



Inspecting policing  
in the public interest

## **Anti-social behaviour inspection report**

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

# Findings for Northumbria Police

## Overview

There is a relatively high level of ASB recorded by Northumbria Police in comparison with the rest of England and Wales.

HMIC found that the force has continued to improve the way it deals with ASB since its 2010 inspection. Staff show a greater understanding of the definitions of repeat and vulnerable victims, and we found victims to be better monitored and managed. The introduction of a vulnerability risk matrix has led to improvements to the way the force considers harm and assesses risk to victims. Partnership working is strong, with effective plans in place to tackle particular ASB issues with other agencies (such as local councils); these plans are now also better supervised (to make sure they are on track), and there are improved processes around how they are signed off as complete.

However, the control room does not always pass on relevant incident and caller history to the officers who respond to calls about ASB, especially at busy times.

HMIC is also concerned that when we reviewed 100 calls from the public about ASB made to the force, we found that call takers were not consistently checking if the caller was particularly vulnerable or had been the victim of ASB before. This may mean that some victims are not getting the extra support they need. However, this is not reflected in the results of a survey of ASB victims from Northumbria Police area, which show that respondents are more likely than the national average to feel satisfied with the service they received from the force, to feel satisfied with the way ASB is dealt with in their area, and to feel the call they made to the force made a difference to the problem.

This survey also shows that a higher than average number of ASB victims in Northumbria thought the ASB they suffered was specifically motivated by hostility or prejudice towards anything relating to race, religion, disability, gender identity or sexual orientation.

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

Northumbria Police has invested in software to improve its ability to identify repeat or vulnerable victims. However, the force does not always identify these callers as soon as they contact the police.

We found that call handlers did not always probe callers to determine whether the caller needed extra support, although the force system requires them to do this. During the inspection HMIC reviewed 100 calls about ASB, and found that the call handlers only probed callers to help establish if a caller was a repeat victim on 33 occasions, and if he or she was a vulnerable victim on seven occasions.

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

The force ensures neighbourhood policing teams, investigators and officers who respond to 999 calls are regularly briefed about local ASB issues. They are supported in this by an IT system which highlights ASB hotspots (including the locations of vulnerable and/or repeat victims and offenders) so that extra patrols can be sent to these areas. This represents progress since our 2010 inspection.

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

Since our 2010 inspection the force has invested in a new IT system to improve the way it gathers and analyses data and information about ASB. The force holds regular meetings to review this information and decide where best to allocate resources in order to tackle local ASB problems.

The force also regularly shares this information with other agencies (such as the local authority) through meetings known as Local Multi-Agency Problem Solving meetings. This makes sure agencies are addressing the same repeat and/or vulnerable victims, locations and offenders, and allocating their resources appropriately.

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

Neighbourhood policing teams receive good support from the wider force to make sure they have the training and resources they need to tackle ASB.

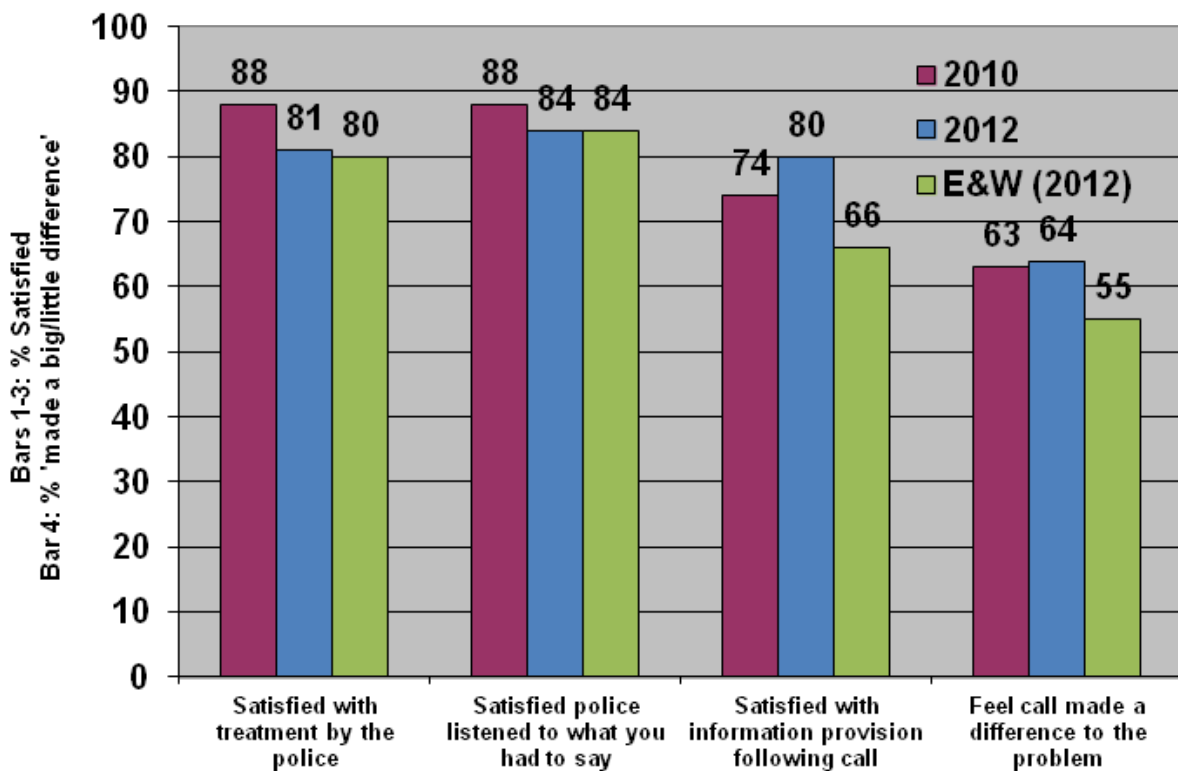
Staff develop plans to tackle specific ASB problems, often working in partnership with other agencies, and supported by helpful IT systems. These plans are regularly reviewed to make sure they are having a positive impact on the problem, and are not signed off as completed without the approval of a supervisor.

However, the familiarity of some staff with the force’s computerised toolkit of tactical options for dealing with ASB needs to be improved, as some neighbourhood staff were unable to find this information.

### Results of a survey of ASB victims

We surveyed 200 people who reported ASB to Northumbria 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. All figures are similar to the national average unless stated.

### Experience of reporting ASB



These results show that the force is performing broadly in line with England and Wales as a whole in two areas. However, a greater proportion of respondents in Northumbria felt their call made a difference to the problem, and felt satisfied with the information provided by the police following their call than in England and Wales as a whole. This is a good result for the force.

