



Inspecting policing
in the public interest

Crime inspection 2014

Durham Constabulary

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How effective is the force at cutting crime?

Overall summary

Durham Constabulary is effective at preventing and investigating crime. The constabulary provides appropriate support to victims, delivers positive outcomes for victims and engages effectively with its communities.

Durham Constabulary puts victims and communities at the centre of its activity. Its victim-centred approach makes extensive use of outcomes other than prosecution to deliver what the victim wants. The use of restorative justice and community resolution is both widespread and innovative.

Durham Constabulary has a clear focus on tackling crime and criminals. It works to a clear set of published priorities to protect neighbourhoods, tackle criminals and solve problems.

The chief constable and his senior team lead by example, demonstrating visible leadership.

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 Durham 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

Durham Constabulary focuses on the needs of the victim, and on tackling crime and criminals. The force actively engages with its communities to ensure it knows what matters to them and takes action to solve local problems. Staff take responsibility for preventing crime through a problem-solving approach.

Partnership working and information sharing are embedded and strengths for the force.

Durham Constabulary continues to provide a good service to victims of domestic abuse and helps keep them safe. Tackling domestic abuse is a priority for the force and staff, with staff demonstrating a high level of commitment and awareness.

How effective is the force at investigating offending?

Outstanding

Total victim care is the daily business for the entire workforce. This way of working is reinforced by senior leaders, by the way staff talk, and by corporate communication, training and performance management.

The victim is placed at the centre of any investigation. The force is effective at investigating crime.

Durham Constabulary has achieved success in reducing re-offending rates.

Each neighbourhood maintains their own problem-solving database, which is accessible and searchable by all staff. Each plan has a complete history of actions undertaken and what has proven successful.

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

Outstanding

The force is successfully tackling anti-social behaviour through community engagement and understanding the causes of offending.

The force uses an approach known as 'restorative justice' effectively to tackle anti-social behaviour and prevent crime.

Senior leaders place a strong emphasis on the importance of tackling anti-social behaviour, which is clearly recognised by staff and partners alike.

Partnership working for tackling anti-social behaviour is embedded and effective. The force works well with local authority partners in understanding local anti-social behaviour concerns and finding solutions.

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 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 this 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.

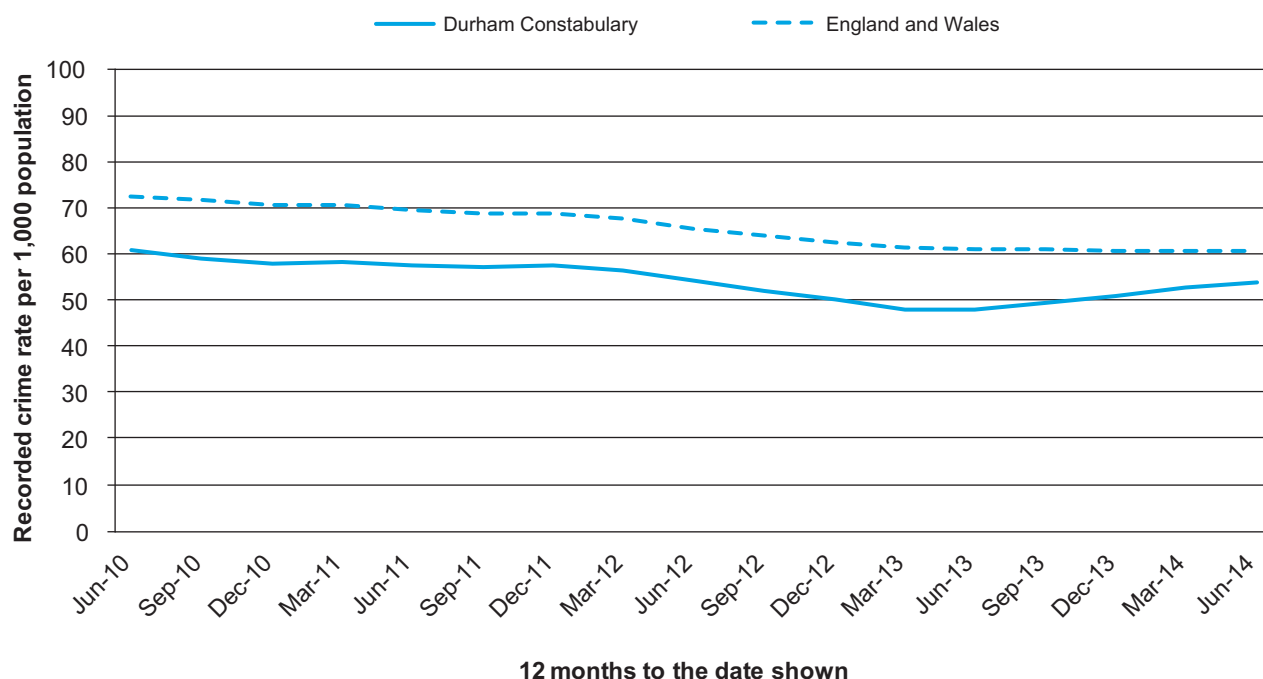
Crime

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 11 percent in Durham 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 11 percent in Durham, compared with a reduction of 16 percent across England and Wales.

During the 12 months prior to the end of June 2014, recorded crime (excluding fraud) in Durham increased by 13 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 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 Durham (per 1,000 population) compared with the rest of England and Wales.

12 months to June 2014	Durham Constabulary rate (per 1,000 population)	England and Wales total rate (per 1,000 population)
Crime excluding fraud	54.0	60.7
Victim-based crime	48.5	53.9
Sexual offences	1.6	1.2
Violence with injury	5.2	5.9
Burglary in a dwelling*	5.0	8.9
Anti-social behaviour incidents*	47.4	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

Durham's detection rate (for crimes excluding fraud) for the 12 months to the end of March 2014 was 36 percent, which was higher than the 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

Durham Constabulary has a clear focus on tackling crime and criminals. The current police and crime plan was written after consultation with local people and partners. The crime reduction and prevention priorities are to tackle anti-social behaviour and the harm caused by alcohol and drugs; and to reduce the impact of domestic abuse and hate crime. The chief constable is extremely visible in the force and provides strong and effective leadership.

The force understands what matters to the communities it polices. The force has a robust performance management framework in place to monitor and manage its ability to have an impact on crime and offending. It uses information from partner agencies as part of its regular and comprehensive assessments of demand, threat, risk and harm. These assessments are reviewed monthly. The force uses analysis of this information to make decisions about how best to use its resources to tackle emerging threats and changes in demand: for example, the seasonal peak in dwelling burglaries when students return to the area, and the current operation to deal with historical sexual and physical abuse at a detention centre within the county. These processes take into account wider regional and national demands for resources, such as tackling serious and organised crime and the force's contribution to dealing with terrorism.

The force has a crime reduction strategy that uses a problem-solving approach. It has three key strands: Operation Relentless to tackle offenders; Operation Reinforce to tackle locations; and Operation Reassure to ensure good victim care. This approach, in partnership with partner agencies, has helped to tackle recent increases in violent crime, retail theft and criminal damage.

Durham has seen increases in recorded crime in the past 12 months. HMIC understands that this is partly due to an ongoing investigation into the historical sexual and physical abuse of detained persons at Medomsley Detention Centre. At the time of inspection the force had received criminal complaints from over 600 victims with this figure expected to rise. This is a factor in the increase in recorded crime.

Quality of victim contact

Durham Constabulary is clearly focused on the needs of its victims and communities, and places them at the centre of its response to crime and anti-social behaviour.

The force uses effective methods to capture victim and community feedback to improve the service they provide. For example, it tailors its approach to police and community together (PACT) meetings for specific communities. Examples include Polish PACT and junior PACT. The force has some of the highest neighbourhood watch coverage nationally (County Durham has over 218,000 households and Darlington has over 48,000 households), and uses the feedback from these active watch schemes and similar schemes, such as farm watch and pub watch, to influence the way it delivers its services.

Neighbourhood officers are actively encouraged to be highly visible in the community, talking to people to gather information and feedback, and to use this information to identify and deal with local problems.

There has been a particular drive to improve satisfaction regarding follow-up contact with victims of crime and anti-social behaviour. The force uses a 'Victim's Contract', which is agreed with every victim when a police officer attends either a crime or an incident. The contract ensures that victim contact is determined by the victim in terms of how often and by what means they are kept informed regarding progress of the investigation. Victim contracts are reviewed by supervisors and senior managers to ensure quality and compliance.

Scrutiny of these contracts and victim confidence and satisfaction levels is provided by the force's citizen journey programme board, which is chaired by the deputy chief constable and attended by senior managers. This focus on the needs of the victim has improved victim satisfaction levels. For example, in the first few months of 2014 the force reported an increase in satisfaction levels for anti-social behaviour victims compared with 2012.

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, Durham Constabulary had a victim satisfaction rate of 88.6 percent (± 1.8 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 89.6 percent (± 1.5 percent) recorded for Durham in the previous year.

Use of police tactics

Durham Constabulary expects all staff to be responsible for preventing crime through problem solving. Each neighbourhood policing team maintains their own problem-solving database, which is accessible and searchable across the force.

Response teams are responsible for a minimum of two problem-solving plans that are monitored and managed by sergeants, and reviewed monthly. The force works in partnership with other agencies and manages this through local multi-agency partnership meetings. The chief constable demonstrates considerable commitment to the problem-solving approach, personally promoting it with staff through his face-to-face training sessions. As a result, the problem-solving approach is used as the response to a wide range of incidents, and is seen as 'daily business' for the force. To underline its importance, the force holds annual problem-solving awards that recognise and promote good practice. Neighbourhood policing teams are now working on a project called 'Mutual gain', which is aimed at expanding the use of this approach by encouraging problem solving within communities.

HMIC found daily management meetings to be effective in identifying vulnerability and in tasking resources to deal with crime investigation and reduction. These meetings are supported by a weekly intelligence-led review. The review forecasts potential crime patterns, puts tactics in place to prevent crime happening and to target the people who may be committing it. There is clear evidence that staff are undertaking crime prevention activity such as 'park, walk and talk'. This involves them parking their vehicles and doing foot patrol in identified 'hotspot' areas at key times to prevent crime and reassure the public.

Partnership working and information sharing

There is clear evidence that partnership working and information sharing are embedded within Durham Constabulary, and contribute to effective crime prevention and reduction. During our inspection, partner agencies highlighted and praised the force's distinct victim-centred approach.

Durham Constabulary's safer neighbourhood units are co-located with partners in a 'hub'. The force believes the benefits of working in the same place include improved communication, information sharing and joint problem solving.

The force has a range of partnership schemes to engage with victims and offenders and to identify any vulnerabilities within these groups. HMIC found evidence of the force working to tackle the factors that can cause crime and increase vulnerability, such as mental health issues.

The force runs schemes to assess vulnerability, needs and to divert people away from criminal activity. This helps to reduce the risk they pose to the community. For example, the force undertook effective early intervention work with the younger sibling of a known organised crime group member to prevent him from taking the same path.

Durham Constabulary has a culture of reducing crime by diverting offenders away from committing crime. The force has trained its staff in the seven 'critical pathways'¹ to offending identified by the National Offender Management Service (NOMS) as the reasons why people commit crime.

The force encourages officers to consider these critical pathways when dealing with offenders, and to look at why people are offending. Officers spoke of using this approach, which was illustrated in the case of a 17-year-old prolific shoplifter. Using the critical pathway approach, officers analysed his offending behaviour and found he was not on benefits and had no money. The police helped him to access the benefits he was entitled to and he has now not offended for 5 months.

This approach evidences the force's commitment to tackling the underlying causes of crime and supporting offenders away from committing crime. The force believes this to be important to reducing crime in the long term.

Durham Constabulary works effectively with partners to tackle serious sexual offences and so-called hidden crime. The force is working with neighbouring forces to produce a common strategy and action plan to tackle violence against women and girls and child sexual exploitation. The force works with the local children safeguarding boards to identify issues emerging nationally. The force carries out a range of preventive and educational activity. This has included the distribution of leaflets at schools, and providing crime prevention training to taxi drivers and late-night food outlets. The aim is to raise awareness of the signs to look for to identify young people at risk.

The force focuses on early intervention and the effective identification of risk. Frontline teams are given awareness training for so-called honour-based violence and forced marriage, and each shift of officers has an identified safeguarding champion. There are regular force-wide messages about harder to identify safeguarding risks.

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:

¹ NOMS introduced the idea of structuring interventions around seven 'critical pathways': accommodation; drug and alcohol misuse; financial management and income; education, training and employability; children and families; health; attitudes, thinking and behaviour.

- 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 has made an initial consideration of the plan submitted by Durham Constabulary. We found that all the recommendations made in the force inspection report are being followed up. These include improvements in call handling, training and how victims are informed of court results. The force has also set out the activity it is taking to respond to the national priorities for change in this area.

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.

HMIC found evidence that Durham Constabulary continues to provide a good service to victims of domestic abuse and helps keep them safe. Tackling domestic abuse is a priority for the force, and staff display a high level of commitment and awareness. Domestic abuse is identified as a key area to work with partners to provide timely support. For example, a vulnerable victim was re-housed immediately by a social housing landlord while offenders were in custody.

Summary

Good

- Durham Constabulary focuses on the needs of the victim, and on tackling crime and criminals. The force actively engages with its communities to ensure it knows what matters to them and takes action to solve local problems. Staff take responsibility for preventing crime through a problem-solving approach.
- Partnership working and information sharing are embedded and strengths for the force.
- Durham Constabulary continues to provide a good service to victims of domestic abuse and helps keep them safe. Tackling domestic abuse is a priority for the force and staff, with staff demonstrating a high level of commitment and awareness.

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

Durham Constabulary has an effective victim-centred approach with a strong focus on ensuring victims do not become repeat victims. As already mentioned in this report, the force has various quality assurance processes in place to ensure good victim care. These processes are further enhanced by supervisors making contact with some victims of crime to hear about their experiences and ensure they have received a high level of service.

Staff receive briefings and training on the Code of Practice for Victims of Crime through mandatory online training packages, face-to-face sessions, webcasts and video broadcasts from chief officers. The force uses innovative training methods. For example, a recent mastermind spoof quiz hosted by the deputy chief constable was used to update staff on the revised Code of Practice for Victims of Crime.

The force has created a victim journey process map to help it improve the way it supports victims. The map has five different sections: reporting, investigation, post charge, court and appeal. This identifies victims' needs at each stage. A safeguarding officer from the force is working with the office of the police and crime commissioner to identify the needs of the victim at different stages and allow for the 'tailoring' of services to meet those needs. This focus on individual needs is illustrated by the support in place for the victims of sexual abuse at Medomsley Detention Centre. The force has designed a bespoke support package for victims. The package is designed to avoid any duplication, misinformation or repeated contact by people from different parts of the organisation.

Durham Constabulary carries out needs and risk assessments on the people who come into contact with the police as either victims of crime, victims of anti-social behaviour or offenders who enter custody. The assessments look at the vulnerability of the person to allow support services to be targeted to meet their needs. Recently the force widened a scheme, which was originally set up to divert women offenders out of the criminal justice system, to include male offenders.

The force has effective processes to identify the most vulnerable people and ensure that they have the correct support. These include partner interventions to meet the needs of the individual (for instance, the 'total health care contract' put in place for those detained suffering from mental distress). Other examples include joint visits with independent domestic violence advisers to a household reporting a domestic abuse incident. The

advisers assess the wider issues involved and identify all the potential risks posed to people who live there. This approach involves specialist agencies in providing support from the outset, thereby maximising the opportunities to protect those at risk. This has helped the force to improve the quality of service, safeguard people and prevent future offending.

Officers and staff displayed an excellent understanding of the Code of Practice for Victims of Crime. The force has provided training through e-learning and face-to-face sessions to 91 percent of its staff. There was clear evidence that the force and its staff consistently place the needs of the victim at the centre of their approach to investigating crime and anti-social behaviour.

HMIC found strong evidence of victim personal statements being used in all court files with good-quality updates and contact with the victim. Officers recognise the benefits of working with experts such as independent sexual violence advisers.

Investigation

Durham Constabulary places the victim at the centre of any investigation. The force attends all reports of crime and anti-social behaviour, unless attendance is not possible because the victim or caller lives some distance away from the force area. In the force control room, staff assess calls based on the threat, risk and harm posed by the incident or to the caller. Using the national decision-making model, the call handler decides how quickly the police need to respond to the call for service and what support they might need. This ensures a structured approach to assessing all incidents on the needs of the caller and not just the crime or incident being reported.

In the majority of cases, detectives attend burglaries in a dwelling and other priority crimes. These detectives have been trained to national standards such as ICIDP² and PIP2³. HMIC found that investigation plans follow a seven-point plan and are routinely recorded on the case management system used by the force. The system records updates and investigative activity on each case and supervisors review cases and add actions as required. Supervisors review ongoing cases with individual officers every 4–6 weeks. HMIC found clear evidence that supervisors have the necessary experience, training and accreditation to supervise and quality assure investigations. Each department has experienced supervisors from within their specific aspect of specialism and HMIC found evidence that an effective process of quality assurance exists. Supervisors told us that the computer systems they use help them to supervise cases by sending an automated reminder when the case is due for review. This focuses staff on delivering high-quality investigations.

2 Initial Crime Investigators Development Programme (ICIDP).

3 Professionalising Investigation Programme (PIP), level 2.

HMIC found evidence that officers use a full range of investigative tactics to maximise the possibility of a successful outcome. Examples include an automated alert to pawnbrokers or jewellers when high-value jewellery is stolen.

The force also 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 all neighbourhood and 24/7 response staff to ensure all possible evidence is secured without relying solely on evidence from the victim. Video footage of the incident, showing the demeanour of the perpetrator and any injuries to the victim or damage to the property can be compelling evidence and can often mean that a prosecution need not rely on the victim having to give evidence.

The force uses specialist resources to tackle crime patterns. For example, the force uses officers from the regional organised crime unit to investigate a recurring pattern of dwelling burglaries in the force. Other specialists such as crime scene investigators (CSIs) are based in local stations and examples were given of when they offered effective support to investigations. CSI resources are available across the force until 10pm every day and through an on-call system for serious crime (for example, murder) after that time. However, some staff commented that the lack of general availability of CSIs after 10pm has a negative impact on the investigation of some crimes.

Tackling repeat and prolific offenders

Durham Constabulary's approach to integrated offender management (IOM)⁴ focuses on those offenders who pose the greatest risk to the public. IOM is located in four hubs across the force, and is co-located with partners. The teams are led by a detective sergeant but with central oversight by a detective inspector. IOM manages approximately 200 offenders. They are selected based on offending rates and patterns. Referrals into IOM come from prison, probation, custody, drugs and alcohol team and third-sector charities.

Durham Constabulary has a fully embedded IOM process. HMIC found officers and partners fully engaged in the IOM process. Working relationships are strong and effective. Officers receive clear direction from senior management about how to work within IOM, and this is reflected in the good understanding officers across the force have of the process.

The force uses multi-agency public protection arrangements (MAPPA), multi-agency risk assessment conferences (MARAC) and the IOM arrangements to prioritise resources and identify and tackle repeat offending. HMIC found evidence that the force also works with partners to address 'high-impact households' and serial perpetrators of violence (SPOVS).

⁴ Durham Constabulary defines people on IOM as offenders who repeatedly commit offences classed as crime and reduction partnerships' priorities across Durham and Darlington, causing harm across our communities, whose behaviour requires significant multi-agency intervention.

Once identified, checks are made to ensure the serial perpetrator is not already being managed via another process (for example, MAPPA, MARAC or IOM). If not, then the perpetrator is managed with a plan to reduce offending, often by adopting a multi-agency problem-solving approach. Activities to deliver the plan are monitored and managed by the force.

Durham Constabulary has strong and effective processes for managing and disrupting organised crime groups (OCGs) through a variety of strategic and tactical meetings. The organised crime group unit has meetings every six weeks with partners to discuss intelligence from other agencies. The force also has an OCG disruption panel to co-ordinate activity to disrupt OCGs.

OCGs are scored in line with national standards and given the most appropriate plan owner based on location and type of activity. This approach ensures staff at all levels of the force are involved in activities to disrupt organised criminality. This is particularly the case at a local level where there is strong and effective involvement of the neighbourhood policing teams in tackling OCGs.

Disruption activity and intelligence are recorded and managed on the force IT system, and the plan owner is also supported in each of the four policing areas by an OCG co-ordinator who gives advice on possible disruption tactics. HMIC found good examples of effective partnership working to disrupt OCG activity. For example, the force worked with the local trading standards department to disrupt an OCG dealing in counterfeit cigarettes. Trading standards carried out surveillance and gathered evidence. The police then obtained and carried out warrants, conducted an investigation and secured convictions against the perpetrators. The police are now progressing recovery of assets through the Proceeds of Crime Act.

Learning from experience

Durham Constabulary has adopted national training standards for all roles. Officers are required to complete a portfolio of skills and maintain annual accreditation. HMIC found that all detectives are either accredited to PIP level 2, or are in the process of being accredited. Specialist staff within public protection were all found to have the additional appropriate skills and accreditation to fulfil their role.

Each of the neighbourhood teams in the force maintains their own problem-solving database; this is accessible and searchable by all staff. Each plan has a complete history of actions undertaken and evaluates what was successful in tackling the problem. The force has effective methods to spread best practice including circulating case studies about innovative problem-solving techniques. Problem-solving events are held with partner agencies to ensure that lessons are learned from experience.

Senior officers provide strong leadership and support for the continuous professional development of staff. The assistant chief officer chairs the force's continuous improvement board. The head of learning and development is responsible for managing and implementing the force's annual training plan. The new anti-social behaviour powers training is being provided to all frontline staff through online packages and face-to-face training with partner agencies. All staff will have received cyber crime training by January 2015, and certain detectives will receive an enhanced 4-day course to better equip them to investigate this type of crime.

The force also has mechanisms in place to learn directly from the experiences of victims. For example, the victim support group has created a toolkit that gives the victim an opportunity to provide feedback across all the criminal justice system. The feedback is forwarded to the group and discussed at monthly meetings to influence changes to victim care services.

Durham Constabulary uses forums such as the critical incident command forum to ensure learning points are captured and policy and practice are changed. An example was provided of a recent chemical suicide case where injury had been caused to the first officer attending due to intoxication by the chemicals. Following a review, the force briefed staff to raise awareness of how to deal safely with such incidents to ensure their safety and protection for the public.

The force has processes in place to monitor and learn from local and national cases and investigations such as the recent Northumbria Police operation into sexual exploitation. The force also briefs staff on lessons learned from Independent Police Complaints Commission and professional standards department investigations through regular bulletins. Operational staff provide evidence to improve the way the force works. For example, an officer completed a full review of the force child safeguarding services. The force consulted Child Exploitation and Online Protection (CEOP) on the procedures and assessed other examples of best practice from around the UK. New processes were then introduced as core business to enhance the service. This example, and others, provide strong evidence of the force approach to learning.

Summary

Outstanding

- Total victim care is the daily business for the entire workforce. This way of working is reinforced by senior leaders, by the way staff talk, and by corporate communication, training and performance management.
- The victim is placed at the centre of any investigation. The force is effective at investigating crime.
- Durham Constabulary has achieved success in reducing re-offending rates.
- Each neighbourhood maintains their own problem-solving database, which is accessible and searchable by all staff. Each plan has a complete history of actions undertaken and what has proven successful.

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

In the past 12 months Durham Constabulary has significantly improved its response to anti-social behaviour. The force has put in place a number of initiatives to capture and act on community feedback. The force uses its independent advisory groups (IAGs) and long-standing community representatives from minority communities to support and enhance engagement with hard-to-reach groups. In a recent initiative, police community support officers (PCSOs) attended different events such as a local pub quiz and parent and toddler groups to speak to people and get feedback on concerns they had. As a result of this and wider community engagement, the force is seeing improvements in satisfaction levels for victims of crime and anti-social behaviour.

The neighbourhood policing teams carry out considerable engagement through a variety of means (police and community together [PACT] meetings, street meetings, area patrols, school visits, meetings with the business community, youth engagement, volunteer sector, park walk and talk, area visual audits, etc.). This allows them to identify what matters to the community and to set their local policing priorities accordingly. Two-thirds of the PACT meetings are chaired by members of the community who are force volunteers. Partner agencies are involved in this engagement, and the force creates joint plans to address the community issues.

The force is effective in providing updates to the community. These are delivered through meetings, one-to-one visits, social media and local press articles. All police constables and PCSOs have been trained to use Facebook and are encouraged to use it to communicate with the local community and to share good news stories.

During the inspection a neighbourhood policing team told us about an operation they were planning. This initiative was modelled on a similar initiative from New York. The planned activity was aimed at the new and returning student population of Durham University. All officers and staff were sent out to engage with the community in a pre-defined geographical area to talk to anyone and everyone they met. The force believes this increased visibility helps officers to identify criminal activity, reassure the public and provide general advice.

Partnership working

Neighbourhood policing teams work closely with a range of partner agencies. HMIC were provided with good examples of multi-agency initiatives to tackle problem tenants and troubled families. The force also uses a range of referral services to support their work, and a restorative approach to prevent re-offending.

This strong partnership approach is underlined by other activity and relationships; housing enforcement officers and local authority staff carry out joint patrols, visits and activities with neighbourhood policing team officers. In addition, the independent advisory group also has local links and there is a direct relationship between members and the local neighbourhood policing inspector.

The force attends all reports of anti-social behaviour and carries out a risk assessment of the victim. Problem-solving plans are created for incidents that involve repeat or vulnerable victims, locations or offenders. These plans are monitored by the neighbourhood policing team supervisors. All victim contact is reviewed on a weekly basis.

Durham Constabulary uses a wide range of tactics (for example, closure orders, anti-social behaviour injunctions and exclusion orders) to prevent anti-social behaviour. It uses Section 27 notices (a police power to direct a person to leave a specified area) to intervene at an early stage and to prevent issues such as alcohol misuse in town centres escalating into larger disturbances. The force has a clear commitment to updating its communities on the outcomes of activity undertaken.

Improving services to the public

In the 12 months to March 2014, Durham Constabulary recorded 29,439 incidents of anti-social behaviour. This is a reduction of 4 percent against the previous 12 months.

HMIC found a clear commitment from all the staff within Durham Constabulary to dealing with 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. It is clear that this restorative approach now underpins the force approach to offending. The force has developed a range of restorative approaches and has trained over 2,000 officers and staff. Officers meet with victims and identify their wishes. Trained staff then use a restorative approach to work with the victim and offender. This is a significant move away from the traditional prosecution-based approach used by most police forces.

The force and its partners focus on preventing re-offending through education. This is achieved through a range of diversionary and educational initiatives. An example was given of a pedal cycle being taken from a school by children. They were identified and, working with the school, the children who took the pedal cycle washed all the other cycles at the school. A PCSO attended and protectively marked up all the pedal cycles, therefore combining restorative justice with crime prevention.

Senior leaders promote the use of restorative approaches, with an expectation that officers will carry out at least one restorative approach per month. The force will only use this approach in cases of sexual offending or domestic abuse after positive action has been taken to deal with the vulnerability of the victim. Once this vulnerability has been dealt with, a restorative outcome may be considered but only on the authority of senior officers.

Summary

Outstanding

- The force is successfully tackling anti-social behaviour through community engagement and understanding the causes of offending.
- The force uses an approach known as 'restorative justice' effectively to tackle anti-social behaviour and prevent crime.
- Senior leaders place a strong emphasis on the importance of tackling anti-social behaviour, which is clearly recognised by staff and partners alike.
- Partnership working for tackling anti-social behaviour is embedded and effective. The force works well with local authority partners in understanding local anti-social behaviour concerns and finding solutions.

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.