



Inspecting policing
in the public interest



DELIVERING THE POLICING PLEDGE

Suffolk 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
Suffolk Constabulary is:

POOR

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.

FAIR

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.

FAIR

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.

POOR

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.

POOR

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

PLEDGE POINT 1

Police station opening times were posted on the force website. Call facilities were available for use when the station was closed. Customers with physical disabilities or impairments were helped in various ways such as automatic opening doors and portable amplifiers for those with hearing difficulties. For customers whose first language is not English, a telephone-based interpreting service was available. The local policing plan included information on translation into large type, Braille, audio and 9 languages other than English. The force's external website had a translation facility. **But** there were no arrangements to cover staff absence or breaks in front offices and this sometimes affected police station opening times. The force recognised that more work was needed to better understand the needs of its diverse communities.

PLEDGE POINT 2

Suffolk Constabulary refer to Neighbourhood Policing Teams (NPTs) as Safer Neighbourhood Teams (SNTs). Each Safer Neighbourhood Team (SNT) had its own page on the external website which showed photographs and contact details of team members. This information was also shared with communities who registered their details on the force website to receive neighbourhood information (1,000 people have registered) with a further 41,000 people who have registered for "Police Direct", a telephone and text messaging system. **But** the teams' details were not displayed in public places, such as shops, or in police stations' front offices.

PLEDGE POINT 3

The SNT staff were required to spend at least 80% of their time working in their area. Mobile police stations were sent to rural communities at the same time as local events such as markets or meetings, and this increased visibility. **But** the data showing how much time teams spent on their area was unreliable and a number of teams had unfilled vacancies. Some officers who were not on an SNT were not aware of local priorities.

PLEDGE POINT 4

The force had guidelines that aimed to check team emails and voicemails daily. SNTs emails were automatically answered with an immediate automated response. **But** there were no postal correspondence guidelines and only a third of letters sent by the inspection team were replied to within 24 hours. The inspection team sent 15 emails to teams; only three received a personal response within 24 hours, and eight received an automated reply. Teams were unaware of the email and voicemail checking policy. Records revealed that voicemail messages to officers personal radios (airwave terminal) had not been checked regularly, which meant that some calls were not responded to within 24 hours.

PLEDGE POINT 5

Emergency callers were held on the line so that the operator could keep them informed of when a patrol would be with them. The Police Authority had set a response target of 15 minutes for all emergencies and did not differentiate between urban and rural locations. **But** estimated times of arrival were not given and not all control room staff were aware of the response targets.

PLEDGE POINT 6

Control room staff had been trained in assessing 'vulnerable' and 'upset' callers and operators could access the neighbourhood priorities by checking the SNT website and searching by postcode. **But** attendance times were not monitored against the promises in the Pledge and many control room staff were unaware of the meaning of 'vulnerable' and 'upset'.

PLEDGE POINT 7

There were plenty of chances for the community to meet the teams face to face, whose details were published on SNT web pages. **But** although consultations with the public were organised, SNT priorities were set at community tasking meetings, which were not open to the general public. Community views were expected to be voiced by local authority representatives and SNTs following earlier consultation. Meetings were not routinely advertised on police station notice boards.

PLEDGE POINT 8

The website gave access to the crime mapping system and local priorities were stated for each SNT area. **But** the pages did not show joint problem-solving and very few updates were available on progress made on local priorities. There was no information about how the force had tried to find out what policing updates the community wanted, and how the public wanted to receive this information.

PLEDGE POINT 9

The force met the “Victims’ Code of Practice”. Supervisors routinely called back victims to see if they were satisfied with the service they had received. **But** officers did not ask questions to find out victims’ wishes about being kept updated and in many cases, call backs were made whether victims wanted it or not.

PLEDGE POINT 10

The Head of the Professional Standards Department (PSD) received details of all public surveys, including dissatisfied customers. Any areas that were identified as needing improvement were shared across the force. **But** there was no system to capture and analyse cases of minor public dissatisfaction which meant that opportunities to learn lessons were lost. There was no formal system to monitor complaints received via the website from the public over the weekend.

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.

FAIR

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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