



Inspecting policing
in the public interest



DELIVERING THE POLICING PLEDGE

West Mercia Police

“Are the local police delivering for you?”

The ‘Policing Pledge’ sets out ten minimum standards that the police service promised to deliver from 31 December 2008.

Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC) has reviewed how well the 43 forces in England and Wales are delivering the standards they promised the public.

This report provides members of the public with information on the performance of their local force.

Each Pledge standard and the three areas relating to how the force is working towards its delivery have been graded. HMIC has combined these assessments to give an overall grade for the force.

The overall grade for
West Mercia Police is:

GOOD

The different grades

EXCELLENT

is awarded for exceptional performance which is consistently above and beyond the required standard.

GOOD

is defined as meeting the standard, although there may be minor dips in performance.

FAIR

is awarded where performance is variable and falls short of the required standard. Remedial action is needed.

POOR

is used when performance fails to meet an acceptable level. Immediate remedial action is needed.

THE POLICING PLEDGE POINTS

HMIC GRADING

PLEDGE POINT 1

Always treat you fairly with dignity and respect, ensuring you have fair access to our services at a time that is reasonable and suitable for you.

GOOD

PLEDGE POINT 2

Provide you with information so you know who your dedicated Neighbourhood Policing Team are, where they are based, how to contact them and how to work with them.

GOOD

PLEDGE POINT 3

Ensure your Neighbourhood Policing Team and other police patrols are visible and on your patch at times when they will be most effective and when you tell us you most need them. We will ensure that your team is not taken away from neighbourhood business more than is absolutely necessary. Officers will spend at least 80% of their time visibly working in your neighbourhood, tackling your priorities. Staff turnover will be minimised.

GOOD

PLEDGE POINT 4

Respond to every message directed to your Neighbourhood Policing Team within 24 hours and, where necessary, provide a more detailed response as soon as we can.

FAIR

PLEDGE POINT 5

Aim to answer 999 calls within 10 seconds, deploying to emergencies immediately, giving an estimated time of arrival (ETA), and getting to you safely, and as quickly as possible. In urban areas, we will aim to get to you within 15 minutes and in rural areas within 20 minutes.

GOOD

PLEDGE POINT 6

Answer all non-emergency calls promptly. If attendance is needed, send a patrol, giving you an ETA, and:

GOOD

- if you are vulnerable or upset, we will aim to be with you within 60 minutes;
- if you are calling about an issue that we have agreed with your community will be a neighbourhood priority and attendance is required, we will aim to be with you within 60 minutes;
- alternatively, if appropriate, we will make an appointment to see you at a time that fits in with your life and within 48 hours;
- if agreed that attendance is not necessary, we will give you advice, answer your questions and/or put you in touch with someone who can help.

PLEDGE POINT 7

Arrange regular public meetings to agree your priorities at least once a month, giving you a chance to meet your local team with other members of your community. These will include opportunities such as surgeries, street briefings and mobile police station visits, which will be arranged to meet local needs and requirements.

GOOD

PLEDGE POINT 8

Provide monthly updates on progress, and on local crime and policing issues. This will include the provision of crime maps, information on specific crimes and what happened to those brought to justice, details of what action we and our partners are taking to make your neighbourhood safer, and information on how your force is performing.

FAIR

PLEDGE POINT 9

If you have been a victim of crime, agree with you how often you would like to be kept informed of progress in your case and for how long. You have the right to be kept informed at least every month if you wish, and for as long as is reasonable.

GOOD

PLEDGE POINT 10

Acknowledge any dissatisfaction with the service you have received within 24 hours of reporting it to us. To help us fully resolve the matter, discuss with you how it will be handled, give you an opportunity to talk in person to someone about your concerns and agree with you what will be done about them and how quickly.

FAIR

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

PLEDGE POINT 1

Individual police stations engaged with visitors and asked how their customer service could be improved. Stations then made changes based on this public feedback. Suggestions included separate service areas for the different needs of individuals and the station implemented this change. For example, people reporting for bail now register in separate custodial areas, limiting contact with other visitors to the station. The police stations advertise their opening hours on the website and on clear signage and meet these stated hours. **But** on rare occasions smaller stations sometimes close when front counter staff are off duty or providing cover to larger stations.

PLEDGE POINT 2

West Mercia Police refer to Neighbourhood Policing Teams (NPTs) as Local Policing Teams (LPTs). All LPT web pages contained photographs and contact details of individual police officers and this information was regularly updated to ensure the content is current. Information about how the public could better work with the police was also published in parish council magazines, newspapers and leaflets, which were widely circulated to different groups in the community.

PLEDGE POINT 3

Most LPT officers had been in post for at least two years and this provided good continuity for the community. Newly recruited Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs) and Police Constables were jointly trained when they join the constabulary, which promoted team working and shared knowledge of neighbourhood problems. LPTs were given daily updates of where they were needed and what required their attention. Most staff confirmed that they spend at least 80% of their time visibly working in their area, tackling local problems. **But** there was no official tracking system in place that allowed supervisors to formally monitor the time LPTs visibly spend in their communities.

PLEDGE POINT 4

Each LPT had a direct contact number. All callers were greeted with a voice message in cases where the call was not immediately answered. Callers were told they could expect to receive a reply within 24 hours. **But** messages were left with 20 teams and only 17 (85%) replied within 24 hours. Although an automated initial response had been set up, some email messages were not followed up in more detail when staff members were away. In some cases, replies did not clearly state which officer was going to address the individual's case, and when action could be expected.

PLEDGE POINT 5

Local monitoring proved that over 92% of 999 calls were answered within 10 seconds and 92% of emergency incidents were attended to within target times. In most cases estimated times of arrival (ETA) were given to callers. Public service desks offered additional support to the Call Management Centre in times of high demand. **But** the number of officers that were available to respond to incidents was not always in line with demand.

PLEDGE POINT 6

93% of non-emergency calls were answered within national standards. Staff could identify when a 60 minute response was required. Staff had been trained to recognise 'vulnerable' and 'upset' callers and call centre staff could then refer callers to other services. A system of dedicated officers responding to scheduled appointments was being introduced.

PLEDGE POINT 7

There are many opportunities for the public to meet their local LPT and to discuss what the community feel the LPT should prioritise. Strong links have been made with young people through schools, sports clubs and adventure activities. Monthly community meetings are held and where possible, supervisors attend to assess quality. **But** there is no official record of attendance at public meetings, which would measure community involvement. Some LPT web pages and station notice boards did not have details of forthcoming public meetings.

PLEDGE POINT 8

Crime maps based on postcodes were available on the internet and were presented at community meetings. Each LPT circulates a briefing sheet with updates on local policing issues. Some public meetings were jointly run with partners whose websites displayed details of how problems were being tackled. **But** while updates on local offenders were available on the LPT web pages, this information was not circulated at all community meetings.

PLEDGE POINT 9

Victim care contracts ensure that victims of crime receive updates after 7, 14 and 28 days following the crime. These updates include being informed when officers dealing with their case have moved on. In 80% of cases, these contracts were upheld. A database records how victims of crime choose to be kept updated, both before and after an offender has been charged.

PLEDGE POINT 10

In most cases, those reporting dissatisfaction received a 24 hour response and agreements were reached on how to address the dissatisfaction. The force received public feedback from a range of sources including complaints and force surveys. This information was used to learn lessons and improve processes. **But** some staff did not show an understanding of the importance of replying to dissatisfied customers within 24 hours. Difficulties had been experienced in fulfilling a 24/7 response to all complaints received; basic systems were in place but they did not operate seven days a week.

WHAT THE FORCE WAS DOING TO IMPROVE ITS PERFORMANCE

As well as reporting on the force's delivery of each Pledge standard, HMIC has also assessed and graded the efforts it was making to improve performance:

HMIC GRADING

Surveys and management meetings were being used to improve performance; public satisfaction and confidence data were taken into account.

FAIR

The force had identified deficiencies in its delivery of the Pledge and was taking action in those areas.

GOOD

Implementation was led by the force's senior team, the Police Authority was involved, staff were being trained and the Pledge was communicated to staff and the public.

GOOD



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The report is available in alternative languages and formats on request.

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