



Inspecting policing  
in the **public interest**

**Anti-social behaviour  
inspection report**

**Essex 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 Essex; the 2010 review is available on the HMIC website ([www.hmic.gov.uk](http://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 Essex Police is performing in these key areas.

# Findings for Essex Police

## Overview

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

HMIC found that the force has made limited progress since 2010 in the four key areas that are important if ASB victims are to receive a good service. In fact, there has been a deterioration in the effective use of police intelligence to help address ASB problems. The force is also still unable to consistently identify vulnerable victims when they call or those repeat victims who may not have previously contacted police. This means some of these victims may not be getting the extra support they need.

However, our survey of people who rang the police about ASB in 2011 shows that victim satisfaction levels in Essex remain generally in line with national figures, with the number of positive responses increasing in some important areas (such as in how satisfied they were with the information provided after they called the police).

Over the last year the force has focused its efforts on the increasing challenge to reduce crime in Essex (and the force has reported that overall crime has been coming down for the three months to end of March 2012). The number of ASB incidents has fallen significantly in the last year. However HMIC remains concerned that ASB is not prioritised in the same way as other crimes. When HMIC inspected the force, it was about to introduce a new local policing model, which will place greater emphasis on solving long-term problems, including ASB.

In addition, the force has agreed that it needs to look beyond the level of reported ASB incidents when measuring its own performance. In the future it will also monitor its treatment of repeat and vulnerable victims, and how effective it is in keeping ASB victims updated. This should help the force to provide a better service to victims.

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

The force is still unable to consistently identify vulnerable victims when they call, or those repeat victims who may not have previously contacted the police. Some information about previous calls is available from the force's IT systems, but call takers do not always review these records, particularly at busy times.

Call takers should use a set of structured questions to help establish if the caller is a repeat or vulnerable victim. However, HMIC reviewed 100 calls from people reporting ASB incidents to the force, and in almost half of these, the call taker did not ask about previous incidents. In three-quarters of the calls they did not ask any questions to establish if the caller may be vulnerable. We did however find that in the majority of cases the call taker dealt with the victim in a professional manner.

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

Neighbourhood policing teams carry out their own searches of force systems and brief themselves effectively on the nature and location of ASB issues in their area.

Emergency response teams and investigators are generally not briefed about local ASB issues. However, at the time of the inspection, the force had plans in place for a new model to brief staff. The intention is that this will lead to greater consistency across the force, ensuring that all relevant staff are aware of ASB issues in their area.

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

HMIC found that the force has some good local arrangements to share information with partners (such as local councils and housing agencies) about specific ASB problems, but that this is not consistent across the force.

With some types of crime increasing in Essex over the past year, the force has deployed its intelligence gathering and analytical resources to tackling these crimes rather than to solving more complex and deep-rooted ASB issues. At a local level, arrangements to allocate and direct police resources also tend to focus on these rising crime types, rather than on ASB.

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

Neighbourhood policing teams use a wide range of methods to tackle ASB. The force has an IT system for managing these approaches as part of plans to solve long-term ASB problems. However, this system is not used by all teams. A range of different approaches

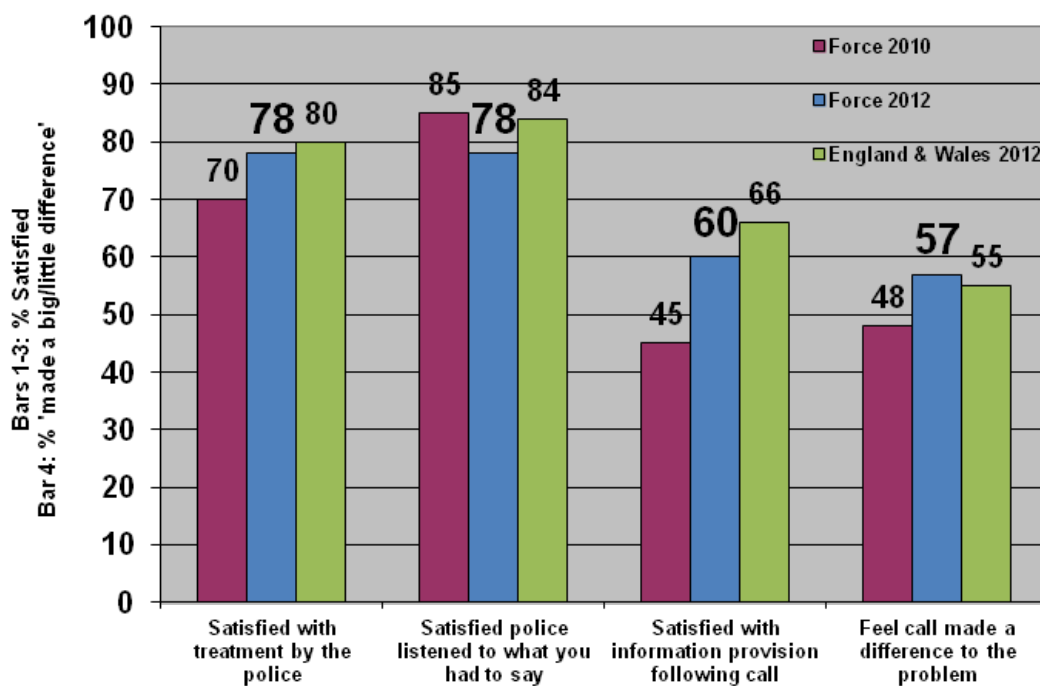
is used across the force and therefore the supervision of these plans is not as consistent as it could be. This issue was raised by HMIC in 2010, but the force has yet to address it effectively.

The force has a policy to ensure that neighbourhood policing teams are not normally taken off their patch. Plans are in place to ensure that this will be monitored once the new policing model is introduced. Introduction of the model will also mean that a number of staff move into new roles. The force has a training plan in place to support this, and staff moving to neighbourhood policing roles will receive training in ASB.

### Results of a survey of ASB victims

We surveyed 200 people who reported ASB to Essex 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



This shows that victim satisfaction with the information provided by the police has risen since 2010. The proportion of positive responses has also increased across two other important areas, although the sample size means that this is not a statistically significant result. Overall, the force is performing broadly in line with the national average.

