

Drusilla Sharpling, CBE
Her Majesty's Inspector of Constabulary

Mr J. Long
T/Chief Constable
Avon and Somerset Constabulary
Police Headquarters, PO Box 37
Valley Road
Portishead
Nr Bristol
Somerset BS20 8QJ

3 September 2014

Dear John

Core business: An inspection of crime prevention, police attendance and use of police time

Between January and April 2014, HMIC carried out inspection fieldwork across all 43 forces in England and Wales. This inspection, called 'Making best use of police time' (now known as 'Core business: An inspection of crime prevention, police attendance and use of police time') assessed three areas of police work. These were:

- how well forces are preventing crime and anti-social behaviour;
- how forces respond to reports of crime, including investigating crime and bringing offenders to justice; and
- how well forces are freeing up the time of their staff so they can focus on core policing functions.

Attached is an embargoed copy of the national thematic report for this inspection which will now be published by HMIC on Thursday 4 September 2014 at 00:01. This must not be published until this date and time.

The findings that specifically relate to your force are included in this letter. The initial findings were previously sent to you for factual accuracy checks and, where appropriate, have been amended following your response.

The majority of the inspection findings contained in the national thematic report do not identify individual forces. However, electronic versions of the national report will link to the HMIC website where data on each force can be viewed.

We will revisit some of the evidence gathered during the 'Core business' inspection as part of the crime inspection for HMIC's Police Efficiency, Effectiveness and Legitimacy (PEEL) interim assessment.

All forces will be given the opportunity to provide an update. This updated evidence will be considered as part of the PEEL interim crime inspection, which is due to be published at the end of November.

Preventing crime

- Tactical governance arrangements encourage and support delivery of preventative policing at a local and constabulary level. An overarching crime prevention strategy would provide greater clarity to officers, staff and the public on the importance to the constabulary of preventing crime and anti-social behaviour and how this will be achieved.
- HMIC found some good examples of where the constabulary has undertaken small- and large-scale crime prevention initiatives. For example, in Bristol, a strategic crime co-ordinator has been funded (2 year posting) to ensure consistency when rolling out crime prevention activity and products. There is also a serious acquisitive crime intelligence team (SACIT) that identifies crime hotspots and links in with local policing teams to address problem areas. In addition, HMIC found that the daily management meetings in the constabulary were being used well to focus staff on crime prevention activity showing good evidence of follow-up work and use of the constabulary tasking system ('iTask').
- The constabulary uses an electronic database to record problem-solving activity and this is updated with information to help officers and staff prevent crime in local neighbourhoods. In 2008, the constabulary created the IDPARTNERS problem-solving system and methodology building upon the national SARA (scanning, analysis, response and assessment) problem solving approach. While it is evident it is being used to record problem-solving plans and outcomes, there is little evidence of evaluation or sharing of good practice across the constabulary.
- Other than to new recruits, limited crime prevention training has been delivered to staff who deal frequently with victims of crime and anti-social behaviour. HMIC believes that by providing focused training to specific staff, the constabulary would be able to make better use of opportunities to prevent crime and thereby provide a better quality of service to the public.

Crime recording and attendance

- The constabulary does not have a policy to attend all reports of crime and incidents but one that is based on a series of considerations, including identifying the threat, risk and harm to the victim, caller or community. HMIC understands that the constabulary has not consulted the public in relation to this policy.
- Discussions and observations in the constabulary's call-handling centre identified clear policies and procedures to identify vulnerable and repeat victims of crime and anti-social behaviour to improve services to victims.
- Crime is recorded by the force in one of two ways:
 - creating an incident on the command and control system and subsequently entering details onto the crime recording system; or
 - directly recording crime onto the crime-recording system without creating an incident first.

The force has systems in place to identify how many crimes it attends.

- During the inspection, HMIC reviewed a number of crime investigations including reports of crimes that were not attended. HMIC found that, in general, there was clear evidence of officers recording updates on the progress of investigations. We also found evidence of supervisory oversight.
- HMIC found that the integrated offender management scheme (IOM), in place to manage those offenders likely to cause most harm to their communities, was well-managed in Bristol. There are regular meetings with key partners and a structured approach is used to identify and assess risk. The constabulary has replicated IOM multi-agency arrangements in the other two policing areas but the inspection found that they were not as robust as the effective Bristol IOM.
- The inspection team found that the constabulary has clear, robust arrangements to manage its outstanding named suspects and offenders. The constabulary was able to provide HMIC with the details of a number of named suspects yet to be arrested or interviewed, as well as those who had failed to answer police bail. A sample of named suspect files, including those circulated as wanted on the police national computer, provided clear evidence that activity had been documented and properly supervised in a number of cases.

Freeing up time

- The constabulary has regularly been reviewing its demand and resource profiles for a number of years and since 2013 has undertaken a comprehensive review process: 'the constabulary review'. This systematic and comprehensive assessment of demand has drawn on data from Operations Check and Census, and the constabulary has used consultancy and demand analysis modelling.
- The constabulary is developing work with other agencies to identify and address those tasks that are not the sole responsibility of the police, most notably around mental health provision.
- The inspection found that there is a clear structure to assist supervisors in assessing the workload and performance of frontline officers and staff. The performance and workload data of staff are captured through automated systems and are readily available to supervisors and managers on the constabulary intranet and the constabulary tasking system (iTask). Tasking processes are used effectively by supervisors. Dip-sampling of crime workloads by HMIC provided evidence that investigators were being appropriately assigned to crimes.

- The constabulary has some understanding of the amount of savings in staff time that has been made as a result of changes and new technology.
- The use of mobile devices (such as tablets and mobile phones) to enable officers to access constabulary systems while on patrol is limited outside of Bristol.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Drusilla Sharpling'. The signature is fluid and cursive, with a prominent initial 'D' and a long, sweeping tail.

Drusilla Sharpling
Her Majesty's Inspector of Constabulary
Wales and Western Region