



Inspecting policing
in the public interest

Anti-social behaviour inspection report

**West Mercia 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 West Mercia; 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 West Mercia Police is performing in these key areas.

Findings for West Mercia Police

Overview

There is a relatively medium level of ASB recorded by police in West Mercia in comparison with the rest of England and Wales.

HMIC found that West Mercia Police has made some progress since 2010 in the way it understands and deals with ASB problems. It has made it clear that tackling ASB is everyone's priority, and this is well understood by staff. A chief officer is the force lead for local policing (including ASB). This officer also holds the national Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) ASB portfolio, and is the joint force lead moving forward into the strategic alliance with Warwickshire Police.

The force works well with local partners (such as councils and housing associations) in tackling ASB. It has invested in training, and uses consistent and reliable processes to identify and support repeat and vulnerable callers (including risk assessments carried out when a caller first contacts the police). This ensures that those most at risk of harm from ASB can receive the extra support they need.

More might be done to understand how ASB performance could be monitored at a force level. ASB is well managed at a local level, with plans in place to tackle specific problems and risks. These are supported by analysis and multi-agency intervention through the partnership 'ASB support hubs' and tasking and coordinating processes (which ensure the right resource is allocated to tackle particular problems).

When we surveyed ASB victims in West Mercia, 49% were satisfied with the way that the problem is dealt with by police in their local area. When asked about the last time they made a call to report ASB, 55% were satisfied with the way that the police dealt with the ASB (which is below the national average). Only 56% were satisfied with the information provided after the call, which is lower than the national average of 66%.

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

Calls to West Mercia Police are assessed on a case-by-case basis, and the force decides on what level of response is needed by considering risk, harm and vulnerability, not just the category of the crime or incident.

HMIC found that control room staff were clearly focused on the needs of the victim. Levels of initial investigation and the way information from the calls is recorded are also good.

Repeat callers and vulnerable victims of ASB are consistently identified as soon as they report a problem. The new risk assessment for ASB includes questions on repeat incidents and vulnerability, and has clearly assisted in creating a structured approach to the management of this vital element of ASB.

We reviewed 100 calls about ASB and found that the call handlers asked specific questions to establish if a caller had been a victim on a previous occasion 74 times. On a further 46 occasions call takers asked about the vulnerability of the caller. In 33 of the 46 occasions vulnerability was correctly identified.

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

There has been a significant investment in training for all staff who are regularly engaged in dealing with ASB, including local policing teams, officers who respond to emergencies, investigators and front counter staff.

Local policing teams are knowledgeable about their area, passionate about what they do and committed to providing a high quality service to their communities. HMIC found good examples of operational teams across the force working well together.

We also found some excellent practice around how staff are briefed. However, the degree and regularity of briefings provided to operational staff on ASB specifically varies across the force.

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

The local policing teams and 'ASB support hubs' (in particular the Community Problem-Solving Coordinators) greatly assist in managing ASB, and use an approach based on assessing all the available information. Analytical work examines information on ASB victims, locations and offenders, and provides local areas with a comprehensive and timely review of vulnerability and risk.

The force has a structured process in place to manage how it responds to ASB. Risk management plans (aimed at targeting particular ASB problems) are used to track and monitor actions, and are easily accessible to all staff. We found evidence that these plans were well supervised, and the force is particularly good at ensuring that they are not closed (ie judged to be completed, with no further work required) without a supervisor's sign off.

West Mercia Police are actively engaged with partner agencies (such as housing associations and local authorities). They share information and resources, and hold frequent meetings to discuss ASB hotspots and repeat callers and vulnerable victims, so they can work together to best address the issues. However, HMIC found inconsistencies in how these partnerships work on action plans to tackle medium to long-term local concerns.

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

Local policing teams receive good support from the wider force and the importance of their role is regularly reinforced by chief officers. The force has designated 'Priority Policing Areas' where staff are not taken away from their local duties and put on other policing jobs.

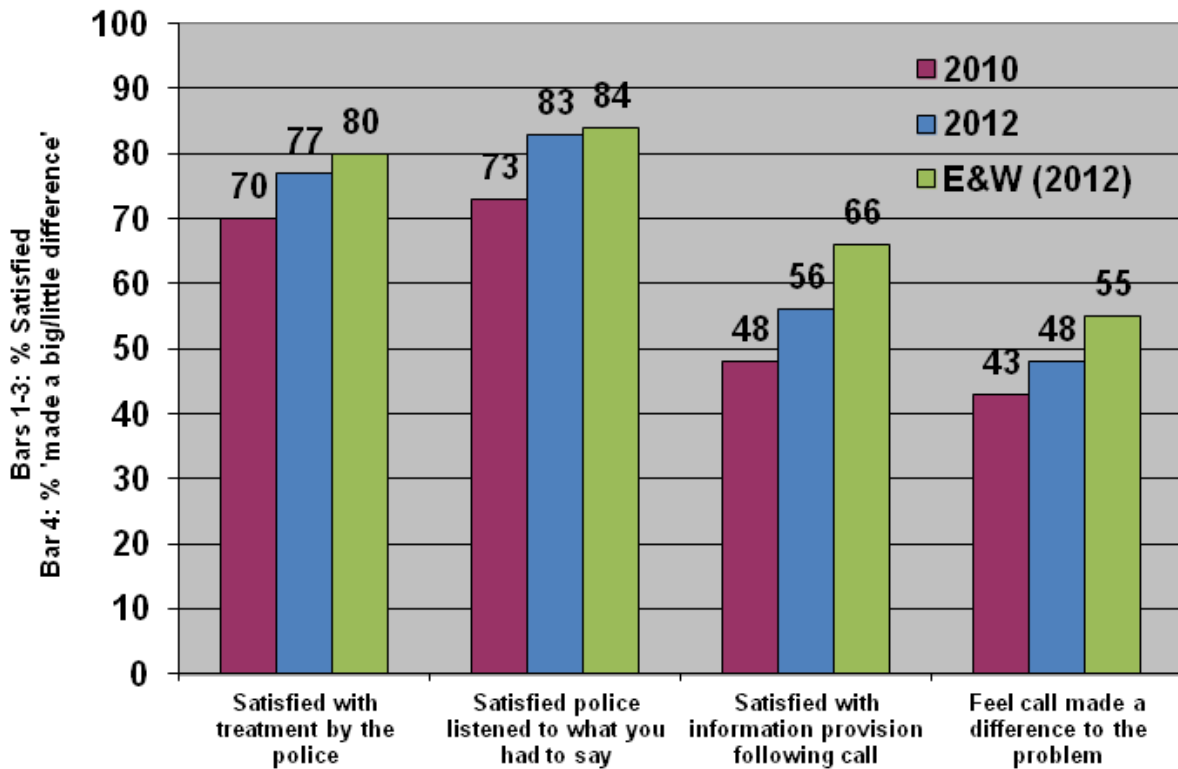
Local policing teams receive training around ASB and are aware of the range of options available to help them tackle local issues.

Partnership working and sharing of information (to get a better understanding of the true picture of ASB in their area) was found to be very strong, and clearly contributes to the successful management and resolution of ASB at a local level. The 'ASB support hubs' perform a quality assurance and risk management role regarding ASB and are regarded as a centre of excellence for advice on ASB management and reduction.

Results of a survey of ASB victims

We surveyed 200 people who reported ASB to West Mercia 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.

Experience of reporting ASB



These results show that the force is performing broadly in line with the national average in these areas. There is one exception: people in West Mercia were less likely to say they felt satisfied with the information the police provided after the call.