



Inspecting policing
in the public interest



DELIVERING THE POLICING PLEDGE

Cheshire 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
Cheshire 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.

GOOD

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.

GOOD

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.

GOOD

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.

GOOD

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.

GOOD

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 had a range of diversity programmes and policies in place which reflected the national standards on issues of equality. The Police Authority had devised a comprehensive community contact plan. The Neighbourhood Policing Units (NPU) had used national indicators (like the “Vulnerable Location Index”) to identify ‘vulnerable’ individuals and communities. The opening times of police stations were recently reviewed and advertised on the website. **But** the expectations of the rural community were not being fully met.

PLEDGE POINT 2

Details of NPUs including contact details are displayed on the force website and information on the Policing Pledge was circulated to every household in Cheshire. **But** the force website was not as effective as it could be in providing information to the public.

PLEDGE POINT 3

The force had systems to make sure NPU staff were visible in their areas and tackled local priorities. NPU officers were expected to remain in post for a minimum of two years. **But** NPU staff were not meeting the 80% visibility level in rural areas. The redeploying of staff to undertake other duties needed to be reduced in several neighbourhoods.

PLEDGE POINT 4

There was an NPU voicemail and email response in place. In tests, messages left on the system elicited a good response and in all cases this was within 24 hours. The advice given was found to be professional and empathetic to the caller’s needs. The force was implementing an IT solution to provide a reliable 24 hour response to neighbourhood police contact. **But** the force needed to improve its checking of the voicemail system at weekends and also the arrangements for supervisors to check if this was done.

PLEDGE POINT 5

All call handlers have been trained to provide estimated times of arrival (ETAs). Performance was checked hourly by duty supervisors to ensure this was done. 999 calls were being answered and responded safely within these time limits. **But** while the force had a challenging target of attending incidents in rural areas within 15 minutes, a lack of resources in such areas made this difficult.

PLEDGE POINT 6

The force had appropriate systems to ensure it answered all non-emergency calls safely and promptly. This allowed callers to make appointments that suited them. Again ETAs were provided. Random call monitoring was undertaken both by the force and an external company to ensure they met Pledge standard. **But** call handlers did not have access to Policing Pledge priorities. The way local priorities were updated needed to be improved. The force had defined the term ‘vulnerable’ to staff, but not the term ‘upset’.

PLEDGE POINT 7

The force had adopted the Government initiative entitled “You Said, We Did”. The force used the website to ask for feedback and to respond to public need. There were a range of opportunities for people to meet their neighbourhood police teams. Meetings were publicised through various media including the force website, posters and local radio. Consultation had taken place with local groups to discuss their needs. **But**, in rural areas, the large number of meetings meant it was difficult for neighbourhood officers to attend them all. There needs to be a more accountable process in which the force considers public opinion more when deciding priorities.

PLEDGE POINT 8

The force had a range of media tools to inform the community about progress on local crime and policing issues. A monthly community newsletter was given to every household. A crime mapping system was also on the website. **But** updates provided to the public were inconsistent dependent on the area. The website did not inform the public of planned events and updates on action taken.

PLEDGE POINT 9

The customer service desks offered a high quality service to the public. As well as managing the crime investigation process they provided up to date information to victims. **But** a survey showed that there was a victim contact plan in only 3 of the 15 cases sampled. The force’s “Victim code” guidance required updating to include a “victim care contract”.

PLEDGE POINT 10

The force reviewed the conduct of all officers who were subject to three complaints in a 12 month period. The force had made sure that formal complainants were kept updated of their case every 28 days. The customer service desk contacted dissatisfied customers about their concerns. **But** the force and the Police Authority needed to consider how to deal with the whole range of dissatisfaction which can affect public confidence in the police.

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.

FAIR

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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This publication is printed
on 50% recycled paper

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

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Ashley House
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: 978-1-84987-028-3

Ref: 297705