



Inspecting policing
in the public interest

Crime inspection 2014

Dorset Police

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How effective is the force at cutting crime?

Overall summary

Dorset Police has achieved relatively large reductions in crime and, in particular, victim-based crime. The force works well with local partners to prevent crime and reduce offending. HMIC found that the force has a strong focus on the needs of victims and increasing public satisfaction with the services it provides. The force is committed to delivering neighbourhood policing and has made reducing anti-social behaviour a strategic priority. Investigations are generally carried out to a good standard. The force has used investigative resources effectively by realigning staff to where they are needed most, and by creating specialist teams to deal with emerging threats. It has invested in an evidence-based policing (EBP) approach in order to understand what works in practice. It evaluates new ideas effectively.

The force operates a good threat, risk and harm assessment process linked to effective force and local level tasking arrangements that hold local commanders to account for performance. However, at the time of inspection there was a backlog of cases in the Safeguarding Referral Unit. This means that potentially vulnerable victims have either been waiting an unacceptable time for services or have been missed altogether.

The force works well with partners and has achieved particular success in joint actions to dismantle and disrupt organised crime groups.

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 Dorset Police's approach to crime recording, which is not as accurate as it should be. Individual force reports are available at <http://www.justiceinspectors.gov.uk/hmic/>

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

Good

Dorset Police has structures and processes that ensure that its resources match threat, risk and harm. The force has reduced crime by 7 percent in the past year and victim-based crime also by 7 percent.

Dorset Police has a victim-focused approach and is continuing to review processes to identify further opportunities to improve its service.

Dorset Police has strong working relationships with partners. These help the force to tackle effectively crime types ranging from seasonal theft from vehicles, sexual offences to organised crime.

How effective is the force at investigating offending?

Requires improvement

Staff show a good awareness of what might constitute a vulnerable victim and the importance of providing appropriate support. There are robust processes for initial assessment, and safeguards in place to check some of these assessments.

However, there are two significant weaknesses identified in the narrow definition of vulnerability and the backlog of cases in the Safeguarding Referral Unit, which means that potentially vulnerable victims are either waiting an unacceptable time for services or are missed altogether.

Dorset Police generally carries out investigations to a good standard and has made effective use of existing resources to focus on emerging threats.

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

Good

Reducing anti-social behaviour is a priority for Dorset Police. It is underpinned by the presence of dedicated safer neighbourhood teams, committed to working with the community on what local people consider important.

Dorset Police has strong working relationships with partners to reduce anti-social behaviour, and the force is working closely with them to understand and use the new legislative powers.

Dorset Police continuously seeks to improve its handling of anti-social behaviour to achieve good outcomes for victims. The force makes extensive use of restorative justice in cases involving young people, and it is considering how to extend this approach to adult offenders.

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

Good

How effective is the force at investigating offending?

Requires improvement

Dorset Police has made a significant investment in evidence-based policing in order to understand what works. The force can then evaluate its activity to improve its services to victims and prevent crime.

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 focused 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 force 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 force 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.

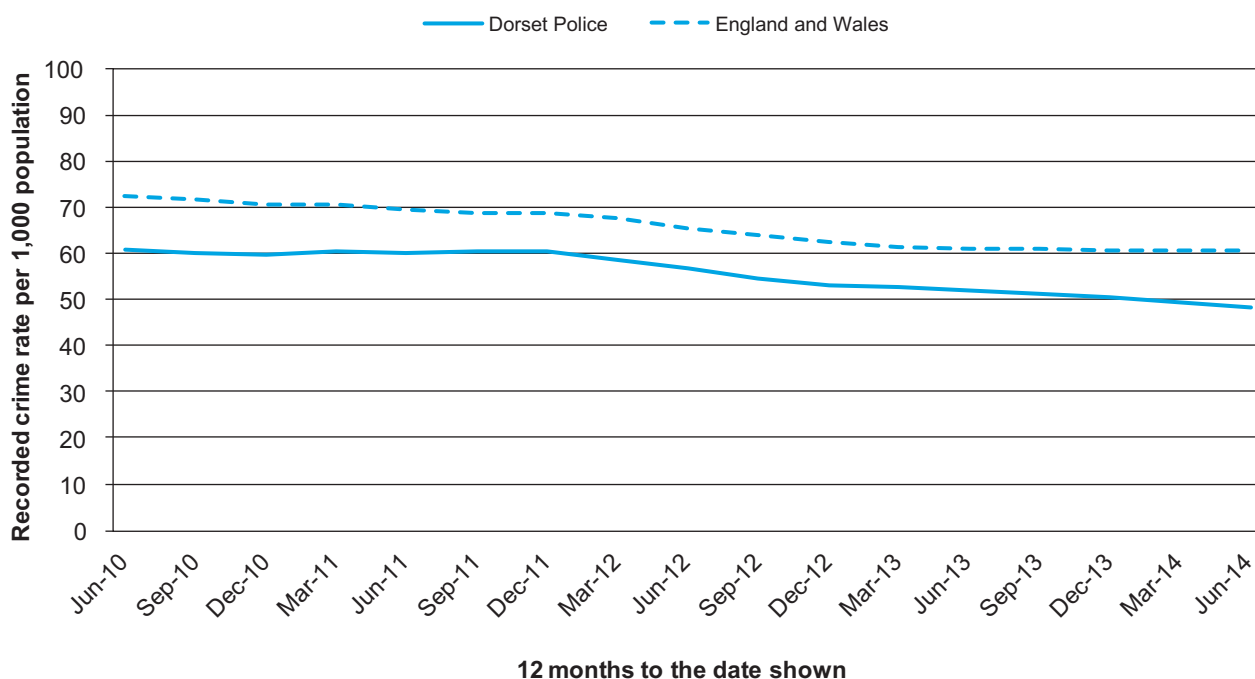
Crime

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 21 percent in Dorset 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 20 percent in Dorset, compared with a reduction of 16 percent across England and Wales.

During the 12 months prior to the end of June 2014, recorded crime (excluding fraud) in Dorset reduced by 7 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 Dorset (per 1,000 population) compared with the rest of England and Wales.

12 months to June 2014	Dorset Police rate (per 1,000 population)	England and Wales total rate (per 1,000 population)
Crime excluding fraud	48.4	60.7
Victim-based crime	44.5	53.9
Sexual offences	0.9	1.2
Violence with injury	4.9	5.9
Burglary in a dwelling*	5.2	8.9
Anti-social behaviour incidents*	39.0	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.justiceinspectors.gov.uk/hmic/crime-and-policing-comparator

Dorset’s detection rate (for crimes excluding fraud) for the 12 months to the end of March 2014 was 24 percent which was lower than the 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

Dorset Police is working hard to ensure that operational activity supports the priorities set out in the police and crime plan. The principal priority is to 'reduce the number of victims of crime and anti-social behaviour'. The force carries out an annual demand assessment based on threat, risk and harm, and has a number of other approaches to ensure that demand is understood on a more dynamic basis. It has a number of processes to make sure its resources are aligned to the demand the force faces. These processes happen on a daily, weekly and monthly basis to ensure that both short and longer-term demands are met. They are well supported with good information about crime trends. The public can have confidence that the force understands the issues it has to police and redeploys resources to match requirements.

The force carries out customer satisfaction and community safety surveys and has tried to develop a correlation between satisfaction and feelings of safety linked to police activity. It has also carried out dedicated surveys to understand the views of victims on police attendance at incidents and how community resolutions are used. The force has also engaged three charities to run police consultation groups on race equality, disability and sexual orientation to help gain community feedback on these issues. It has taken the opportunity to ask these groups to comment on some force policies such as risk management as well. The force employs an external agency to monitor the views of the public four times a year. It also regularly uses community messaging, Twitter and Dorset Alerts (an electronic database of contacts where messages are sent automatically) to seek the views of residents.

Quality of victim contact

The 'Victims First' initiative started in 2011; this puts victims at the centre of the work of Dorset Police. The approach has been reinforced by the Victims Bureau, launched in November 2013. The bureau manages victim contact, particularly for volume crime, and has access to relevant crime data. It is also responsible for updating victims on such issues. Bureau staff and local partners both told HMIC that this approach had improved the service to victims. It was also clear that the staff supporting victims of sexual offences had significant amounts of contact with them and their families. Specialist staff acknowledged that the Victims Bureau was prepared to help them in managing their contact with victims; however, they felt it was a key part of their role to support and update victims, so they managed this activity within their own teams.

As part of the inspection, HMIC dip sampled domestic abuse and non-domestic abuse files and found a mixed picture. There was clear evidence of a victim-centred approach in domestic abuse cases, but few records setting out risk assessments in non-domestic abuse cases. There were also delays in updating victims on court results, due to staff shortages within the Witness Care Bureau.

Training on the Code of Practice for Victims of Crime has been implemented with an electronic learning package. We found that officers and police staff understood the importance of ensuring that victims are kept updated and consulted as part of the initial investigation, documenting preferences and completing a victim contract card to formalise arrangements. The force indicated that it could improve further in this area, and it is currently undertaking a major piece of work to map the procedures followed by the Victims Bureau. To complement this work, it is also mapping the victim's journey from the beginning to the end of the process. This will enable the force to improve services by identifying opportunities to remove duplication and waste.

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, Dorset Police had a victim satisfaction rate of 84.5 percent (\pm 1.4 percent), which is broadly in line with the satisfaction rate in England and Wales of 85.0 percent (\pm 0.2 percent). Its current rate is higher than the 82.4 percent (\pm 1.5 percent) recorded for Dorset in the previous year.

Use of police tactics

Dorset Police uses a wide range of tactics to prevent and disrupt criminal activity. The force has specific intelligence 'desks' providing information and analysis about burglary, volume crime and sexual offenders, as well as geographically focused desks to deal with neighbourhood issues. The range of intelligence products is supported by PIER (Prevention, Intelligence, Enforcement and Reassurance) Plans to manage actions. The Public Protection Unit (PPU) has dedicated analysts. Monthly meetings with partners involve intelligence products to support tasking activity.

The force uses problem-solving approaches to address community concerns. An example is a specific operation (Operative Wave) that was launched in 2013 as a result of a spike in theft from high-value vehicles, due mainly to the influx of tourists in the summer months. This operation, which included attending all reports of vehicle crime, led to a reduction in offences, and the lessons from this dedicated operation have now been incorporated into everyday policing. HMIC was also given examples of the practical application of prevention orders to target both individual behaviour and anticipated violence in a specific area. The force has a long-established scheme called 'Stop that Thief', run in conjunction with an insurance company partner to reduce rural crime, where crime prevention advice and the loan of alarm equipment are available to enable farmers to understand how they can protect their property.

The force maps organised crime groups (OCGs) with regular updating and action planning in areas where these are clearly identified. Weekly reviews to check actions also take place. OCGs are graded according to the threat, risk and harm they pose, and they are targeted using regional, force or local level resources as appropriate. HMIC found that Dorset Police had a strong focus on tackling and dismantling OCGs, and was able to give examples of working with partners at all levels to combat them. The force had also adopted tactics that had been successful in other areas, such as increased work with the community. For example, Operation Moped involved three days of action and the use of anti-social behaviour orders and this was followed by Operation Furlong that used a range of tactics to disrupt a number of dangerous drugs networks.

Partnership working and information sharing

Dorset Police has strong relationships with partner organisations and a number of arrangements exist to ensure that all partners are involved in preventing and reducing crime at both the strategic and the tactical level. Crime prevention is carried out by safer neighbourhood teams working in conjunction with local councils and housing associations. The force has dedicated domestic abuse staff co-located with other agencies in Poole that cover the whole force area. There is also a sexual assault referral centre at Bournemouth police station.

There is a co-located local authority analyst at Poole police station. They assess vulnerable victims and emerging crime series, with some co-location of intelligence services at Bournemouth and Weymouth. Both police and partners are benefiting from this information-sharing approach. However, staff felt that further information sharing would be beneficial, and could be achieved by analysts from all partner agencies being co-located.

A senior operational officer works with local authorities to support families with a range of complex issues and needs. The force also has a dedicated resource (the safer schools team) that conducts training in schools and works with partners on issues such as anti-social behaviour and child sexual exploitation. It was reported to HMIC that a large number of children had benefited from the service they provide.

The force has a Safeguarding Referral Unit. This is not a multi-agency safeguarding hub (MASH). However, there is a full-time childcare social worker from Bournemouth and a part-time childcare social worker from Poole within the unit. Two part-time mental health youth diversion workers have also recently started working in the unit. The force is keen to work towards a full MASH implementation and believes this would improve information exchange and increase protection for the public. While some progress has been made, there has been difficulty in co-ordinating the working practices and resources of the two different local authorities.

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 respond 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 Dorset police. We found that it outlines a broad range of actions in line with the agreed national priorities for forces outlined above. However, although the plan contains a comprehensive response to the specific HMIC recommendations for the force, with activity shown against those recommendations, it does not include clear evidence of activity in those areas where the force itself felt it had further work to do.

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.

HMIC found that Dorset Police generally provides a good service to victims of domestic abuse. During the crime inspection, we found evidence that the force had undertaken a domestic abuse victim satisfaction survey in Poole and Bournemouth to further improve its service. The survey looked at the quality of the police response to reported incidents. Improvement suggestions were sent to the local inspector, multi-agency risk assessment conference (MARAC) or strategic domestic abuse group as appropriate. Serious case reviews have now been opened to all agencies and include a 'lessons learned' meeting led by the safeguarding board chair.

Recommendations

- Dorset Police should continue to work with local authorities to establish a Dorset-wide multi-agency safeguarding hub (MASH) by June 2015.

Summary

Good

- Dorset Police has structures and processes that ensure that its resources match threat, risk and harm. The force has reduced crime by 7 percent in the past year and victim-based crime also by 7 percent.
- Dorset Police has a victim-focused approach and is continuing to review processes to identify further opportunities to improve its service.
- Dorset Police has strong working relationships with partners. These help the force to tackle effectively crime types ranging from seasonal theft from vehicles, sexual offences to organised crime.

How effective is the force at investigating offending?

HMIC looked at the range of police tactics and powers used by the force 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 force learns from experience in order to improve professionalism in operational practice and leadership.

Vulnerability, risk and victims

When someone first contacts Dorset Police, the force assesses them to see whether they are particularly vulnerable or have been a victim before. The force has invested in a risk assessment unit as part of the force control room which provides real time information on risk and previous calls to officers as they attend an incident. HMIC found that there is a good understanding of vulnerability and the importance of supporting victims. There is also good awareness of the procedure to refer vulnerable people to the safeguarding referral unit, which accesses information from other agencies to provide both a fuller risk assessment and multi-agency support. Within the safer neighbourhood teams, police community support officers (PCSOs) now focus on contacting and visiting victims in their communities, and identifying vulnerability and repeat victimisation, if this has not already been done. Partners in the Victim Support service also said they worked closely with the safer neighbourhood teams to provide extra support to vulnerable victims. Partners confirmed that Dorset Police's systems are effective in identifying repeat victims and repeat locations.

The main safeguarding focus for the force is the safeguarding referral unit, whose job it is to identify vulnerable children and adults. Referrals can be received from other agencies as well as the police. The safeguarding referral unit does not have the same level of co-location and integrated working practices as other structures (for example, the MASH) that work with vulnerable people, and this is a weakness. Once vulnerability is confirmed, a strategy discussion is held and details recorded. HMIC identified two significant concerns in the safeguarding referral unit's safeguarding approach. First, applying the definition of vulnerable adults and children may exclude some vulnerable adults, and those who fall outside it are not supported by the safeguarding referral unit. Reports are either returned to the submitting officer or not followed up at all. There is no supervisory oversight or ownership, and therefore a risk of failing some vulnerable victims. These problems are recognised by the force and it is actively considering how to resolve them. During the inspection, we also found a backlog of vulnerable victim notifications within the safeguarding referral unit, some of which had been waiting a week for review. This presents a significant risk that appropriate action may not be being taken quickly enough to protect highly vulnerable people.

Partnership working underpins the force response to vulnerable victims. There are multi-agency groups that work with repeat victims of sexual assault. A 'Pan Dorset' network supported by in-force champions tackles race and hate crime. This network runs seminars and the force has introduced the national hate crime 'app', launched locally with partners, to encourage reporting of these crimes. The force has also started a monthly telephone conference with partners to share information on any concerns about care homes for the elderly; decisions on actions needed will be passed to the safeguarding adults quality group for vulnerable adults.

Staff felt that good use is made of the special measures available to enhance the quality of a witness evidence: for example, providing evidence via video link or from behind a screen in court. They now speak to other forces, if the victim lives outside the force area, to try and ensure the use of special measures. The force has used special measures to give continuity in family court proceedings running alongside a criminal case. It is also extending online training for the Code of Practice for Victims of Crime, with extra training for all uniformed and Criminal Investigation Department (CID) officers consisting of one day's training on safeguarding. This covers a range of safeguarding issues including compliance with the Code of Practice.

Investigation

Dorset Police does not have a 100 percent attendance policy for crimes but the screening process takes into account 'opportunities for gathering evidence and the vulnerability of victims'. The force has mandated attendance for certain crimes, such as thefts from vehicles, if a particular crime type is identified as a priority and attendance is an effective tactic.

A review of a small sample of case files identified that overall the standard of investigations was good, with prompt attendance, positive and appropriate action by responding officers, and effective evidence gathering. The recording of investigation plans was mixed. However, HMIC noted that in domestic abuse cases either specialist staff or CID officers were engaged as appropriate.

HMIC found a 'one team' approach with CID and uniformed resources having a good working relationship. The force has a dedicated crime management unit to ensure that supervisors are managing files appropriately by checking their quality; making sure that victims are kept up to date with developments in the case; and confirming that all opportunities for gathering evidence have been exhausted before the decision is taken not to continue with the investigation. There is a robust approach to scrutiny of case files (such as dip sampling) and the force has invested in a dedicated officer to work with its teams to improve the quality of their investigations. The force has reported a 5 percent increase in positive outcomes in recent months. This is when a range of options has been considered, including prosecution or the use of restorative justice in cases where an offender has been identified.

Reducing levels of less serious offences has enabled the force to redeploy investigative resources to target the emerging threats of cyber-crime and child sexual exploitation by setting up separate cyber-crime and police online investigation teams.

Tackling repeat and prolific offenders

Dorset Police tackles repeat offending in a number of ways. The force operates an integrated offender management¹ (IOM) team with partners who work with a small cohort of offenders. The force is working with Devon and Cornwall Police on creating a joint approach to IOM as part of a strategic alliance between the two forces. The IOM team reviews registered sex offenders and completes risk management plans for offenders, including offender vulnerability. The offenders are then referred to other agencies if appropriate.

Safer neighbourhood teams engage with young people. There are a number of multi-agency projects that look at diverting youngsters, who are on the edge of criminality, away from that lifestyle. An example is a project led by the fire service in which young people from troubled families are taken to Dartmoor on residential outdoor pursuits trips, as well as doing community work. These projects have been publicised in the local media. Referrals are made by police, fire service, schools and youth offending. The force has also worked with partners to tackle prostitution using a multi-agency approach, it works with individual prostitutes to help them find alternative ways of living.

¹ There is no standard national definition of who should be considered for IOM arrangements. Dorset Police uses its own scoring system to decide who needs to be managed in this way.

Learning from experience

Dorset Police focuses its lessons learned approach on an evidence-based policing (EBP) methodology. The force has trained a group of EBP practitioners and placed toolkits on its intranet with links to the College of Policing's good practice in EBP. It has a central repository for initiatives, so is able to see what has been effective. It has a 'lessons learned' group that is chaired by the deputy chief constable and feeds into the joint executive board which then reports an overview of lessons learned to the strategic performance board. The force has created the role of a lessons learned co-ordinator to identify and manage the deployment of best practice. It also has relationships with Bournemouth and Portsmouth universities to gain an understanding of the academic rigour required to learn effectively from experience.

The force has appointed a superintendent to lead its cyber-crime strategy to complement national and regional units by improving local capability without creating a large unit. This approach was made possible by freeing up resources by reducing crime. More generally, the force has worked with Bournemouth University to develop the cyber strategy and technical capability. Cyber crime training has been delivered to all frontline staff, a cyber training suite has been installed and preventative advice is being delivered by the safer schools team. The force is also developing a suite of out-of-court disposals to offer greater flexibility in providing appropriate outcomes for victims. It faces a significant challenge in early 2015 when it will be running an extensive training programme for the roll-out of a new crime recording system (NICHE). This initiative will facilitate greater integration of the information technology systems currently in use, enabling officers to search across a range of data to help them fulfil their roles effectively.

Recommendations

- Dorset Police should immediately develop and implement a process to ensure that all vulnerable victims receive appropriate support, and that responsibility for ownership and oversight is clearly documented.
- Dorset Police should immediately review the process for assessing vulnerable adult and child notifications to the safeguarding referral unit and by January 2015 have implemented action to ensure that they are consistently identified and dealt with as speedily as possible.

Summary



Requires improvement

- Staff show a good awareness of what might constitute a vulnerable victim and the importance of providing appropriate support. There are robust processes for initial assessment, and safeguards in place to check some of these assessments.
- However, there are two significant weaknesses identified in the narrow definition of vulnerability and the backlog of cases in the Safeguarding Referral Unit, which means that potentially vulnerable victims are either waiting an unacceptable time for services or are missed altogether.
- Dorset Police generally carries out investigations to a good standard and has made effective use of existing resources to focus on emerging threats.
- Dorset Police has made a significant investment in evidence-based policing in order to understand what works. The force can then evaluate its activity to improve its services to victims and prevent crime.

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

HMIC looked at how the force 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 force and whether victims of anti-social behaviour were dealt with in a comparable way to victims of other crimes.

Community contact and victim care

Dorset Police has made reducing the number of victims of crime and anti-social behaviour a principal strategic priority. In the 12 months to March 2014, the force recorded 29,447 incidents of anti-social behaviour. This was a reduction of 9 percent against the previous 12 months.

Safer neighbourhood teams, supported by uniformed response officers, have the primary responsibility for reducing anti-social behaviour. Control room staff use a set of questions to assess victim vulnerability on receipt of the initial call, and other force systems identify repeat victimisation. HMIC found that staff recognised that reducing anti-social behaviour was a high priority for the force. Also, response officers were able to articulate the importance of tackling anti-social behaviour at a local level in order to deter crime, although their primary role meant they had little time to undertake preventative patrols. The force monitors anti-social behaviour incidents on a daily, weekly and monthly basis via the local and force tasking processes. It also analyses patterns of behaviours and the effectiveness of initiatives.

Staff in the safer neighbourhood teams gave examples of community engagement including public meetings, neighbourhood forums, PACT (police and communities together) meetings and local action groups chaired by the local community safety officer (a council employee). They also communicate by using social media and newsletters. The safer schools team supports local problem solving by conducting talks on local issues, such as problems identified with children using catapults, and working with excluded pupils. Crime prevention initiatives are carried out too – for example, ‘shed u cation’. This involves the use of a mobile crime prevention advice trailer, presented as a shed, to promote a crime prevention message and advice on a range of issues from shed breaks, burglaries and other acquisitive crime.

‘Force actions’ are electronic logs that can be created by anyone in the force and help in dealing with anti-social behaviour. HMIC saw evidence of the use of these logs to deal with a neighbour dispute where actions were decided upon and monitored by supervisors. Other relevant information was attached to the log and, once finalised, retained in case problems re-occurred in the future. The force also runs proactive operations such as high-profile patrols by special constables over the summer period.

Partnership working

Dorset Police has strong relationships with partners to address anti-social behaviour. Partners told us that the force works well with them and engages at every level, focusing on assessing risk, dealing with problems in an appropriate way and avoiding criminalising young people by using non-criminal justice outcomes whenever possible. Partners said that the force uses its police powers to deal with anti-social behaviour when appropriate, and works with the local councils to understand community triggers and new legislation. An example was given of the use of anti-social behaviour orders to disrupt the activities of drug dealers who were travelling to a local area. Partners were able to describe police interaction with independent advisory groups, liaison with community groups, and joint activity with safer neighbourhood and child exploitation teams. The force also works with specialist partners such as the Dorset Families Matter programme.

Effective mechanisms bring partners together. They enable them to consider analytical evidence, previous history, housing data and problem locations (this includes evidence from the IOM teams), and this information is fed back to response officers.

The force has a number of single points of contact for diverse communities to build relationships and encourage the reporting of potentially hidden crime. Neighbourhood officers work with social workers and schools to support hard-to-reach minority groups.

Improving services to the public

The force has a range of training and briefing approaches to ensure the new anti-social behaviour powers can be used to full effect. The e-learning will be made available to everyone. Also, 12 staff members are receiving extra training so that they can become local experts on anti-social behaviour issues and help in co-ordinating activities. A training day for PCSOs is also being developed. The Poole safer neighbourhood team inspector, sergeant and a police constable are attending a two-day training course with the local authority on how the new anti-social behaviour powers will be used in Poole. The force is also developing memorandums of understanding with partner agencies.

The force makes extensive use of restorative justice outcomes to divert young people away from the criminal justice system, and it is looking to extend this approach to include adults. It has undertaken multi-agency reviews to identify who is best placed to carry out interventions with a focus on better outcomes for victims. PCSOs are used extensively for restorative justice interventions and the force runs a specific three-day training course to equip them for the role. Dorset Police is currently developing a suite of restorative justice and out-of-court disposal options to give greater flexibility in achieving appropriate outcomes for victims.

Summary



Good

- Reducing anti-social behaviour is a priority for Dorset Police. It is underpinned by the presence of dedicated safer neighbourhood teams, committed to working with the community on what local people consider important.
- Dorset Police has strong working relationships with partners to reduce anti-social behaviour, and the force is working closely with them to understand and use the new legislative powers.
- Dorset Police continuously seeks to improve its handling of anti-social behaviour to achieve good outcomes for victims. The force makes extensive use of restorative justice outcomes in cases involving young people, and it is considering how to extend this approach to adult offenders.

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 significantly lower than is expected.