



Inspecting policing
in the **public interest**

Crime inspection 2014

Cumbria Constabulary

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How effective is the force at cutting crime?

Overall summary

Cumbria experiences a lower level of crime than most areas of the country. The police work well with partners to prevent crime and reduce re-offending.

Neighbourhood policing and anti-social behaviour are central priorities for the constabulary. Neighbourhood policing teams communicate well with communities, and understand their concerns and priorities.

HMIC found that there is a strong focus on the victim and vulnerability. We found that victims generally receive a good service but that contact with victims by officers is occasionally inconsistent. However, victim satisfaction with policing services is higher in Cumbria than the rate for England and Wales.

This year, HMIC undertook an inspection into the crime data integrity of all 43 police forces, to determine the extent to which police-recorded crime information can be trusted at a national level. HMIC has concerns about Cumbria Constabulary's approach to crime recording, which is not as accurate as it should be. Individual force reports are available at <http://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmic/>.

How effective is the force at reducing crime and preventing offending?

Good

The constabulary has a well-established process in place to prioritise the use of resources across each of the three territorial policing areas via the daily morning meeting which drives constabulary and local policing activity.

The constabulary has strong local partnership arrangements, particularly in relation to preventing young people from entering the criminal justice system. This is evident through effective multi-agency information sharing and joint action with young people to discourage offending behaviour at an early stage.

The constabulary has developed its consultation and engagement approach with communities in Cumbria. It is testing new methods of engagement including a 'cop in a shop' initiative in supermarkets to better understand the needs of local communities.

How effective is the force at investigating offending?

Good

There is good focus on victims and the need to protect those most at risk. This was evident at both a constabulary and local level with commitment shown by officers and staff to consider the victim at all stages of the investigation.

There is a good basic level of investigative capacity within the constabulary. However, there is insufficient support for the continuing professional development of some staff.

The constabulary has developed its own covert investigation facility and is expanding its capability in this area, responding to the challenge of tackling online criminality which targets children and vulnerable people.

How effective is the force at tackling anti-social behaviour?

Good

Cumbria Constabulary has a strong commitment to neighbourhood policing and a good understanding of local concerns and priorities. Neighbourhood policing officers and police community support officers tackle anti-social behaviour effectively, and are committed to ensuring that the most vulnerable people in their communities are protected.

The constabulary has a strong focus on understanding and tackling anti-social behaviour as part of its local neighbourhood policing approach. This involves the use of dedicated officers as 'problem solvers' and neighbourhood policing staff, often working in partnership with other agencies.

**How effective is the force
at reducing crime and
preventing offending?**

Good

**How effective is the force
at investigating offending?**

Good

Currently, offenders being monitored as part of the integrated offender management process are predominantly the responsibility of individual officers within each of the territorial policing areas. There is an opportunity to involve wider elements of the constabulary in the management of these offenders.

**How effective is the force
at tackling anti-social
behaviour?**

Good

The use of restorative justice has good oversight through the out-of-court disposals board which provides external and independent validation of decisions taken to deal with first time offenders.

Introduction

This inspection looks at how effective police forces are at cutting crime. The public expects the police to reduce, prevent and investigate crime, bring suspects to justice and, in conjunction with other services and agencies, care for victims. To assess each force's effectiveness, we looked at three specific areas:

- How effective is the force at reducing crime and preventing offending?
- How effective is the force at investigating offending?
- How effective is the force at tackling anti-social behaviour?

Methodology

During our inspection we analysed data and documents from forces, and conducted in-force inspections. We interviewed the senior officers responsible for crime, neighbourhood policing and victim care in each force. We held focus groups with frontline police officers, investigators and police staff, and observed their activities first hand. We also reviewed 20 crime investigations in each force and interviewed heads of partner organisations such as local authorities. We focused on anti-social behaviour and the offences of: burglary dwelling; serious sexual offences; and violence with injury on this inspection. We chose to focus on these offences because they cover the areas of acquisitive and violent crime and the protection of vulnerable people. This has allowed us to make an assessment of how well the force treated the victim throughout the investigation – examining in particular how well officers gathered evidence and how well they were supervised.

Victims are at the heart of this inspection. Victims are entitled to a service from the police; this includes regular information about their case, an opportunity to provide an impact statement where relevant and to be consulted on potential criminal justice outcomes. When the police provide this service to victims, it increases victim satisfaction and builds trust and confidence in the police.

As part of this inspection, we considered how well forces deal with domestic abuse, alongside other offence types. HMIC published a report in March 2014 on how well forces tackled domestic abuse and provided support to victims. As a result of that inspection all forces were asked to provide an action plan setting out how they were improving services to victims of domestic abuse and we have reviewed the action plans developed by forces. The action plans have not informed the judgments made in these reports.

The crime inspection provides HMIC with the first opportunity to test whether the force's approach to improving how it tackles domestic abuse is beginning to have an effect and this forms part of our overall assessment of the force.

How effective is the force at reducing crime and preventing offending?

HMIC looked at how the leadership of the force deploys its resources to reduce the volume of crimes being committed, maximise the quality of victim contact, and ensure that the force focuses on community priorities while mitigating national threats.

We looked at how the force prevents crime, how it uses police tactics such as stop and search powers to prevent and detect crime and reduce offending. We also looked at how the police work with other agencies such as social services to reduce crime.

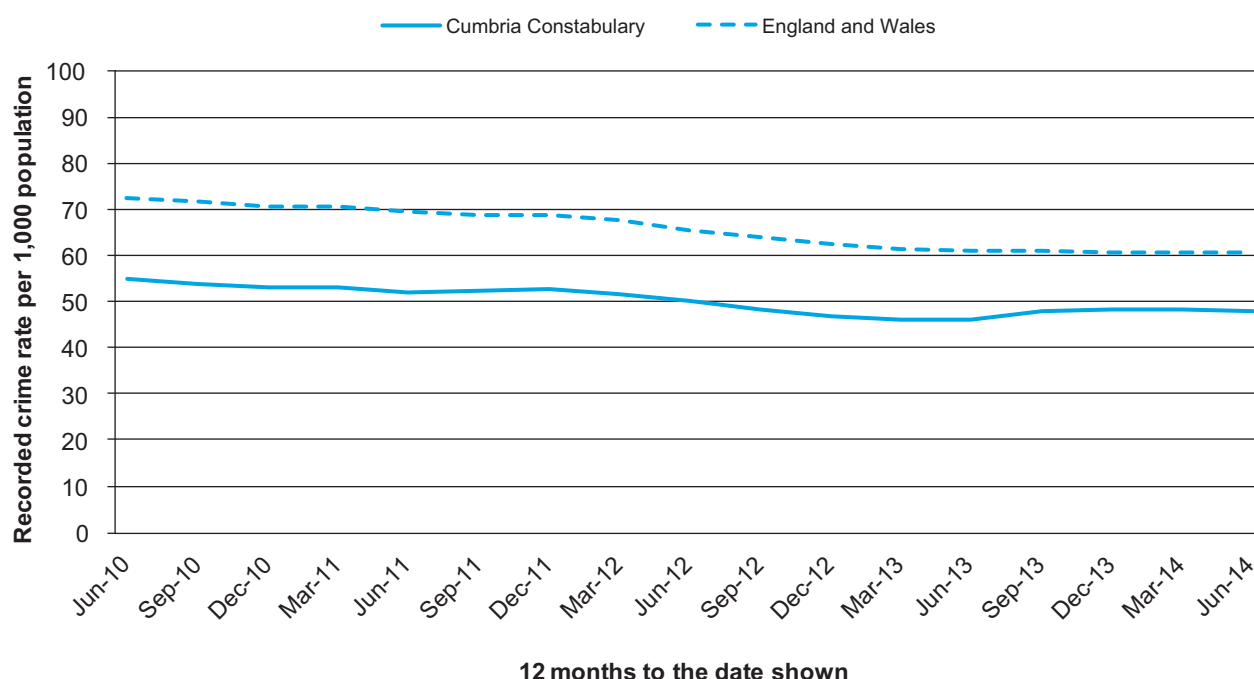
Crime

In 2010 the Home Secretary set a clear priority for the police service to cut crime. When compared with the 12 months to June 2010, recorded crime (excluding fraud) in the 12 months to June 2014 reduced by 13 percent in Cumbria compared with a reduction of 16 percent across all forces in England and Wales.

Over this period, victim-based crime (i.e., crimes where there is a direct victim such as an individual, a group, or an organisation) decreased by 12 percent in Cumbria, compared with a reduction of 16 percent across England and Wales.

Looking at the 12 months prior to the end of June 2014; recorded crime (excluding fraud) in Cumbria increased by 3 percent, compared with a 1 percent reduction across England and Wales.

Figure: Recorded crime rate (per 1,000 population) between June 2010 and June 2014.



By looking at how many recorded crimes and incidents of anti-social behaviour (ASB) occur per 1,000 population, we get an indication of how safe it is for the public in that police area. The table below shows crime and anti-social behaviour rates in Cumbria (per 1,000 population) compared with the rest of England and Wales.

12 months to June 2014	Cumbria Constabulary rate (per 1,000 population)	England and Wales total rate (per 1,000 population)
Crime excluding fraud	47.8	60.7
Victim-based crime	41.3	53.9
Sexual offences	1.0	1.2
Violence with injury	5.5	5.9
Burglary in a dwelling*	3.0	8.9
Anti-social behaviour incidents*	47.9	36.8

***Note that anti-social behaviour data is for the 12 months to March 2014 and the rate for burglary in a dwelling is the rate per 1,000 households, not population.**

We have chosen these types of crime to give an indication of offending levels in the force area. We are not judging the effectiveness of the force on recorded crime rates only. For information on the frequency of other kinds of crimes in your area, go to www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmic/crime-and-policing-comparator

Cumbria's detection rate (for crimes excluding fraud) for the 12 months to the end of March 2014 was 35 percent which was higher than the figure of 26 percent for England and Wales.

The new crime outcomes framework was introduced in April 2014. It replaces a previous framework for recording how the police finalise investigations through what was known as 'sanction detections' (e.g. charges and/or summons). The new crime outcomes framework is designed to support police officers to use their professional judgment to ensure a just and timely outcome which reflects the harm to the victim, the seriousness of the offending behaviour, the impact on the community, and which deters future offending. Data on the full range of outcomes achieved as a result of investigations (not just detections but also, for example, community resolutions such as mediation known as restorative justice) will be available from July 2015 and used in future HMIC inspections.

Meeting the needs of the community

Cumbria Constabulary has clear priorities for reducing crime and anti-social behaviour. These priorities are detailed in various documents such as the police and crime commissioner's police and crime plan. Each year, the constabulary conducts a strategic threat and risk assessment which sets the key priorities and areas of focus for the force. This is reviewed bi-annually.

On a more regular basis daily management meetings are used to assess threat, harm, risk and organisational needs against areas of concern. These meetings have a particular focus on domestic abuse and vulnerability. Resources within the force are deployed to those areas of greatest risk, and to prevent and reduce crime. Officers and PCSOs are allocated specific tasks and areas to patrol to align resources to identified priorities.

The constabulary is good at communicating with the public and listening to their needs. It uses several different methods to contact the public including social media such as Twitter and Facebook, email and text messages. The media and communications team tailor crime messages and prevention advice to specific communities in Cumbria. The constabulary is testing new ways of engaging with the public through initiatives such as community meetings in supermarkets to better understand the needs of local communities.

Quality of victim contact

Cumbria Constabulary is victim-centred in its approach to reducing and preventing offending. The force consults victims on the services that it provides, and uses information and data from satisfaction surveys to inform change.

The constabulary has introduced 'victim contracts', which set out the agreed format and frequency for updates to be provided to victims as each investigation progresses. These are recorded on the force's IT system, in line with the requirements of the Code of Practice for Victims of Crime. Supervisors are able to monitor the frequency of victim contact, and report on levels of progress as part of each local daily management meeting.

Overall victim care is of a good standard in Cumbria. However, we found there to be a lack of understanding in how the Code of Practice for Victims of Crime should be applied by some frontline staff after an offender has been charged with an offence, and in particular to their understanding of how the constabulary's witness care unit would assist them in keeping victims updated whilst cases were waiting to go to court. Some partner agencies whom we interviewed told us that officers failing to keep victims regularly updated was a theme in the feedback they received from victims.

An important measure of the impact of changes to service delivery for the public is how satisfied victims are with the overall service they receive when they seek police assistance. In the 12 months to the end of June 2014, Cumbria Constabulary had a victim satisfaction rate of 89.2 percent (± 2.8 percent) which is higher than the satisfaction rate in England and Wales of 85.0 percent (± 0.2 percent). Its current rate is broadly in line with the 89.1 percent (± 2.8 percent) recorded for Cumbria in the previous year.

Use of police tactics

Cumbria Constabulary uses a broad range of tactics to reduce and prevent offending. For example the constabulary has used new legal powers to prevent domestic abuse offenders from having contact with their victims (domestic violence protection orders).

HMIC found evidence of a strong focus on the prevention of crime throughout the organisation. The constabulary has six crime prevention officers who have a significant role in supporting victims of domestic abuse and anti-social behaviour, especially those assessed as being at high risk of further victimisation. These officers provide additional security measures and advice, and offer access to other support agencies. The constabulary uses a variety of proven and effective approaches to address burglary and violent crime. For example, use of local media to communicate crime prevention messages; daily briefings nominate locations for high visibility patrols and increased use of stop and search. Preventative tactics are well understood by staff, and influence their everyday patrol activity. Preventative orders are used effectively to stop sex offenders and violent offenders from contacting or causing distress to their victims.

Cumbria Constabulary has clear processes to identify and prioritise organised crime groups within the county and also works closely with neighbouring forces in relation to travelling criminals from outside of the force area who use the Cumbrian road network. There are effective processes in place to manage such groups at all levels of the organisation and neighbourhood officers demonstrated good awareness of priority criminals on their territorial policing area. At a strategic level, the Constabulary has senior oversight through an organised crime group review meeting and can bid for regional resources if necessary.

Partnership working and information sharing

There is good and effective partnership working to prevent crime and offending in Cumbria. The co-location of police officers with partner agencies in a multi-agency safeguarding hub (MASH) in Penrith has enhanced their ability to share information and data. This has given the force the ability to make more timely interventions and adopt a joint approach to addressing issues around vulnerable people to ensure that they are kept safe.

However, we found that there was still room for improvement in ensuring that crimes referred to police officers working in the MASH are recorded at the earliest opportunity. This will ensure a crime investigation is progressed and more importantly, ensure the safety of vulnerable victims.¹

HMIC found that there are a number of effective partnership arrangements across the county, which consider the interests of young first time offenders. These are aimed at preventing young people from entering the criminal justice system. The arrangements include multi-agency information sharing and joint action with young people that explores alternative options to discourage further offending.

Domestic abuse

In March 2014 HMIC published the results of its inspection of 43 forces on the effectiveness of the police approach to domestic violence, with a focus on outcomes for victims and whether risks to victims are adequately managed. This included clear recommendations for each force about improvements it should make. As a result of this inspection all forces were required to produce and publish an action plan setting out the steps they were taking to improve the services to victims of domestic abuse. This plan should demonstrate that HMIC recommendations are being addressed and also explain how:

- the leadership will ensure the changes necessary and hold the right people to account;
- the police response when a victim first contacts them (by a 999 call or by visiting a police station) and when they first attend the scene of the incident is improved;
- the force will ensure there is a high quality investigation of all domestic abuse crime;
- victims will be properly supported and offenders properly managed; and
- the training and learning provided to officers ensures they can give the best available response to the victim.

HMIC have made an initial consideration of the plan submitted by Cumbria Constabulary. We found the Constabulary has produced a plan that evidences activity in line with the agreed national priorities for forces to improve their response to domestic abuse outlined above. Although there does not appear to be direct reference to the specific HMIC recommendations for the force, evidence within the action plan supports most of the activity required by the HMIC.

¹ This issue was highlighted in the HMIC Crime Data Integrity report into crime recording practices in Cumbria Constabulary (July 2014).

The crime inspection provided us with our first opportunity to test whether changes in the force's approach to domestic abuse were beginning to have a positive effect.

During the inspection HMIC found there are three well-established multi-agency risk assessment conferences (MARAC) held within the force area. These regular meetings involve a good range of partner organisations and help the force to manage high risk cases of domestic abuse in a co-ordinated way. The force has reported that in the 12 months to 31 July 2014, Cumbria Constabulary presented 91 cases to a multi-agency risk assessment conference (MARAC) joining with a range of partners in providing better support for victims of domestic violence.

Recommendations

- Cumbria Constabulary should immediately take action to ensure that crimes referred to the police team at the multi-agency safeguarding hub (MASH) triage unit are recorded and investigated as soon as possible.
- Within three months Cumbria Constabulary should ensure that all officers and staff are aware of:
 - (a) their responsibilities in relation to the Code of Practice for Victims of Crime and for keeping victims informed of the progress of investigations; and
 - (b) the role and responsibilities fulfilled by the Witness Care Unit in supporting victims and keeping them updated on the progress of investigations to enable officers to more effectively manage victims' expectations.

Summary

Good

- The constabulary has a well-established process in place to prioritise the use of resources across each of the three territorial policing areas via the daily morning meeting which drives constabulary and local policing activity.
- The constabulary has strong local partnership arrangements, particularly in relation to preventing young people from entering the criminal justice system. This is evident through effective multi-agency information sharing and joint action with young people to discourage offending behaviour at an early stage.
- The constabulary has developed its consultation and engagement approach with communities in Cumbria. It is testing new methods of engagement including a 'cop in a shop' initiative in supermarkets to better understand the needs of local communities.

How effective is the force at investigating offending?

HMIC looked at the range of police tactics and powers used by the force to investigate offending, including how investigations are conducted, whether persistent offenders are diverted from crime and how people vulnerable to repeat crime are supported. We looked at how the force learns from experience in order to improve professionalism in operational practice and leadership.

Vulnerability, risk and victims

There is a clear commitment to quality of service and victim care in the constabulary. HMIC found a good focus on victims and the need to protect those most at risk at all levels of the organisation. There are robust processes in place to assess and manage risks to victims throughout the investigation process. Victims who are vulnerable, for example elderly people living alone, are identified at the first point of contact in the constabulary's control room. The constabulary is also able to identify those who have previously been a victim of crime on three or more occasions. It adapts its approach to safeguarding victims according to their individual needs, and victim care is generally well managed by officers.

However, not all frontline officers fully understand the range of voluntary sector services available to support victims, such as independent sexual violence advisors (ISVAs). Consequently these services are not being offered to all victims at the earliest opportunity.

The referral of victims of domestic abuse to independent domestic violence advisors (IDVAs) is also inconsistent. Some risk assessments relating to victims assessed as 'standard risk' are not being referred until after an offender is charged and their case is heard in court. This means that some victims are missing out on vital support services at a time when they often feel vulnerable.

Investigation

HMIC found that the quality of investigation in Cumbria is good. Evidence to support this emerged from our interviews with staff and in our review of 20 case files carried out as part of this inspection. Our review found that investigations are carried out to a good standard overall, with positive and timely action taken to pursue lines of enquiry and arrest suspects. However, in a few cases, our research highlighted that some supervisors are not offering meaningful direction to investigating officers especially in relation to how investigations should be progressed.

The force has made improvements to its investigative training and resource management, and this year is to deliver 20 continuing professional development events to support the development of crime investigators. In addition, the constabulary has developed its own bespoke distance learning training material on emerging areas of crime, such as child sexual exploitation. This method of training has been chosen due to the difficulties of delivering face-to-face class based training to staff spread over a large geographical force area. However, some front line officers considered that there was an over reliance on distance learning packages which did not give them the opportunity to check their knowledge and understanding. The training manager was aware of this issue and is revising the current approach on how distance learning products will be used.

The force makes use of technology to enhance the quality of evidence to support an investigation. For example the force has purchased body-worn cameras (a video camera worn by staff on their clothing) for staff to record evidence; this approach has been especially beneficial in dealing with incidents involving domestic abuse to ensure all possible evidence is secured without relying solely on evidence from the victim.

A senior investigating officer and detectives are available at all times to support and provide advice on investigations to colleagues. The constabulary has invested in basic training for all detectives and more advanced specialist training for staff working in those roles such as domestic abuse and child safeguarding to protect vulnerable adults and children.

The constabulary has identified the threat posed by offenders who prey on victims, such as children and the vulnerable, over the internet. The constabulary has developed its own covert internet investigation facility and is expanding its capability in this area. Elsewhere, the constabulary is working at a regional level to understand the level of risk and impact associated with cyber-crime.

Tackling repeat and prolific offenders

The constabulary has good partnership arrangements in place for managing the most prolific offenders who pose a risk to the public. It recognises that preventing re-offending requires a co-ordinated approach from all partners, and there are good examples of partnership working in this area. Both the multi-agency public protection arrangements (MAPPA) and the multi-agency risk assessment conferences (MARAC) are well embedded, with good links to support agencies such as drug and alcohol services. The force has an understanding of prolific offenders at a local level.

HMIC found that the constabulary's integrated offender management arrangements are being revised, with additional partner agencies adding their support. Currently, integrated offender management arrangements are within the remit of a few individuals in each of the territorial policing areas. There is scope to involve other officers and departments in the management of these more persistent offenders to reduce the likelihood of their reoffending. The constabulary intends to work more closely with partners in future, ultimately in a co-located setting to provide more effective oversight of repeat offenders.

Learning from experience

HMIC found inconsistencies in the constabulary's approach to learning in order to improve the services it provides. The constabulary does review its understanding of demand and the quality of service it offers to the public. However, there is now limited capacity following a reduction in resources to conduct analysis to understand and evaluate the effectiveness of police operations and crime prevention tactics. The constabulary is planning to introduce a new IT platform called 'sharepoint' which it expects will aid the dissemination of good practice across the organisation.

Recommendations

- Cumbria Constabulary should immediately develop and implement a process to ensure victims of domestic abuse are referred to relevant victim support services, including those from the voluntary and community sectors, in a timely manner.
- Within six months Cumbria Constabulary should ensure that there are arrangements in place to:
 - (a) systematically review and evaluate the benefits from both current tactics, police operations and anti-social behaviour initiatives;
 - (b) systematically capture learning and good practice in crime prevention and local problem solving; and
 - (c) share learning and good practice across the constabulary.

Summary

Good

- There is a good focus on victims and the need to protect those most at risk. This was evident at both a constabulary and local level with commitment shown by officers and staff to consider the victim at all stages of the investigation.
- There is a good basic level of investigative capacity within the constabulary. However, there is insufficient support for the continuing professional development of some staff.
- The constabulary has developed its own covert investigation facility and is expanding its capability in this area, responding to the challenge of tackling online criminality which targets children and vulnerable people.
- Currently, offenders being monitored as part of the integrated offender management process are predominantly the responsibility of individual officers within each of the territorial policing areas. There is an opportunity to involve wider elements of the constabulary in the management of these offenders.

How effective is the force at tackling anti-social behaviour?

HMIC looked at how the force prevents and tackles anti-social behaviour; in particular the way victims are treated. We looked at the quality and consistency of victim contact across the force and whether victims of anti-social behaviour were dealt with in a comparable way to victims of other crimes.

Community contact and victim care

Cumbria Constabulary has a strong commitment to neighbourhood policing and maintaining a visible policing presence. This is evident at both a constabulary and local level. Staff use a range of methods to engage with the public and understand community concerns. 'Safer, Stronger Communities' meetings are regularly held to review the priorities for local areas, and to update local people on activity carried out by neighbourhood policing teams.

The constabulary has targeted rural crime using community volunteers from affected areas in an initiative called 'farm watch', and has a good collaborative working relationship with North Yorkshire Police and Durham Constabulary to tackle crime affecting remote rural communities. In order to better communicate with the more isolated areas of the constabulary, a community broadcast system called the 'Cumbria community messaging service' has been introduced. This service provides information on crime and anti-social behaviour via electronic text messages from the police to members of the public who sign up to the scheme.

Neighbourhood policing teams are well established in local communities. We found that staff including dedicated 'problem solving' officers have a good appreciation of the issues around anti-social behaviour in their area. The constabulary's focus on protecting the most vulnerable victims is also well understood by staff. An anti-social behaviour risk assessment matrix (ASBRA) is used to assess and grade each anti-social behaviour incident to ensure that appropriate interventions are prioritised. Those incidents scoring highly are reviewed as part of the daily management meeting to ensure that the appropriate response and support for the victim are instigated by each local neighbourhood policing team.

The constabulary deals with some crime and anti-social behaviour by the use of an approach called restorative justice. This involves bringing the victim and offender together for mediation or reparation. To ensure this approach is being used appropriately, oversight and scrutiny is provided by an 'out of court disposals board' made up of independent members of the local community.

The constabulary makes full use of the relevant legislation to prevent and reduce anti-social behaviour incidents and to restrict the behaviour of those committing offences. Anti-social behaviour orders (ASBOs) are occasionally sought by the constabulary to deter offenders from committing further anti-social acts. In the 12 months to the end of July 2014, Cumbria Constabulary received reports from 14,138 victims of anti-social behaviour. In the same period, 1,317 anti-social behaviour dispersal orders, 122 anti-social behaviour warning notices and 21 anti-social behaviour orders were issued.

Partnership working

HMIC found that community safety partnerships are strong in Cumbria. At a neighbourhood level, partnership problem solving, joint patrolling, neighbourhood meetings and anti-social behaviour panels are now common practice. Officers, located within neighbourhood policing teams and dedicated to problem solving activities, closely work with other agencies to provide a cohesive response and sustainable solutions. HMIC also found good partnership engagement in dealing with troubled families. While we found that problem solving activity within neighbourhood policing teams is good, cases are monitored and managed on different information technology systems. This can make it more difficult for supervisors to offer effective oversight and direction to officers and for the constabulary to assess what works and to share good practice.

Summary

Good

- Cumbria Constabulary has a strong commitment to neighbourhood policing and a good understanding of local concerns and priorities. Neighbourhood policing officers and police community support officers tackle anti-social behaviour effectively, and are committed to ensuring that the most vulnerable people in their community are protected.
- The constabulary has a strong focus on understanding and tackling anti-social behaviour as part of its local neighbourhood policing approach. This involves the use of dedicated officers as 'problem solvers' and neighbourhood policing staff, often working in partnership with other agencies.
- The use of restorative justice has good oversight through the out-of-court disposals board which provides external and independent validation of decisions taken to deal with first time offenders.

What each judgment means

HMIC uses four categories for making judgments, two are positive and two are negative. The categories are:

- outstanding;
- good;
- requires improvement; and
- inadequate.

Judgment is made against how well the force cuts crime. In applying the categories HMIC considers whether:

- the way the force is cutting crime and reducing offending is good, or exceeds this standard sufficiently to be judged as outstanding;
- the force requires improvement in the way it cuts crime, and/or there are some weaknesses; or
- the force's effectiveness at cutting crime is inadequate because it is significantly lower than is expected.