

An inspection into how the police service is making best use of its time

Terms of reference

1. Background

As part of the HMIC Business Plan for 2013/14, it was agreed that HMIC would undertake work to assess the effectiveness of certain aspects of policing activity, including inspection focused upon preventative policing, police attendance and freeing up police time. As a result of recent programme and resource management discussions between HMIC and the Home Office, it was agreed that these three related areas of business would be drawn together, and delivered under one 'umbrella' programme: Making best use of police time.

There are some very clear links and interdependencies across these three areas of policing; the ability of the police to free up time will affect their response to calls from the public, the quality of service whilst attending and the amount of time they can dedicate to preventative policing; preventing crimes and incidents from occurring not only reduces the impact on the public as victims but also reduces future demand on police resources. How well the police respond to calls for service from the public will influence the likelihood of detecting the crime and preventing repeat incidents from occurring.

The reductions required in the 2010/11 comprehensive spending review (CSR) challenged the police service to become more efficient and, at least as, effective. All 43 Home Office forces have reorganised themselves and examined systems and procedures in an effort to reduce costs and maintain service delivery. The most recent Spending Review announcement of 26 June 2013 requires the police service to find further savings. This means that it is even more important to ensure that forces are not reducing cost at the expense of service and that police time is freed up to focus on those activities that are key to reducing crime and improving public satisfaction and confidence.

The policing issues identified for this inspection programme have been the subject of some examination recently by HMIC, either directly or as part of other reviews. Results from this work indicates that, as forces make significant changes to their structures, systems and working practices, the service being delivered to the public and the effectiveness of preventative policing is very mixed.

2. Scope

The key questions posed in this inspection programme are;

1. How effective are police forces at preventing crimes and incidents from happening?
2. When crimes and incidents are reported, how do forces respond and how does their activity affect crime investigation and prevention, public reassurance, satisfaction and confidence?
3. What constitutes a working day for officers and staff, and how are forces freeing up time and exploiting technology to ensure their focus is on those activities that will reduce crime, anti-social behaviour and improve confidence and satisfaction?

This inspection will examine the extent to which preventative policing forms part of each force's policing model; how research on what is known to work in reducing crime informs those approaches to preventative policing: how they are translated into operational activity; and how effective approaches are identified, captured and shared. While it is acknowledged that the police often work closely with partner agencies to prevent crime, HMIC does not have the remit or capacity within this inspection to review partner arrangements and will, therefore, focus on partnerships to prevent crime from a police perspective. This inspection will examine the extent to which forces are using investigative and offender-focused activity and techniques to prevent crime reoccurring.

The inspection will examine how the police service is responding to calls from the public regarding incidents of crime and anti-social behaviour. It will include examining and comparing the standards of service delivery in relation to the attendance at, and investigation of, crimes and incidents across police forces and any corresponding variations in the levels of crime reduction, detection and public reassurance and satisfaction. HMIC will assess how each force has engaged the public in determining how they should respond to and investigate crimes and incidents.

In relation to freeing up police time, the inspection will examine the extent to which the police service understands how 'policing' time is currently spent and what forces are doing to create capacity to sustain or improve service delivery. The review will consider how forces are examining systems, processes and procedures to make them more efficient and effective and how technology is being used to improve efficiency.

The scope of this inspection includes all 43 Home Office forces, the British Transport Police (BTP) and Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) will be asked if they wish to be included within the programme. It does not include the National Crime Agency, any other non Home Office forces, or forces of Crown Dependencies or UK overseas territories.

3. Aim and objectives

The aim of this inspection is to provide an assessment of what the police do to maximise their capacity to serve the public; to what extent and how effectively they undertake preventative activity; and, when crimes and incidents are reported, how well the police respond to them.

The following work streams are under consideration:

Preventive policing

HMIC will build upon the work undertaken in *Taking Time for Crime*¹ and will examine how efficient and effective forces are in preventing crime. It will look at research undertaken nationally by the College of Policing and other agencies to develop evidence-based practices in preventative policing. This will include;

- considering the approach adopted by forces, and how preventative policing features in their plans, procedures and working practices;
- assessing how forces create opportunities to prevent, rather than respond to, crime and the key roles involved in for prevention activity;
- scrutinising pre-emptive activity as well as preventative tactics adopted following crimes and incidents being reported; and
- examining how forces determine and deliver the intelligence, information, equipment and training necessary for effective preventative policing;
- examining how forces identify, highlight and share effective practice both internally and across the service.

Police attendance

This aspect of the inspection programme is to examine how effective forces are in responding to calls from the public. It will examine the variations in standards of call management and police response to the public and the impact on crime and incident rates, service quality, satisfaction and confidence. This will include:

- reviewing plans, policies, systems and working practices in relation to call handing, crime and incident categorisation and prioritisation and resource deployment;
- understanding the governance, accountability and checking mechanisms in place to ensure public service delivery;
- examining information and data and reality test each force's responses to specific crimes and incidents, including the deployment, investigative (or other) activity and resolution;
- comparing and contrasting force deployment, attendance and service delivery policies against crime and incident performance, public satisfaction and confidence; and
- survey work to assess the public's requirements and expectations.

¹ Taking time for crime: a study of how police officers prevent crime in the field, September 2012

Freeing up police time

HMIC will examine how forces are looking to understand their demand and how they are freeing up time to focus on those activities that are key to delivering high quality policing services. In particular, the inspection will examine reorganisation and change programmes undertaken (and proposed) during the CSR period to improve efficiency and effectiveness (including those aimed at reducing bureaucracy), as well as how forces determine and measure the productivity of their staff. This will include:

- considering how forces have assessed how their time is currently occupied and allocated and arranged their resourcing accordingly;
- assessing tasks and activities considered necessary (either requiring police powers or otherwise) and those that are not, to delivering a quality service;
- assessing how forces understand what a working day consists of, and how they assess and measure the workload of their staff;
- examining how organisational and cultural change undertaken ensures the best use of police time; and
- understanding how forces are maximising technology to improve their efficiency and effectiveness and how those savings are being measured.

4. Methodology

The objectives will be achieved via:

- the examination of existing databases and processes to ascertain what is currently known in these areas of business;
- the requisition, examination and assessment of key documents from forces, including (but not exclusively) policy, guidance, structural and resourcing models and plans, improvement and efficiency plans and other relevant documentation;
- interviews with key stakeholders and senior police officers/staff;
- through an in-force reality testing programme to examine, check and validate documentation, procedures and practices;
- liaison with an ACPO, APCC and Home Office reference group to ensure effective liaison with the service during the conduct of the review;
- liaison with relevant professionals and specialists in these areas of business, such as the Technical Advisory Group;
- liaison with police and police staff associations;
- public surveys in relation to police attendance and preventative policing activity undertaken in their area; and
- research and benchmarking with private and public sector organisations to identify good practice.

5. Timeframe

The timescales below give an indication of when we anticipate key stages of the work to be completed. It assumes there will be three separate national reports, published at monthly intervals before the end of July 2014:

- agree terms of reference – by 1 November 2013
- develop and agree templates and data requirements – by 1 December 2013
- pilot testing of methodology in force, confirm inspection schedule, resource requirements and deliver staff training – by 1 January 2014
- in-force reality testing – 1 January to 1 April 2014
- data quality assurance and analysis – beginning 1 April 2014
- three separate, complementary reports to be published during the months of May, June and July 2014.

6. Product

While this piece of work is essentially three inspections being undertaken simultaneously, there are clear links between the different pieces of work. A single national report will therefore be created, summarising findings from all three inspections.

In order to make findings as useful and accessible to the public as possible, a single, high-level public-facing report will also be produced for each force. Forces will also receive a more detailed post-inspection feedback report.