



Inspecting policing
in the public interest

Anti-social behaviour inspection report

**Metropolitan Police Service
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 the Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) area; 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 the MPS is performing in these key areas.

Findings for the Metropolitan Police Service

Overview

There is a relatively medium level of ASB recorded by police in the Metropolitan Police (in comparison with the rest of England and Wales). However, our survey of 400 people in the London area who reported ASB during 2011 showed that only 43% were satisfied with the way the police were dealing with the issue in their area. This is significantly below the national average of 55%, and the lowest in the country.

HMIC recognises that some progress has been made since 2010:

- There is a renewed drive from senior officers to improve the police response to ASB.
- More information is available to the public about what the force is doing to address ASB.
- Staff in the police boroughs have established good relationships at all levels with partner organisations, and have a better understanding of what ASB-related information these partners hold.
- Investigators and officers responding to emergencies are provided with more information about ASB to help them contribute towards putting in place plans to tackle particular problems.
- IT improvements have made it easier for telephone operators to identify if a caller is vulnerable or subject to repeated incidents of ASB.
- A number of plans to improve how the force tackles ASB are either drawn up or being prepared.
- Some boroughs have introduced dedicated ASB specialists, who are effective at coordinating the activities of neighbourhood officers.

However, the force could do more to deal with how some staff deal with the public, and to ensure that they obtain relevant information at the earliest opportunity from people reporting ASB.

In the survey of 400 ASB complainants, 72% were satisfied with how well their call to the police was dealt with. This is significantly below the national average of 82%, and the lowest in the country. The impact of ASB upon individuals needs to be continually assessed to allow the police to respond in the most appropriate way.

The force does not currently record all ASB in a consistent manner and supervisors are not always checking the activities of their staff.

HMIC is also concerned that some neighbourhood and public contact staff are not clear about ASB definitions, particularly around repeat and vulnerable victims. The force could explore developing high-level information sharing arrangements with partners. They also need to establish what success looks like in terms of problem solving so that their achievements can be measured effectively. Only 49% of complainants were satisfied with how the police dealt with their specific ASB incident. This is below the 63% national average, and the lowest in the country.

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

The force has extended an existing IT function to capture more information about repeat and vulnerable victims as soon as they telephone the police (using 999 or 101). This information is recorded and made available to help decide how the police should respond both to the initial call, and to any subsequent requests for assistance.

However, the force does not always identify these callers at the time they contact the police. HMIC found that call handlers did not consistently search through the IT system to establish if the caller had telephoned before, or ask questions to determine whether the caller needed extra support. In the 100 ASB calls reviewed by HMIC, the call handlers only asked questions to help establish if a caller was a vulnerable victim on 28 occasions, and in 24 of these the caller expressed some degree of vulnerability. Questions about whether the caller had experienced ASB before were asked in 40 of the 100 cases.

ASB reported by other methods than phoning the switchboards is not always recorded on the main IT system, which makes it more difficult for the police to establish if the person is a vulnerable or repeat victim.

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

The force has made some progress in this area since our 2010 inspection, by making additional information about ASB available to investigators and staff responding to 999 calls. In some areas investigators work closely with neighbourhood staff, have a better understanding of what ASB is happening, and so provide greater assistance to neighbourhood colleagues in planning how to tackle particular ASB problems.

Neighbourhood teams have a good understanding of what ASB is occurring within their area and are involved in a wide range of initiatives to tackle particular problems. Daily electronic briefings with details about where and when ASB is happening are made available to all staff; but HMIC found that officers who respond to emergencies and investigators have limited knowledge of this information. Also, this briefing material does not regularly include information about the risks to particular victims. This potentially reduces the ability of officers and staff to respond in an effective manner and focus their efforts on the ASB that is having the biggest impact on the quality of life for local people.

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

Progress has been made since our 2010 inspection in relation to the understanding of what ASB-related information is held by partners in the 32 police boroughs. Local police officers and staff have built close relationships with a range of other organisations, such as local authorities, housing associations and mental health trusts. They meet regularly with these partners (among others) to share information about ASB and look for ways to solve problems together. In some areas analysts work alongside each other to make the best use of this shared information to identify ASB hotspots and trends. This means the local police have a more complete picture of the ASB taking place within their borough, including issues which have not been reported to them directly.

However, the MPS could do more to work with partners at the force level and to look for efficient, automated ways of exchanging information. Whilst regular meetings take place in boroughs to examine ASB issues, not all include a focus upon victims, offenders, locations, and times and days when ASB is happening, or the level of risk involved.

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

Information is made available to neighbourhood officers on the force IT systems to help them decide what action to take and what works in tackling ASB. Some areas assign a dedicated officer to coordinate borough ASB action plans, and this appears to work well in ensuring a range of measures are deployed and monitored. A central unit provides telephone assistance and shares details around the force of what methods are effective. Plans examined by HMIC indicate that the police are employing a range of tactics to solve ASB – particularly in high risk cases, which tend to be more closely managed (in a similar manner to a crime investigation).

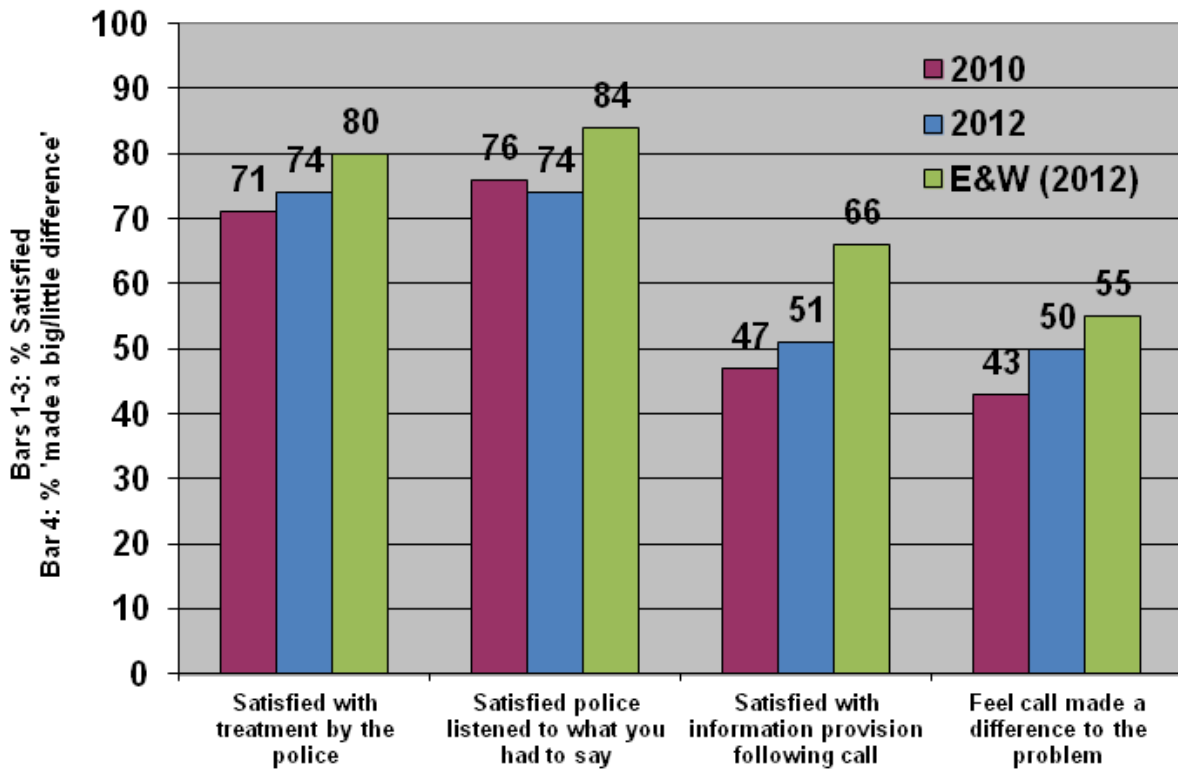
Neighbourhood staff report an increasing number of vacancies in their teams, particularly with PCSOs, and that they are taken away from their normal duties more frequently to assist in other areas of policing. This means fewer officers are available for patrolling and to maintain contact with local people, including victims of ASB. Only 51% of those surveyed were content with the way in which the police provided them with information. This is significantly below the national average of 66%, and the lowest in the country.

There is very little time made available for neighbourhood staff to receive training. Supervisors are adopting different approaches to overseeing ASB and some do not record the advice they give or the result when they check their officer's work. The force is inconsistent in deciding how and when their plans to tackle ASB should be considered finished, and so signed off.

Results of a survey of ASB victims

We surveyed 400 people who reported ASB to the Metropolitan 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 force is performing broadly below the national average in these areas. This is a poor result for the force.

