



Inspecting policing
in the public interest

Anti-social behaviour inspection report

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

Findings for Kent Police

Overview

There is a relatively low level of ASB reported to police in Kent and Medway in comparison with the rest of England and Wales.

HMIC found that the force has made some progress since 2010 in the way it understands and tackles ASB problems in Kent and Medway. Our survey of ASB victims in Kent suggests an increase in the proportion of positive responses about the force since 2010.

In 2010 HMIC identified that many cases of ASB reported directly to staff (rather than phoned into the force control room) were not being recorded on the force system. The force has now addressed this, and as a consequence has a better understanding of the extent of ASB across Kent and Medway.

The force and its local authority partners have a joint strategy to address ASB, and have also agreed to put in place a shared IT system for managing long-term ASB problems. This will make it easier for the police and local councils to work together to address local ASB issues.

Despite this, the force is still unable to consistently identify repeat and vulnerable victims when they first call. This means some of these victims may not be getting the extra support they need.

When HMIC inspected the force it had only recently introduced a new local policing model, which has led to a significant increase in the number of officers working in neighbourhood policing teams. These officers are now expected to manage a number of additional demands, including the investigation of local crime. Because of these demands, many neighbourhood constables are finding it difficult to devote as much time as they should to addressing ASB issues.

Some concerns raised by HMIC in 2010 have yet to be addressed. For example, supervision of the management of long-term ASB issues is still not as consistent as it could be.

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

Repeat and vulnerable victims are not consistently identified at the point when they report an incident to the police. Some information about previous calls is available from the force's IT systems, but this is not always reviewed by call takers, particularly at busy times.

Call takers are also expected to 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 found that the call taker did not ask if the person had been a victim before in over half of these calls. Questions to establish if the caller may be vulnerable were rarely asked. In a number of cases, information offered by the caller that might suggest they could be vulnerable (such as information about their age or a disability) was not picked up and probed by the call taker.

If a caller is identified as a repeat or vulnerable victim, this should be recorded on the force system, so that the information is available should they call again. However, this is rarely done. 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?

Most staff are briefed in person by a supervisor. Neighbourhood policing teams are well briefed on the nature and location of ASB issues in their area. Briefing arrangements for emergency response officers and local investigators tend to focus on other issues (such as burglary and car crime), and rarely feature ASB. The force has recognised that this could be improved, and is carrying out a review to see how this can be done.

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

There are good local arrangements for sharing information about ASB issues with partners (such as local councils and housing agencies). At force level, a joint ASB strategy has recently been agreed between the police and all of the local authorities in the Kent and Medway area. Funding has also been identified to develop a joint IT system for all of these partners to manage long-term ASB problems. This will help develop a greater understanding of the information that partners have to help tackle ASB across the force area.

The force analyses information about ASB to help prioritise where and how resources are used. Since 2010, the force has improved its arrangements for ensuring ASB incidents

that are reported directly to staff (rather than phoned in to the force control room) are recorded on the force system. However, the fact that repeat and vulnerable victims are not always identified means that the analysis of ASB information is not as effective as it could be.

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 to manage longer term problems, although it is not used by all teams. Various systems are used to record and manage ASB 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. Plans to introduce a new system for managing long-term ASB problems later in 2012 should improve the situation.

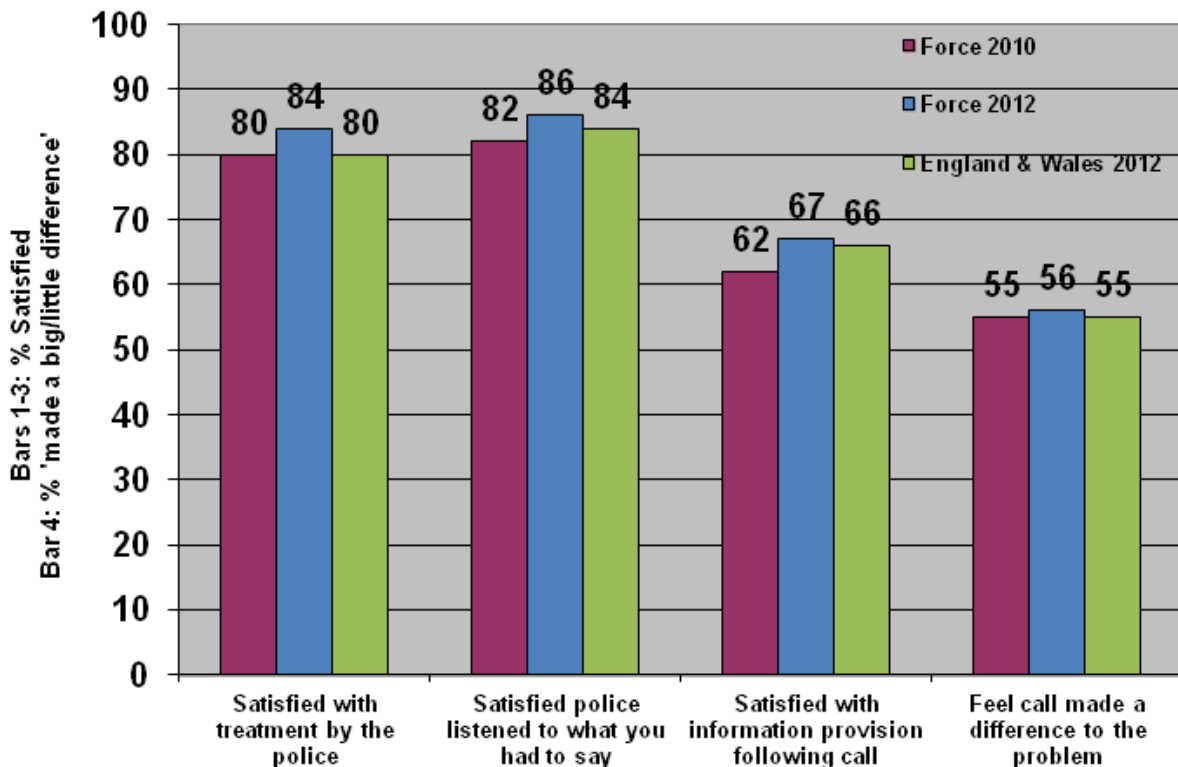
Some local training has been carried out to make staff more aware of the powers available to partners (such as housing agencies) to help tackle ASB.

The new policing model in Kent has seen a significant increase in the number of staff working in neighbourhood policing roles. At the same time, neighbourhood constables have taken on additional responsibilities, such as the investigation of local crime. The force expects these officers to be involved in tackling ASB on their patch, but many are finding that these additional responsibilities leave them with little time to do so. Instead, police community support officers now take responsibility for most ASB issues, and a community safety unit on each district works with partners to address the more complicated and long-term ASB problems.

Results of a survey of ASB victims

We surveyed 200 people who reported ASB to Kent 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. The results show that the force is performing broadly in line with the national average.

Experience of reporting ASB



Although the change is too small to be statistically significant, these results also suggest an increase in the proportion of positive responses about the force across all four of these important areas. This is a positive result for the force.