and responsive to community needs. Collaboration between forces may be the way forward to obtain the necessary investment, quality support and increased capacity.

- Communicating performance against the Pledge was not much in evidence, and neither were the steps being taken to improve performance where forces are not meeting the standards promised. Where forces were performing well against targets, for example in meeting the 80% target for being on their patch, little evidence was found on websites or within force publications of this achievement.

Forces have made a good start in implementing and communicating their strategies for delivering the Pledge but need to ensure broader understanding across the organisation. Where performance is good, they need to market this. Where they are not achieving, they need to be communicating to the public what steps they are taking to improve. Human resources and training policies need to reflect the new, more open and accessible policing environment promoted by the Pledge, one in which police will be increasingly held to account by their local communities.

Performance

Monitoring and Delivery

The main national target concerns confidence. However, forces do need a monitoring regime to understand business delivery and progress against their Pledge. Forces are exploring how best to monitor delivery against the standards set and incorporate this into existing performance management regimes, alongside a suite of other diagnostic indicators linked to public satisfaction and local confidence. This is not necessarily about collecting more data, but making use of existing data and quality assurance through dip sampling, as well as using more qualitative measures.

Strengths

- Of the seven forces visited, two had specific frameworks being established to monitor their delivery on their Pledge. Cumbria Constabulary, for example, has reviewed its performance framework and moved to a balanced scorecard approach to deliver increased confidence in the police and local authority.
- HMIC is aware that Kent, while not part of the scoping visit, is one of a number of forces working with the NPJA to help develop effective monitoring for assessing and improving delivery on the Pledge. It has set out a range of measures for each point of the Pledge, together with the overarching 'confidence' measure. Where information is not available, it intends to employ a 'mystery shopper' approach and dip sampling. The matrix of measures will be updated monthly.

Areas for development

- It was evident that, for some forces, there is an air of confusion as to where confidence and quality sits within performance. A balanced approach is required, where a necessary focus is maintained on reduction and detection of crime in conjunction with the qualitative citizen focus and the overall confidence in the police and local authority.
- While forces are aware of the risks attached to not delivering on the promises made, not all forces have included loss of confidence/failure to deliver Pledge promises within force and/or local risk registers.

HMIC recognises that any framework implemented needs to be proportionate and not overly bureaucratic. It is impossible to progress delivery of the Policing Pledge without some form of performance management and monitoring being put in place. This is particularly important given the need to inform the public on how well the Pledge is being delivered.

Pledge Delivery

Fairness, Dignity and Respect

Pledge Point 1

Always treat you fairly with dignity and respect, ensuring you have fair access to our services at a time that is reasonable and suitable for you.

Access to police services is provided in many ways, including via the internet, through front desks at police stations, in the community at meetings and through day-to-day contact with NPTs, and by phone. It is incumbent on every member of the service to ensure that the public are treated professionally and courteously. This is about the customer experience and building good relationships with communities to enable them to feel confident about engaging with the police. Where things are not going well, forces need to find out why and put them right.

Strengths

- Each force visited had developed a clear vision with a strong commitment to Citizen Focus. Most have a set of values helping to underpin the Pledge and promoting a customer service ethos. These are communicated through easy to remember straplines, namely:
 - ‘Customer First’ (Essex);
 - ‘Every contact leaves a trace’ (Avon and Somerset);
 - ‘Making every contact count’ (South Wales);
 - ‘Making the Difference’ (Northamptonshire);
 - ‘Excel’ (West Yorkshire);
 - ‘Safer, Stronger Cumbria: Keep our public safe, satisfied and reassured’ (Cumbria); and
 - ‘Promise’ (MPS).
- Forces visited had undertaken a range of reviews to improve services to the public, for example:
 - PACT (Police and Community – Together) processes, and the single non-emergency call centre in South Wales Police;

- contact management in Cumbria and West Yorkshire;
- local policing in West Yorkshire, strategically developing NPTs to include evaluating initiatives;
- increasing access through third party reporting centres in Cumbria, to enable people to report crime and raise community concerns; and
- customer service investment in Essex.

■ Well-established quality assurance procedures exist in contact centres to check staff are meeting the standards set. Increasingly, forces are widening the scope of their approach by making quality checks a part of the supervisor's role. Where this is most visible is in quality call backs to victims of crime to monitor service delivery. The Customer First approach in Essex is one such programme; by calling back one in three crime victims they check standards of politeness and adherence to policy and use the feedback to inform service delivery.

■ The website review provided the opportunity to look at sites from the public perspective – how easy is it to find out about and access local policing services and how will you be treated? More informative, visually impactful and easily navigable websites contain:

- comprehensive details of police stations and local bases, phone numbers, opening times and directions – also email addresses and online forms;

- information in a range of languages and with 'listen to' or 'browse aloud' facilities offered;
- the Google 'translate' facility or similar auto-translation facility;
- minicom telephone number and availability of language line;
- the force's vision and values widely displayed;
- easily accessible equality and diversity sections which provide a range of policy documentation, advice and links to relevant organisations; and
- plenty of visual images reflecting a diverse workforce and community.

Work in progress

■ In Avon and Somerset a joint venture company has been formed, Southwest One. The police, Somerset County Council and Taunton Deane Borough Council are jointly working to modernise support services and improve access to and delivery of customer-facing services, such as enquiries received by phone and at front counters. A first step is to better understand demand and build consistent performance data about when and why people are accessing services. The long-term goal is to bring a more consistent approach to each interaction with a citizen, whether at a police station, with an officer on the street or on the phone.

- Ensuring that services meet the needs of diverse communities will be key to achieving this Pledge point. Forces and police authorities have established consultation processes and these now need to incorporate Pledge commitments. One force visited, Northamptonshire, has made some progress on this.

Developing practice

Case study

Northamptonshire Police – Consultation exercise to establish policing priorities and public perception of the Pledge to establish how it should be interpreted to meet the needs of local people.

Between December 2008 and January 2009 a joint consultation exercise by the force and the authority took place. In addition to surveys and large-scale public events, focus groups were held with specific minority communities and seldom-heard members of the public. These aimed to provide a more qualitative and inclusive approach, finding out about the reactions to aspects of the Policing Pledge of older people, young people, including offenders, and new and emerging communities.

The focus groups enabled in-depth feedback to be collected about policing priorities, aspects of the Pledge and the quality and equality of service issues. Attendees of the focus groups were very positive about how they felt their views had been heard.

Respondents consulted were asked to give feedback about Pledge point 2 (providing information about NPTs) and Pledge point 8 (providing monthly updates on progress). Two-thirds of respondents demonstrated interest in receiving information, with most interest focused on ‘what action police and our partners are taking to make the neighbourhood safer’ and ‘information on specific crimes and what happened to those brought to justice’. The three most popular ways of receiving information were via the force website, local newspapers and *Homebeat*, the police newspaper.

In this exercise, comprehensive feedback about community policing, visibility and accessibility was obtained which has been collated and analysed to help inform future service delivery. The intention is to have greater partnership involvement in similar future exercises.

Areas for development

- There was little evidence found of Pledge points being translated into other languages. Avon and Somerset has used Polish officers to translate the Pledge and West Yorkshire has consulted with communities to identify specific language requirements (Bengali, Urdu, Punjabi, Polish and potentially Chinese) in addition to English for publishing the Pledge.
- It is clear from the review of websites and visits to forces that communicating key messages to those for whom English is not their first language is not actively being considered by many forces.
- It is also clear that there is not one common design service standard; ease of navigation and usability of the sites are highly variable. It is seldom evident that the design is driven by the needs of the customer.
- Treating people fairly with dignity and respect is an overarching theme of the Policing Pledge. Nationally, the Independent Police Complaints Commission identifies incivility as one of the highest causes for dissatisfaction. Each of the forces had clear statements about or expectations of how to serve individuals and conform to standards of conduct. They were not, however, able to consistently demonstrate the capture of expressions of dissatisfaction to assist 'service recovery' and support organisational learning.
- While access by phone at times of emergency and to switchboards in non-emergencies is generally well managed, secondary call handling – dealing with the issue raised by callers – is often the challenge. A significant amount of work has been undertaken by the forces to improve access; however, there remains considerable scope for improvement.

While forces are beginning to employ more sophisticated techniques to identify what customers actually want, there is a need to demonstrate more obviously and effectively that they are providing fair access and that they are taking account of the needs of diverse communities.

Community Engagement and Consultation

Building on the neighbourhood policing agenda, citizens should have ready access to information about their local police who need to be highly visible and respond promptly to telephone calls and emails. Opportunities need to be provided for the public to engage productively with police and agree local priorities at monthly meetings; they should also be updated on local crime and policing issues so they have a better understanding of what is going on in their area. This is broadly covered under Pledge points 2, 3, 4, 7 and 8.

Pledge Point 2

Provide you with information so you know who your dedicated Neighbourhood Policing Team (NPT) are, where they are based, how to contact them and how to work with them.

Strengths

- All forces have a facility on their websites for the public to establish who their NPT is. This ranges from a postcode search to searches using street names, team names, areas or using an interactive map. Similarly, all sites give some means of contacting NPTs. In a number of forces, details of staff and officers' mobile phone

numbers and email addresses are given. Elsewhere, forces offer a team email address and/or an invitation to ring the force non-emergency number to ask for a specific team.

- Details of NPTs are also well advertised on posters, in force and local newspapers and in local strategic locations such as libraries.
- The work and role of NPTs are generally well explained, often accompanied by messages from senior officers promoting and supporting Neighbourhood Policing, and there is clear branding of Neighbourhood Policing in a number of forces. The 'Our Bobby' scheme with the strapline 'Our Area, Our Police, Our Say' in South Wales is just one good example.
- While there remain some gaps in the photo gallery on web pages, photos are now of higher quality, may be of teams or individuals, and some are accompanied by informative pen pictures. Earlier concerns by some staff about publication of photos have been, in the main, addressed and there are examples of videos to introduce team members using local webcams.

Areas for development

- The website review found that not all Neighbourhood Policing web pages show where NPTs are based and details of key individual networks were not always found. There is also some lack of consistency, ranging from comprehensive coverage on some websites of locations and times of meetings, their purpose and who will be attending, through to basic details giving just the time and date when staff would be available.

- While some websites actively encourage community involvement, and there are opportunities to express views electronically, most do not have this facility. Generally, NPT web pages are now much more informative, but forces need to ensure a consistent and comprehensive approach by way of audit, dip sampling or peer review.

Pledge Point 3

Ensure your NPT and other police patrols are visible and on your patch at times when they will be most effective and when you tell us you most need them. We will ensure your team are not taken away from neighbourhood business more than is absolutely necessary. They will spend at least 80% of their time visibly working in your neighbourhood, tackling your priorities. Staff turnover will be minimised.

Strengths

- The forces visited had clear abstraction policies which are subject to regular review. NPT staff in one force reported that they are seldom if ever abstracted and that they expected to be in post for two years. Another force, following review of their abstraction policy, has set a new and demanding target of NPTs being on their patch for 95% of the time (but see 'Areas for development').
- NPT staff have good knowledge of the Policing Pledge, understand their role in delivering this aspect of it, and are enthusiastic and committed to being available to their communities and to tackling local priorities.
- Good use of technology is helping to achieve greater visibility, with BlackBerry devices and personal mobile phones being issued to staff and computer terminals located in libraries and other key locations. This enables staff to be both 'on their patch' and available to 'multi-task'.

Work in progress

- Forces are developing ways to ensure greater visibility in line with local needs, a good example being the development of electronic patrol plans in Avon and Somerset which encourages the involvement of 'other' police patrols in managing neighbourhood priorities.
- Avon and Somerset are providing increasing support for NPTs to achieve greater visibility through the use of Police Community Support Officer (PCSO) support staff.

Developing practice

Case study

Avon and Somerset Constabulary – Patrol plan guidance and electronic patrol plans

To deliver increased visibility and reassure communities, patrol plan guidance has been developed. Patrols need to ensure that they are visible at key times and be able to respond to crime trends, predicted criminal activity or intelligence received. Awareness of local priorities underpins the patrol patterns, as does the need to ensure that NPTs are on their patch 80% of the time.

Plans are electronically generated and are colour coded with 'red sector' times when all patrol staff are required in high-visibility or priority locations. There are mandatory out-of-station periods with suggested patrol points to maximise visibility and reassurance – and these are included in community beat profiles.

Developed locally, the plans differ across different divisions and there is work in progress to introduce corporacy and consistency. Full roll out is due for spring 2009.

The plans are being monitored through intrusive supervision and evaluated through public feedback surveys. Anticipated results include improved police visibility and confidence. Plans are accessible to all staff, including those not on NPTs – for example, Roads Policing.

Patrol plans are regarded positively by NPTs. Response and other operational units are now clearly seen as helping to tackle local priorities and NPTs feel much less isolated.

Developing practice

Case study

Avon and Somerset Constabulary – PCSO support role

A relatively new role, but one that is bearing fruit is that of PCSO support staff. As part of the NPT, support staff help the team deliver on their aim of increasing public confidence and satisfaction.

The job role is wide ranging and includes administrative support. Staff have a link to corporate communications for the updating of NPT web pages. They will arrange appointments through a new system for non-urgent calls, monitoring these through a mailbox system. They also maintain community profiles.

The hours of work have been re-negotiated with staff associations to accommodate 8am to 10pm, seven days a week.

Acting as a point of contact for the NPTs for both the public and internally, the role is highly valued by police and PCSOs alike, enabling NPTs to increase visible patrol time.

The PCSO support role is also seen as contributing to improved demand management and compliance with national standards (quality of service commitment and the victims' code of practice) contributing significantly to delivery of Pledge promises.

Areas for development

- Forces rely on monitoring their abstraction policies to gauge the visibility of NPT staff. In one force there was confusion among staff as to whether sickness was counted as an abstraction, in another the 80% visibility refers to the availability of the team rather than to individuals. A question was also raised as to whether team members working in plain clothes on neighbourhood priorities were counted as being 'visible'. It might be more helpful to have a 'visibility' policy and agree with local communities as to what they understand is meant by this term and what their expectations are.
- Monitoring compliance with abstraction policies presents a challenge for forces. Currently there is reliance on activity analysis, with some forces looking to move towards 'tracker' systems that will automatically log activity.

- No performance management information was easily accessible on the web pages viewed to say whether or not the 80% visibility target is being achieved. Forces are missing a trick here and, where they are regularly achieving this, they would benefit by advertising their good performance.
- Little information was found about visibility or alignment to NPTs of other police patrols, with just three forces mentioning the responsibility of response teams to Neighbourhood Policing or Pledge aspirations on their websites.

Pledge Point 4

Respond to every message directed to your NPT within 24 hours and, where necessary, provide a more detailed response as soon as we can.

Strengths

- Strong commitment shown from NPT staff to respond to calls and emails in 24 hours supported by experimentation with new systems and processes to achieve this.
- Good use of 'mystery shoppers' by Essex Police has helped improve performance in this area.

Case study

Essex Police – Improvements to 24-hour response to messages to NPTs

Essex Police are developing a range of ways to assess whether they are delivering on the promises they have made to their public. To check that messages directed to neighbourhood teams via email or telephone are being responded to in 24 hours, the customer services department employs two staff to undertake 'mystery shopping'. Results are fed back to divisional superintendents responsible for quality of service issues.

In November 2008, 85% of telephone calls and 74.7% of emails were responded to within the 24-hour period. By January 2009, this had improved to 96% and 84% respectively, in part due to the introduction of a system that results in greater ownership by teams, and by the issue of a team mobile phone that is passed from one 'duty' NPT member to the next.

Areas for development

- Email messages were sent to the 35 forces displaying an email address for their NPTs. The email identified itself as coming from HMIC. Of the 31 delivered, a mix of responses was received: 15 replies were received within 24 hours, although two of these were automated. The longest response took over eight days.
- Other than within the Pledge itself, there was little reference on websites to NPTs responding within a certain time frame. One NPT in West Yorkshire did promise to respond in 24 hours, others posted caveats that responses would be 'as soon as possible' or that there was no 24-hour facility to monitor emails.
- Forces were unable in most cases to provide robust evidence that this Pledge point is being delivered. To ensure a 24-hour response they need to have policy and procedure clearly laid out to explain how they will meet this aspect of the Pledge. Consideration needs to be given to written call logs within NPTs, and to making clear the ownership of and response to calls. There is a need for policy and procedures in respect of contact mechanisms, including voicemail and response protocols. Supervisors need to check regularly for compliance. While there was some evidence of this, it was neither consistent nor universal.

Pledge Point 7

Arrange regular public meetings to agree your priorities, at least once a month, giving you a chance to meet your local team with other members of your community. These will include opportunities such as surgeries, street briefings and mobile police station visits which will be arranged to meet local needs and requirements.

Strengths

- It was apparent, both from the website review and by visits to forces, that there is a wide range and frequency of public meetings to include community panels, street briefings, surgeries, PACT meetings and 'Pizza and Cola' meetings. About a third of web pages viewed showed published meetings for the next three months, and innovation was shown by police and partners in making use of already established meetings to include discussion on neighbourhood priorities.
- An integral part of the visits to forces was attendance at PACT meetings by the inspection team. The better meetings could evidence the following:
 - the meeting is well attended having been advertised effectively;

- introductions are made, the purpose of the meeting is explained and the meeting well structured;
- an easily accessible location with suitable facilities;
- professional, smart appearance and conduct of all police attending;
- a clear agenda and some formal record taken;
- an effective and skilled chair;
- literature that is not police-specific but which includes partners;
- systems for agreeing priorities that are fair and transparent;
- effective report back on priorities agreed; and
- contextual crime updates provided with actions on key themes.

Areas for development

- Forces need to do more than just ‘tick the box’ by holding monthly meetings. They need to provide quality and effectiveness. Visits to public meetings by HMIC indicated that the skills levels of those organising and running meetings varied. Some meetings were well organised: the purpose of the meeting was clearly explained, minutes were taken and local crime and policing issues were effectively presented. At others it was not clear who people were and crime figures were presented in an inconsistent way with inadequate explanations.

- Local priorities need to be more specific; currently, many are vague and general. Forces should consider giving more detailed explanations on their websites of how priorities were decided, how long they will run for and more information about action taken and progress made. Additionally, forces could provide a library of previous priorities for web users to see.

Pledge Point 8

Provide monthly updates on progress, and on local crime and policing issues. This will include the provision of crime maps, information on specific crimes and what happened to those brought to justice, details of what action we and our partners are taking to make your neighbourhood safer and information on how your force is performing.

Strengths

The website review highlighted some innovative ways of providing relevant and timely monthly updates of progress on priorities and on local crime issues. These include:

- ‘You said – We did’ feature and video updates on NPT pages (for example, Norfolk);

- local crime and policing issues featuring in newsletters and blogs;
 - detailed news item on the North Wales Police's home page about the imprisonment of a local man for fraud – an investigation after complaints from local people prompting action to attain an anti-social behaviour order;
 - Police Direct – a high-tech messaging service with updates on crime and policing issues from the Suffolk Constabulary; and
 - monthly podcasts by NPT inspectors in Northamptonshire.
- One force has had particular success with the provision of local electronic bulletins.

Case study

Cambridgeshire Constabulary – e-cops

By providing their postcode, the public in Cambridgeshire can sign up to e-cops, an email update on local crime and policing issues. Developed in-house and rolled out force-wide three years ago, the system has 12,000 subscribers across the county. Neighbourhood police staff compile their own messages, often as a blog, and sign them, giving them a personal and local feel. Messages can be sent to a street or group of streets if there is a particular problem in an area.

Corporate communications regularly dip sample messages and provide advice and training for staff on how to use the system and communicate effectively. Staff are encouraged to talk about local agreed priorities and what they and partners are doing about them.

Subscribers can respond to the emails, and in this way valuable intelligence has been received and a real dialogue between police and public is apparent.

A satisfaction survey showed that the public value it and that it has increased confidence in the police. The system is being refined and further developed but has already become an integral part of neighbourhood management in Cambridgeshire.

- All forces have introduced crime mapping. Maps are easy to find on most websites, with good links from the home or NPT pages and clear signposting with small icons to catch viewers' attention. Some 30 forces are signed up to the RKH tool which uses the Ordnance Survey map. The remaining 13 forces have their own bespoke system. West Mercia, having launched crime maps, invites feedback from users by way of an electronic survey.

Areas for development

- There was little evidence found of any systematic way of feeding back information on specific crimes, what happened to those brought to justice or details of what action police and partners are taking to make areas safer.
- In terms of how well a force is performing, particularly against delivery of the Pledge, there is little evidence of this being available at the local level. Where performance information is available, it tends to be crime-related, is often provided at force or district level, and is not always up to date or provided in a user-friendly style. Forces need to become more adept at feeding back performance against the Pledge. They need to tell people where they are meeting their Pledge promises, and where they are not, and outline how they intend to improve.

Neighbourhood Policing is the area where forces are strongest in their Pledge delivery but, as can be seen from the above, much work remains to be done. Forces need to provide greater visibility and work towards delivering more consistent quality of service. Procedures for providing a 24-hour response need to be developed and engagement with partners, particularly criminal justice partners, must be pursued to find ways of delivering information and updates in line with Pledge requirements.

Contact Management and Response

For effective contact management, forces need to have highly skilled staff, strong adherence to national call-handling standards and good data to support a robust performance management regime, which in turn will inform improvement plans. Providing a timely response within the timescales set requires good resource management.

Pledge Point 5

Aim to answer 999 calls within 10 seconds, deploying to emergencies immediately, giving an estimated time of arrival, getting to you safely and as quickly as possible. In urban areas we will aim to get to you within 15 minutes and in rural areas within 20 minutes.

Most forces already aim to respond to 999 calls and deploy to incidents within the time frames stated. The stress is on the word 'aim', as it is recognised that at times of peak 999 demand, or due to circumstances beyond police control (for example, traffic congestion), these times may not always be met. The overriding principle is to get to calls safely and this should never be compromised for the sake of meeting this aim.

Strengths

- All seven forces visited had well developed performance monitoring within their contact management departments. These form part of a performance management framework and a strong commitment to improve performance was in evidence. Established quality assurance processes were apparent, with guidance provided to call handlers, standards monitored by supervisors and feedback provided. Essex Police in particular had a strong customer service ethos, with a robust quality assurance regime. This is exemplified by a quote from one member of a focus group: "We pride ourselves on the quality we give to our customers."
- The majority of contact management staff spoken to had knowledge of the Pledge and an understanding of the role they have to play in delivering it. Many had received briefings from supervisors, had self-briefed using intranet packages or had attended training sessions on customer care. In South Wales, contact management staff have a training day every ten weeks, and have overlapping shifts to enable detailed daily briefing.
- Despite publicity campaigns and better marketing of non-emergency numbers, all too often members of the public ring 999 for non-emergencies. Two of the forces visited (MPS and South Wales) have made significant progress on reducing 999 demand by introducing and making more widely known a single non-emergency number.

Developing practice

Case study

Metropolitan Police Service – Introduction of new MPS contact number

As a precursor to publication of the MPS Pledge in October 2008, a new MPS contact number was introduced. This makes it easier for people to contact the MPS for non-emergency matters.

Overall demand has remained unaffected, but 999 calls have reduced by about 10% since the launch.

In January 2008, 85.5% of 999 calls were answered in 10 seconds – by January 2009 this had improved to 95.4%.

- Customer relation units were established within one contact centre visited. These offer a service, both to dissatisfied callers trying to resolve any issues and by calling back informants where an officer did not, for any reason, see them and update them. This is helping to better inform the public, reduce repeat calls and quickly resolve any dissatisfaction.

Areas for development

- Force performance on the number of 999 calls answered within the target time is readily available. For the year 2007/08, the average performance among the 41 forces who submitted figures was to answer 91.56% of calls in target time, which means that 8.44% of calls would not have met this Pledge commitment.
- No force visited was currently able to confidently provide an estimated time of arrival to emergency calls. Replies such as 'We aim to be with you in . . .' and giving a timescale and 'We will be with you as soon as possible' are used. In one force the development of an automatic resource location system is under consideration, but evidence of meeting this part of the Pledge is currently elusive.

Pledge Point 6

Answer all non-emergency calls promptly. If attendance is needed, send a patrol giving you an estimated time of arrival, and:

- if you are vulnerable or upset, we will aim to be with you within 60 minutes; and
- if you are calling about an issue that we have agreed with your community will be a neighbourhood priority and attendance is required, we will aim to be with you within 60 minutes.

- Alternatively, if appropriate, we will make an appointment to see you at a time that fits in with your life and within 48 hours.
- If it is agreed that attendance is not necessary, we will give you advice, answer your questions and/or put you in touch with someone who can help.

Strengths

- In South Wales, use of the single 101 number has been further developed to resolve non-emergency calls immediately where possible, and to help ensure that calls relating to neighbourhood priorities are picked up and responded to within 60 minutes.

Case study

South Wales Police – A single non-emergency number, 101

Within South Wales Police, non-emergency calls are received from the public at the occurrence bureau, and from callers in the Cardiff area, via the single non-emergency number 101. Telephone investigators are trained to resolve the call in its entirety where possible, or, if it is not a police matter, refer the caller via direct access to an appropriate agency (for example, DVLA, fire service, the victim support service, noise abatement officer).

Through a postcode search they can access [ourbobby.com](https://www.ourbobby.com), the neighbourhood policing portal, to check if the call relates to a neighbourhood priority. It can be escalated to one requiring a 60-minute response via the Niche or NSPIS system. Call completion will electronically transfer the call to the appropriate control room for resource allocation.

Callers express satisfaction with the service offered – victim satisfaction surveys show 98% satisfaction for first contact. Staff feel empowered to deal with callers' issues and feel that, by being able to deal with neighbourhood priorities, they can provide a high level of customer service and reassurance. Awareness of the 101 number is high, and is helping to reduce the number of 999 calls.

In developing the system, the force is exploring how 101 staff might help provide a central point of contact and monitoring for a 24-hour response to NPTs and customer dissatisfaction/concerns.

- All the forces visited provide guidance to call takers on what constitutes a vulnerable and upset caller. They also allow call takers discretion to make their own professional judgements about whether a caller is vulnerable or upset, overseen by quality checks by supervisors who provide feedback to call handlers.
- Staff within the contact management centres visited were able to access and give advice to callers when they called about a non-police matter, putting callers in touch with relevant agencies who can help. This was particularly well developed in South Wales where the single non-emergency number is in operation.
 - reviewing dispatch processes (in MPS a gap analysis flagged up that supervision was key to improvement);
 - piloting appointments systems (Northamptonshire);
 - realignment of resources to get more officers and PCSOs available to allocate to calls within the desired timescales (Essex);
 - re-grading of calls (emergency, grade 2, scheduled appointments);
 - reviewing communication centre shift patterns to better meet demand; and
 - making significant investment to improve contact management systems.

Work in progress

- A range of ways to manage ‘scheduled appointments’ were witnessed during the scoping visits. One force makes use of a ‘demand car’, NPT staff and traffic officers; another relies heavily on PCSO support staff to arrange and manage an appointments system; and, in the same force, the CID also operates a 48-hour appointments system. Other forces are piloting or introducing appointments systems later this year. It would be fair to say that these are embryonic.
- There was evidence in all forces visited of improvement plans and significant work in progress aimed at improving call and deployment response times. Examples include:
 - reviewing the definitions of what constitutes ‘urban’ and ‘rural’ areas (Avon and Somerset);

Areas for development

- As part of the reality checking process, a call was made to every non-emergency contact centre with the caller introducing himself as from HMIC. Respondents were asked if they had received a briefing on the Pledge, how they would determine the level of vulnerability of the caller, what action would then be taken and how they handle calls relating to neighbourhood issues.
- Most calls were swiftly answered but 13 took over 30 seconds, the longest taking 1 minute, 45 seconds to pick up. Over half of those answering had received a briefing on the Pledge. Questioning and personal judgement were cited as the main ways of deciding about vulnerability, and respondees detailed a range of ways in which they might deal with neighbourhood issues. Few, however,

made mention of the 60-minute response requirement to Neighbourhood Policing priorities.

- A challenge for forces is how to ensure that calls relating to agreed neighbourhood priorities are responded to within 60 minutes. All the forces visited are exploring the best ways to achieve this, including:
 - ensuring that neighbourhood priorities are specific;
 - making priorities available to call-handling staff electronically;
 - briefing staff on the requirements;
 - working to improve and get the best from existing IT; and
 - reconfiguring grading systems to cater for emergency calls, a 60-minute response or a scheduled appointment.
- Monitoring performance, however, is less well advanced, although some progress is being made, for example in Essex where failed 60-minute responses are flagged to the chief officer team.

Developing practice

Case study

Essex Police – Monitoring and responding to calls about neighbourhood priorities

Divisional commanders can select neighbourhood priorities requiring attendance to be flagged for a 60-minute response. An example might be anti-social behaviour, which is common to a number of neighbourhood action panel areas.

A marker is placed on the command and control system, which is triggered by street names, locations or beats, and the call is automatically coded (code 8). When a call comes in, a ‘pop-up’ comments box appears on the screen prompting the call handler to check whether the call is ‘priority’-related. If so, a unit is assigned through the incident management unit to response officers, traffic officers or NPT officers, depending on who is available.

This helps to meet the standard and reassure communities that their concerns are being dealt with. It has also given NPT staff confidence that other force resources have a role to play in tackling local priorities.

Results are monitored semi-automatically on a daily basis and made available for the daily management meeting. Failure to meet the 60-minute response time is fed back to local managers. The system is being refined and baseline performance is being established against which improvements can be monitored. Currently about 75% of code 8 calls are being responded to within 60 minutes.

- Not all command and control systems are geared up to support delivery of this Pledge point. A number of forces use the same command and control system, but appear to be working in isolation. Forces using Storm and similar systems need to collaborate to seek single solutions for the challenges faced.
- The exact impact of delivering the Pledge, while not yet fully known, may have resourcing implications for forces. The scoping team heard from one communications department head who is being asked to make £1.7 million savings in two years which may mean staff reductions; this at a time when the department is being challenged to deliver on Pledge promises. Similarly, while forces are committed to respond to calls within certain timescales, concerns were raised that, at times of peak demand, they may not have sufficient units available.

Improving aspects of performance for contact management and response represents a challenge for many forces. Existing IT systems do not always readily facilitate identification of local policing priorities and forces do not yet have the ability to effectively monitor their 60-minute response, nor do they have a consistent appointments policy. There is a need for more diagnostic work to drive quality from the receipt of the call through to the delivery of the service, as well as a need to develop IT systems to further support delivery.

Victim and Customer Care

Pledge Point 9

If you have been a victim of crime, agree with you how often you would like to be kept informed of progress in your case and for how long. You have the right to be kept informed at least every month if you wish and for as long as is reasonable.

Covered in the main by existing arrangements outlined in the victims' code of practice, Pledge point 9 reaffirms the importance of supporting victims of crime and providing confidence through keeping them informed in a manner and frequency tailored to need. Forces need to have systems in place and staff who take ownership for achieving this.

NB: The limitations of the scoping exercise did not allow for a full examination of victim services – this will be covered in greater depth in the inspection of all 43 forces.

Strengths

- A strong commitment to witnesses and victims being kept informed through close co-operation and joint working between criminal justice departments and the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) was apparent in the forces

visited, but there was also recognition that this is an area with room for improvement. Post-charge, forces report high levels of service being provided to victims and witnesses by victim care units.

- Information and advice to victims is readily available. For example, the more informative websites displayed some or all of the following:
 - comprehensive information about services for victims of crime, including the code of practice;
 - direct links from home and/or quality of service pages to advice for victims;
 - clear links to relevant criminal justice system facilities, CPS websites and to the victim support service; and
 - an electronic facility whereby victims can obtain an update on the status of their crime with further notifications offered by text and email.
- In one force visited, attendance at all crimes is considered by the force as a key aspect of their service to victims, reinforcing their strong quality of service commitment.
- The website review noted references to customer contact contracts in Surrey. Although Surrey Police is not one of the forces visited, in view of its above average levels of customer satisfaction with respect to victims, the practice is worth outlining here (see Case study box).

Developing practice

Case study

Surrey Police – Customer contact contracts

Surrey Police introduced an enhanced contact practice entitled ‘contact contract’ in November 2007, providing a service above the minimum standards set out in the victims’ code of practice and the Policing Pledge.

Once a crime has been allocated, a CID officer will call the victim, introduce themselves and agree the ‘contact contract’ which is tailored to individual need. It consists of:

- a preferred method of contact;
- a preferred frequency of contact; and
- any times to avoid, for example, if the victim works particular shifts.

These details and every subsequent contact are then recorded on the crime information system, which ensures that, if there is a change to the officer in charge, the contract can be maintained.

Compliance is monitored against the ‘contact contract’ by the investigating officer’s supervisor, with the results being fed into the basic command unit customer service boards chaired by the unit commander. Updates are also provided at significant points including arrest, bail, charge or court appearances.

Satisfaction levels for keeping victims informed have increased since the introduction of this process, with 74.5% of people surveyed indicating they were completely, very or fairly satisfied (in the period April to December 2008) compared with 67.2% in the year to March 2008.

- To provide follow-up and advice to local victims of crime, victim focus desks have been introduced in MPS. As part of ‘Operation Emerald’ to modernise criminal justice processes and improve service delivery to victims and witnesses, it was rolled out in December 2008 on every borough operational command unit and supported by the introduction of 152 victim PCSOs.

Areas for development

- Pre-charge systems for keeping victims informed lack consistency. One force has introduced a new role of victim care officer in crime management units, and also set challenging targets for improving performance on keeping victims informed. Elsewhere, supervisors are increasingly being asked to do quality assurance call backs to victims. Yet this is sometimes viewed as just another job to do rather than being integral to any investigation and a means to ensure customer satisfaction.

- While some forces claimed good compliance with the victims' code of practice, it is apparent that forces find difficulty in effectively monitoring this. Dip sampling is a popular option but a technical fix using existing IT systems is being explored by one force visited. Victim satisfaction levels in respect of being kept informed remain relatively low at 69.19%, and forces need to become more focused to better manage performance.

Pledge Point 10

Acknowledge any dissatisfaction with the service you have received within 24 hours of reporting it to us. To help us fully resolve the matter, discuss with you how it will be handled, give you an opportunity to talk in person to someone about your concerns and agree with you what will be done about them and how quickly.

Acknowledging and resolving dissatisfaction is key for any organisation that prides itself on good customer service. Where there has been a failure to provide a satisfactory service, the situation needs to be recovered quickly. A force needs to show that the matter is being taken seriously and systems need to be in place that allow for ownership of the issue, early resolution through personal contact and an agreed way forward. Forces need to understand what causes dissatisfaction and use that information to improve services.

Strengths

- Forces have well-established systems for dealing with what has traditionally been referred to as 'complaints against police'. The website review showed that information about how to make a complaint about the conduct of a police officer or police staff member is comprehensively detailed on most websites, and the process for dealing with this type of complaint is fully explained.

- Information about this type of complaint is collated and analysed by PSDs which provide a range of feedback options aimed at reducing complaints: for example, publication of newsletters, regular meetings with operational command unit commanders and, where a development need is highlighted, enhanced training programmes.
- Forces that have embraced the Citizen Focus approach actively encourage feedback from the public and use it to improve their service. They make it easy for the public to make comments by, for example, having direct links from their website home pages, from quality of service pages or from the Pledge itself. One force's website had a

hyperlink to help locate the local police unit and details of which local commander to contact about a service or general complaint; another offered positive encouragement to the public to make complaints as it assists police to improve their service. Fifteen forces have facilities to file a complaint online and more forces are considering this option.

Work in progress

- Delivering a 24-hour response to expressions of dissatisfaction, particularly at weekends, is a challenge for most forces. Two forces visited (Essex and West Yorkshire) were developing systems to tackle this.

Developing practice

Case study

Essex Police – 24-hour response to expressions of dissatisfaction

Essex Police offer a separate email address (concerns@essex.pnn.police.uk), which they have recently publicised, together with the phone number of the PSD in their local Pledges. To ensure a 24-hour response, staff have a PDA that allows them access to answer phone messages, texts or emails received outside office hours. They can then respond appropriately, depending on the seriousness of the complaint or concern.

Where the matter relates to dissatisfaction with the service received, it is acknowledged within 24 hours, referred to a single point of contact at the relevant department or command unit and the complainant is requested to get back to the PSD if a satisfactory outcome is not achieved. Departments or command units then deal with the matter.

Currently about 8 calls are received at weekends, with the majority requiring follow up. Trends can be picked up by the PSD, providing an opportunity for organisational learning, and any further messages received are also followed up.

Areas for development

- There was little evidence of a systematic approach to managing general dissatisfaction with service delivery. Robust systems are needed to collate information about dissatisfaction, to respond within 24 hours, to ensure follow-up action and to reach agreement on a way forward. These service recovery schemes, where they exist, are currently in development.
- How to make a general or service complaint is not found on all websites. If forces are serious about improving services they must better publicise how to express dissatisfaction and make the process by which they will deal with complaints more transparent.
- There remains much work to be done by forces to capture, collate, analyse and learn from lower-level dissatisfaction. About half of all complaint allegations relate to incivility, impoliteness and intolerance, discriminatory behaviour or neglect/failure of duty. Yet it was apparent from focus groups that there is little awareness locally as to what the main areas of dissatisfaction are or how to resolve them.

The importance of feedback in helping forces to improve their service is not universally understood. Forces need to proactively listen to users of the service and develop a culture in which the needs and priorities of citizens are understood by staff and taken into account when designing and delivering policing services. Forces must move from ‘investigating complaints’, a process which is well embedded in the force psyche, to focusing on ‘resolving dissatisfaction’ and making more effective use of ‘complaints intelligence’ to achieve organisational learning.

Next Steps

All 43 forces in England and Wales will be subject to inspection on delivery of their Policing Pledge between April and October 2009. The scoping work has revealed forces to be at different stages of development with much 'work in progress'. The last paragraph of the Policing Pledge states:

We want to do our best for you, but if we fail to meet our Pledge we will always explain why it has not been possible on that occasion to deliver the high standards to which we aspire and you deserve.

To achieve these high standards, forces now need to step up a gear, taking account of the learning points from this report and focusing their efforts towards building confidence levels in line with the challenging target to raise them by 15 percentage points, to 60%, by March 2012.

Glossary

ACPO	Association of Chief Police Officers
APA	Association of Police Authorities
CPS	Crown Prosecution Service
HMIC	Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary
IPCC	Independent Police Complaints Commission
MPS	Metropolitan Police Service
NPIA	National Policing Improvement Agency
NPT	Neighbourhood Policing Team
PACT	Police and Community Together (in some forces known as Partners and Communities Together)
PCSO	Police Community Support Officer
PMDU	Prime Minister's Delivery Unit
PSD	Professional Standards Department

Appendix:

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