



Inspecting policing
in the public interest

**Anti-social behaviour
inspection report**

**Bedfordshire Police
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 in Bedfordshire; 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 Bedfordshire Police is performing in these key areas.

Findings for Bedfordshire Police

Overview

There is a medium level of ASB reported to police in Bedfordshire in comparison with the rest of England and Wales.

HMIC found that the force has made little progress since 2010 in the four key areas that are important if ASB victims are to receive a good service. While the force recognises the impact of ASB on its communities, it has, until recently, prioritised its resources to tackle serious and acquisitive crime. As a result the force is reporting a strong reduction in overall crime. The introduction of a new policing model has seen the force increase the number of local police officers. It is committed to ensuring that future improvements in its response to ASB mirror the improvements it has achieved in driving down crime.

Our survey of ASB victims in Bedfordshire shows that satisfaction levels are below national figures in three of the four important areas, which is a poor result for the force.

When responding to any call, the force takes into account the likely threat, harm and risk to the victim or the community, and this helps to ensure that the correct response is given. The force does not currently have a consistent process to identify the risk to victims of ASB specifically, but is developing new processes which will ensure that the level of risk to victims is assessed on every occasion.

The inspector-led police community support officer teams display clear ownership for ASB matters. However, where there are systems and processes in place to deal with or manage ASB effectively, there are different levels of supervision across the force leading to inconsistency in the management of ASB.

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

The force is unable to automatically identify repeat and vulnerable victims when they first contact the police. Instead, the force relies on call takers to question the caller or conduct a manual check of force computer systems. As a result, repeat and vulnerable callers are not consistently identified, meaning that some victims do not receive the support they need. The force has recognised this and by July 2012 will have rolled out a new process, including a set of questions to help call takers identify repeat and vulnerable callers more effectively. It has already tested this out in a four-day pilot study.

HMIC reviewed 100 calls from victims of ASB. The call taker only asked the caller about previous incidents in a third of these cases. Questions to identify if the caller may be vulnerable were only asked in a quarter of occasions. In two thirds of these cases the call taker dealt with the caller in a professional manner. The HMIC review of 20 calls from the pilot study indicated an increase in the number of repeat and vulnerable victims identified at the first point of contact as well as higher levels of care shown by the call taker towards the victim.

The force recognises the limitations of its current command and control IT system. It has plans to introduce a new system in 2013 which will enable it to conduct automated searches from information such as telephone numbers and locations. This will assist them with identifying those callers have contacted the police on other occasions.

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

Local policing teams have responsibility for neighbourhood policing and regularly brief themselves about ASB in their area from information available on the force internal IT systems. Some face-to-face briefings are also held, involving neighbourhood officers and those who respond to emergencies. At these briefings ASB is discussed and intelligence can be researched. This has led to a wider understanding of local ASB issues and the targeting of resources.

Investigators rarely receive briefings about ASB and are rarely tasked in relation to ASB issues.

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

Within Bedfordshire, the investigation and detection of crime has received more of a priority over the past year and the force has made a decision to focus its efforts in gathering and analysing information about these crimes rather than about ASB. Because of this the analysis of ASB is limited which means that the force does not have a full picture of its ASB issues.

Working with partners the force has employed analysts who have a specific responsibility to assess and analyse data from other partner agencies such as local councils and social housing landlords. The analysts have access to a partnership database where all the information is stored.

The force is also developing a new IT system which will extract information from other force systems. This means that the analysis of ASB data will be carried out more effectively.

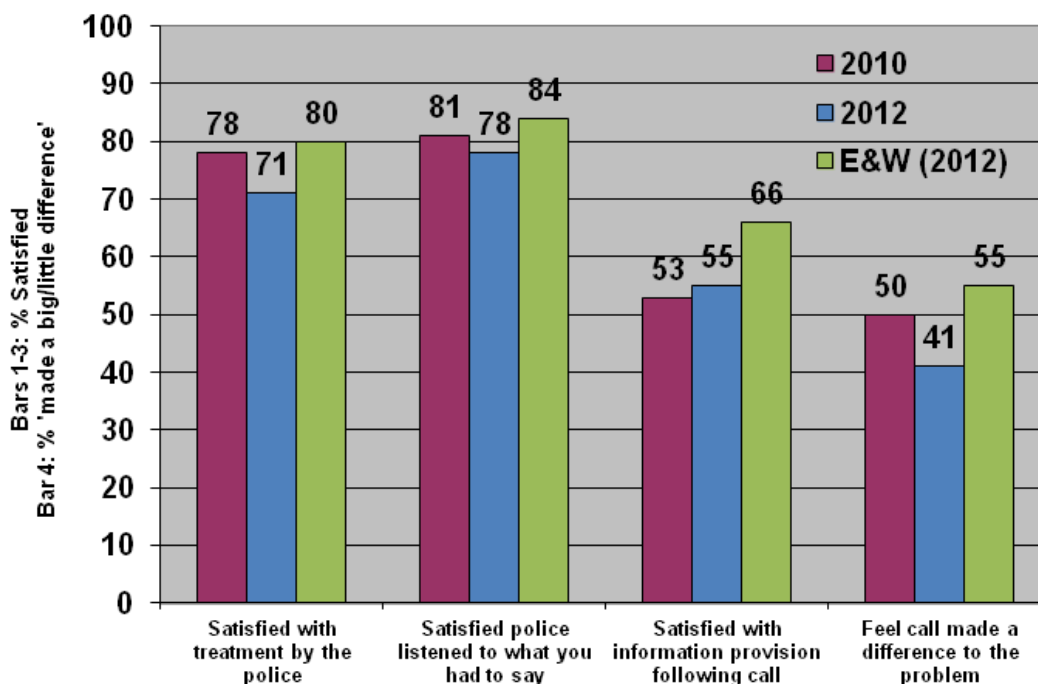
Do neighbourhood policing teams have the right tools and resources to tackle ASB?

In Luton, the force and borough council have funded a priority ASB case management team. This is a co-located multi-agency team which is providing an excellent service to victims of ASB and is recognised as good practice. The team has been trained to use a range of options to address ASB and identify solutions.

Results of a survey of ASB victims

We surveyed 200 people who reported ASB to Bedfordshire Police 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 the proportion of positive responses in three of these important areas is significantly below the national average (the difference in the 'satisfied police listened' question is too small to be statistically significant). This is a poor result for the force.

