



Inspecting policing
in the public interest



DELIVERING THE POLICING PLEDGE

Avon and Somerset Constabulary

“Are the local police delivering for you?”

The ‘Policing Pledge’ sets out ten minimum standards that the police service promised to deliver from 31 December 2008.

Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC) has reviewed how well the 43 forces in England and Wales are delivering the standards they promised the public.

This report provides members of the public with information on the performance of their local force.

Each Pledge standard and the three areas relating to how the force is working towards its delivery have been graded. HMIC has combined these assessments to give an overall grade for the force.

The overall grade for Avon and Somerset Constabulary is:

FAIR

The different grades:

EXCELLENT

is awarded for exceptional performance which is consistently above and beyond the required standard.

GOOD

is defined as meeting the standard, although there may be minor dips in performance.

FAIR

is awarded where performance is variable and falls short of the required standard. Remedial action is needed.

POOR

is used when performance fails to meet an acceptable level. Immediate remedial action is needed.

THE POLICING PLEDGE POINTS

HMIC GRADING

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.

FAIR

PLEDGE POINT 2

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

FAIR

PLEDGE POINT 3

Ensure your Neighbourhood Policing Team 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 that your team is not taken away from neighbourhood business more than is absolutely necessary. Officers will spend at least 80% of their time visibly working in your neighbourhood, tackling your priorities. Staff turnover will be minimised.

FAIR

PLEDGE POINT 4

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

FAIR

PLEDGE POINT 5

Aim to answer 999 calls within 10 seconds, deploying to emergencies immediately, giving an estimated time of arrival (ETA), and 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.

FAIR

PLEDGE POINT 6

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

- if you are vulnerable or upset, we will aim to be with you within 60 minutes;
- 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 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.

FAIR

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.

FAIR

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.

FAIR

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.

FAIR

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.

FAIR

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

PLEDGE POINT 1

The force was committed to making services accessible to the public and some consultation had been undertaken. The website detailed facilities available at each police station. Customers with physical disabilities or impairments were helped in various ways, including a new emergency and non-emergency text service for the deaf and hard of hearing. **But**, while reports of incivility were collected, there was a need to improve understanding of why reports of incivility have increased, and trends have been identified in order to improve training and organisational learning.

PLEDGE POINT 2

Avon and Somerset Constabulary refer to Neighbourhood Policing Teams (NPTs) as Safer, Stronger, Neighbourhood Teams (SSNTs). Safer Stronger Neighbourhood (SSN) team members, contact details and where they were based could all be found through the website, police station front offices and various other means. SSNT websites were well laid out and readily accessible to members of the public. **But** publication and marketing of the Policing Pledge needed to be more corporate and consistent across the force area. Public meetings were not widely publicised to encourage people to attend and work with their local SSNTs.

PLEDGE POINT 3

There was good continuity of staff in SSNT posts. It was generally felt that staff were visible in excess of 80% of the time and there was evidence of patrol routes being arranged to improve engagement and to respond to local communities and their needs. **But** SSNT staff were still regularly working in adjoining neighbourhoods and there needed to be improved monitoring to ensure that staff were visible in their own SSNT areas.

PLEDGE POINT 4

Calls and emails to SSNT were generally responded to quickly and helpfully. Call takers had a good understanding of how to contact SSN team members. **But** some automated messages did not comply with the Pledge requirement to respond within 24 hours and no monitoring took place to ensure that the original caller had been contacted.

PLEDGE POINT 5

Force performance for answering emergency calls was high and the force aimed to meet higher targets. Performance data was sufficiently accurate and reflected high standards by the force. **But** estimated times of arrival (ETAs) were not being provided to customers by call takers. The attendance times in response to emergency calls in both urban and rural areas need to improve, with only 70.7% of urban (target 75%) and 81.3% of rural (target 90%) being achieved within the Pledge target times for the year 2008/09.

PLEDGE POINT 6

Callers identified as 'vulnerable' or 'upset' generally received a 60-minute response to their call. Call takers were able to identify neighbourhood priorities and to ensure a response within 60 minutes. A scheduled appointment system for non-emergency calls was in place across the force. **But** whilst staff used their common sense to identify who was 'vulnerable' or 'upset', no specific guidance had been issued. Although there was a scheduled appointment system in place, the approach across the force was not consistent.

PLEDGE POINT 7

There were innovative opportunities for people to engage with their local team in addition to the regular monthly meetings. These were well publicised and included street surgeries, pizza and cola evenings and drop-ins. **But** public engagement in the priority-setting process was limited.

PLEDGE POINT 8

SSNT websites and community newsletters provided detailed information on what activities they were undertaking in the community and local crime-mapping information was available. Local priorities and progress to tackle those were publicised. Joint problem-solving initiatives with partners and action taken were also reported through various media. **But** the reporting of how offenders were dealt with was still being developed, with only those deemed as most important being published.

PLEDGE POINT 9

Staff showed good awareness of the arrangements for victims' care. Victims were consulted about how they would like to be kept informed, which included monthly updates by text, email or telephone. **But** calls to victims of crime by HMIC revealed that some investigations were not completed to an acceptable level and the quality of victim updates was variable.

PLEDGE POINT 10

Complaints and dissatisfaction were collated from a variety of means by the Professional Standards Department. There were some basic systems for acknowledging dissatisfaction reports within 24 hours. **But** whilst the management of complaints was quite clear, there was a lack of understanding among customer facing staff as to what dissatisfaction was, and how to record and deal with it.

WHAT THE FORCE WAS DOING TO IMPROVE ITS PERFORMANCE

As well as reporting on the force's delivery of each Pledge standard, HMIC has also assessed and graded the efforts it was making to improve performance:

HMIC GRADING

Surveys and management meetings were being used to improve performance; public satisfaction and confidence data were taken into account.

FAIR

The force had identified deficiencies in its delivery of the Pledge and was taking action in those areas.

GOOD

Implementation was led by the force's senior team, the Police Authority was involved, staff were being trained and the Pledge was communicated to staff and the public.

GOOD



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The report is available in alternative languages and formats on request.

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2 Monck Street
London SW1P 2BQ

This report is also available from the HMIC website
<http://inspectors.justice.gov.uk/hmic>

Published in October 2009.

Printed by the Central Office of Information.

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ISBN: 978-1-84987-025-2

Ref: 297705