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Dear Chris

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 This must not be published until this date and time.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

- Although there is no documented, overarching force crime prevention strategy, 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 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 supported with intelligence around crime hot-spot areas, specific locations and prolific and persistent offenders.
- The force has an electronic database which is updated with information that helps officers and staff prevent crime in neighbourhoods: the database is well used by staff but has been described as 'clunky' to navigate. HMIC found evidence of problem-solving techniques. The force uses pilots to evaluate initiatives before they roll them out force-wide and has a strong track record of using evidence-based policing projects, working with colleges and universities to improve the police response to public concerns. Operation Savvy is a good example of this approach. The operation was used to improve the tasking and focus of patrols for neighbourhood teams.
- Other than to new recruits, no consistent formal crime prevention training has been given to staff who deal frequently with victims of crime and anti-social behaviour. HMIC believes that by providing focused training to specific staff, the force would be able to make better use of opportunities to prevent crime and thereby improve the service provided 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 considers the threat, risk and harm to the victim, caller or community and dispatches an officer if the operator believes it is necessary based on vulnerability and solvability factors. HMIC understands that some consultation with the public has taken place in relation to this policy. In addition, there are specific occasions when a crime is reported where the force will always aim to attend. The supervisors in the control room check every log before it is closed to ensure the appropriate response was provided. The force also ensures that every sergeant, inspector and chief inspector in local policing contacts two recent victims of crime every month and checks on the quality of service provided. Feedback is given to staff on the quality of service provided.
- Discussions and observations in the force's call-handling centre identified that the force does not have a specific definition for vulnerable and repeat victims. However, considerable training relating to vulnerability and the use of the national decision model has been provided to the control room operators to assist them in identifying the appropriate response.

- 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.

The force is unable to identify how many crimes are recorded directly onto the crime recording system, or how many of those crimes it attends subsequently.

- 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 found that the Integrated Offender Management scheme in place to manage those offenders likely to cause most harm to their communities, was managed well. The force has invested in this area, enabling it to expand the number of managed offenders to include domestic abuse perpetrators. 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.
- 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

- 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. For example HMIC found that the mental health triage response has reduced both the number of detentions under section 136 of The Mental Health Act and officer time spent in custody facilities.
- The force has considerably reduced the demand on frontline officers following the implementation of the two new force contact centres. They provide a public-focused approach. The first person the caller speaks with carries out the functions of a call-handler with the aim of resolving the caller's need at the first point of contact. Call-handlers can record and resolve a crime on the telephone if there is no requirement to send an officer.
- The inspection found a clear structure to assist supervisors in assessing the workload and performance of frontline officers and staff. There are good systems and processes in place for local policing staff and the force can easily identify outliers and trends and react accordingly. However, specialist officers in operational support do not use the same system to monitor consistently the workload or effectiveness of their officers.

- The force has a thorough understanding of the amount of savings in frontline staff time that has been made as a result of changes or new technology. There has been some detailed analysis of the activity of response officers in the 'week in the life of' project. This project identified the common barriers that prevented officers being available to respond to incidents. The force identified a further two hours capacity per officer in an average tour of duty by introducing new processes and removing those barriers.
- The use of mobile devices (such as tablets and mobile phones) to enable officers to access force systems while on patrol is limited. Although the force has increased the availability of operators to assist officers, they still need to return to stations to access the force databases to complete their tasks. This is acknowledged by the force and is part of the IT strategy that will be progressed with the implementation of a private sector partnership. The partnership will share responsibilities for outcomes, including crime and budget reductions.

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