

Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary



HMIC Inspection Report
Essex Police
Neighbourhood Policing
Developing Citizen Focus Policing

September 2008



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Introduction to HMIC Inspections

For a century and a half, Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC) has been charged with examining and improving the efficiency of the police service in England and Wales, with the first HM Inspectors (HMIs) being appointed under the provisions of the County and Borough Police Act 1856. In 1962, the Royal Commission on the Police formally acknowledged HMIC's contribution to policing.

HMIs are appointed by the Crown on the recommendation of the Home Secretary and report to HM Chief Inspector of Constabulary, who is the Home Secretary's principal professional policing adviser and is independent of both the Home Office and the police service. HMIC's principal statutory duties are set out in the Police Act 1996. For more information, please visit HMIC's website at <http://inspectors.homeoffice.gov.uk/hmic/>.

In 2006, HMIC conducted a broad assessment of all 43 Home Office police forces in England and Wales, examining 23 areas of activity. This baseline assessment had followed a similar process in 2005, and thus created a rich evidence base of strengths and weaknesses across the country. However, it is now necessary for HMIC to focus its inspection effort on those areas of policing that are not data-rich and where qualitative assessment is the only feasible way of judging both current performance and the prospects for improvement. This, together with the critical factor that HMIC should concentrate its scrutiny on high-risk areas of policing – in terms of risk both to the public and to the service's reputation – pointed inexorably to a focus on what are known collectively as 'protective services'. In addition, there is a need to apply professional judgement to some key aspects of leadership and governance, where some quantitative measures exist but a more rounded assessment is appropriate.

Having reached this view internally, HMIC consulted key stakeholders, including the Home Office, the Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) and the Association of Police Authorities (APA). A consensus emerged that HMIC could add greater value by undertaking more probing inspections of fewer topics. Stakeholders concurred with the emphasis on protective services but requested that Neighbourhood Policing remain a priority for inspection until there is evidence that it has been embedded in everyday police work.

HMIC uses a rigorous and transparent methodology to conduct its inspections and reach conclusions and judgements. All evidence is gathered, verified and then assessed against specific grading criteria (SGC) drawn from an agreed set of national (ACPO-developed) standards. However, the main purpose of inspection is not to make judgements but to drive improvements in policing. Both professional and lay readers are urged, therefore, to focus not on the headline grades but on the opportunities for improvement identified within the text of this report.

HMIC Business Plan for 2008/09

HMIC's business plan (available at <http://inspectors.homeoffice.gov.uk/hmic/our-work/business-plan/>) reflects our continued focus on:

- protective services – including the management of public order, civil contingencies and critical incidents as phase 3 of the programme in autumn 2008/spring 2009;
- counter-terrorism – including all elements of the national CONTEST strategy;

- strategic services – such as information management and professional standards; and
- the embedding of Neighbourhood Policing.

HMIC's priorities for the coming year are set in the context of the wide range of strategic challenges that face both the police service and HMIC, including the need to increase service delivery against a backdrop of reduced resources. With this in mind, the business plan for 2008/09 includes for the first time a 'value for money' plan that relates to the current Comprehensive Spending Review period (2008–11).

Our intention is to move to a default position where we do not routinely carry out all-force inspections, except in exceptional circumstances; we expect to use a greater degree of risk assessment to target activity on those issues and areas where the most severe vulnerabilities exist, where most improvement is required or where the greatest benefit to the service can be gained through the identification of best practice.

The recent Green Paper on policing – *From the Neighbourhood to the National: Policing our Communities Together* – proposes major changes to the role of HMIC. We are currently working through the implications to chart a way forward, and it will not be until the late Autumn when we are able to communicate how this will impact on the future approach and inspection plans. In the meantime, we have now commenced work covering the areas of critical incident management, public order and civil contingencies/emergency planning – which will conclude in early 2009. In consultation with ACPO portfolio holders and a range of relevant bodies (such as the Cabinet Office in respect of civil contingency work) we have conducted an assessment of risk, threat and demand and, based on this, we will focus on those forces where we can add most value. We will also commence a series of police authority inspections in April 2009, which will follow a pilot process from November 2008 through to January 2009.

Programmed Frameworks

During phase 2 of HMIC's inspection programme, we examined force responses to major crime, serious and organised crime, Neighbourhood Policing and Developing Citizen Focus Policing in each of the 43 forces of England and Wales.

This document includes the full graded report for the Neighbourhood Policing inspection and Developing Citizen Focus Policing inspection.

Neighbourhood Policing

The public expect and require a safe and secure society, and it is the role of the police, in partnership, to ensure provision of such a society. The HMIC inspection of Neighbourhood Policing implementation assesses the impact on neighbourhoods together with identified developments for the future.

The piloting of the National Reassurance Policing Programme (NRPP) between April 2003 and 2005 led to the Neighbourhood Policing programme launch by ACPO in April 2005.

There has been considerable commitment and dedication from key partners, from those in neighbourhood teams and across communities to deliver Neighbourhood Policing in every area. This includes over £1,000 million of government investment (2003–09), although funding provision beyond 2009 is unclear.

The NRPP evaluation highlighted three key activities for successful Neighbourhood Policing, namely:

- the consistent presence of dedicated neighbourhood teams capable of working in the community to establish and maintain control;
- intelligence-led identification of community concerns with prompt, effective, targeted action against those concerns; and
- joint action and problem solving with the community and other local partners, improving the local environment and quality of life.

To date, the Neighbourhood Policing programme has recruited over 16,000 police community support officers (PCSOs), who, together with 13,000 constables and sergeants, are dedicated by forces to 3,600 neighbourhood teams across England and Wales.

This report further supports Sir Ronnie Flanagan's *Review of Policing* (2008), which considers that community safety must be at the heart of local partnership working, bringing together different agencies in a wider neighbourhood management approach.

Developing Citizen Focus Policing

Citizen Focus policing is about developing a culture where the needs and priorities of the citizen are understood by staff and are always taken into account when designing and delivering policing services.

Sir Ronnie Flanagan's *Review of Policing* emphasised the importance of focusing on the treatment of individuals during existing processes: this is one of the key determinants of satisfaction.

A sustained commitment to quality and customer need is essential to enhance satisfaction and confidence in policing, and to build trust and further opportunities for active engagement with individuals, thereby building safer and more secure communities.

This HMIC inspection of Developing Citizen Focus Policing is the first overall inspection of this agenda and provides a baseline for future progress. One of the key aims of the inspection was to identify those forces that are showing innovation in their approach, to share effective practice and emerging learning. A key challenge for the service is to drive effective practice more widely and consistently, thereby improving the experience for people in different areas.

Latest data reveals that, nationally, there have been improvements in satisfaction with the overall service provided. However, the potential exists to further enhance customer experience and the prospect of victims and other users of the policing service reporting consistently higher satisfaction levels. All the indications show that sustained effort is required over a period of years to deliver the highest levels of satisfaction; this inspection provides an insight into the key aspects to be addressed. It is published in the context of the recent Green Paper *From the Neighbourhood to the National – Policing our Communities Together* and other reports, which all highlight the priorities of being accountable and responsive to local people. The longer-term investment in Neighbourhood Policing and the benefits of Neighbourhood Management have provided an evidence base for the broad Citizen Focus agenda.

Statutory Performance Indicators and Key Diagnostic Indicators

In addition to the inspection of forces, HMIC has drawn on published data in the Policing Performance Assessment Frameworks (PPAFs) published between March 2005 and March 2008 as an indicator of outcomes for both Neighbourhood Policing and Developing Citizen Focus Policing.

The statutory performance indicators (SPIs) and key diagnostic indicator (KDI) that are most appropriate to indicate outcomes for the public and are used to inform this inspection are set out below:

Neighbourhood Policing

- SPI 2a – the percentage of people who think that their local police do a good or excellent job.
- KDI – the percentage of people who ‘agree local police are dealing with anti-social behaviour and crime that matter in this area’.
- SPI 10b – the percentage of people who think there is a high level of anti-social behaviour in their area.

Developing Citizen Focus Policing

- SPI 1e – satisfaction of victims of domestic burglary, violent crime, vehicle crime and road traffic collisions with the overall service provided by the police.
- SPI 3b – a comparison of satisfaction rates for white users with those for users from minority ethnic groups with the overall service provided.

Forces are assessed in terms of their performance compared with the average for their most similar forces (MSF) and whether any difference is statistically significant. Statistical significance can be explained in lay terms as follows: ‘The difference in performance between the force and the average for its MSF is unlikely to have occurred by chance.’ A more detailed description of how statistical significance has been used is included in Appendix 2 at the end of this report.

Developing Practice

In addition to assessing force performance, one of HMIC’s key roles is to identify and share good practice across the police service. Much good practice is identified as HMIC conducts its assessments and is reflected (described as a ‘strength’) in the body of the report. In addition, each force is given the opportunity to submit more detailed examples of its good practice. HMIC has therefore, in some reports, selected suitable examples and included them in the report. The key criteria for each example are that the work has been evaluated by the force and the good practice is easily transferable to other forces; each force has provided a contact name and telephone number or email address, should further information be required. HMIC has not conducted any independent evaluation of the examples of good practice provided.

The Grading Process

HMIC has moved to a new grading system based on the national standards; forces will be deemed to be meeting the standard, exceeding the standard or failing to meet the standard.

Meeting the standard

HMIC uses the standards agreed with key stakeholders including ACPO, the National Policing Improvement Agency (NPIA) and the Home Office as the basis for SGC. The standards for Neighbourhood Policing and Developing Citizen Focus Policing are set out in those sections of this report, together with definitions for exceeding the standard and failing to meet the standard.

Force Overview and Context

Geographical Description of Force Area

Essex Police covers 1,404 square miles, including a number of large towns with a population of between 100,000 and 150,000 (Basildon, Chelmsford, Colchester, Harlow and Southend). The area also includes a number of medium-sized towns (Maldon and Braintree) and smaller market towns (Hadleigh and Saffron Walden) with significant agricultural links. Population densities vary significantly; the larger urban communities tend to be found in the south, along the Thames corridor, while more rural communities located to the north.

The county's towns are linked by a number of key roads, including the M25, M11, A12 and A13. Essex Police also covers one of the largest expanses of coastline in the UK. This, together with Stansted Airport (the third busiest London airport) and the ports of Tilbury and Harwich, links the UK to other countries and sees many visitors entering the UK through Essex.

Demographic Description of Force Area

The county has a population of just over 1.6 million people, an increase of 5% since 1991; population is forecast to rise by 24%, to over 2 million by 2021. Essex had 72,000 residents from black and minority ethnic (BME) groups in 2001. There were 38,000 residents from ethnic groups other than white, and 34,000 from white minority groups. People from all BME groups made up 3.5% of Essex residents in 2001, the largest group coming from India, with a smaller number of people of Afro-Caribbean, Pakistani and Chinese heritage. Across England, 13% of people belong to BME groups. People from ethnic groups other than white made up 2.9% of Essex residents. Three times as many people across England are from these groups (9.1%). White minority groups made up 2.6% of the Essex population, compared with 3.9% across England.

The average earnings for a full-time employee are £31,755; this is above the UK average of £28,210. The average pay for males within the county is a third higher than for females. A high percentage of residents work in management or as senior officials, and there are also many people in administrative and clerical occupations.

Over 15% of residents hold qualifications to degree level or equivalent. Almost 30% of residents have no formal qualifications.

Local authorities in Essex set some of the lowest council taxes in the country. Like other police forces, Essex is dependent on central government for 75% of its funding; the remaining 25% is met by council tax funding. This means that a gearing effect arises,

whereby council tax increases are high in percentage terms if the annual increase in government financial support is significantly less than the increase in the annual budget requirement. This forms the backdrop to what Essex perceives to be an uncertain grant-funding future. To address these uncertainties around funding and expenditure, the force has devised a three-year medium-term approach to financial and service planning to ensure delivery of operational goals.

Structural Description of Force, including Staff Changes at Chief Officer Level

The force headquarters is based in Chelmsford, and many of the support functions – including the force information room (FIR) and Essex Police Training College – are also located at headquarters (HQ).

The last major restructuring in Essex took place in April 2006, when the number of divisions was reduced from seven to five.

Policing is delivered by the five territorial divisions, plus a division at Stansted Airport. These are supported by three centrally co-ordinated divisions: crime, mobile support and communications.

Following a number of changes to the chief officer team (late 2006), there has been a period of stability, and the team, including the director of finance and administration, is considered to be strong and to have the necessary experience to deliver an appropriate level of service.

There have been no major changes to the police authority (PA), and there remains a positive and professional relationship between the force and PA members.

In terms of resources, the Essex net revenue expenditure on services for 2007/08 is estimated to be £241.8 million.

Essex has 3,464 police officers, 2,310 police staff and 440 police community support officers (PCSOs). The force also has 561 special constables to support regular officers.

Strategic Priorities

The strategy of Essex Police Authority and Essex Police outlines the strategic objectives for the policing of Essex over the next three years and provides a framework for the local policing plan. It represents the shared aim of the PA and Essex Police to deliver a first-class policing service that is focused on the needs of the citizen.

Essex Police is committed to delivering a style of policing that is visible and accessible, and that improves face-to-face contact with the public.

The strategy reflects local consultation and contains the following overarching priorities for 2007/08:

- to increase police visibility and reassurance;
- to improve both the timeliness and the quality of response to calls for assistance;
- and
- to tackle anti-social behaviour (ASB) and disorder.

Force Performance Overview

Force development since 2007 inspections

Essex has demonstrated strong performance against many of the priorities and targets set by the PA during 2006/07. There has been a noticeable achievement in crime reduction, while sanction detections have increased. The force has one of the lowest crime rates in England.

Two main goals have been to make accessibility to policing services easier and to improve the way in which the service is delivered. This has been achieved by increasing the opening hours of police stations (12 out of 47 police stations are open 24 hours a day), by providing one-stop shops in the county, and by introducing a non-emergency telephone number for the force.

There has also been steady progress in the delivery of Neighbourhood Policing (NHP) across Essex. Neighbourhood Policing teams (NPTs) cover 144 areas, which are all based on wards. Each NPT has either a police constable (PC) or a PCSO as a single point of contact, and details are fully accessible via the force website, the central telephony system and a variety of posters and newsletters.

Essex has appointed 440 PCSOs to NPTs and has achieved a proportionate share of the 16,000 PCSOs who were to have been in place nationally by the end of April 2007.

In relation to the previous HM Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC) baseline assessment for 2005/06, areas for improvement have been closely monitored using a tracker system that figures in chief officer-led performance meetings.

The force has been working on improving its service around domestic violence (graded Poor in 2007) and a revisit took place in July 2008 to assess progress. Evidence was provided of progress against recommendations and areas for improvement identified within the original inspection. As a result of many improvements, including more effective management of risk, the force has been upgraded by HMIC to Fair for domestic violence.

Essex Police has continued to work collaboratively with Kent to maximise resources, realise savings and improve front-line policing. In addition to collaborative policing, the forces are working together to review professional HQ support functions and budgets, identifying savings and improving services. Seven such reviews are planned for the current year.

The year saw the implementation of a centralised, non-emergency switchboard. Supported by a new, single, non-emergency number, which was launched in March 2008, the switchboard now offers a 24-hour, 7-day service county-wide.

The mounted unit, which comprises four horses, a sergeant and six constables, was launched in December 2007. This additional capability has enabled Essex Police to conduct patrols in communities where, historically, engagement has been difficult. Patrols are set to increase as the unit develops.

The new Dunmow police station was opened in June 2008 after the force identified the need for a greater police presence in the area, as Stansted Airport and the A120/M11 corridor developed. Designed to replace the existing 1842 building, the new station provides modern facilities to complement those already available at divisional HQ in Braintree.

Protective services

Ongoing collaboration between Essex and Kent on protective services

Having secured government funding, in July 2007 Essex and Kent became one of 13 demonstrator sites, working together to develop and integrate marine capability, ports command, air support and automated number plate recognition technology.

Neighbourhood Policing

2007/08 Neighbourhood Policing Summary of judgement	Meeting the standard
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Meeting the standard

Following the moderation process, Essex Police was assessed as meeting the standard. Neighbourhood policing has been implemented to a consistent standard across the force.

Neighbourhoods are appropriately staffed.

Summary statement

The force is deploying across all its BCUs the right people in the right place at the right time to ensure that its neighbourhoods are appropriately staffed.

Strengths

- There are 144 NHP areas in Essex – each ward-based and consistently implemented. The boundaries are clearly defined, established and publicised within the force area (also see Areas for improvement). Members of the public and staff are able to access boundary details through front offices and via the force intranet and external websites.
- All neighbourhoods have a named point of contact at PC/PCSO level. While there are no documented plans for succession planning, suitable neighbourhood specialist officer (NSO) candidates are identified in advance of vacancies (see also Areas for improvement).
- Reality checking established that members of the public were confident in how to contact their local officer or PCSO. Examples in Brightlingsea and Chelmsford were evidenced during the inspection phase.
- The force website identifies the named contact for neighbourhoods and functionality is enhanced by a postcode search, which can be used by the public and also by staff on the internal intranet system. Staff can readily access the relevant NPT web page from an incident log. This is supplemented through clearly displayed posters in front offices and community notices within each neighbourhood.
- Staffing levels of neighbourhood PCs and PCSOs are maintained to ensure that there is rarely, if ever, a period when a neighbourhood has no dedicated contact point. During focus group discussions, NHP staff were able to cite examples of NSOs not being released until a replacement was found.
- There is a clearly defined and generally well understood abstraction policy for neighbourhood staff. The force has set itself a target abstraction rate of 5% and it manages to achieve this. For the three months preceding the inspection, only one of the 14 districts had not achieved the 5% target. (This particular district achieved a 5.6% abstraction rate for the period, which, while slightly over target, is commendable). Abstractions are monitored at local and strategic level. If they apply to go elsewhere, NSOs are not released from their role until a suitable replacement is found. NSO

sergeant abstractions are also monitored, and 12 of the 14 districts achieved compliance in the same period. The force defines an abstraction as the removal of an NSO from their ward or the NSO undertaking duties not appropriate to their role. The policy also applies to PCSOs and supervisors.

- Many NSOs have pre-existing experience in problem solving, and all PCSOs undertake induction training for their role. The force uses the scanning, analysis, response, assessment (SARA) problem-solving model, which is well understood; it also maintains a database of problem-solving activity.
- Some joint training has taken place with partners to improve problem-solving work. This was best evidenced at divisional and district level, where the evidence of joint problem-solving activity was good – eg at Southend, where joint working was healthy and productive (see also Areas for improvement).
- There are named and dedicated sergeants for all neighbourhood staff. Inspectors may have joint responsibility for neighbourhood and response capabilities, but, when questioned, they felt that they were able to manage their joint roles effectively and that the demand on them was manageable.
- The force was able to cite clear examples of communications staff receiving reward and recognition for customer-facing good work, with several specific events having taken place within the last year.
- All NSOs receive special priority payments in recognition of the additional responsibility and accountability that is connected to their role (see also Areas for improvement).
- Each division makes nominations for various categories of ACTION awards (such as special constable/police staff member/PCSO of the year), delivered at force-wide ACTION-award dinner ceremonies. For three years now, monthly awards have also been given; staff must fulfil each element of ACTION in order to achieve recognition.
- Public and partnership consultation took place in 2005/06 on the formation of neighbourhood boundaries. No full-scale review has taken place since then, but concerns from partners have all been considered.

Work in progress

- The force is embarking on an ambitious programme to increase recruitment of specials. The target set by the Chief Constable is 1,000 by the year 2010, and a figure of approximately 600 has already been achieved. If all 1,000 of these specials eventually become aligned to NPTs – and if they achieve their minimum 16 hours per month duty – this will equate to the full-time equivalent of an additional 100 PCs.
- The force's recruitment rate for specials is ambitious, and there is a need to ensure that training and tutoring needs are met. Both these areas were raised as issues during the inspection, and they will undoubtedly hamper the capability of specials to enhance NHP. A review of capability in these areas is needed.
- With the drive on the recruitment of specials, there is an opportunity for the force to seek better representation from minority communities. This will assist in the force's ability to align those staff with specific skills or knowledge to specific communities.

Area(s) for improvement

- The force does not have a succession plan for neighbourhood staff. Adopting a corporate approach, to ensure that the most appropriate staff are ready to take on neighbourhood roles as they become vacant would assist the force in its succession planning.
- The force should ensure that there is a corporate approach to succession planning and early identification of suitable NSOs. In common with other forces, Essex experiences issues with the retention of PCSOs (though the main reason for PCSOs leaving is that they become police officers). PCSOs and NSOs cited examples of PCSOs leaving their role early on in their service to take up a different role within Essex Police. Some felt that being a PCSO was seen as a precursor to becoming an officer. This will result in wasted training costs and lack of consistency for neighbourhood residents; it was noted, however, that less than 10% (42) of the PCSO establishment left in 2007.
- There is some confusion among operational staff (PCs, PCSOs and sergeants) as to exactly what constitutes an abstraction. This became evident during focus group discussions, and it was felt by the same staff that this may lead to inaccurate recording of abstraction data.
- The force's recruitment plan for specials does not take account of the cost of recruitment, training, additional expenses or equipment. To increase the establishment by such a significant number will inevitably incur initial and ongoing expense. A full review has since taken place, including recognition and identification of costing, and inclusion of this in budgets.
- While each BCU monitors the abstraction of its own staff, various methods are used. It may assist clarity at force level to review the models already utilised.
- Although there is no systematic approach to staff deployment, a small number of neighbourhood staff have undertaken specialist training – eg being trained in sign language.
- As the force does not systematically deploy or train staff to meet neighbourhood need, it should conduct a training-needs analysis of its neighbourhood staff across the force and set objectives to meet a consistent baseline standard, as well as identify specialist training requirements.
- The force is aware that its approach to joint problem-solving training could be improved; there are some examples where it has worked well (such as joint training on mini motos and on prolific offenders), but there is no consistency of approach.
- Supervisory ratios for neighbourhood staff vary, as there is no formula that is adhered to for sergeant to PC/PCSO levels. A sergeant can supervise between eight and 33 staff, depending on where they work (eg Canvey Island). A review of supervisory ratios and inconsistencies should be conducted.

RECOMMENDATION 1

Her Majesty's Inspector recommends that the force implements planning to support its ambitious programme of recruitment of Special Constables, especially in the areas of training, tutoring, finance and estates.

RECOMMENDATION 2

Her Majesty's Inspector recommends that a review of Neighbourhood supervisory ratios of staff to sergeants is conducted.

Effective community engagement is taking place. Representative communities are routinely consulted and are identifying and receiving feedback on local priorities.

Summary statement

Most neighbourhoods in the force area are actively engaging with their local police and its partners.

Strengths

- The force has a strategic community-engagement strategy that was reviewed in January 2008. This is complemented by more detailed district-level community-engagement strategies.
- There are 160 neighbourhood action panels (NAPs) in place across the force area, and these are actively involved in priority setting and engaging with neighbourhood staff.
- Where specific needs arise, bespoke community-engagement tools are employed (such as the creation of a youth action panel following a murder in Epping).
- Engagement at neighbourhood level is healthy, and Essex has demonstrated consultation with key stakeholders, such as the PA, key individual networks (KINs) and crime and disorder reduction partnerships (CDRPs).
- Each NPT has a dedicated mobile phone number for use by the public to directly contact their local NSO/PCSO. The telephone is switched on and is accessible to callers every day until 10pm, and there is a facility for call takers to put callers directly through to NHP staff. This obviates the need for an answerphone or voicemail system. Reality checking demonstrated that these phones were answered by the duty NSO/PCSO.
- Each school in Essex has a named NHP point of contact. There are 15 dedicated officers based in schools in Essex, with another 14 liaison officers to support them. These numbers are in addition to neighbourhood staff.
- The force has recently reviewed its front-office opening hours, increasing them by 440 hours through the use of volunteers and divisional reviews of service-desk shift patterns and working arrangements. This is complemented by the opening of four 'one-stop shops', which are based in partners' premises (eg Colchester Garrison, Basildon District Council) and which assist with accessibility (see also Areas for improvement).
- Under the direction of the Chief Constable, officers attend all reported crime. They engage with victims and take a statement, and also pass on local NHP information where relevant (see also Areas for improvement).
- There is healthy engagement with communities and partners at the neighbourhood level, with tangible outcomes. Examples were provided by partners, and also during discussions with NAP attendees.

- Information exchange with communities takes place at the local level, through a variety of informal means, such as email, meetings, telephone and face-to-face contact.
- The force has an extensive array of marketing material that relates to NHP and that is designed to target different aspects of the community, but especially young people and those from the general (but not specific) BME communities (see also Areas for improvement).
- Neighbourhood priorities are discussed and agreed through NAPs. Resources from relevant agencies are then assigned and progress is monitored through the NAP, and quality-assured through planned 'door-knocking' consultation by PCSOs.
- Districts utilise community-engagement calendars and employ a system of quantitative performance management, which enables monitoring of community engagement.
- The priorities set by NAPs are routinely reviewed and quality-assured by PCSOs 'door-knocking' in the specified area, to ensure that the problem identified is one of concern to the neighbourhood. These door-knocks are recorded and collated by the district.
- Sergeants operate a 'one-in-three' call-back system. Under this system, using scripted questions they call back one crime-report victim in every three to check the quality of service that officers are providing (see also Areas for improvement).

Work in progress

- As part of the overall strategic intelligence requirement, the force is focusing on improving the process of gathering and processing community intelligence.
- The force has developed and (at the time of the inspection) was about to implement a performance-management system for NHP staff called LIBRA. The framework appeared comprehensive, but could not be tested at the time. During a later revisit, it was evident that the LIBRA development had been discontinued in favour of an alternative solution, yet to be tested. The force currently has no one tool for NHP performance management, but is able to extract data from various sources to provide a performance picture as required, by utilising Gocart (Graphic Operational Crime Analysis Research Tool). Gocart also considers quality-of-service data.
- It was acknowledged during inspection that work was going on to scope emerging communities within Essex.
- The 'one-in-three' supervisor call-back checks, introduced in 2004, are not occurring as intended, as they are perceived by some supervisors as taking too much time and therefore place too great a demand on sergeants. General themes and findings from checks are not routinely fed back to front-line staff. There has been a web-based monitoring system in place since 2007; however, the force should review this approach and decide how to take it forward, since it is currently not working as intended.

Area(s) for improvement

- While attending every crime is a highly effective method of engagement, it is felt by a number of staff interviewed that taking a statement at each crime is not always necessary and can be time consuming. Statements were seen that were clearly not up to court standard (eg in domestic violence) and had not been quality-assured. A system of quality assurance should be adopted to ensure that statements are of a consistent standard, especially as the requirement to take statements is chief officer led.

- Information sharing takes place with some success, and there is a force-wide policy in place to support it; however, it can occur in a non-corporate manner, often relying on relationships and personality for success. There was no tangible evidence of independent advisory group (IAG) involvement either in setting NHP strategic direction, or at tactical level – with the exception of responses to critical incidents. However, it was noted that IAG members were reflected in neighbourhood profiles.
- The force does not identify specific BME communities in its engagement literature. The literature is well presented, but it does not seek to engage particular groups that the force has identified as emerging or vulnerable.
- Awareness of serious and organised crime profiles and intelligence-gathering requirements was low among NHP staff. NHP staff had difficulty in articulating plans to improve the way in which the force deals with vulnerable or emerging communities.

RECOMMENDATION 3

Her Majesty's Inspector recommends that the force implements a system for ensuring consistent quality of statement taking at all crimes.

RECOMMENDATION 4

Her Majesty's Inspector recommends that the force improves its awareness of, and processes to support the collection of community intelligence.

Joint problem solving is established and included within performance regimes.

Summary statement

Joint problem solving involves the police with partners and communities across all neighbourhoods. Joint problem-solving activity is partly evaluated, and this demonstrates moderate problem resolution at neighbourhood level.

Strengths

- Joint problem solving routinely occurs at neighbourhood level and is considered a natural process for both police and partners (see also Areas for improvement). The impact of activity is evaluated through NAPs, with joint problem-solving activity signed off at NAP level. There is widespread understanding of the SARA model and a well-utilised problem-solving database for use by NHP staff.
- The force joint action group (JAG) structure is established and working effectively at district level. Districts minute meetings and create and maintain action plans to ensure that joint problem-solving activity is monitored and evaluated.
- There is a district inspection process, which assists in quality-assuring joint problem-solving activity. Both partners and police were comfortable that joint problem solving was healthy and embedded.

- There is comprehensive evidence of chief officer involvement at strategic partnership level in Essex. Chief officers participate in or lead the youth issues group, the children's and young people's partnership, the strategic IAG, the Essex Management Board, the strategic drug and alcohol action team and the Essex County local area agreement.
- The assistant chief constable (ACC) (territorial policing) – the NHP lead – chairs the strategic territorial policing board, where NHP issues are addressed. She leads on youth justice for the force and engages with strategic partners through this forum.
- National Intelligence Model (NIM) principles are systematically embedded into the joint problem-solving process. There are NAPs at the local level and JAGs at the district level, which act as community tasking and co-ordination groups (TCGs). These feed in via the district commanders to the level 1 TCG process (which is attended by selected partners). Daily management meetings are held on each BCU and include neighbourhood issues and tensions.
- Call handlers are able to access local priorities via the force intranet site and link a caller's concern to neighbourhood activity in 'real time'. They are able to put callers straight through to NHP staff.
- 'Community sign-off' for identified problems is a recognised process at the NAP level. The NAP chair agrees the three priorities and the timeframe for resolution. These are then monitored and brought back to the NAP for sign-off as they are completed. There were examples of priorities that had taken some time to resolve, and of active community involvement in agreeing priorities initially, and in subsequently agreeing their sign-off. This process is enhanced by the district JAG meetings, which employ an action-planning approach. The individual within the NAP who raises the priority is involved in its monitoring and sign-off.
- There are examples of joint problem-solving activity, one example being the SMAART (Southend Multi Agency Anti Social Behaviour Response Team) multi-agency problem-solving team in Southend, which was put forward by police and partners alike as an instance of good partnership work. SMAART tackles low-level ASB, including the mediation service, joint problem-solving training for Anti-Social Behaviour Orders (ASBOs) and mental health. There is also evidence of joint training in domestic violence and ASB (also see Areas for improvement).

Work in progress

- South Eastern division recently co-located the ASB team with NSOs – a move that will assist joint working and training. A practitioners' ASB event is planned for June 2008.

Area(s) for improvement

- While the recording of problem-solving activity clearly occurs, there is less coherence around its evaluation and the dissemination of good practice within the force and to partners.
- There is little evidence of a corporate approach to joint problem-solving training. An analysis of county-wide joint problem-solving requirements should be conducted to complement the good (but ad hoc) arrangements at the local level. The force should then consider county-wide training in problem solving, led by appropriate agencies.

The outcomes of Neighbourhood policing are being realised by the surveyed public.

	SPI 2a Percentage of people who think that their local police do a good or excellent job		KDI Percentage of people who 'agree local police are dealing with anti-social behaviour and crime that matter in this area'		SPI 10b Percentage of people who think there is a high level of anti-social behaviour	
	Difference from MSF (percentage point pp)	2005/06 to 2007/08 change	Difference from MSF	2005/06 to 2007/08 change	Difference from MSF	2005/06 to 2007/08 change
Essex	+0.9 pp	+2.4 pp	-2.5 pp	+2.0 pp	-3.7 pp	+1.4 pp

Summary statement

The SPI/KDI data shows that force performance is not significantly different to the average for the MSF.

The SPI/KDI data also shows that force performance is unchanged compared with two years ago.

Context

The SPI and KDI statistics are obtained from the PPAFs to March 2008. These figures are survey based and have been analysed for statistical significance, which can be explained in lay terms as follows: 'The difference in performance between the force and the average for its MSF is unlikely to have occurred by chance.'

Note: When comparing the force's performance with previous years, year-on-year statistical significance is explained as follows: 'The difference in force performance between the years compared is unlikely to have occurred by chance.'

There is a summary of how statistical significance is used at Appendix 2 at the end of this report.

As part of the BCS, approximately 1,000 interviews are undertaken in each force area in England and Wales. Included in the survey is the individual's assessment of whether the local police are doing a good job, whether the police are dealing with anti-social behaviour and crime that matter in their area, and whether anti-social behaviour in their area is a problem.

Strengths

- SPI 2a: Over the last three years, the percentage of people living in Essex who think the police do a good or excellent job has increased by 2.4 percentage points, putting the force on a par with its peers.

- KDI: The percentage of respondents who agree that the police deal with the things that matter has increased by 2.0 percentage points over the last three years, which puts the force on a par with its peers.
- SPI 10b: The perception of ASB has decreased by 3.7 percentage points, which positions the force very favourably in a comparison with its peers and shows it continuing to improve over the past three years.
- Overall, the force is making steady and improving progress in all three areas discussed.

SPI 2a – percentage of people who think that their local police do a good or excellent job.

- Some 53.5% of people surveyed in the year ending March 2008 think that their local police do a good or excellent job, which is not significantly different to the average for the MSF.
- Force performance was unchanged in the year ending March 2008; 53.5% of people surveyed think that their local police do a good or excellent job, compared with 51.1% in the year ending March 2006.

KDI – percentage of people who ‘agree local police are dealing with anti-social behaviour and crime that matter in this area’.

- Some 47.7% of people surveyed in the year ending March 2008 ‘agree local police are dealing with anti-social behaviour and crime that matter in this area’, which is not significantly different to the average for the MSF.
- Force performance was unchanged in the year ending March 2008; 47.7% of people surveyed ‘agree local police are dealing with anti-social behaviour and crime that matter in this area’, compared with 45.5% in the year ending March 2006.

SPI 10b – percentage of people who think there is a high level of anti-social behaviour.

- Some 10.3% of people surveyed in the year ending March 2008 think there is a high level of anti-social behaviour, which is significantly different to the average for the MSF.
- Force performance was unchanged in the year ending March 2008; 10.3% of people surveyed think there is a high level of anti-social behaviour, compared with 9.0% in the year ending March 2006.

Work in progress

None identified.

Area(s) for improvement

None identified.

Force-level and local satisfaction/confidence measures are used to inform service delivery.

Summary statement

The force partially understands the needs of its communities. Identified service improvements are frequently made to improve local service delivery.

Strengths

- To ensure a consistent approach to demand management, some BCUs have operational management units dealing with lower-priority calls, while others use incident management units. This is still at the pilot stage, and the two types of unit are staffed differently and have differing remits.
- Under Operation Joseph 2, Western division has implemented an appointments system for attending non-urgent calls. This has reduced the open list to around 50–90 calls to be attended; by contrast, in South Western division it is around 200 on average. This new approach to demand management means that members of the public are seen at the time they expect to be seen, and this should, in consequence, improve perceptions. The intention is to: reduce incidents, ensure that all crime is attended within 24 hours, increase satisfaction and assist in the training of new officers (see also Areas for improvement). The approach is well documented as was being implemented across the BCU. Through the incident management unit, by utilising the system for task and operational resource management (STORM) incident-management system and by employing ‘incident managers’, the BCU is able to ensure that officers arrive at all crime incidents and see victims when expected.
- All FIR staff have undertaken NHP training, and FIR 999 performance has improved, which is likely to have had a positive effect on confidence levels.
- User-satisfaction surveys have now been outsourced to a private company, resulting initially in some delay owing to problems with vetting. This situation has now been resolved, and the processing of user-satisfaction surveys is an essential part of the force’s NHP programme. The company conducts 500 calls per month and provides the force with monthly summaries and more detailed quarterly reports. The force categorises its surveys under the headings: satisfaction, public ‘feel’ and local priorities.
- There is an analyst within HQ territorial policing who is the main lead on confidence and satisfaction. The involvement of the force’s performance manager in survey and satisfaction data work includes leading confidence and satisfaction reporting and analysis. In September 2007, reporting moved from quarterly to monthly on all SPIs. Reports are circulated monthly to divisions and are discussed by the quality and customer service group.
- Local surveys conducted at a district level are used to gain feedback on policing activity, such as Operation Leopard, which tackles ASB in the ward of Vange.
- The force uses Essex County Council tracker-survey data three times a year, and once a year this is fed down to district level. Essex Police uses the survey to gain an improved understanding around levels of ASB, drugs and public awareness of local officers and PCSOs.

- The PA introduced a Citizen Focus oversight board in 2004; two key Essex Police Authority members attend the force's Citizen Focus board. The Citizen Focus plan commenced in January 2008. There is PA attendance at relevant force performance meetings during which citizen focus measurements are monitored.

Work in progress

- The force has implemented a customer-service action plan, which is an ongoing piece of work designed to co-ordinate improvements across the force. Satisfaction data from the company that the force now uses goes to HQ and is sent monthly to BCUs to be incorporated into monthly quality-of-service meetings. Satisfaction feedback and analysis of the 'one-in-three' supervisor checks is not yet accessible to ward level.

Area(s) for improvement

- The approach to demand management employed on Western division is working well, but is not yet a corporate model. There is evidence of significant numbers of calls waiting to be attended, and this will have a negative effect on the public's perceptions. The force should consider refining the 'Western' model and implementing it across the county, if it is judged worthwhile. A tightly controlled incident-management system is required, as the force attends all crimes.
- The force was not able to provide evidence of its ability to account for variations in confidence or satisfaction levels in a detailed or comprehensive manner, and it recognises that there is work to be done to better appreciate variations.
- While the organisation undoubtedly learns from community feedback at the neighbourhood level, the force does not have a systematic process to assist with this.
- The process around dealing with quality-of-service complaints is vague and does not seek to maximise learning. The force's approach can be evidenced in call handling, but the examples offered did not confidently provide evidence of a system by which the force can learn from its mistakes. This is an area that should be reviewed, not only to capture and rectify poor practice and a poor approach organisationally, but also to propagate effective approaches.

The force demonstrates sustainable plans for Neighbourhood Policing.

Summary statement

The force and the PA have partially shown how they have ensured that NHP will be sustained beyond April 2008.

Strengths

- The force has demonstrated a commitment to sustaining NHP through its strategic plans and through financial records, such as finance and audit committee reports. Operation FLAG is a review of force functions that seeks to re-designate and return 100 staff to front-line policing.
- The Chief Constable personally leads the Essex Police drive to improve performance. He presents ACTION road shows to the force, and it was evident that most of the force had attended. Those who went along to focus groups were able to

articulate what ACTION meant and how it applied to them (Achievement focus, Customer first, Taking responsibility for others, Inspiring high standards, Overcoming hurdles, Never accepting second best).

- The current number of PCSOs is budgeted for and will be sustained in the coming financial year. The force has demonstrated a clear commitment to maintaining NSO numbers and, through a review of its response-policing approach, will be able to do so.
- The force has developed and maintains an 'AFI tracker' action plan. This plan allocates high-level owner actions in order to ensure continued development in Citizen Focus and NHP.
- The ACC (territorial policing) is the NHP lead for the force and leads the strategic direction of NHP through the ACC (territorial policing) meetings. Officers and staff at all levels are aware of who the NHP strategic lead is and of work undertaken across the force to support NHP.
- The deputy chair of the PA also chairs Essex Police Authority's public engagement panel, sits on the Citizen Focus board, is the link member for the FIR, and attends a JAG in Tendring. Support to NHP from the PA was considered to be high profile compared with some other PAs.
- One annual public-engagement meeting is held per district by the Essex Police Authority (14 in total). Last year, in an effort to improve its public consultation methods, the PA held 30 'Have your say' events, conducted outside supermarkets and shopping centres.
- The force's NHP board reports to the PA's engagement panel every six weeks, which ensures oversight by the PA.

Work in progress

- The force's ambition to recruit 1,000 specials and integrate them into NPTs is stretching. The force should seek to embed a detailed human resources strategy to support this, incorporating the management arrangements for specials, and their hierarchy, training, tutoring, development and retention.
- In common with many forces, Essex has some difficulty in offering a career path for PCSOs (though some PCSOs can specialise as trainers, tutors and in schools work). This can manifest itself in PCSOs leaving to take on other roles within the organisation (42 in 2007). During NHP focus group meetings, staff expressed concern at what they felt was a trend. Even though most leave to become police officers, this still means a lack of consistency for some neighbourhoods.

Area(s) for improvement

- While the force has been able to demonstrate that it can sustain the NPTs themselves, it is less clear on how estates and information systems strategies, for example, have been adjusted to meet NHP needs in the future. The force was not able to provide evidence to support this area. There was not a clear corporate approach to seeking sponsorship and outside funding, or to utilising non-police premises.

- There is assurance and commitment at chief officer level that PCSO numbers will be maintained, but there is little documented clarity on this matter, outside those posts funded by partnerships.

Developing practice

None.

Developing Citizen Focus Policing

2007/08 Developing Citizen Focus Policing Summary of judgement	Meeting the standard
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Meeting the standard

A Citizen Focus ethos is embedded across the force, establishing an initial baseline.

Summary statement

The force partially understands the needs of its communities. Identified service improvements are frequently made to improve local service delivery. The force partially communicates the National Quality of Service Commitment standards, the Code of Practice for Victims of Crime standards and the force corporate/accessibility standards to its communities.

Service users' views are sought and are used to improve service delivery

Strengths

- For approximately two years, the force has employed a mystery shopper and reality-check programme, and has fed findings into BCU command teams to assist them in improving the service to the public. Essex has demonstrated a commitment to this method of improving its awareness of satisfaction and confidence (see also work in progress).
- The force has a system of 'one-in-three' checks, whereby first-line supervisors call back one crime victim in every three as a way of quality-assuring officers' work and identifying themes. This commenced in 2004 with clearly documented guidelines for supervisors, and was supported through use of an intranet electronic form in 2007 (see also Areas for improvement).
- Essex Police has recently reviewed its communications structure. Good progress has been made in the FIR in answering 999 and non-emergency calls.
- The force decided that the standard governing the speed with which non-emergency calls are answered needed to be the same as for 999 calls. In 2006/07, the gap was 6.1 percentage points. In 2007/08, that gap had narrowed to 2.6 percentage points, and the force feels this direction of change to be satisfactory.
- In the year to date, the figures are: 96.9% of all 999 calls answered within 10 seconds and 96% of all non-emergency calls answered within 30 seconds. This improvement programme has been reinforced by internal assessment, through checks on call quality (300–350 per month); the intention is to move to checking with callers individually.
- There is a strategic crime and demand management meeting, chaired by the ACC Citizen Focus lead. This meeting brings together key BCU staff to ensure consistency across the force and better manage demand.

- Western division, under Operation Joseph, has recently introduced an appointments system for attending non-urgent calls, and this has reduced the 'open list' of incidents to around 50–90; by contrast, in South Western division it is still around 200 on average. This approach also ensures that members of the public are seen when it is convenient for them, by an officer who will not be called away. A review of this approach has yet to be completed, but the intention is to roll it out further.
- The deputy chair of the PA chairs the Essex Police Authority's public engagement panel and also sits on the force's Citizen Focus board. Force NHP updates are reported to the PA engagement panel every six weeks.
- The PA lead on engagement is able to access daily FIR performance information. Each PA member has a district, and three are to be aligned to HQ divisions: crime, mobile support and communications. PA members routinely attend NAP meetings and provide feedback to the force via a template form.
- The force has articulated its commitment to Citizen Focus through reference in its 2007–10 strategic priorities, which are published and can be accessed on its website.
- Force standards and intentions were clearly evident in front offices during the reality-checking phase. This complements the comprehensive force website and other methods used, such as direct contact, the policing plan and post-charge witness care.

Work in progress

- The mystery shopper tender has recently been awarded to a selected outsourced company. Initially, work will be undertaken across Western and South Eastern divisions. The research will take the form of 50 front-office scenarios over a period of six weeks, using a range of 'shoppers'. It will also include five visits to mobile police stations, 15 mobile phone interactions and 30 web hits. BME researchers and researchers with disabilities will also be used, and the information will be analysed.
- The initial contract has been fully costed, and a continuous programme is possible throughout the year. The force has yet to decide whether it intends to continue this funding.
- A number of staff from the FIR are currently working alongside South Western division to show it how to manage demand better and bring it more into line with Western. This should help to significantly reduce the division's 'open list' of around 200 incidents.
- The force utilises volunteers in various roles, and some have been used to staff front offices in less-demanding locations. Evidence was obtained during reality checking of customer-facing staff that some volunteers had received little training and were turning customers away (eg because they were unable to take crime reports).
- To ensure sustainability in secondary call-handling performance, a secondary call-handling manager was appointed in March 2008.
- A centralised call-handling facility was introduced (17 March 2008), improving performance for secondary calls. This has resulted in an enhanced service when an extension is busy or there is no reply.

- The force's system of 'one-in-three' supervisor checks is not being adhered to. Staff feel that the demand is too great, though they can see the merit in principle. There is no effective method of ensuring that the checks are completed or of disseminating organisational learning. However, the performance-management team now produces results, and its reports are circulated to BCUs to assist in improving the situation.

Area(s) for improvement

- Among operational staff, there is a low awareness of the force's *Customer First* DVD. Those interviewed in focus groups were aware that there was a DVD, but knowledge of its content was patchy. At the time of inspection, not all staff had viewed the DVD; further roll-out is anticipated as part of ACTION phase 2. The force should ensure the continued roll out of this programme.

RECOMMENDATION 5

Her Majesty's Inspector recommends that the force continues in its programme to increase awareness of citizen focus with particular focus on front line staff.

- Some divisions have operations management units, while others have incident management units, and these both operate and are staffed differently. This lack of consistency in demand management is likely to result in standards that vary according to where a member of the public lives. The force should seek to implement good practice across all BCUs.
- There is an inconsistency in systems and processes that formally record and assess feedback from the community. The force has therefore been unable to demonstrate that it has used this information to inform and improve service delivery.

The force is partially monitoring its compliance with the National Quality of Service Commitment

Strengths

- At a strategic level, the force identifies where it is failing to meet the national QoSC standards through the monthly quality and customer service group meetings, chaired at a strategic level. Actions are generated from these meetings and are followed up in subsequent months.
- Each BCU has a superintendent who is responsible for quality. These superintendents attend a six-monthly meeting with the head of customer service to review, among other things, dissatisfaction levels and complaints. Adherence to the QoSC is also monitored.

Area for improvement

- Although there is a force-level action plan, during focus group meetings staff did not demonstrate a strong understanding of, and adherence to, national quality-of-service standards at a local level. There was limited understanding and application demonstrated during the reality-checking phase.

Quality of service complaints are dealt with effectively

Strengths

- Quality is measured within the FIR. Ten calls per day – a mix of 999 and non-emergency – are selected at random by supervisors. Feedback is then directly provided to call takers.
- Complaints received by the FIR are recorded on a spreadsheet, a copy of which goes to shift inspectors to deal with. Any organisational learning is then recorded (see also Areas for improvement).
- User-satisfaction data was historically reported quarterly; now it takes place monthly. Every two weeks, the details of phone surveys are distilled for a number of superintendents, who then personally call back if a member of the public is dissatisfied.
- There is a detailed quality-of-service link on the force's website, with further links explaining the standards the public can expect of Essex Police and other partner agencies. The NHP link sets out the Essex Police Pledge, including 'What you can expect from us'.

Work in progress

- There was very little evidence of organisational learning gained through FIR complaints. Areas for improvement are identified and gathered, but the process after this point remains in a developmental position.

Area(s) for improvement

- The force lacks a clear approach to managing quality-of-service complaints made to divisions. It is currently unable to demonstrate how such complaints change activity at both force and BCU level.

The force has integrated Citizen Focus and operational activity, such as contact management, response, Neighbourhood Policing, investigation and through the criminal justice process.

Summary statement

The force has implemented corporate service standards expected of all staff when dealing with the public. Satisfaction and confidence performance is partially integrated into BCU and force performance-management processes.

Strengths

- The force utilises a district structure, with each district commanded by a chief inspector. Prior to the HMIC inspection, each district undertook a self-inspection to identify strengths and gaps in its ability to develop Citizen Focus, demonstrating a willingness to improve and learn as an organisation (though the activity was a one-off occurrence).
- The force has corporate standards, setting out how members of the public should be dealt with. The ACTION programme sets out customer-service standards for responding to phone calls, emails, letters, texts and voicemail. These standards

have been communicated through ACTION leadership training and through internal marketing.

- A postcode search has been introduced across the force, enabling internal users (via the intranet) and service users (via the internet) to obtain details of their NPTs, local priorities and dates of public meetings.
- The Chief Constable personally leads the Essex Police drive to improve performance. He presents ACTION road shows to the force, and it was evident that most of the force had attended. Those who went along to focus groups were able to articulate what ACTION meant and how it applied to them. Through the road shows, and reinforced through web applications, staff were able to explain what the corporate standards were and whether they felt they were meeting them. ACTION is evidently a key corporate message that has reached most, if not all, staff.
- There is evidence of a comprehensive range of Essex Police-branded marketing material that contributes to customer perception of the force. Essex Police has also introduced a mounted branch at considerable cost, and explanations were given as to how the branch ties in with delivering Citizen Focus policing (DCFP) and NHP. As well as more traditional operational taskings, high-profile reassurance and public awareness patrols are planned into activity. While some staff raised concerns at the cost of introducing the mounted branch, and while its effectiveness has yet to be evaluated, it is a bold and unusual move for the force.
- There is evidence that staff from within the communications arena have received rewards and recognition for providing good service to the public at two scheduled events per year. Last year, under the ACTION banner, 30 awards were presented for good customer service. Those receiving awards are invited to attend a 'black tie' event that is held annually.

Work in progress

- Since the beginning of 2008, the force has been able to demonstrate clearer corporate management and leadership of Citizen Focus. The fact that the improved change in focus and emphasis has been so recent has hampered development, as it was apparent that DCFP activity only began in earnest after the start of the calendar year (2008).
- The force needs to improve its levels of satisfaction with victim updates. There are currently standards in place for officers and staff to keep victims updated, but the current crime-reporting system has no facility to accurately measure this activity. As this is clearly an area in which the force needs to improve, it should seek an interim solution prior to replacement of the existing system in 18 months to two years. At the time of inspection, a solution was being piloted on Western division, and there was starting to be some improvement.
- There is a lack of awareness among many operational staff as to what the organisation expects of them in terms of Citizen Focus. Training, skills and awareness are below the levels achieved for NHP; however, this should improve with the wider roll-out of ACTION 2.

Area(s) for improvement

- There is some confusion by operational staff over the lines of responsibility and ACPO 'ownership' of Citizen Focus. Corporate awareness and management of

Citizen Focus could be stronger, and it is overshadowed by the strong and more established approach to NHP. There is no obvious reference to Citizen Focus (either under that title or any other) on the force's website. There is no mention on the website of Citizen Focus within the lead ACPO officer's portfolio, as there is with NHP.

- Although there are established processes for rewarding staff for general good or brave work under the ACTION banner, staff in focus groups struggled to provide examples of where awards had been given for customer service provided by operational staff. However, it was apparent that there is an established process under ACTION.

Performance processes partially include local satisfaction measures, and locally established priorities

Strengths

- The force employs a variety of methods to identify users' views and compliance with the national QoSC, such as: user-satisfaction results, monitoring the quality of NHP engagement strategies, local public surveys, feedback from public meetings, call-handling performance and witness and victim experience survey (WAVES) data. This is monitored through the monthly quality and customer service group meeting cycle.
- The force has a robust and well-established approach to post-charge witness care. The force is demonstrably more advanced in post-charge Citizen Focus than in pre-charge. The head of the criminal justice department (CJD) is a member of the Citizen Focus programme board, and a senior CJD representative attends force quality and customer service group meetings. Policing performance assessment framework (PPAF) and WAVES surveys and data give the force a better than 80% satisfaction rating.
- As part of improving overall witness care, the CJD has run a campaign around 'Make sure the victim has their say', with, for example, pocket book-sized cards and posters on doors. It is seeking to improve on the current rate of 46% for the completion of victim personal statements.
- Each NPT has a mobile phone number, which allows members of the public to contact a local officer or PCSO throughout the day, up until 10pm. NSOs received calls while focus group meetings were taking place. The service is quality-checked by senior managers, who call the mobile phones to check the response.
- One-page summaries of SPI data are circulated quarterly, highlighting movement in satisfaction levels.
- The force's confidence and quality board oversees results from different gender, age and BME groups. There is a fortnightly recovery document, which is passed to BCUs for contact to be made with those dissatisfied with the service received.
- User-satisfaction data is gathered by an external company. In September 2007, the force began to communicate monthly rather than quarterly data. This goes to every division and department, and they are then required to create action plans as a

basis for improvement. These are centrally monitored and reviewed by the quality and customer service group.

Work in progress

- To ensure sustainability in secondary call-handling performance, a secondary call-handling manager was appointed in March 2008.
- A performance-management regime for NSOs (LIBRA) has been developed by the force and was about to be implemented at the time of the inspection.

Area(s) for improvement

- LIBRA was intended to seek to integrate satisfaction measures into ‘traditional’ individual performance measurement, but at the time it was not ready to be evaluated. After the inspection period, the decision was taken to abandon LIBRA and seek another solution. While this work relates to a performance-management model for NHP, if implemented fully there will be a direct effect on DCFP standards. The LIBRA system was replaced by Gocart after the inspection took place, as a system better suited to integrating ‘traditional’ performance measures with satisfaction and confidence measures.

The force can demonstrate that the relevant SPIs remain stable as a minimum.

	SPI 1e		SPI 3b	SPI 3b
	Satisfaction with the overall service provided		Satisfaction of users from minority ethnic groups with the overall service provided	Gap – comparison of satisfaction for white users and users from minority ethnic groups with the overall service provided
	Difference from MSF	2005/06 to 2007/08 change	2005/06 to 2007/08 change	+/-pp
Essex	+1.6 pp	+1.8 pp	-4.6 pp	+6.0 pp

Summary statement

The SPI data shows that force performance is significantly better than the average for the MSF.

The SPI data also shows that force performance has significantly improved compared with two years ago.

Satisfaction of users from minority ethnic groups with the overall service provided is unchanged.

There is a satisfaction gap between white users and users from minority ethnic groups with the overall service provided. Users from minority ethnic groups are 6.0 percentage points less satisfied.

Where there is a gap in satisfaction with service delivery between white users and users from minority ethnic groups, the force has not evidenced that it is taking action to understand and narrow the gap. The force had however begun to undertake a limited piece of work where a Sergeant called back BME users with the purpose of service recovery.

Context

The SPI statistics are obtained from the PPAFs to March 2008. These statistics are survey based and have been analysed for statistical significance, which can be explained in lay terms as follows: 'The difference in performance between the force and the average for its MSF is unlikely to have occurred by chance.'

Note: When comparing the force's performance with previous years, year-on-year statistical significance is explained as follows: 'the difference in the force performance between the years compared is unlikely to have occurred by chance.'

There is a summary of the statistical analysis methodology at Appendix 2 at the end of this report.

Victims of crime and users of police services are surveyed using Essex Police's own user satisfaction surveys, which comply to national standards and thus allow comparison with other forces. Surveys are based on a sample size of 600 interviews per BCU.

Strengths

- Essex is showing neither significant improvement nor decline in recent years in either measure. Its percentage satisfaction rates are comparable and slightly above those of its peers.

SPI 1e – satisfaction with the overall service provided.

- 83.2% of people surveyed in the year ending March 2008 were satisfied with the overall service provided, which is significantly better than the average for the MSF.
- Force performance significantly improved in the year ending March 2008; 83.2% of people surveyed were satisfied with the overall service provided, compared with 81.4% in the year ending March 2006.

Work in progress

None identified.

Area(s) for improvement

SPI 3b – comparison of satisfaction for white users and users from minority ethnic groups with the overall service provided.

- Force performance was unchanged in the year ending March 2008; 76.7% of users from minority ethnic groups were satisfied with the overall service provided, compared with 81.3% in the year ending March 2006.

- There is a satisfaction gap between white users and users from minority ethnic groups with the overall service provided. Users from minority ethnic groups are 6.0% less satisfied. The 6.0 percentage point gap in BME victim satisfaction levels is statistically significant, and is sufficient to warrant research into the reasons for the 4.6 percentage point reduction in satisfaction over the last two years. The force did not know why this reduction had occurred and could not provide evidence of work being undertaken to address it.

RECOMMENDATION 6

Her Majesty's Inspector recommends that the force conducts research into why the White / BME confidence gap is growing.

Developing practice

None.

Recommendations

Recommendation 1

Her Majesty’s Inspector recommends that the force implements planning to support its ambitious programme of recruitment of Special Constables, especially in the areas of training, tutoring, finance and estates.

Recommendation 2

Her Majesty’s Inspector recommends that the force implements a system for ensuring consistent quality of statement taking at all crimes.

Recommendation 3

Her Majesty’s Inspector recommends that a review of Neighbourhood supervisory ratios of staff to sergeants is conducted.

Recommendation 4

Her Majesty’s Inspector recommends that the force improves its awareness of, and processes to support the collection of community intelligence.

Recommendation 5

Her Majesty’s Inspector recommends that the force continues in its programme to increase awareness of citizen focus with particular focus on front line staff.

Recommendation 6

Her Majesty’s Inspector recommends that the force conducts research into why the White / BME confidence gap is growing.

Appendix 1: Glossary of Terms and Abbreviations

A

ACC	assistant chief constable
ACPO	Association of Chief Police Officers
ACTION	Achievement focus, Customer first, Taking responsibility for others, Inspiring high standards, Overcoming hurdles, Never accepting second best
ASB	anti-social behaviour
ASBO	Anti-Social Behaviour Order

B

BCU	basic command unit
BME	black and minority ethnic

C

CDRP	crime and disorder reduction partnership
CJD	criminal justice department

D

DCC	deputy chief constable
DCFP	delivering Citizen Focus policing

F

FIR	force information room
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H

HMIC	Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary
HQ	headquarters

I

IAG	independent advisory group
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J

JAG	joint action group
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K

KDI key diagnostic indicator
KIN key individual network

L

LIBRA neighbourhood policing – performance management system

M

MSF most similar forces

N

NAP neighbourhood action panel
NHP Neighbourhood Policing
NIM National Intelligence Model
NPT Neighbourhood Policing team
NSO neighbourhood specialist officer

P

PA police authority
PC police constable
PCSO police community support officer
PPAF policing performance assessment framework

Q

QoS quality of service commitment

S

SARA scanning, analysis, response, assessment
SPI statutory performance indicator
STORM system for task and operational resource management

T

TCG tasking and co-ordination group

W

WAVES witness and victim experience survey

Appendix 2: Assessment of Outcomes Using Statutory Performance Indicator Data

Context

The HMIC grading of Neighbourhood Policing and Citizen Focus for each force takes performance on the key SPIs as a starting point. These are derived from the PPAF and are survey based.

The survey results come from two different sources:

- **Neighbourhood Policing**
Results come from the BCS, which questions the general population. The annual sample size for the BCS is usually 1,000 interviews per force.
- **Developing Citizen Focus Policing**
Results come from forces' own user satisfaction surveys. The annual sample size for these user satisfaction surveys is 600 interviews per BCU.

Understanding survey results

The percentage shown for each force represents an estimate of the result if the whole relevant population had been surveyed. Around the estimate there is a margin of error based on the size of the sample surveyed (not on the size of the population).

This margin is known as a **confidence interval** and it will narrow or widen depending on how confident we want to be that the estimate reflects the views of the whole population (a common standard is 95% confident) and therefore how many people have to be interviewed. For example, if we have a survey estimate of 81% from a sample of approximately 1,000 people, the confidence interval would be plus or minus 3 and the appropriate statement would be that we can be 95% confident that the real figure in the population lies between 78% and 84%.

Having more interviewees – a larger sample – means that the estimate will be more precise and the confidence interval will be correspondingly narrower. Generally, user satisfaction surveys will provide a greater degree of precision in their answers than the BCS because the sample size is greater (1,000 for the **whole force** for the BCS, as opposed to 600 **for each BCU** for user satisfaction).

HMIC grading using survey results

In order to **meet the standard**, forces need to show no 'significant' difference between their score and the average for their MSF or against their own data from previous years. Consequently, force performance could be considered to be 'exceeding the standard' or 'failing to meet the standard' if it shows a 'significant' difference from the MSF average or from previous years' data.

HMIC would not consider force performance as 'exceeding the standard' if SPI data were travelling in the wrong direction, ie deteriorating. Likewise, credit has been given for an upward direction in SPI data even if performance falls below the MSF average.

Understanding significant difference

The calculation that determines whether a difference is statistically significant takes into account the force's confidence interval and the confidence interval of its MSF.¹ The results of the calculation indicate, with a specified degree of certainty, whether the result shows a real difference or could have been achieved by chance.

This greater level of precision is the reason why a difference of approximately two percentage points is statistically significant² in the case of the user satisfaction indicator, whereas a difference of around four percentage points is required for the BCS indicators. If the sample size is small, the calculation is still able to show a statistically significant difference but the gap will have to be larger.

[Produced by HMIC based on guidance from the NPIA Research, Analysis and Information Unit, Victoria Street, London.]

¹ The BCS results are also corrected to take account of intentional 'under-sampling' or 'over-sampling' of different groups in the force area.

² It is likely that there is a real, underlying difference between data taken at two different times or between two populations. If sufficient data is collected, the difference may not have to be large to be statistically significant.