



Inspecting policing
in the public interest

Crime inspection 2014

Cheshire Constabulary

November 2014

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ISBN: xxx-x-xxxxx-xxx-x

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How effective is the force at cutting crime?

Overall summary

Cheshire Constabulary has a good track record in reducing crime. Preventing crime is a clear priority for the force and it works well with local partners in making good use of resources in providing a joined-up response to problems.

HMIC found a victim-centred approach throughout the force; it has a positive focus on learning and improving services. There is a genuine commitment among staff to delivering a high quality service to local communities.

There is a mixed picture in the quality of investigations, with some good examples of effective investigations and good victim care from specialist teams dealing with domestic abuse and rape, but also some inconsistencies elsewhere in the planning and supervision of investigations.

Rates of anti-social behaviour are comparatively high in Cheshire but the force is working well with partners to understand and address local concerns.

This year, HMIC undertook an inspection into the crime data integrity of all 43 police forces, to determine the extent to which police-recorded crime information can be trusted at a national level. HMIC has serious concerns about Cheshire Constabulary's approach to crime recording, which is not as accurate as it should be. Individual force reports are available at <http://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmic/>.

How effective is the force at reducing crime and preventing offending?

Good

Cheshire Constabulary has a good track record in reducing crime. There were fewer crimes per 1,000 population in Cheshire in the 12 months to June 2014 than across England and Wales as a whole. Crime rates have fallen at around the same rate as across England and Wales over the last four years although, in the last year, crime fell at a greater rate in Cheshire than across England and Wales.

Crime prevention is a clear priority for the force and there is a strong focus on understanding the root causes of crime and providing appropriate services to prevent crime and re-offending. The constabulary also provides a victim-centred approach through its neighbourhood teams and specialist teams who provide good victim care.

How effective is the force at investigating offending?

Good

There are clear procedures in place to identify vulnerable and repeat victims and staff understand the victim centred approach and are committed to providing high quality service.

HMIC found a mixed picture with regard to the quality of investigations with some good and victim-focused practice in specialist investigations but there were inconsistencies in the quality of investigations in other areas.

The constabulary works well to prevent re-offending among serious and prolific offenders through a highly regarded integrated approach to managing offenders with partners.

How effective is the force at tackling anti-social behaviour?

Good

There are comparatively high rates of anti-social behaviour in Cheshire, although the area has seen a reduction over the last year.

Cheshire Constabulary uses a range of tools and techniques to understand and address local concerns and engage with the public and victims of anti-social behaviour. The constabulary has good systems in place to identify repeat victims of anti-social behaviour and spot where a pattern of escalating risk might be occurring.

The constabulary works well with partners to tackle anti-social behaviour. There is good practice in place with partner agencies across most of the force area, working jointly to assess and manage risk to victims from anti-social behaviour.

How effective is the force at reducing crime and preventing offending?

Good

The constabulary works well in partnership to make best use of local resources to enable joined-up responses and target activity at areas of greatest risk. There are plans to further extend local partnership working.

How effective is the force at investigating offending?

Good

The constabulary has a positive approach to learning. 'Systems thinking' is widely understood and has been used to good effect. It has provided a general focus on understanding where improvements in service can be made across the force.

How effective is the force at tackling anti-social behaviour?

Good

Introduction

This inspection looks at how effective police forces are at cutting crime. The public expects the police to reduce, prevent and investigate crime, bring suspects to justice and, in conjunction with other services and agencies, care for victims. To assess each force's effectiveness, we looked at three specific areas:

- How effective is the force at reducing crime and preventing offending?
- How effective is the force at investigating offending?
- How effective is the force at tackling anti-social behaviour?

Methodology

During our inspection we analysed data and documents from forces, and conducted in-force inspections. We interviewed the senior officers responsible for crime, neighbourhood policing and victim care in each force. We held focus groups with frontline police officers, investigators and police staff, and observed their activities first hand. We also reviewed 20 crime investigations in each force and interviewed heads of partner organisations such as local authorities. We focussed on anti-social behaviour and the offences of: burglary dwelling; serious sexual offences; and violence with injury on this inspection. We chose to focus on these offences because they cover the areas of acquisitive and violent crime and the protection of vulnerable people. This has allowed us to make an assessment of how well the force treated the victim throughout the investigation – examining in particular how well officers gathered evidence and how well they were supervised.

Victims are at the heart of this inspection. Victims are entitled to a service from the police; this includes regular information about their case, an opportunity to provide an impact statement where relevant and to be consulted on potential criminal justice outcomes. When the police provide this service to victims, it increases victim satisfaction and builds trust and confidence in the police.

As part of this inspection, we considered how well forces deal with domestic abuse, alongside other offence types. HMIC published a report in March 2014 on how well forces tackled domestic abuse and provided support to victims. As a result of that inspection all forces were asked to provide an action plan setting out how they were improving services to victims of domestic abuse and we have reviewed the action plans developed by forces. The action plans have not informed the judgments made in these reports.

The crime inspection provides HMIC with the first opportunity to test whether the force's approach to improving how it tackles domestic abuse is beginning to have an effect and this forms part of our overall assessment of the force.

How effective is the force at reducing crime and preventing offending?

HMIC looked at how the leadership of the constabulary deploys its resources to reduce the volume of crimes being committed, maximise the quality of victim contact, and ensure that the force focuses on community priorities while mitigating national threats.

We looked at how the constabulary prevents crime, how it uses police tactics such as stop and search powers to prevent and detect crime and reduce offending. We also looked at how the police work with other agencies such as social services to reduce crime.

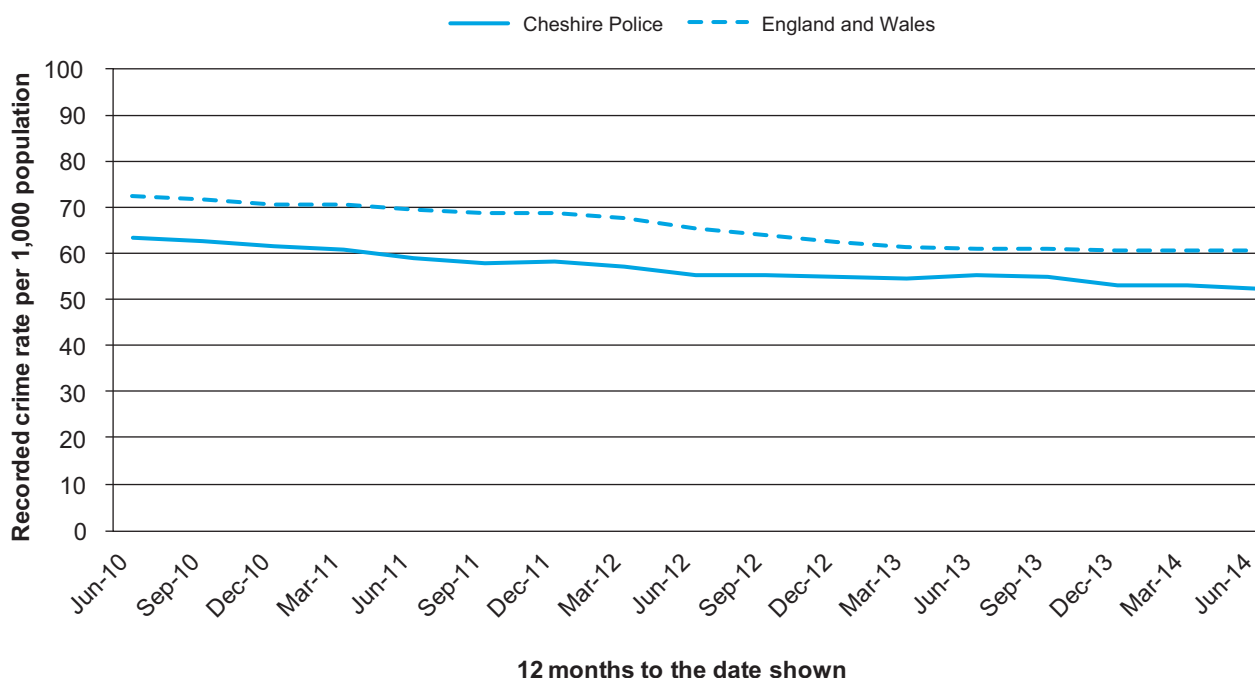
Crime

In 2010 the Home Secretary set a clear priority for the police service to cut crime. When compared with the 12 months to June 2010, recorded crime (excluding fraud) in the 12 months to June 2014 reduced by 17 percent in Cheshire compared with a reduction of 16 percent across all forces in England and Wales.

Over this period, victim-based crime (i.e., crimes where there is a direct victim such as an individual, a group, or an organisation) decreased by 17 percent in Cheshire, compared with a reduction of 16 percent across England and Wales.

Looking at the 12 months prior to the end of June 2014; recorded crime (excluding fraud) in Cheshire reduced by 5 percent, compared with a 1 percent reduction across England and Wales.

Figure: Recorded crime rate (per 1,000 population) between June 2010 and June 2014.



By looking at how many recorded crimes and incidents of anti-social behaviour occur per 1,000 population, we get an indication of how safe it is for the public in that police area. The table below shows crime and anti-social behaviour rates in Cheshire (per 1,000 population) compared with the rest of England and Wales.

12 months to June 2014	Cheshire Constabulary rate (per 1,000 population)	England and Wales total rate (per 1,000 population)
Crime excluding fraud	52.5	60.7
Victim-based crime	46.8	53.9
Sexual offences	0.9	1.2
Violence with injury	4.9	5.9
Burglary in a dwelling*	6.2	8.9
Anti-social behaviour incidents*	42.5	36.8

***Note that anti-social behaviour data is for the 12 months to March 2014 and the rate for burglary in a dwelling is the rate per 1,000 households, not population.**

We have chosen these types of crime to give an indication of offending levels in the force area. We are not judging the effectiveness of the force on recorded crime rates only. For information on the frequency of other kinds of crimes in your area, go to www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmic/crime-and-policing-comparator

Cheshire’s detection rate (for crimes excluding fraud) for the 12 months to the end of March 2014 was 25 percent which was broadly in line with the figure of 26 percent for England and Wales.

The new crime outcomes framework was introduced in April 2014. It replaces a previous framework for recording how the police finalise investigations through what was known as ‘sanction detections’ (e.g. charges and/or summons). The new crime outcomes framework is designed to support police officers to use their professional judgment to ensure a just and timely outcome which reflects the harm to the victim, the seriousness of the offending behaviour, the impact on the community, and which deters future offending. Data on the full range of outcomes achieved as a result of investigations (not just detections but also, for example, community resolutions such as mediation known as restorative justice) will be available from July 2015 and used in future HMIC inspections.

Meeting the needs of the community

Preventing crime and anti-social behaviour is a clear priority for Cheshire Constabulary; the force also has a strong focus on understanding the needs of its communities and providing a high quality service to victims. The constabulary carries out a high level comprehensive assessment of the threats and risks facing communities across the county each year, this understanding of current and future risk helps to ensure that police and partner activities can be directed at the areas of greatest risk and need. There is an effective process within the constabulary to review ongoing and emerging threats and risks on a daily basis through a well-structured force-wide briefing arrangement. We found that officers and staff have a good understanding of the threats and risks to the community and resources are moved to support the greatest priorities.

The constabulary has recently produced a crime prevention strategy which provides a clear direction for staff and draws together approaches to crime and antisocial behaviour reduction and the prevention of offending. Officers understand the importance of preventative activity and resources are targeted to deliver the aims of the strategy. The strategy also recognises the key role of partners and was informed by a pilot programme of work currently in progress called 'Altogether Better'. This brings together the police and other public sector organisations to assess need and respond to individuals and families in a more effective and timely way. This includes engaging with them at a much earlier stage as well as responding to them in the event of an issue occurring.

The constabulary has invested in developing a 'systems thinking' approach to how services are designed and provided. 'Systems thinking' takes a step-by-step approach to understanding the nature of the demand, designing responses that will tackle it and delivering the quality of service that will meet public expectations. Officers examine the root causes of crime and anti-social behaviour within a location and then look at the ways the causes can be tackled and develop the right police response so that crime can be prevented or reduced in both the short and longer term. Where there are clear and obvious measurements and opportunities to draw comparisons (for example, effect on policing demand), then an evaluation has been undertaken in order to inform an agreed business change. However, there is no formal evaluation process for all areas that have been subject to the systems thinking methodology. This would be particularly beneficial in relation to the 'root causes' of crime, for example, where related to victims and offenders.

The constabulary's IT system for recording crimes now requires the officer to complete a section outlining the root cause of the crime. The constabulary has used this approach to support the development of beat management teams and to pilot a new team structure in Ellesmere Port, to better serve the community. It brings together the response officers and the investigative team with the neighbourhood team. The trial is still being evaluated but it was showing improvements in victim care. The officer who initially attends an incident continues to 'own' the investigation through to its completion, rather than handing it on to a different team. Early indications suggest an increase in the number of domestic crimes solved.

The constabulary use good methods to engage with the public such as social media, surveys and an online messaging system called Cheshire Police Alert where the public can subscribe to updates such as crime prevention advice; this is particularly useful with Watch schemes in providing information and updates. Face-to-face meetings take place within the community and also beat surgeries held at different locations where a range of views from the public can be gathered. To further support engagement the police and crime commissioner has recently developed a scheme that allows young people to benchmark and feedback on police processes and communication.

Quality of victim contact

The constabulary has adopted a victim centred approach that has been developed over a number of years. Every victim receives a victim's pack which sets out clearly what level of service they can expect to receive and if requested, officers will always visit the victim to provide support and reassurance. There is a clear and genuine commitment from staff to provide a good service. We saw a number of examples of this in action. For instance a neighbour dispute resulted in the victim reporting a series of anti-social behaviour and crime related incidents, including bins being set on fire. The investigating officer, rather than simply responding to each individual complaint, recognised that this was a pattern of escalating and complex risk to the victim and the community. The officer developed and led in the delivery of a comprehensive plan to respond to the risk which brought in the support of the fire service, the local housing provider and mental health services.

Cheshire Constabulary has delivered training to all staff on the Code of Practice for Victims of Crime; the fieldwork undertaken as part of the inspection demonstrated that front line staff were aware of their responsibilities towards victims. This was further supported by evidence obtained during observations of the daily management meetings and from examination of investigations on the NICHE¹ system; in both of these vulnerability and victim care was well managed

1 NICHE is the IT system used by the constabulary to record and manage crime reports and investigations

There is a wide range of techniques used to update victims including Facebook messages, email, text messaging and telephone calls as well as face to face. Feedback from victims is also provided through surveys and the use of complaints to determine where improvements can be made.

An important measure of the impact of changes to service delivery for the public is how satisfied victims are with the overall service they receive when they seek police assistance. In the 12 months to the end of June 2014, the Cheshire had a victim satisfaction rate of 86.4 percent (± 2.2 percent) which is broadly in line with the satisfaction rate in England and Wales of 85.0 percent (± 0.2 percent). Its current rate is broadly in line with the 88.7 percent (± 1.7 percent) recorded for Cheshire in the previous year.

Use of police tactics

The constabulary uses a range of tactics to respond to, investigate and prevent crime. There is good analysis of crime data and local intelligence which is used on a daily basis to target resources effectively. Police powers such as stop and search, domestic violence prevention orders and anti-social behaviour orders are used appropriately and form part of regular activity across the force. Special operations are also mounted to deal with specific problems, for example, 'operation guardian' was focused on tackling violence across the force area and local officers were regularly involved in activities to support the operation.

The constabulary has effective processes in place to manage and disrupt organised crime groups (OCGs) across the county. Local teams are given the responsibility for tackling groups within their areas. Partners are also engaged with disrupting OCGs and examples were provided where licensing powers had been used in premises where meetings take place to try and disrupt gang activity.

HMIC found that the constabulary recognises the importance of using local problem solving techniques to develop plans and some examples of good problem solving were evident. However, problem solving plans are not consistently used across the constabulary and, where they exist, they often lacked detail and supervision of them was limited.

Partnership working and information sharing

Strong partnership working is evident across the constabulary mainly with public and voluntary sector organisations. Partners valued the constabulary's approach to working in partnership confirming that improvements had been made in the past year, specifically in identifying and responding to vulnerable victims. Partners were particularly positive about the joint work through the specialist teams especially with the public protection unit and rape investigation unit.

The previously mentioned Altogether Better project is a good example of the police and other public sector organisations working together in one area with individuals and troubled families who frequently require support. This provides a much wider perspective (up to 16 public sector agencies) when considering the best course of action to take in finding long solutions to complex problems. As a result, the constabulary reports that there has been an increase in referrals into the team from other organisations including domestic abuse cases that previously had been unreported. Plans are in place to expand the Altogether Better approach across other areas of the constabulary and a bid has been submitted to provide funding.

The constabulary has teamed up with mental health services to pilot a street triage project. This involves a police officer and a mental health professional jointly patrolling to provide a prompt and effective response and support to people who suffer from mental health problems, enabling an early assessment and appropriate service to be provided. This has prevented individuals from being taken into custody unnecessarily and entering the criminal justice process when they actually require specialist mental health treatment. Plans are in place to expand the pilot to the remaining areas of the constabulary.

Cheshire Constabulary is developing a corporate approach to identify and respond to the rapidly growing threat from child sexual exploitation. The constabulary has worked with partner organisations and has agreed that a joined-up approach is required in order to tackle the issues effectively. Co-ordinators across the constabulary have been appointed to develop the detailed plans needed.

The constabulary has effective processes in place to manage offenders through an Integrated Offender Management (IOM) scheme called the 'Navigate' programme. This was consistently identified as working well in all areas and comprises a number of public sector agencies working together in an attempt to prevent offenders from re-offending.

Domestic abuse

In March 2014 HMIC published the results of its inspection of 43 forces on the effectiveness of the police approach to domestic violence, with a focus on outcomes for victims and whether risks to victims are adequately managed. This included clear recommendations for each force about improvements it should make. As a result of this inspection all forces were required to produce and publish an action plan setting out the steps they were taking to improve the services to victims of domestic abuse. This plan should demonstrate that HMIC recommendations are being addressed and also explain how:

- the leadership will ensure the changes necessary and hold the right people to account;
- the police response when a victim first contacts them (by a 999 call or by visiting a police station) and when they first attend the scene of the incident is improved;

- the force will ensure there is a high quality investigation of all domestic abuse crime;
- victims will be properly supported and offenders properly managed; and
- the training and learning provided to officers ensures they can give the best available response to the victim.

HMIC has made an initial consideration of the plan produced by Cheshire Constabulary. We found it incorporates HMIC recommendations relating to both the constabulary and the police service as a whole. The updates for each recommendation only contain a short overview of progress regarding each recommendation and are monitored as part of existing constabulary governance processes

The crime inspection provided us with our first opportunity to test whether changes in the force's approach to domestic abuse were beginning to have a positive effect.

During this inspection, HMIC found evidence that domestic abuse continues to be a priority for Cheshire Constabulary. We found that there are productive working relationships between police and other agencies involved in supporting victims of domestic abuse. This was demonstrated in the effectiveness of the multi-agency risk assessment conferences (MARACs) to ensure that victims are protected from further harm.

There is evidence that accredited and trained staff are routinely involved in protecting victims. These staff conduct investigations into the higher risk cases of domestic abuse, whilst offering advice and guidance to other officers dealing with standard and medium risk investigations.

The file review of domestic abuse cases conducted as part of this investigation did identify some inconsistencies in the quality of investigations across the constabulary and some weaknesses in the monitoring and quality assurance of investigations.

HMIC identified that there was scope to provide more training to frontline officers and control room staff around recognising the different aspects of domestic abuse and assessing the vulnerability of victims correctly.

HMIC found processes in place in Cheshire to identify serial perpetrators of domestic abuse and manage their behaviour. Additionally, there are mechanisms in place to monitor when domestic abuse offenders are released from prison; to notify victims that this is happening; and to offer them appropriate support as necessary.

Recommendations

- Within three months, Cheshire Constabulary should develop and commence the implementation of an action plan to improve the quality of problem solving which will ensure that:
 - (a) officers and police staff are aware of the problem solving approaches and have the professional skills and expertise to fulfil their duties;
 - (b) supervisors know what is expected of them in driving up standards; and
 - (c) there is appropriate recording, monitoring and oversight of the plans.

Summary



Good

- Cheshire Constabulary has a good track record in reducing crime. There were fewer crimes per 1,000 population in Cheshire in the 12 months to June 2014 than across England and Wales as a whole. Crime rates have fallen at around the same rate as across England and Wales over the last four years although, in the last year, crime fell at a greater rate in Cheshire than across England and Wales.
- Crime prevention is a clear priority for the constabulary and there is a strong focus on understanding the root causes of crime and providing appropriate services to prevent crime and re-offending. The constabulary also provides a victim-centred approach through its neighbourhood teams and specialist teams who provide good victim care.
- The constabulary works well in partnership to make best use of local resources to enable joined-up responses and target activity at areas of greatest risk. There are plans to further extend local partnership working.

How effective is the force at investigating offending?

HMIC looked at the range of police tactics and powers used by the constabulary to investigate offending, including how investigations are conducted, whether persistent offenders are diverted from crime and how people vulnerable to repeat crime are supported. We looked at how the constabulary learns from experience in order to improve professionalism in operational practice and leadership.

Vulnerability, risk and victims

Cheshire Constabulary has effective processes in place to identify if victims are vulnerable or have been a repeat victim of crime so that an appropriate police response can be provided. Training has been given to all staff including the force control room and front counters, as these tend to be the main route where calls for service are made.

Staff throughout the constabulary clearly understand, can articulate and are enthusiastic about the victim-centred approach, although the understanding of what additional requirements should be taken following identification of a vulnerable and repeat caller was inconsistent. It was clear that staff aimed to provide high levels of service in all cases but it would be helpful for the constabulary to clarify cases where there would be the need for additional activity or focus.

The constabulary regularly makes special measures available for victims to make court appearance less intimidating. Plans are progressing to implement video links, this will enable the victim to avoid going to court in person and to give their evidence at an alternative location via a live link.

Investigation

Professional judgments about the level of threat and risk of harm posed to the victim are used to decide on the most appropriate police response to each call for assistance. In addition the constabulary has a policy that all reports of burglary, violence and hate crime will receive a police attendance as will any incident where the victim has requested that an officer attend. Attendance is now monitored on a daily basis as part of the performance management framework.

Crimes are reviewed and allocated to officers based on the type of offence with the most serious being allocated to specialist teams. Officers confirmed the use of investigation techniques include house-to-house enquiries for burglary and 'cocooning' which involves engagement with all members of a community within the immediate vicinity of a burglary taking place. Officers will visit to not only gather intelligence but also provide reassurance and crime prevention advice.

Of the investigation files reviewed as part of this inspection we found a number of good examples where the attending officer carried out an effective initial investigation. After the initial attendance there was however inconsistency in the quality of investigation, specifically in the use of investigation plans and in the level of supervision applied to some case files.

For more serious crimes, specialist teams have a range of resources available to investigate and provide support and safeguarding for the victim. In relation to serious sexual offences there is a sexual assault referral centre (SARC) that has been commissioned through a partner agency that works with the dedicated rape team. This was recognised as providing a good service to victims in an appropriate environment for gathering evidence.

The High Tech unit, who carry out investigations into on-line offending, has recently merged with the team who manage child sex offenders. This has improved the quality of evidence taken from a scene, as by working together, specific items can be targeted for analysis, reducing the volume of items being seized. This has reduced the time taken for forensic analysis, meaning that evidence is available more quickly, reducing the delay in securing a prosecution and the length of time offenders are on bail. This is a key strength.

Tackling repeat and prolific offenders

The Navigate Integrated Offender Management (IOM) programme operates across the whole constabulary area and includes police, probation, employment, housing and drug/alcohol support teams. Officers and staff consistently identified that the process works well not only with identified offenders but also by targeting those at highest risk of offending in the future. This is a key strength. Local neighbourhood teams stated that they were aware of the offenders in their areas and the level of risks they presented. This information is provided on a regular basis across the constabulary. A police community support officer also works in the Navigate team to provide improved community knowledge and additional support for the victims of these prolific offenders. The programme has been extended to develop Navigate Safer, which focuses more on the victims and offenders involved in domestic abuse cases.

According to the constabulary's definition, as of 31 July 2014, the constabulary had 230 offenders under the IOM programme.²

² There is no standard definition of who should be managed under the Integrated Offender Management scheme. Cheshire Constabulary work closely with the probation service and partners to identify offenders for the scheme.

Learning from experience

The systems thinking approach is widely understood by officers and has been used to good effect. It has provided a general focus on understanding where improvements in service can be made across the constabulary. It was clear that this approach is valued and a key strength.

The constabulary has processes in place for learning and development for all staff of all grades and ranks as part of an overall programme of continuous professional development. There is an effective approach to training with mandatory training and delivery days used, including workshops that focus on issues such as alcohol or anti-social behaviour. Training is being delivered to develop skills and knowledge to tackle cyber-crime with the stated aim of 'developing the most cyber literate investigative workforce in the country'. The new changes in anti-social behaviour powers were well planned with training sessions in place. Levels of professional accreditation were appropriate and were built into staff development plans.

The constabulary previously recognised that sharing information and good practice around the constabulary and with partners is not as effective as it needs to be. There are limited opportunities to share good practice other than through managers, meetings or within a particular location. The constabulary recognises this and has nominated a senior officer to develop the mechanisms to improve this.

Recommendations

- Cheshire Constabulary should immediately take steps to ensure the roles and responsibilities regarding the service provided to vulnerable and repeat victims are clarified and communicated with relevant staff.
- Within three months Cheshire Constabulary should develop and commence the implementation of an action plan to improve the quality of investigations, including those relating to domestic abuse, which will ensure that:
 - (a) investigating officers and police staff are aware of the standard required and have the professional skills and expertise to fulfil their duties;
 - (b) supervisors know what is expected of them in driving up standards; and
 - (c) there is appropriate monitoring and oversight of investigative quality and timeliness.

Summary



Good

- There are clear procedures in place to identify vulnerable and repeat victims and staff understand the victim centred approach and are committed to providing high quality service.
- HMIC found a mixed picture with regard to the quality of investigations with some good and victim-focused practice in specialist investigations but there were inconsistencies in the quality of investigations in other areas.
- The constabulary works well to prevent re-offending among serious and prolific offenders through a highly regarded integrated approach to managing offenders with partners.
- The constabulary has a positive approach to learning. 'Systems thinking' is widely understood and has been used to good effect. It has provided a general focus on understanding where improvements in service can be made across the force.

How effective is the force at tackling anti social behaviour?

HMIC looked at how the constabulary prevents and tackles anti-social behaviour; in particular the way victims are treated. We looked at the quality and consistency of victim contact across the constabulary and whether victims of anti-social behaviour were dealt with in a comparable way to victims of other crimes.

Community contact and victim care

Cheshire Constabulary uses a range of tools and techniques to understand local concerns and engage with the public and victims of anti-social behaviour. For example, to target older people the force engage through over 60's groups, and for younger communities through social media.

We found that many of the officers and PCSOs make effective use of social media as a regular method of engagement. Examples were provided where the use of social media had been successful in locating individuals through posting photographs with calls for information.

The role of PCSOs was highlighted as a key strength in engaging communities and a number of these are jointly funded with other agencies. A commitment from chief officers has been made that at least one PCSO will be provided for each community ward.

The police and crime commissioner and the constabulary are trialling the use of 'participatory budgets' where funding will be provided to communities and partners to tackle the issues that have the most impact. If successful this will involve a greater participation by the community therefore developing the opportunity to be more self-sufficient.

The constabulary has good systems in place to identify repeat victims of anti-social behaviour and spot where a pattern of escalating risk might be occurring.

Partnership working

The constabulary works well with partners to tackle anti-social behaviour. There is good practice in place with partner agencies across most areas of the constabulary, working jointly to assess and manage risk to victims from anti-social behaviour. In some areas of Cheshire, police staff are located together with colleagues from other agencies. This strengthens relationships and enables better joint problem solving, with a more timely response in addressing issues. There are local plans in place to direct joint activity and tactics. These are routinely monitored to assess how effective approaches and tactics are in dealing with anti-social behaviour for example, looking at how the levels of reported incidents change as a result of targeting offenders.

The 'yellow card' scheme is a good example of the constabulary and partners acting promptly to prevent anti-social behaviour continuing. Young people are given a yellow card when their behaviour starts to cause concerns. When a young person has received three yellow cards they will be referred to the anti-social behaviour co-ordinator. The process can lead to formal sanctions being issued such as acceptable behaviour contracts (ABCs) and orders (ASBOs) but also considers alternative methods for preventing re-offending.

Improving services to the public

In the 12 months to March 2014, Cheshire Constabulary recorded 44,023 incidents of anti-social behaviour. This is a reduction of 4 percent against the previous 12 months.

There are a range of activities undertaken to engage with young people to divert those at risk of offending into other, more constructive activities. PCSOs for example, organised a range of activities such as a sports scheme, a boxing club and football matches over the summer period. During this time, the constabulary reported a decrease in anti-social behaviour incidents.

The force actively attempts to engage with emerging and hard-to-reach communities. Efforts have been taken to remove blockages, such as language barriers, through recruiting bilingual staff and in developing positive relationships through regular dialogue. In some areas liaison officers are in place. They have, over time, built trust to increase community confidence in the constabulary. An example of this is that the Independent Advisory Group (IAG) is also consulted to provide advice on community issues and how they should be resolved.

There is good use of a range of community resolution outcomes, specifically with young people, that attempt to prevent them, where it is appropriate, from entering the criminal justice system. These include: the use of mediation to resolve disputes, and offenders rectifying damage caused through their anti-social behaviour. There is work ongoing with the probation service, the youth offending team and the fire service to educate and re-focus young people into alternative and more productive activities. Youth offending panels have been established to bring agencies together to jointly agree and plan how individuals will be managed.

Summary



Good

- There are comparatively high rates of anti-social behaviour in Cheshire, although the area has seen a reduction over the last year.
- Cheshire Constabulary uses a range of tools and techniques to understand and address local concerns and engage with the public and victims of anti-social behaviour. The constabulary has good systems in place to identify repeat victims of anti-social behaviour and spot where a pattern of escalating risk might be occurring.
- The constabulary works well with partners to tackle anti-social behaviour. There is good practice in place with partner agencies across most of the force area, working jointly to assess and manage risk to victims from anti-social behaviour.

What each judgment means

HMIC uses four categories for making judgments, two are positive and two are negative. The categories are:

- outstanding;
- good;
- requires improvement; and
- inadequate.

Judgment is made against how well the force cuts crime. In applying the categories HMIC considers whether:

- the way the force is cutting crime and reducing offending is good, or exceeds this standard sufficiently to be judged as outstanding;
- the force requires improvement in the way it cuts crime, and/or there are some weaknesses; or
- the force's effectiveness at cutting crime is inadequate because it is lower than is expected.