



Inspecting policing
in the public interest

Anti-social behaviour inspection report

**Avon and Somerset Constabulary
June 2012**

About this review

In Spring 2010, Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC) carried out a review to find out how the police can best tackle anti-social behaviour (ASB). We committed to repeating this inspection in 2012 to check on progress. This report tells you what we found; the 2010 review is available on the HMIC website (www.hmic.gov.uk).

What works in tackling ASB?

In 2010 HMIC found that forces have the best chance to give ASB victims a good service if they:

- **Identify if a caller is a vulnerable** (for instance, elderly or disabled) **or repeat victim** as soon as they call the police, so they can get extra support;
- **Brief all relevant officers and staff** regularly and thoroughly about local ASB issues;
- Regularly **gather and analyse data and information** about ASB places, offenders and victims, and allocate resources to tackle specific problems; and
- **Provide their neighbourhood policing teams with the right tools and resources** to tackle ASB.

This is how Avon and Somerset Constabulary is performing in these key areas.

Findings for Avon and Somerset Constabulary

Overview

There is a relatively low level of ASB recorded by police in Avon and Somerset in comparison with the rest of England and Wales.

HMIC found that the constabulary has made significant progress since 2010 in the way it understands and deals with ASB problems in Avon and Somerset. It has refreshed its 'ASB Gold Standard' for the way it tackles the issue (and provided extra training to bring staff up to speed), and provides a quality service to victims.

In May 2011, the constabulary introduced a new protocol and IT software system to help identify more consistently if someone contacting them to report ASB is vulnerable (for instance, disabled) or has called before. Local police officers then contact all ASB victims within 24 hours to carry out further assessment of whether the caller is particularly at risk, and so in need of extra support. However, HMIC found that despite these improvements repeat and vulnerable callers are still not always identified at the first point of contact (although the force is working hard to correct this).

HMIC found that the chief officer team are strongly committed to driving forward the constabulary's ASB action plan and Gold Standard. This has been reinforced by the decision to retain ASB victim surveys.

In the results of our own survey of ASB victims in Avon and Somerset, 60% were satisfied with the way that ASB was dealt with by the police in their local area. When asked about the last time they made a call to report ASB, 64% were satisfied with the way that the police dealt with the ASB. Both these results are broadly in line with national figures.

Are repeat and vulnerable victims effectively identified at the point of report?

Avon and Somerset Constabulary has introduced a structured protocol for how it handles calls, which is supported by new IT software. This will help them be more consistent in how they assess a call to determine the most appropriate response (based on the urgency and risk to the victim).

The constabulary does not always identify repeat and vulnerable callers at the first point of contact, but is working towards refining its processes. However, all victims of ASB are called back within 24 hours by local staff, who carry out a further assessment of the level

of risk. Improved IT software use and recording practices will help in the identification of repeat and vulnerable victims.

We reviewed 100 calls about ASB and found that the call handlers only asked specific questions to establish if a caller had been a victim before 53 times. Call handlers verbally checked the vulnerability of the caller on 63 occasions. The constabulary is planning further training for the staff who take calls from the public to help with this.

Are officers and staff regularly and thoroughly briefed about local ASB issues?

Since our 2010 inspection, the constabulary has ensured that their intelligence teams (who analyse data about calls and incidents) provide updates on ASB issues through their IT briefing system. Local operational teams then use this information to send additional patrols to areas identified as being ASB hotspots.

Staff are regularly briefed about ASB issues. High-risk offenders and vulnerable victims are discussed at daily meetings attended by investigators and members of intelligence units, response teams, and neighbourhood policing teams. An electronic briefing system updates all teams on ASB issues and hotspots, with investigators, response and neighbourhood officers working closely together to deal with local ASB issues.

In the future, staff briefing will also be supported by a new IT system which will automatically identify and map ASB hotspots.

Does the force regularly gather and analyse data and information about ASB?

The constabulary works together with the local authorities to help tackle ASB. This includes sharing information on a monthly basis through an IT hub.

Tasking meetings (where work is allocated out to officers) take place both at force level and within the districts on a daily and weekly basis, and include a review of high risk and vulnerable victims. The constabulary has also completed force and local-level ASB profiles, which are used by the police to draw together information from all available sources, so that it can be analysed and used to deploy officers where they have the most effect.

However, HMIC found inconsistencies in how the constabulary manages calls from members of the public who are not assessed as high risk, but who are repeat ASB victims. The constabulary's move towards a system where it records all ASB cases on its intelligence system should help improve the case management and identification of low and medium risk victims of ASB.

Do neighbourhood policing teams have the right tools and resources to tackle ASB?

The ASB Gold Standard has been updated, and includes ASB toolkits (which outline the options available to neighbourhood teams as they work to tackle ASB). Staff have received training to ensure they are up to date with these changes.

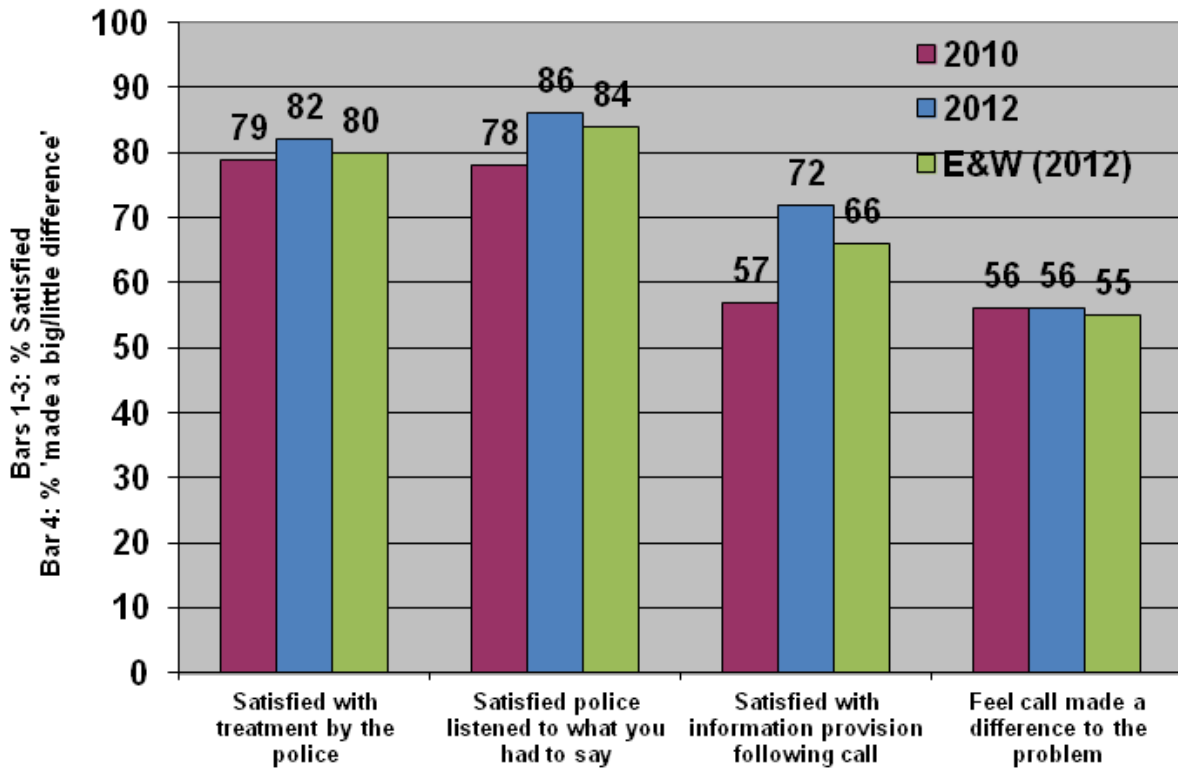
The constabulary has also invested in specialist ASB coordinators, who are located within districts to advise and support staff where needed. Joint plans between police and partners are in place to tackle particular issues across districts, and options to deal with ASB are discussed and agreed with them. However, we found that reviews, updates and final sign-off of these plans by supervisors was inconsistent. The constabulary has already recognised this issue and are addressing it through their action plan.

As part of the constabulary's victim-focused service, all victims receive a call back from local officers within 24 hours of reporting an incident to assess their needs. In addition, a new pilot sees dedicated ASB officers responding to all incidents during peak times.

Results of a survey of ASB victims

We surveyed 200 people who reported ASB to Avon and Somerset Constabulary during 2011. They were asked a range of questions about their perceptions of ASB generally and their experience in reporting ASB to the police.

Experience of reporting ASB



These results show that there has been a statistically significant increase in satisfaction with information provided following the call.