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Dear Debbie

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 This must not be published until this date and time.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

- Dorset Police does not have an overarching crime prevention strategy. However, the inspection team found references to crime reduction and prevention in some of the force's plans and found clear evidence of the force's commitment to preventing crime and anti-social behaviour (ASB) in a range of operations and everyday activity. Local policing commanders articulated how preventative policing is used tactically in their areas of command. HMIC believes that an overarching crime prevention strategy would enhance what is already in place and would provide greater clarity to officers, staff and the public on the importance to the force of preventing crime and anti-social behaviour and how this will be achieved.
- HMIC found examples where the force has undertaken long-term crime prevention initiatives, for example burglary and car crime initiatives which have successfully reduced the number of crimes reported.
- The force has an electronic database to record problem-solving activity that is updated with information to help officers and staff prevent crime in local neighbourhoods. We found clear evidence that this is used regularly and consistently to record activity to resolve and prevent community issues. The inspection also identified that some evaluation and sharing of good practice takes place. In addition, the force has introduced operation Advance to improve its investigative processes and outcomes.
- Other than to new recruits, no force-wide, classroom-based formal crime prevention training is 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 force would be able to make better use of opportunities to prevent crime and thereby provide a better quality of service to the public. However it is acknowledged that crime prevention advice is available on the force website and some crime prevention training is planned for 2014.

Crime recording and attendance

- Crime is recorded by the force, initially by creating an incident on the command and control system and subsequently entering the details onto the crime recording system. The force has systems in place to identify how many crimes it attends.
- Based on a series of considerations including identifying the threat, risk and harm to the victim, caller or community, it assesses what type of resource is required and whether there are potential lines of enquiry linked to the reported crime. HMIC understands that the force has not consulted 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 does not consistently identify vulnerable and repeat victims. The force needs to ensure that the necessary checks are in place so that all vulnerability factors, for example, relating to disability or race, are identified.
- During the inspection, HMIC reviewed a number of crime investigations, including reports of crimes that were not attended. HMIC found that there was clear evidence of officers recording updates on the progress of the investigation. We found evidence of supervisory oversight.

- An Integrated Offender Management scheme was in place to manage those offenders likely to cause most harm to their communities. While the scheme has achieved some success, this has been hampered by limited resourcing; the force is reviewing its integrated offender management capacity while still in a transitional phase.
- The force was unable to provide HMIC with the number of suspects who had failed to answer their police bail. Without this information, the force may be unable to ensure that it has effective arrangements to manage outstanding named suspects and offenders. However, the daily management meeting monitors and discusses arrest plans for suspects who failed to answer bail in the preceding 24 hours.
- A small 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 force has a good understanding of all its demand through annual review and activity analysis in all business areas; this includes neighbourhood policing demand, which is subject of a more detailed insight of demand and how force safer neighbourhood resources are distributed. Its approach includes an analysis of different types of incidents and policing activity; for example, how often police perform ambulance transportation duties outside of the service level agreement. More work can be done in relation to identifying and addressing those tasks that are not believed to be the primary responsibility of the police.
- HMIC found that the force does not have a thorough understanding of the daily productivity of staff. Although some basic management information is available, more detailed information would help supervisors direct their staff so they have a better understanding of what they should achieve whilst on patrol.
- The force cannot identify the amount of savings in staff time that have been made as a result of changes or new technology.
- HMIC identified that the force intends to make 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.

Yours sincerely



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Wales and Western Region