



Inspecting policing
in the public interest

Anti-social behaviour inspection report

**Thames Valley 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 Thames Valley; 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 Thames Valley Police is performing in these key areas.

Findings for Thames Valley Police

Overview

There is a relatively low level of ASB recorded by police in Thames Valley 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 victims in Thames Valley shows high levels of satisfaction with the way they were treated by the police and with information provision, with both results significantly above the national average. This is a very positive result for the force.

The force has trained all neighbourhood policing teams, patrol officers and call takers to identify vulnerable ASB victims. Local policing areas have good arrangements for joint working with partners (such as local authorities and housing associations) to tackle ASB. The force has also introduced changes to its computer systems that are designed to help it more easily identify repeat and vulnerable victims of ASB.

Despite this, the force is still unable to consistently identify repeat and vulnerable victims when they call, particularly those who have experienced ASB previously, but not contacted the police about it before. This means some of these victims may not be getting the extra support they need. The force has recently started to monitor performance in its control rooms to improve the identification of repeat and vulnerable victims.

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

The force has a command and control IT system which automatically identifies repeat ASB victims by their telephone number when they call the police for assistance. Additional checks should also be made on the force's other IT systems: but this does not always happen. In 2011 all call takers received additional training in how to ask questions to identify vulnerable ASB victims. However, the questions are not always being asked, particularly at busy times.

HMIC reviewed 100 calls from people reporting ASB incidents to the force. In just under half of these calls, the call taker did not ask about previous incidents of ASB. Questions to establish if the caller may be vulnerable were not asked in two thirds of the calls.

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

We found that neighbourhood policing staff, patrol officers and investigators worked closely as a team to tackle ASB. This includes attending daily meetings to identify and jointly respond to ASB incidents. Staff in local policing areas receive regular updates on current ASB issues, and there is a good awareness of ASB generally across the force.

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

Each of the local policing areas has dedicated ASB officers, many of whom share offices with local partners. This has also improved information sharing between police and partners about ASB. The local policing areas hold regular meetings with partners to analyse information about ASB victims, offenders and locations, which help them to direct resources to where they are most needed.

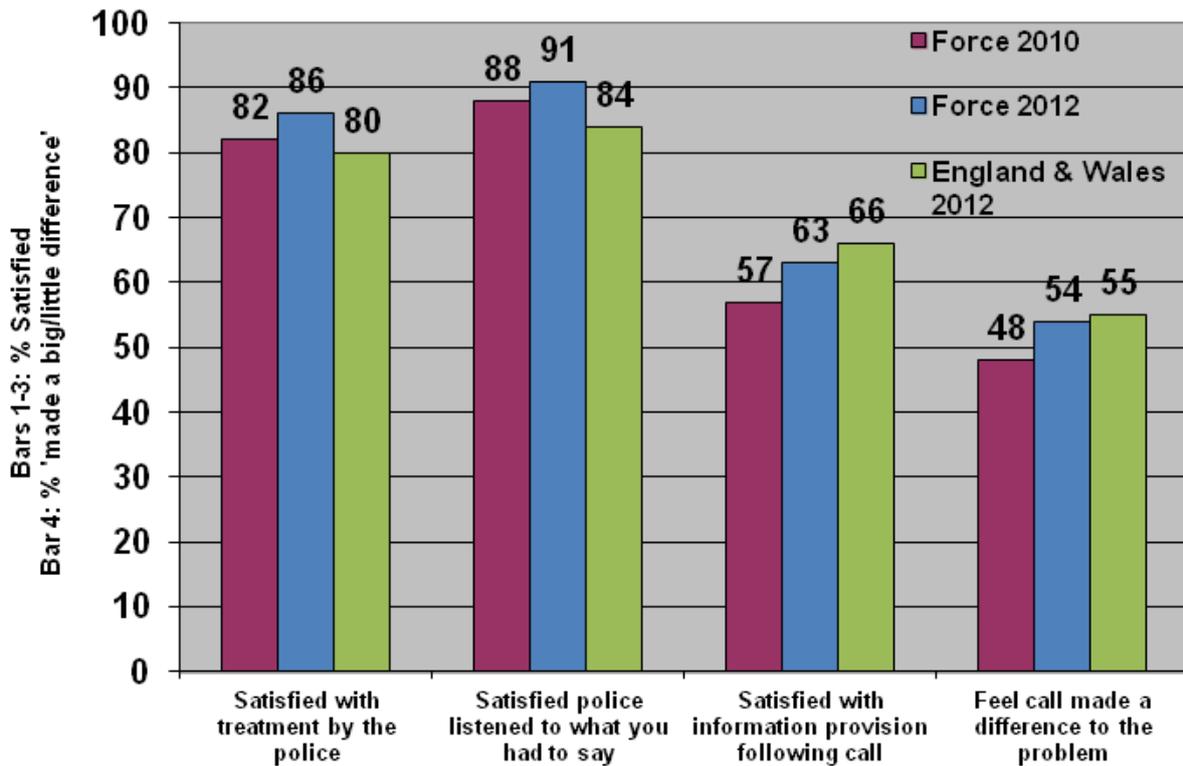
High and medium risk ASB cases and long-term ASB problems are recorded by the force on an IT case management system. This allows the force to better understand overall levels of ASB and the numbers of cases assessed as high or medium risk.

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

The force has invested in training for all neighbourhood policing teams and patrol officers to help them to identify vulnerable ASB victims. All staff have access to ASB reference material on the force intranet, which includes legislation, examples of good practice and guidance on tackling the problem. A police computer system is used to effectively record and manage high and medium risk ASB cases and long-term ASB issues. Supervisors also use this computer system to ensure that action is taken and that victims of ASB are regularly updated on the progress of their case.

Results of a survey of ASB victims

We surveyed 200 people who reported ASB to Thames Valley 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.



These results show an increase in the proportion of positive responses about the force in all four of these important areas since we last asked about this in 2010 (although the change is too small to be statistically significant). The force is performing significantly above the national average in two areas (how victims were treated by the police and how well the police listened to what they had to say). Overall this is a very positive result for the force.

