



Inspecting policing
in the public interest

Anti-social behaviour inspection report

**Durham Constabulary
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 Durham; 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 Durham Constabulary is performing in these key areas.

Findings for Durham Constabulary

Overview

There is a relatively high level of ASB recorded by Durham Constabulary in comparison with the rest of England and Wales.

HMIC found that the constabulary has continued to improve the way it deals with ASB since our 2010 inspection. Key developments include the recent introduction of a mandatory five-point update (1 - Is the incident personal, nuisance, environmental or not ASB? 2 - If it is ASB what action has been taken? 3 - Are there any issues of vulnerability with the caller or anyone else affected? 4 - Are there any specific concerns that need highlighting for future action? 5 - Has positive action been taken) for all ASB incidents, improved identification and management of victim risk (through use of a standard set of five questions and a risk matrix). The constabulary works well with partners (such as local councils), and has put in place effective joint plans to tackle specific ASB problems. For example both the Safer Durham and Safer Darlington Partnerships have ASB themed groups and a dedicated ASB strategy.

However, staff responding to calls about ASB are not consistently provided with relevant background information on the caller and incident, especially during busy times.

Based on the sample of calls reviewed for this inspection, HMIC is also concerned that call takers do not consistently check with the caller if he or she is vulnerable, or if the ASB has happened before, and then update the incident log accordingly. This means some victims may not be getting the extra support they need. However, this is not reflected in the results of a survey of ASB victims from the Durham Constabulary policing area, which show that they are broadly in line with national figures in how satisfied they were with the service they received from the force and with the way ASB is dealt with in their area, and in the proportion who felt that their call made a difference.

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

Durham Constabulary has invested in IT software to improve their ability to identify repeat and vulnerable victims of ASB. They have also recently introduced a set of five standard questions to further help call handlers identify such victims.

HMIC listened to 100 calls received by the constabulary about ASB (before this set of questions was introduced), and found that call handlers did not always ask targeted questions to determine whether the caller needed extra support, although this was required under the force system. Call handlers only asked targeted questions to help establish if a caller was a repeat victim on 51 occasions, and only verbally checked if a victim might be vulnerable in 16 cases.

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

The constabulary ensures neighbourhood policing teams, investigators and officers who respond to 999 calls are regularly briefed about local ASB issues, supported by an IT system which highlights ASB hotspots to staff. These include the locations of vulnerable and/or repeat victims and offenders, and ensure the early identification of ongoing problems so that extra patrols can be sent to those areas.

This represents continued improvement from our inspection in 2010.

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

Since our 2010 inspection, the force has continued to develop IT systems to improve the way it gathers and analyses data and information about ASB. For example, the constabulary has invested in an IT system which allows police and partners to access and share information, so that ASB can be tackled in a more co-ordinated way. The force holds regular meetings to review this information and to decide where best to allocate resources in order to tackle ASB problems.

At a local level, the force also regularly shares information with other agencies (such as the local authority) through meetings known as Local Multi-Agency Problem Solving meetings or Problem Solving Groups. These groups decide on actions to take based on information and analysis provided by multi-agency Safer Neighbourhood Units, which have access to the data of various partnership agencies. This approach makes sure everyone is addressing the same repeat and/or vulnerable victims, locations and offenders, and allocating their resources appropriately.

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

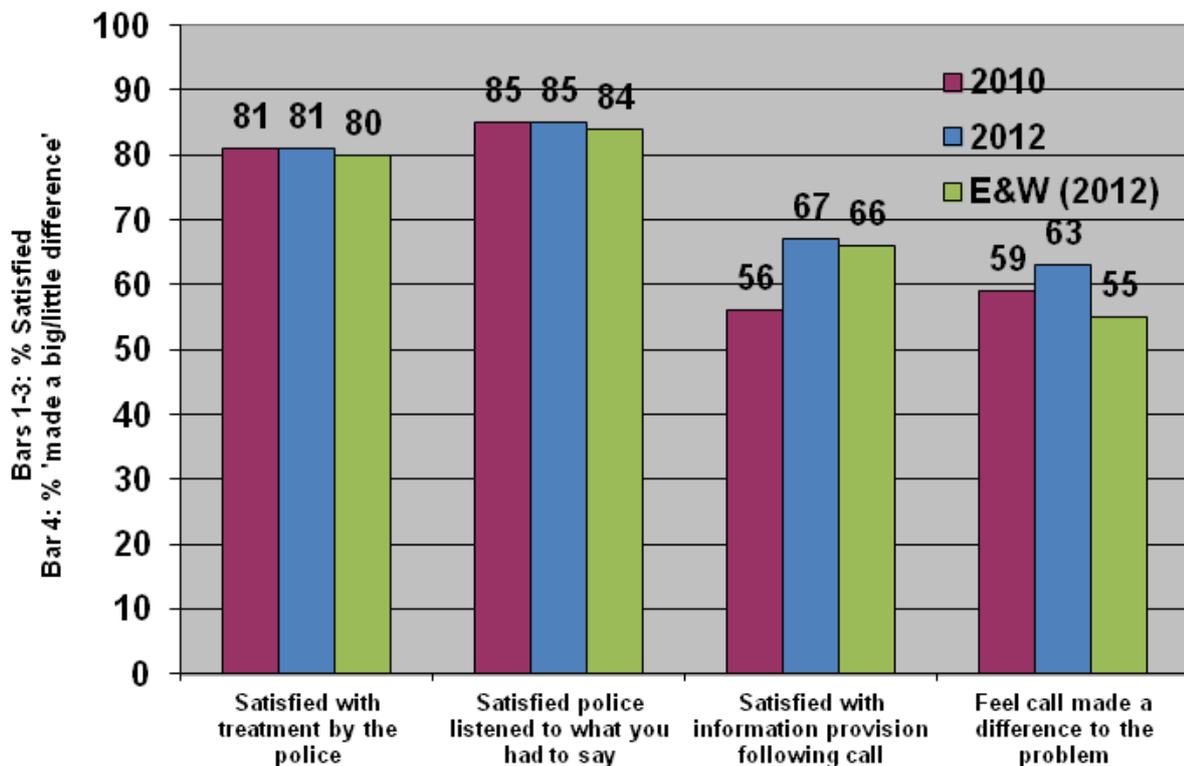
Neighbourhood policing teams receive good support from the wider force to make sure they have the training and resources they need to tackle ASB. They use a wide range of tactics, including letters to parents, joint home visits with the local authority and acceptable behaviour contracts.

Staff develop plans to tackle specific ASB problems, often working in partnership with other agencies and supported by helpful IT systems. These plans are regularly reviewed to make sure they are having a positive impact on the problem, and are not signed off as completed without the approval of a supervisor.

Results of a survey of ASB victims

We surveyed 200 people who reported ASB to Durham Constabulary 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 that the force is performing broadly in line with the national average in these areas. This is a positive result for the force.

