



Inspecting policing
in the public interest



DELIVERING THE POLICING PLEDGE

Hertfordshire Constabulary

“Are the local police delivering for you?”

The ‘Policing Pledge’ sets out ten minimum standards that the police service promised to deliver from 31 December 2008.

Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC) has reviewed how well the 43 forces in England and Wales are delivering the standards they promised the public.

This report provides members of the public with information on the performance of their local force.

Each Pledge standard and the three areas relating to how the force is working towards its delivery have been graded. HMIC has combined these assessments to give an overall grade for the force.

The overall grade for
Hertfordshire Constabulary is:

FAIR

The different grades

EXCELLENT

is awarded for exceptional performance which is consistently above and beyond the required standard.

GOOD

is defined as meeting the standard, although there may be minor dips in performance.

FAIR

is awarded where performance is variable and falls short of the required standard. Remedial action is needed.

POOR

is used when performance fails to meet an acceptable level. Immediate remedial action is needed.

THE POLICING PLEDGE POINTS

HMIC GRADING

PLEDGE POINT 1

Always treat you fairly with dignity and respect, ensuring you have fair access to our services at a time that is reasonable and suitable for you.

FAIR

PLEDGE POINT 2

Provide you with information so you know who your dedicated Neighbourhood Policing Team are, where they are based, how to contact them and how to work with them.

FAIR

PLEDGE POINT 3

Ensure your Neighbourhood Policing Team and other police patrols are visible and on your patch at times when they will be most effective and when you tell us you most need them. We will ensure that your team is not taken away from neighbourhood business more than is absolutely necessary. Officers will spend at least 80% of their time visibly working in your neighbourhood, tackling your priorities. Staff turnover will be minimised.

FAIR

PLEDGE POINT 4

Respond to every message directed to your Neighbourhood Policing Team within 24 hours and, where necessary, provide a more detailed response as soon as we can.

FAIR

PLEDGE POINT 5

Aim to answer 999 calls within 10 seconds, deploying to emergencies immediately, giving an estimated time of arrival (ETA), and getting to you safely, and as quickly as possible. In urban areas, we will aim to get to you within 15 minutes and in rural areas within 20 minutes.

GOOD

PLEDGE POINT 6

Answer all non-emergency calls promptly. If attendance is needed, send a patrol, giving you an ETA, and:

- if you are vulnerable or upset, we will aim to be with you within 60 minutes;
- if you are calling about an issue that we have agreed with your community will be a neighbourhood priority and attendance is required, we will aim to be with you within 60 minutes;
- alternatively, if appropriate, we will make an appointment to see you at a time that fits in with your life and within 48 hours;
- if agreed that attendance is not necessary, we will give you advice, answer your questions and/or put you in touch with someone who can help.

FAIR

PLEDGE POINT 7

Arrange regular public meetings to agree your priorities at least once a month, giving you a chance to meet your local team with other members of your community. These will include opportunities such as surgeries, street briefings and mobile police station visits, which will be arranged to meet local needs and requirements.

POOR

PLEDGE POINT 8

Provide monthly updates on progress, and on local crime and policing issues. This will include the provision of crime maps, information on specific crimes and what happened to those brought to justice, details of what action we and our partners are taking to make your neighbourhood safer, and information on how your force is performing.

FAIR

PLEDGE POINT 9

If you have been a victim of crime, agree with you how often you would like to be kept informed of progress in your case and for how long. You have the right to be kept informed at least every month if you wish, and for as long as is reasonable.

FAIR

PLEDGE POINT 10

Acknowledge any dissatisfaction with the service you have received within 24 hours of reporting it to us. To help us fully resolve the matter, discuss with you how it will be handled, give you an opportunity to talk in person to someone about your concerns and agree with you what will be done about them and how quickly.

FAIR

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

PLEDGE POINT 1

Postcards for the public to feedback to the force were available at police station front counters and a number of surveys had been undertaken to gauge the public's view on service quality. **But** the public had not been consulted about police station opening times. There had not been a comprehensive review of all departments in the force to assess how accessible they were to the public.

PLEDGE POINT 2

Safer Neighbourhood Teams (SNTs) were well established with details of staff being publicised by various methods including the internet, local press articles and newsletters. **But** some SNT websites did not include meeting dates, details of local priorities and updates on local issues.

PLEDGE POINT 3

The force had a policy that aimed to ensure police constables were working in their neighbourhoods for 80% of the time, dealing with local priorities. The force also aimed to ensure that staff remained with their SNT for a two year minimum period. **But** this minimum period was not explicitly set out in policy. The force's 80% visibility policy did not apply to Police Community Safety Officers (PCSOs). The force did not reliably monitor whether it was meeting the 80% level.

PLEDGE POINT 4

The force had a single number that members of the public could call and be automatically routed to the relevant SNT member. There were clear policies in place on answering queries promptly. **But** when tested by HMIC there were cases where email and telephone calls were not replied to within 24 hours. Many voicemail messages were not personalised making it difficult for callers to be sure they were through to the right member of staff.

PLEDGE POINT 5

The force had an effective call management process for 999 calls with over 91% answered within 10 seconds. Emergency calls were attended within 15 minutes for both urban and rural locations over 90% of the time. **But** detailed estimated times of arrival (ETAs) were not always given.

PLEDGE POINT 6

The force had an effective system for identifying 'vulnerable' and 'upset' callers as well as those calls concerning local priorities. The public were able to make appointments with SNT staff. **But** some SNT staff were not aware of this system and did not know that appointments had been made. The force was not monitoring how it responded to all calls that required a 60 minute response and it was not monitoring the effectiveness of the appointment system.

PLEDGE POINT 7

There were a variety of planned contacts with communities including street briefings and surgeries. These were often held in locations that were convenient for many members of the public such as supermarkets. **But** the force had no policy on the format for agreeing local priorities with the community at public meetings. Dates for such meetings were difficult to find and there was no sign of community problem solving or effective engagement by the police at those meetings attended by HMIC.

PLEDGE POINT 8

Maps showing the crime rates in each neighbourhood were easily accessible on the force website. The force had begun to publish local court results on their website giving details of convictions for local offenders. **But** the crime maps did not provide specific crime locations or information on crime patterns. SNT websites and newsletters did not provide any information on the action being taken with partner agencies. Updates on crime and policing issues were of variable quality.

PLEDGE POINT 9

The staff responsible for keeping victims informed had a clear understanding of the Pledge requirements and the force's own audit indicated a 94% compliance rate with the "Victims' Code of Practice". **But** a spot check of 30 reported crimes by HMIC found 30% failed to ensure the victim was updated in a timely manner.

PLEDGE POINT 10

The Professional Standards Department (PSD) dealt effectively with complaints and some reports of dissatisfaction during normal working hours. PSD worked closely with customer service managers who dealt the other dissatisfaction issues. Service improvements were also identified and were then incorporated into staff training. **But** the force did not have a system to check whether acknowledgments were sent within 24 hours. Analysis of dissatisfaction needed to be effectively highlighted at a senior level and the lessons learnt communicated across the force.

WHAT THE FORCE WAS DOING TO IMPROVE ITS PERFORMANCE

As well as reporting on the force's delivery of each Pledge standard, HMIC has also assessed and graded the efforts it was making to improve performance:

HMIC GRADING

Surveys and management meetings were being used to improve performance; public satisfaction and confidence data were taken into account.

GOOD

The force had identified deficiencies in its delivery of the Pledge and was taking action in those areas.

FAIR

Implementation was led by the force's senior team, the Police Authority was involved, staff were being trained and the Pledge was communicated to staff and the public.

FAIR



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The report is available in alternative languages and formats on request.

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