

Drusilla Sharpling, CBE
Her Majesty's Inspector of Constabulary

Mr D. Shaw
Chief Constable
West Mercia Police
Hindlip Hall
Hindlip
P.O. Box 55
Worcester WR3 8SP

3 September 2014

Dear David

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 This must not be published until this date and time.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 to help 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 evaluate initiatives and identify good practice.
- Other than to new recruits, no formal crime prevention training has been delivered to staff who deal frequently with victims of crime and anti-social behaviour. 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 of 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 an 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 and a crime is being reported, the operator will forward the caller onto the crime bureau to take the report over the telephone. HMIC understands that the force has not consulted with the public in relation to 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 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 incidents to ensure staff are complying with attendance 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, for example, relating to disability or race, are identified and the appropriate service provided. The operator should record the rationale to support their decision whether or not to require an officer to attend but HMIC found limited evidence of the implementation of this policy in practice.
- Crime is recorded by the force in one of two ways:

- creating an incident on the command and control system and subsequently entering details onto the crime recording system; or
 - directly recording crime onto the crime-recording system without creating an incident first.
- Although the force is able to identify how many crimes are recorded directly onto the crime recording system, it is not able to identify how many of those crimes it then goes on to attend. The command and control logs provide the detail of whether an officer was dispatched from the control room and their attendance. However, in some cases an officer is not dispatched and the incident is flagged for the neighbourhood team. Officers and police community support officers make follow-up visits at a later stage but their attendance may not be recorded as the incident has been marked as closed on force systems.
 - 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 of the progress of the investigation. We found evidence of supervisory oversight.
 - HMIC examined the arrangements for the Integrated Offender Management scheme in place to manage those offenders likely to cause most harm to their communities. There were inconsistent processes in each local area in the way offenders enter and exit the scheme and how the teams' performance is measured. The force should aim to standardise its approach to offender management and evaluate the effectiveness of the way it uses the scheme.
 - 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 had clear, robust 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, was examined by HMIC. There was clear evidence that activity to locate and apprehend the suspects had been documented and 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 includes an analysis of different types of incidents and policing activity. Some initial demand analysis was taken at the start of its change programme. As the force is working as part of an alliance with Warwickshire, there are plans in place to carry out detailed analysis of demand under an alliance programme lead this year.
- The force has adopted the 'Right Service First Time' approach in the communication centre to ensure the caller receives the right service from the right person or agency. Communication centre staff have received guidance on partner agency services and where appropriate, callers are diverted to ensure the right service is delivered at the first point of contact. 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 to reduce the demand on frontline officers by working with the ambulance service so that officers spend less time on calls that ought to be dealt with by health care professionals.

- HMIC found clear structures to assist supervisors to monitor the workload and performance of frontline officers and staff. The Dashboard IT system provides supervisors with a good tool to understand and manage the workload of their staff. This is used effectively in local policing but not in specialist areas of policing such as firearms or roads policing.
- The force is not able to identify the amount of savings in staff time that has been made as a result of changes it has introduced or as a result of 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', with a stylized flourish at the end.

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