



Inspecting policing
in the public interest

Anti-social behaviour inspection report

**Merseyside Police
June 2012**

About this review

In Spring 2010, Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC) carried out a review to find out how the police can best tackle anti-social behaviour (ASB). We committed to repeating this inspection in 2012 to check on progress. This report tells you what we found in Merseyside; 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 Merseyside Police is performing in these key areas.

Findings for Merseyside Police

Overview

There is a relatively medium level of ASB recorded by police in Merseyside 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 its 2010 inspection. Staff showed greater understanding of who should be classed as a repeat or vulnerable victim and how they should be helped, and the force has recently introduced a Vulnerability Risk Matrix to identify callers who are most at risk of harm from ASB.

The force has put in place effective joint plans with other agencies (such as local councils) to tackle particular ASB issues, and has strong partnerships in place.

Call handlers were found to be polite, empathetic and strongly victim focused. However, when HMIC listened to a sample of calls about ASB received from the public there was evidence that call handlers were not consistently checking the vulnerability of the caller. There was also some confusion about the interpretation of the ASB definitions, with the result that some incidents of ASB were not correctly categorised. This could mean that some victims are not being given the extra support they need.

However, this is not reflected in the results of a survey of victims of ASB from the Merseyside Police area, which showed that their feelings of satisfaction are above the national average with the action taken by the police and that overall the police are doing a good job in their area.

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

Merseyside Police has invested in software to improve their ability to identify repeat and vulnerable victims of ASB. To support this, they have also introduced a Vulnerability Risk Matrix.

HMIC listened to 100 calls received by the force about ASB and found that call handlers only checked the vulnerability status 21 times, although on 63 occasions there was evidence of the call taker checking whether the caller had been a victim of ASB before.

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

The force ensures that neighbourhood policing teams, officers who respond to 999 calls and investigators are briefed regularly by supervisors about general ASB issues and emerging problems. Neighbourhood staff are knowledgeable about their area, passionate about what they do to tackle ASB and committed to provide a high quality service to their communities.

However, HMIC found evidence that investigators were provided with less detailed information as part of daily business than neighbourhood or response staff.

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

Since our 2010 inspection, the force has continued to invest in the way it gathers and analyses information and data around ASB. An example of this is an IT system which allows identification of ASB trends and hotspots, and includes the locations of vulnerable /repeat victims and offenders. This data is examined together with information held by partners at regular meetings, ensuring that continuing problems can be identified at an early stage and patrols briefed specifically about those areas.

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

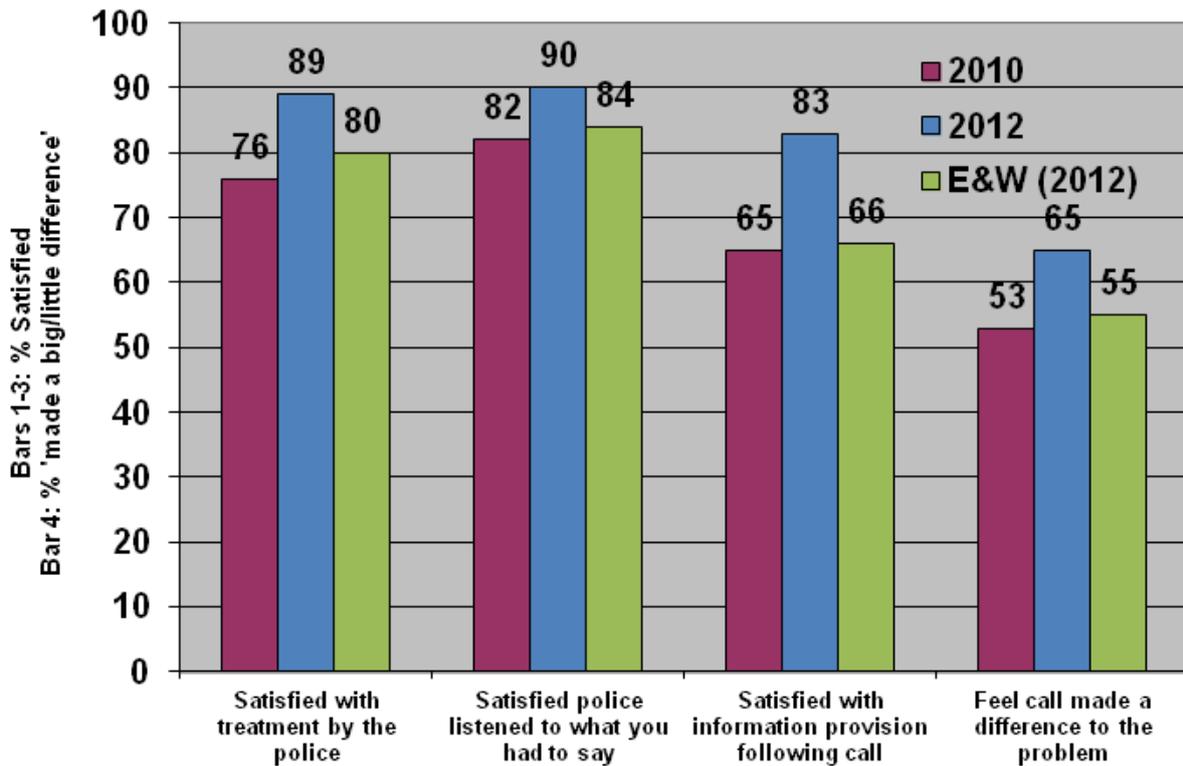
Neighbourhood policing teams receive good support from the wider force in making sure they have the training and resources they need to tackle ASB. This includes managing annual leave, training and operational commitments to make sure that neighbourhood teams maintain a presence within their local wards.

Teams use a wide range of tactics to deal with ASB, including letters to parents, Acceptable Behaviour Contracts, dispersal orders and Anti Social Behaviour Orders. They also develop plans to tackle specific ASB problems, supported by other agencies and helpful IT systems. These plans are regularly reviewed to make sure that they are proving effective, and are not signed off as complete without the approval of a supervisor.

Results of a survey of ASB victims

We surveyed 200 people who reported ASB to Merseyside Police during 2011. They were asked a range of questions about their perceptions of ASB generally and their experience in reporting ASB to the police. All figures are similar to the national average unless stated.

Experience of reporting ASB



These results show that the force is performing above the national average in these areas. The percentage of people who felt satisfied with the way they were treated by the police, and the percentage of people who were satisfied with the information provided following their call have both increased significantly since we last asked about this (in 2010). This is a good result for the force.

