



Inspecting policing
in the public interest



Anti-social Behaviour Inspection Report

West Midlands Police

West Midlands experiences a relatively higher level of anti-social behaviour (ASB) and a higher level of crime per head of population.

Our ASB review

In Spring 2010, Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC) carried out a review of anti-social behaviour in England and Wales. This included asking victims about their experience of reporting ASB to the police, and inspecting the quality of the processes that forces use in tackling and responding to the problem.

Working with the Police Science Institute at Cardiff University, we then used these results to answer the question of how the police can best tackle ASB.

What works?

Forces have the best chance to give victims a good service if they do three key things:

- Brief all relevant officers and staff (including neighbourhood policing teams, officers who respond to emergencies and CID officers) regularly and thoroughly about local ASB issues;
- Regularly gather and analyse data and information about ASB places, offenders and victims in their area, and use this information to allocate resources to tackle the problems; and
- Provide their neighbourhood policing teams with the right tools and resources to tackle ASB, and then monitor the plans the teams put in place to resolve local ASB issues.

This is how West Midlands Police is performing in these areas.

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

Neighbourhood Policing Teams staff are briefed in detail about specific local ASB issues; this is less regular for CID and response staff. Two important elements of the force's ASB plan are sharing information on ASB incidents between NPTs, and briefing officers and PCSOs together.

Representatives from CID and the contact centre (who deal with ASB calls) are present at the daily management meeting where ASB is discussed. This means the chair of the meeting can allocate work to all staff to tackle ASB issues, not just the NPTs. At a local level, the interaction between NPTs, response and CID staff is mixed, and relationships between different units vary from excellent to poor.

Some concern was raised that the current good relationships between response and NPT officers might be damaged, as the teams are no longer based in the same office. However, the appointment of ASB co-ordinators has the potential to maintain effective links between teams, as well as with partner agencies such as the local authority.

Is the force using ASB information to target its work in tackling ASB?

ASB performance is managed by analysing data and information to identify problem areas, focusing on repeat victims of ASB and hotspots identified through the repeat callers' database. ASB features in the daily management meetings, and once a week particular focus is given to repeat victims. In some areas, a daily review, by contact centre supervisors, of all ASB incidents identifies all vulnerable and repeat victims for discussion at the daily management meeting. However, this does not happen throughout the whole force area.

The force has formed a new team that is responsible for ensuring that issues relating to vulnerable victims and communities are raised at the daily management meetings and at the meeting at which decisions are made about the allocation of police resources. However, HMIC found that this process was not yet embedded.

Do neighbourhood policing teams have the right tools and resources to tackle ASB, and are the plans they put in place to resolve local ASB issues monitored?

NPT sergeants are required to ensure an effective plan for investigating each ASB incident is in place on a force IT system, and that additional actions are included in cases involving vulnerable victims. The force has issued guidance on how to solve long-term ASB problems, and training has been provided to some NPT staff.

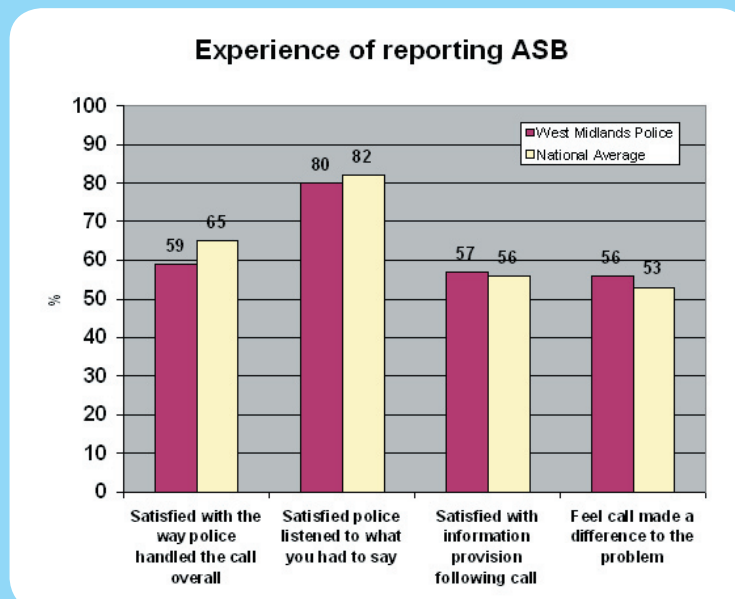
Where ASB is identified as a local policing priority, the vast majority of the neighbourhood policing pages of the force's website show clear evidence of the NPT working with partners (such as the local authority) to solve ASB problems. HMIC found many good examples of where the various tactics available to staff to tackle ASB were used successfully, including the use of Anti-Social Behaviour Orders (ASBOs), Acceptable Behaviour Contracts (ABCs) and dispersal orders. However, the actions taken are not always recorded, and HMIC found instances where the only records of plans to solve problems were entered by hand, in a book. This makes it impossible for the force to review the tactics used and the results achieved. This means their effectiveness cannot be assessed to determine best practice.

Is ASB a priority for the force?

ASB is a force priority and features in the policing plan. The commitment to this is clear, having been recently emphasised in the 'Manual of Standards' to ensure a consistent approach is taken to ASB throughout the force area. Local consultation with the public has been conducted to determine priorities, and ASB has been identified as one of the five most important issues in communities. The level of resources devoted to ASB and the data and information analysed demonstrates a clear commitment to tackling ASB.

Results of the victim satisfaction survey

We surveyed 408 people who reported ASB in West Midlands during September 2009. They were asked a range of questions about their perceptions of ASB generally and their experience in reporting ASB to the police.



From the results, it can be seen that the force is performing broadly in line with the national average for the areas considered in the survey.

