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HM Inspector of Constabulary

Mrs S Sim
Chief Constable, Northumbria Police

3 September 2014

Dear Sue

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 This must not be published until this date and time.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 relate specifically 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 Northumbria Police does not have an overarching crime prevention strategy, crime prevention is a strand through many strategic and tactical documents, and is a consistent theme within the force's meeting structures and processes. A crime prevention strategy would provide further 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 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 on crime prevention activity.
- No formal crime prevention training has been delivered to staff who deal frequently with victims of crime and anti-social behaviour, other than to new recruits. HMIC believes that by providing training, the force would be able to make the most of opportunities to prevent future crimes and provide a better quality of service to the public.
- The force is clear about how it will respond to calls for service from the public. It is one of the few forces that has a policy requiring officers to attend all reports of crimes and incidents.
- 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 potential vulnerability factors, such as disability or race, are identified.

Crime recording and attendance

- Crime is recorded by the force initially by creating an incident on its command and control system and then by entering the details onto its crime recording system. The force has systems in place to identify how many crimes it attends.
- 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 to the progress of the investigation, and supervisory oversight.
- HMIC found the Integrated Offender Management scheme, in place to manage those offenders likely to cause most harm to their communities, to be 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 HMIC with the number of named suspects yet to be arrested or interviewed, as well as those who had failed to answer police bail. The inspection team found that the force has clear, robust arrangements to manage its outstanding named suspects and offenders.

- 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

- HMIC identified that the force has a relatively good understanding of demand, and is taking steps to build up a more detailed insight into demand and how its resources are distributed. This includes analysis of different types of incidents and policing activity.
- 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 there is a clear structure to assist supervisors in assessing the workload and performance of frontline officers and staff.
- The force is not able to identify the amount of savings in staff time made as a result of changes introduced or new technology it has implemented.
- 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.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Roger Baker', with a horizontal line underneath.

Roger Baker
HM Inspector of Constabulary