



Inspecting policing
in the public interest

Anti-social behaviour inspection report

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

Findings for Hertfordshire Constabulary

Overview

There is a medium level of ASB recorded by police in Hertfordshire (in comparison with the rest of England and Wales).

HMIC found that the force has made significant progress since 2010 in the way it understands and tackles ASB problems. Our survey of ASB in Hertfordshire shows that the proportion of positive responses from victims has significantly increased in two important areas. This is a positive result for the force.

The force has introduced a new IT system for managing longer term ASB issues, which is being used by both the police and partners, such as local councils and housing associations. This is helping the force to respond more effectively, in line with the victims' needs. The force has also introduced a new process for call handlers to help identify repeat and vulnerable victims when they first contact the police.

However, the identification of repeat and vulnerable victims, particularly those who have not previously contacted the police, remains inconsistent. This means some of these victims may not be getting the extra support they need.

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

Call takers have recently received a significant amount of additional training. This includes the use of a new structured question set to help to identify repeat and vulnerable callers. While this is positive, repeat and vulnerable victims are not consistently identified when they call the police. In addition, while information relating to previous calls is available on the force's IT systems, it is not always reviewed by call takers, particularly at busy times.

HMIC reviewed 100 calls from people reporting ASB incidents. While call takers were found to be polite, empathetic and victim focused, in almost half of these calls, the call taker did not ask about previous calls. In three-quarters of the calls they did not ask any questions to establish if the caller may be vulnerable. The force has recognised this issue and has commissioned further training.

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

Most frontline officers are expected to brief themselves on ASB, using information available on the force's intranet. In most cases, this works well and HMIC found that neighbourhood policing teams and teams who respond to emergencies had a good understanding of the nature and location of ASB issues in their area. ASB information is also included in briefing material for local investigators – but this is not routinely accessed. HMIC found that neighbourhood, response and investigation teams worked closely together to tackle ASB where it was linked to other crimes.

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

From January 2012 the force, Hertfordshire County Council, local authority partners and registered social landlords have rolled out a joint IT system to case manage ASB problems and support repeat and vulnerable victims. Those areas that already use the system have seen improved information sharing between police and partners about ASB. Analysts also gather information from a range of partners, including local councils and housing, and analyse this to help local teams better understand the nature of ASB problems in their area. This information is available at neighbourhood and ward level and helps direct resources to where they are most needed.

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

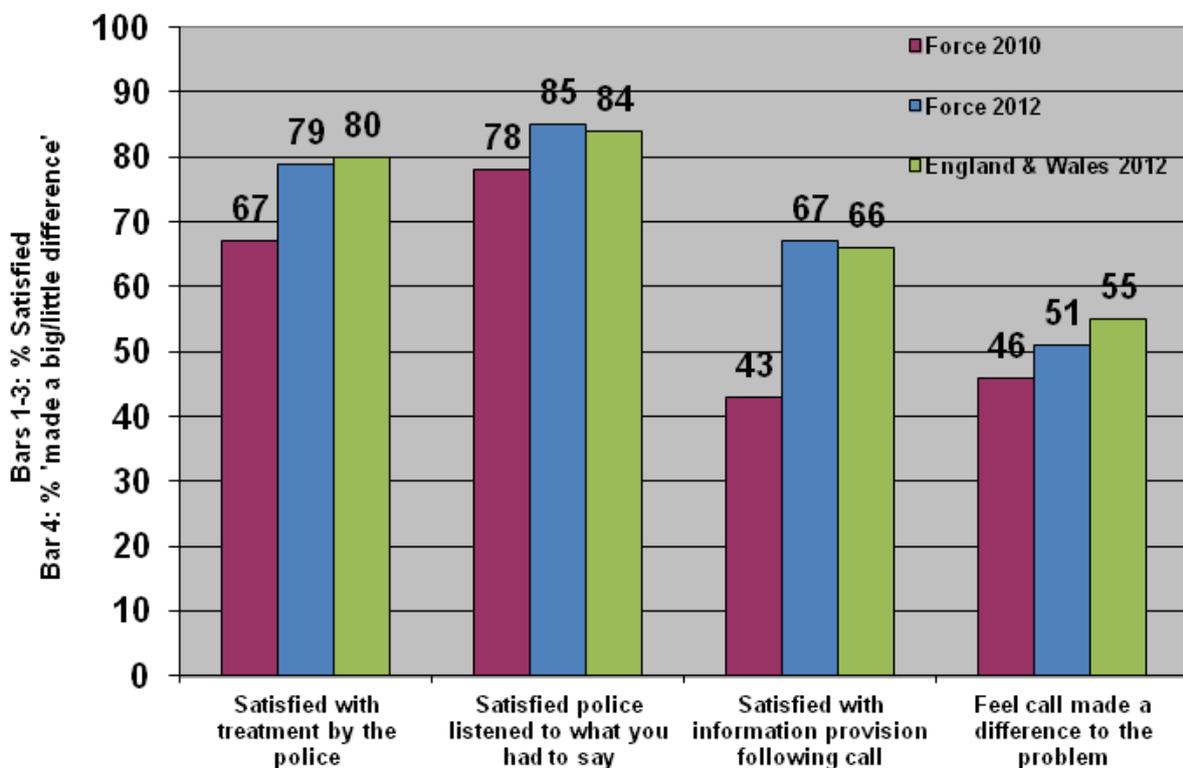
Staff have received relevant training to help them deal more effectively with ASB incidents. Neighbourhood policing teams feel valued for the work they undertake and are very committed to tackling ASB. The force ensures that these staff are not normally taken off their area to perform other tasks.

A new IT system is being introduced across the force for the police and local partners to manage long-term ASB problems. This is supported by a new approach to identifying the harm caused by ASB, particularly to repeat and vulnerable victims. Where this system is already in place it is being used effectively to address these issues.

Results of a survey of ASB victims

We surveyed 200 people who reported ASB to Hertfordshire 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. There results show that the force is performing broadly in line with the national average.

Experience of reporting ASB



In addition, the proportion of positive responses has significantly increased since 2010 in two of these important areas ('satisfied with the way you were treated' and 'satisfied with information provided by the police following your call'); and while the change in the other two areas is too small to be statistically significant, the results show there have been improvements here as well. This is a positive result for the force.

