



Inspecting policing
in the public interest

Anti-social behaviour inspection report

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

Findings for Staffordshire Police

Overview

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

HMIC found that Staffordshire Police has made some progress since 2010 in the way it understands and deals with ASB problems. It has made clear that tackling ASB is everyone's priority, and this is well understood by staff.

Local policing teams across the force are knowledgeable about their area, passionate about what they do, and committed to providing a high quality of service. Partnership working and information sharing are key strengths for the force, and clearly contribute to the successful resolution of ASB at local levels.

However, the force is still unable to consistently identify callers who are at most risk of harm from ASB (such as vulnerable victims or callers who have reported incidents before). There is a framework in place to help assess these risks – but this is not always used, which means that some victims may not be getting the extra support they need.

The way the force manages ASB cases needs to be underpinned by more structured and consistent recording practices, to make sure all issues are captured and progressed. ASB training needs to be extended beyond neighbourhood teams to all staff regularly engaged in dealing with ASB.

When we surveyed ASB victims in Staffordshire, 58% were satisfied with the way that the problem is dealt with by police in their local area. When asked about the last time they made a call to report ASB, 62% were satisfied with the way that the police dealt with them. Both these results are broadly in line with national figures.

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

Staffordshire Police's IT systems can automatically identify vulnerable victims or callers who have reported ASB before if a 'marker' has been placed against a location, or if the call is from a telephone number that has been used previously. The force has also trained its call takers in its risk assessment framework, which assists in the identification of repeat and vulnerable victims.

However, this framework is not being consistently used to identify these callers as soon as they contact the police. HMIC found that call handlers did not always ask specific questions to determine whether the caller needed extra support, as required under the force system. We reviewed 129 calls about ASB and found that the call handlers only asked specific questions to establish if a caller had been a victim on a previous occasion 62 times. Call handlers verbally checked the vulnerability of the caller on 39 occasions.

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

The detail and regularity of ASB-specific briefings to operational staff was inconsistent across the force. HMIC did find examples of good practice in the control room, where the staff who are responsible for deciding when and where officers are sent are routinely briefed on recent ASB problems and trends. Neighbourhood policing teams are also regularly briefed about local ASB issues; but investigators and response officers who respond to 999 calls are not. This means that they might not recognise that new calls relate to incident hotspots, or are from victims who are known to be vulnerable or who have called about a problem before.

The force has an IT system that identifies ASB trends and hotspots, and we found local neighbourhood staff to be very knowledgeable about issues in their areas.

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

The force regularly and consistently updates real-time information on ASB trends and hotspots on the force intranet, so all staff can access information on what's going on in their local area.

This is complemented by a range of analytical products on ASB information, which feed into force meetings to inform performance management and help decide where local resources need to be directed to tackle ASB. At these meetings, which operate at all levels in the force, information about victims, offenders and locations is analysed, and progress against actions is recorded and tracked.

Staffordshire Police is actively engaged with partners in sharing information and resources so that they can tackle ASB together. Frequent meetings with partners take place (often on a daily basis), at which ASB hotspots and repeat and vulnerable victims are discussed, so the police can work with other agencies to best address the issues. There are numerous examples of shared resources working together to better understand ASB and the effect it has at a local level in the Staffordshire Police area.

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

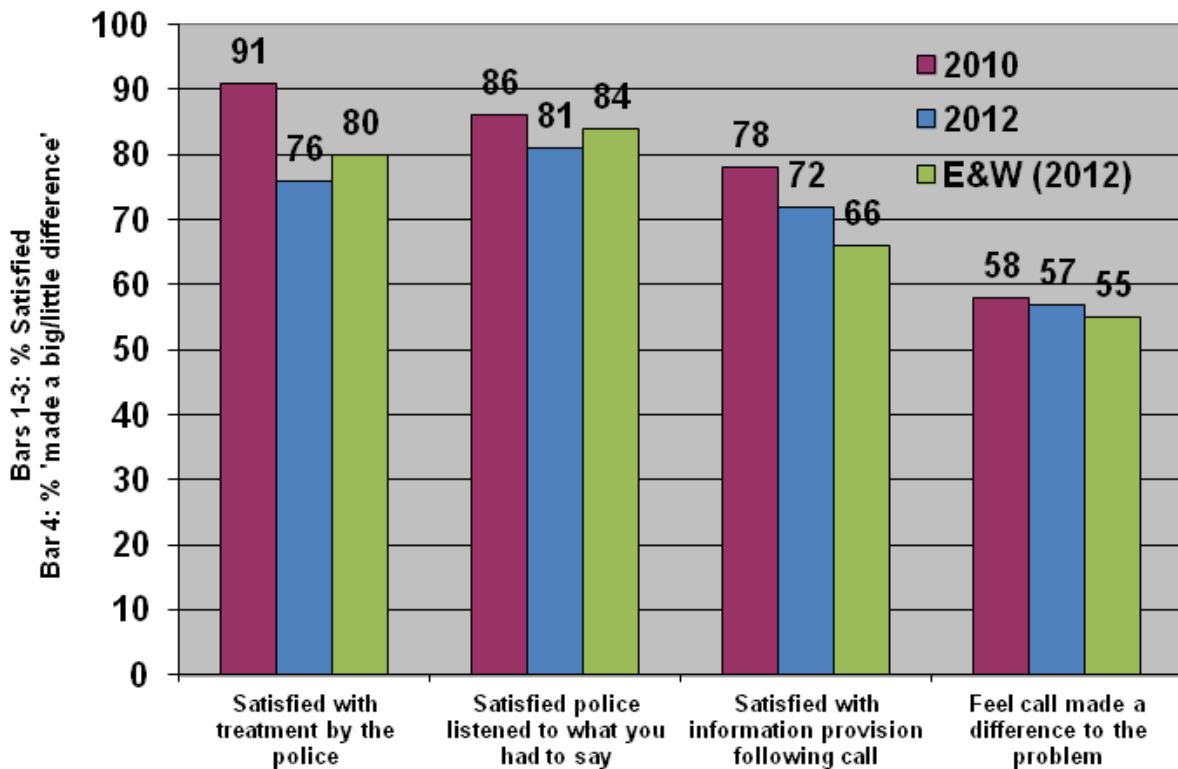
Neighbourhood policing teams receive good support from the wider force, and the importance of their role is regularly reinforced by chief officers. Despite budget reductions under the Comprehensive Spending Review, in 2011 the force made a public commitment to retain neighbourhood team numbers until 2013.

Neighbourhood staff receive training around ASB and are aware of the range of options available to help them tackle local issues. This information is regularly updated on the 'Citizen Focus Toolkit' (published on the force's intranet), which is also used to record action plans relating to specific ASB problems. However, we found that while plans aimed at dealing with high-risk ASB are well managed, a lack of consistency around recording practice means that they may not be logging all medium/low risk issues, or all ongoing neighbourhood problems.

Results of a survey of ASB victims

We surveyed 200 people who reported ASB to Staffordshire 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 the national average in these areas.