

Zoë Billingham BA Hons (Oxon)
HM Inspector of Constabulary, Eastern Region

3 September 2014

Mr Stephen Kavanagh
Chief Constable – Essex Police

Dear Stephen

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 This must not be published until this date and time.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.

Findings that specifically relate to your force are:

Preventing crime

- The force is one of the few forces in England and Wales that has a standalone crime prevention strategy. Despite this, however, it was not entirely clear how preventative activity across the force as a whole is being managed, prioritised and co-ordinated.
- HMIC found some pockets of good practice and good examples where the force has undertaken long-term crime prevention initiatives. In addition, HMIC found that the daily management meetings are used to focus staff towards crime prevention activity.
- Although the force has a database that helps officers to solve problems that support neighbourhood prevention activity, it is not always used as effectively as it could be. While we found evidence of a problem-solving response, areas such as thorough evaluation and sharing good practice were absent.
- New recruits are trained on crime prevention. In addition, neighbourhood officers and PCSOs have undertaken crime prevention workshops within the past two years. However this does not extend to other staff who frequently deal with victims of crime and anti-social behaviour.

Attending crimes and incidents

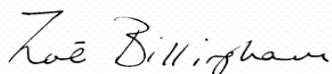
- The force does not have a policy to attend all reports of crimes and incidents, but one based on a series of considerations including identifying the threat, risk and harm to the victim, caller or community. The policy is well understood by staff and applied consistently. HMIC understands that the force has not consulted with the public in relation to this policy. However the force has recognised that elements of its policy are in need of review and plans to consult with the public in making any future changes.
- A number of different teams in the force are separately reviewing and trying to manage down the list of unattended command and control incidents. Staff are not clear about who is responsible for what, there is duplication of effort and a risk that some incidents could be missed.
- Call-handlers in the force's call-handling centre do not identify vulnerable victims consistently. The force needs to ensure that the necessary checks are in place so that vulnerability factors including disability and race are identified.
- 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 can identify individual crimes which are recorded directly onto the crime recording system and which it attends subsequently. However it is not able to produce any management information about the total number of such crimes.
- During the inspection, HMIC reviewed a number of crime investigations, including reports of crimes that were not attended. In certain cases, for crimes such as burglary dwellings, there was clear evidence of investigation and supervision. However, although the sample was small, we found that for some other crimes (many of which were not attended) we found limited evidence of meaningful investigation or supervision. A number of crimes had been closed despite clear investigative opportunities being evident from the initial incident log that had not been pursued.
- HMIC found that the Integrated Offender Management scheme, in place to manage those offenders likely to cause most harm to the communities, is well managed. There are regular meetings with key partners and a structured approach is used to identify and assess risk.

- The force was able to provide the number of named suspects that are yet to be arrested or interviewed, as well as those who had failed to answer police bail. The force prioritises its approach to tracking down and arresting suspects based on an assessment of threat, harm and risk. We found that there appears to be an effective way to oversee suspects wanted for the priority crimes. However there is not the same level of scrutiny for suspects of all crime types.
- A small sample of named suspect files, including those circulated as wanted on PNC, indicated that in a number of cases there was little evidence that activity had been documented or properly supervised.

Freeing up time

- HMIC identified that the force is taking steps to build up a more sophisticated understanding of demand. This includes in-depth analysis of different types of incidents and policing activity.
- The inspection found that the force does always not have a clear understanding of how staff are spending their time. Although some basic management information is available, staff are sometimes unclear about what is expected of them.
- The workload across different functions and teams, and supervisory ratios, are inconsistent. The current force operating model has tended to promote a rather 'siloed working' amongst many staff and as a result teams may not always be working together in the most effective way. The force has recognised these issues and has already made some changes to its operating model by returning the CID to local management. Further changes are planned, including returning the response and patrol function to local command.
- 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 being implemented.
- The use of mobile technology devices, such as tablets and mobile phones to enable officers to access force systems whilst on patrol is currently limited.

Yours sincerely



Zoë Billingham

HM Inspector of Constabulary, Eastern Region

Copied to Denise Peacock
HMIC Liaison Officer