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Her Majesty's Inspector of Constabulary

Mr A. Parker
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3 September 2014

Dear Andy

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 This must not be published until this date and time.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

- HMIC found references to crime reduction and prevention in some of the force's plans and documents but there is no overarching crime prevention strategy. However, officers and staff understand how their actions can prevent crime and crime prevention activity is embedded in the service provided by the force.
- HMIC found 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. The tasking of local staff activity could be improved by providing more detailed intelligence and information for operational staff. The force did not have enough staff to support the analysts at the time of the inspection but intelligence researchers have now been recruited to work with the force analysts and improve the service.
- Although the force has an electronic database that is updated with information that helps officers and staff prevent crime in neighbourhoods, it could be used more effectively. We found evidence of problem-solving, but more could be done to improve evaluation and the implementation of good practice.
- 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 focused training, the force would be able to make better use of opportunities to prevent crime and thereby 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 requires the operator to consider the threat, risk and harm to the victim, caller or community and dispatch an officer if the operator believes it is necessary. Where the attendance of an officer is not necessary, the operator forwards the call to a crime bureau where investigations are conducted. HMIC understands that the force has not consulted with the public in the formulation of this policy.
- In addition, there are specific occasions when a crime is reported where the force will always aim to attend. These crimes include sexual offences, domestic abuse and anti-social behaviour. The force would benefit from a consistent process to quality assure the force response to all crimes and incidents to ensure staff are complying with the relevant policies.
- 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, relating for example to disability or race, are identified and the appropriate service provided. The operator is required to record the rationale to support their decision whether or not to dispatch an officer following a report to the call centre, but HMIC found limited evidence that this requirement was followed in all cases.
- 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 records. The command and control logs provide detail on whether an officer was dispatched from the control room and their attendance. However, in some cases an officer is not dispatched but the incident is flagged for attention by the neighbourhood team. Officers and PCSOs make follow-up visits at a later stage but their attendance may not be recorded as the incident has been closed on force records.

- 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, for other offences, such as theft from a motor vehicle, many of which were not attended, there was little evidence of meaningful investigation or supervision.
- HMIC examined the arrangements for the Integrated Offender Management scheme in place to manage those offenders likely to cause most harm to their communities. The teams were well-managed and used the same processes they had used for the previous Prolific and Priority Offender scheme. The force may benefit from an evaluation of the way it uses the scheme to maintain effectiveness.
- The force was unable to provide HMIC with the number of named suspects yet to be arrested or interviewed. Without this information, the force may be unable to ensure that it has effective arrangements to manage outstanding named suspects and offenders.
- A small sample of named suspect files, including those circulated as wanted on the police national computer, provided little evidence that activity to locate and apprehend them 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 and how its resources are distributed. Its approach involves an analysis of different types of incidents and policing activity. As the force is working as part of the alliance with West Mercia there are plans in place to carry out detailed analysis of demand under an alliance programme lead this year. At the time of inspection, only a limited analysis had taken place.
- The force has embedded the 'Right Service First Time' approach in the communication centre to ensure the service provided to the caller comes from the right person and agency. Communication centre staff have the confidence and knowledge to divert callers to another agency where they believe they will receive the appropriate service. The force has progressed some work with the local mental health team to ensure officers are not inappropriately attending incidents and that mental health workers provide the required support. More progress should be made with the ambulance service to reduce the demand on frontline officers who attend incidents that require the intervention of health care professionals.
- There was no clear structure to assist supervisors to assess the workload and performance of frontline officers and staff. This is hindered by the lack of IT support and the use of a paper-based crime management system. This is being addressed by the introduction of new IT as well as the Dashboard IT system to provide supervisors with a tool to understand and manage the workload of their staff.

- HMIC found that the force does not have a thorough understanding of how staff are spending their time. Although some basic management information is available, more detailed information would help supervisors understand the capacity of their staff and provide more focused tasks.
- The force is not able to identify the amount of savings in staff time that has been made as a result of changes 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 'Drusilla Sharpling', written in a cursive style.

Drusilla Sharpling
Her Majesty's Inspector of Constabulary
Wales and Western Region