



Inspecting policing
in the public interest

Anti-social behaviour inspection report

**Dorset Police
June 2012**

About this review

In Spring 2010, Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC) carried out a review to find out how the police can best tackle anti-social behaviour (ASB). We committed to repeating this inspection in 2012 to check on progress. This report tells you what we found in Dorset; the 2010 review is available on the HMIC website (www.hmic.gov.uk).

What works in tackling ASB?

In 2010 HMIC found that forces have the best chance to give ASB victims a good service if they:

- **Identify if a caller is a vulnerable** (for instance, elderly or disabled) **or repeat victim** as soon as they call the police, so they can get extra support;
- **Brief all relevant officers and staff** regularly and thoroughly about local ASB issues;
- Regularly **gather and analyse data and information** about ASB places, offenders and victims, and allocate resources to tackle specific problems; and
- **Provide their neighbourhood policing teams with the right tools and resources** to tackle ASB.

This is how Dorset Police is performing in these key areas.

Findings for Dorset Police

Overview

There is a relatively medium level of ASB recorded by police in Dorset in comparison with the rest of England and Wales.

HMIC found that the force had made some progress since our last inspection in the way it understands and tackles ASB problems in Dorset. It has committed to improving in areas highlighted in the 2010 review, and clear ownership, direction and a plan are in place to support this commitment.

The force now has a much better understanding of ASB issues and risks, and has learnt lessons from previous cases of repeat victimisation. The commitment to neighbourhood policing is strong, and the force actively works to avoid moving staff away from their neighbourhood role, so that they can build stronger bonds with their communities. Officers and police community support officers (PCSOs) are motivated and knowledgeable about their areas.

There has also been good progress in other areas. For instance, IT tools to automatically plot and flag up ASB hotspots have markedly improved, which means staff can be better briefed on problem areas. Tasking and coordinating meetings (where decisions are made about where officers should be deployed) include consideration of force performance in tackling ASB.

However, while progress has been notable over the last nine months, the force is not always able to identify callers who are most at risk of harm from ASB as soon as they contact the police. This is particularly true for vulnerable victims and for those who have telephoned about ASB before.

Some progress is evidenced by the implementation of a clear force ASB policy, and by extra training for frontline police (particularly around new IT and risk assessments). However, the force needs to consolidate and embed the recent changes and other development areas to improve the way that it tackles ASB. The new force-wide Community Safety Department will take over the project to ensure continuous improvement.

When we surveyed ASB victims in Dorset, 60% were satisfied with the way that ASB is dealt with by police in their local area. When asked about the last time they made a call to report ASB, 65% were satisfied with the way that the police dealt with the ASB. Both these results are broadly in line with national averages.

Are repeat and vulnerable victims effectively identified at the point of report?

Repeat callers and vulnerable victims are not always identified at the point of the initial call. This should be achieved by questioning the caller (as current IT systems do not automatically identify people who have called previously, only if a call comes from a number that has been used to contact them before). The force has recognised the issue and is currently testing a solution to remedy this.

We reviewed 100 calls about ASB and found that the call handlers only asked specific questions to establish if a caller had been a victim on a previous occasion 42 times. Call handlers verbally checked the vulnerability of the caller on 26 occasions.

The force has recently introduced a Victim Vulnerability Assessment which is completed by officers attending ASB incidents, and aims to help the force identify vulnerability at an early stage. Beyond these initial stages, it is accepted that when an ASB victim is reviewed in the tasking and coordinating processes, risk management greatly improves.

Are officers and staff regularly and thoroughly briefed about local ASB issues?

The force has invested in IT systems which means it is now better at identifying ASB hotspots, so that extra patrols can be sent to these areas. This represents good progress. Patrol and safer neighbourhood teams (SNTs, the Dorset Police term for neighbourhood policing teams) have good knowledge of ASB issues in their area. They are now better briefed about ASB issues, and are equipped with the right tools to highlight and map where these are happening. The iTask briefing system is effective and well used by staff.

Good team working between neighbourhood and patrol officers was particularly evident in Dorchester, Bournemouth and Poole.

Does the force regularly gather and analyse data and information about ASB?

Intelligence analysts identify ASB issues much earlier than before, so they can be dealt with quickly. The force holds regular meetings to analyse information about victims, offenders and locations in order to decide where best to allocate resources to tackle local ASB problems, and has carried out work to understand what data partner agencies (such

as local authorities) might hold that could help with this.

Staff are allocated ASB incidents to work on using an efficient system which flags up victims who may require extra support, such as repeat callers or people who are vulnerable.

Do neighbourhood policing teams have the right tools and resources to tackle ASB?

SNTs are resourced to deal with ASB, and their role is protected by chief officers. Movement away to other duties is minimised.

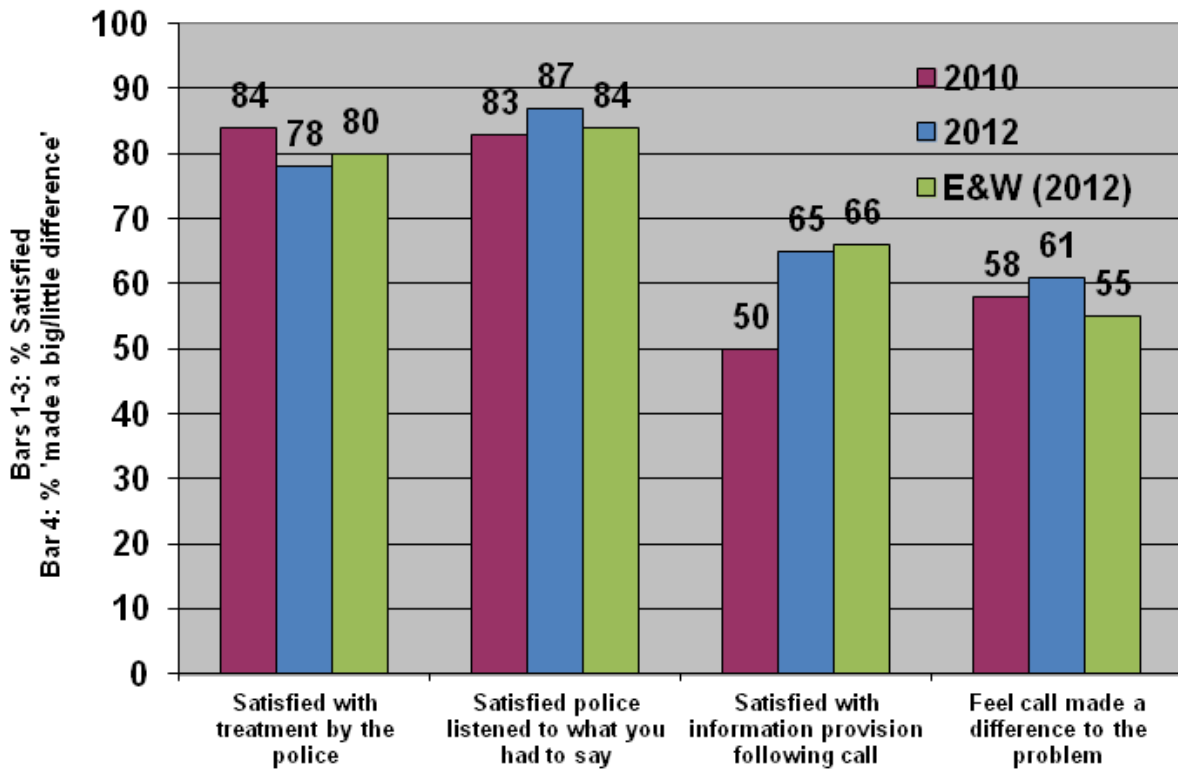
A toolkit of options is available to tackle ASB, and is sometimes used. A new force action system using mapping and research tools gives SNTs a clear view of their local ASB problems. Local police inspectors lead working groups with partner agencies, and staff report good contact with housing providers and local authority staff. There are visible results of this work, such as the skate park in Dorchester.

Frontline police have received training, particularly in the new IT and risk assessments. While this represents progress, the force needs to consolidate and embed the recent changes to improve the way it tackles ASB.

Results of a survey of ASB victims

We surveyed 200 people who reported ASB to Dorset Police during 2011. They were asked a range of questions about their perceptions of ASB generally, and their experience in reporting ASB to the police.

Experience of reporting ASB



These results show a significant increase since 2010 in the percentage of people who are satisfied with the information provided by the police following their call.