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HM Inspector of Constabulary

Mr J Graham
Chief Constable, Cumbria Constabulary

3 September 2014

Dear Jerry

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 This must not be published until this date and time.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

- Although the inspection found references to crime reduction and prevention in some of the force's plans and documents, there is no overarching crime prevention strategy. This would provide greater clarity to officers, staff and the public, of the importance to the force of preventing crime and anti-social behaviour and how it will be achieved.
- HMIC found some good examples of where the force has undertaken long-term crime prevention initiatives. In addition, HMIC found that the daily management meetings in the force were being used well to focus staff towards crime prevention activity.
- Although the inspection found evidence of crime-prevention in neighbourhoods, the force does not have a database to assist officers and staff. This means that the force does not have a platform by which it can effectively evaluate work in this area or share good practice easily.
- Some formal crime prevention training has been delivered to neighbourhood staff whom frequently deal with victims of crime and anti-social behaviour, through a neighbourhood management training course. HMIC believes that by providing crime prevention training more widely, the force would be able to make the most of opportunities to prevent future crimes and provide a better quality service to the public.

Crime recording and attendance

- The force's policy does not require officers to attend all reports of crimes and incidents. Instead it considers the threat, risk and harm to the victim, caller or community. In addition to this, there are specific occasions when a crime is reported, where the force will always aim to attend. HMIC understands that the force has not consulted with the public in relation to this policy.
- During discussions and observations in the force's call-handling centre, the inspection team identified that the force has clear policies and procedures to enable it to consistently identify vulnerable and repeat victims of crime and anti-social behaviour.
- Crime is recorded by the force in one of two ways:
 - creating an incident on the command and control system and then 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 that it attends.

- The Automatic Resource Location System (ARLS) is not used routinely in the communications centre and officer skill sets are not linked onto the force system to allow control room staff to identify officer's skill sets and deploy the most appropriate resource to an incident. Officers from within specialist departments, are not activating ARLS, which would support deployment options.

- CCTV facilities, available across the force, are not being used effectively due to a lack of monitoring. The force is aware of this issue and is taking steps to remedy the situation.
- 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 of the progress of the investigation and supervisory oversight. However, some entries by investigators and supervisors were brief and lacked detail on actions that were still to be completed.
- HMIC examined the arrangements for the Integrated Offender Management scheme, which was in place to manage those offenders likely to cause most harm to the communities. There was no current IOM policy in place and in Workington, we found that there was some scope to improve levels of accountability between partnerships engaged in jointly managing offenders.. The force should aim to standardise its approach to offender management and evaluate the effectiveness of the way it uses the scheme.
- HMIC reviewed a small sample of ten crime investigations where the offender was identifiable as a named suspect. Each investigation had regular updates from the officer in the case and a supervisory input into the investigation record.
- A small sample of ten PNC files, relating to offenders circulated on the police national computer were reviewed. These provided very limited evidence that activity had been undertaken to trace the suspect. Progress had not been documented and properly supervised in a number of cases. These records presented as being administered as a process rather than being actively supervised to ensure the arrest of the suspect.

Freeing up time

- At the time of the inspection, the constabulary was undertaking an analysis of its demand to inform the future approach to calls for service management, address community concerns and deal with crime more effectively whilst reducing future demand.
- The force has carried out some work with other agencies to identify and address those tasks that are not the sole responsibility of the police.
- The inspection found that the force does not have a thorough understanding of how staff are spending their time when performing duty away from the police station. .
- The force is not able to identify the amount of savings in staff time that has been made as a result of changes introduced or as a result of new technology it has implemented. However, there were examples provided where the constabulary had reduced officers in one area to deploy them to other duties where there was perceived to be greater risk.

- HMIC identified that the force has made a clear investment in the use of mobile devices, (such as tablets and mobile phones) to enable officers to access force systems while on patrol although connectivity is an issue in some areas.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Roger Baker', enclosed within a faint rectangular border.

Roger Baker
HM Inspector of Constabulary