



Inspecting policing
in the **public interest**

Crime inspection 2014

Gloucestershire Police

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How effective is the force at cutting crime?

Overall summary

Gloucestershire Constabulary is effective at preventing crime and reducing offending. The rate of overall crime has reduced more in Gloucestershire than in England and Wales as a whole over the last four years.

The constabulary has recognised the importance of becoming more victim-centred in the way it delivers policing. It has made some good progress and we found some areas of good and improving victim care; although there is still room for improvement and victim satisfaction levels are among the lowest of all forces.

HMIC found that the quality of Gloucestershire Constabulary's crime investigation is inconsistent. There are examples of good investigations with an increasing focus on vulnerable victims and better management of the risks they face. But overall the constabulary needs to improve its approach to investigations to be confident that they are consistently undertaken to a high standard.

Gloucestershire Constabulary is effective in working with partners to understand and address local community anti-social behaviour concerns. The rate of anti-social behaviour is higher than that in England and Wales but we found that the constabulary makes good use of the full range of tactics and powers available to prevent and deal with anti-social behaviour.

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 Gloucestershire 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

Leaders and staff at all levels demonstrate a commitment to prevent and reduce crime using a broad range of tactics. The constabulary has carried out an assessment of the demand, threat, risk, and harm that it faces. HMIC found that well-established partnerships are having a positive impact on crime and anti-social behaviour.

The constabulary is committed to crime prevention activity, working with communities to reduce offending, and recognising how this contributes to public confidence. For most types of crime Gloucestershire remains a comparatively safe place although Gloucestershire's dwelling burglary rate is higher than the average for England and Wales. There has been a bigger reduction in crime in Gloucestershire over the last year than that seen across England and Wales as a whole.

How effective is the force at investigating offending?

Requires improvement

HMIC found that the quality of Gloucestershire Constabulary's crime investigation is inconsistent. There is room for improvement in the levels of skills and training for staff involved in investigations. We also found that the quality of supervision is inconsistent. This means that the constabulary may be missing opportunities to solve crimes and bring offenders to justice.

Gloucestershire Constabulary has recognised the importance of becoming more victim-centred in the way it provides policing services. It has made some progress and it has invested in new procedures and training for staff to help them better identify vulnerable victims at the first point of contact. HMIC found some areas of good and improving practice in victim care. However there is still room

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

Good

The rate of incidents of anti-social behaviour for Gloucestershire is higher than that for England and Wales and the county has seen an increase in the last 12 months, whereas incident numbers have been declining in most force areas.

Strong and constructive partnerships, both statutory and voluntary, focus on tackling anti-social behaviour. The dedicated neighbourhood policing teams aligned to local council areas allow the constabulary to link up with partners to better understand local community concerns and find joined-up solutions.

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

Good

Gloucestershire Constabulary provides staff with appropriate learning and development to improve their ability to prevent and reduce crime. It is improving the way it identifies risks to victims and it now prioritises those people at greatest risk of harm.

How effective is the force at investigating offending?

Requires improvement

for improvement for this to be fully translated into all operational activity. Victim satisfaction levels remain lower here than those of most other forces.

The constabulary has strong partnership arrangements in place for managing the most prolific offenders who pose a risk to the public. It has also responded quickly and decisively to address the weaknesses identified in our domestic abuse inspection in 2013. The introduction of new specialist teams should provide an improved approach to investigations and additional focus on victims of sexual exploitation, serious sexual offences and domestic abuse.

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

Good

Gloucestershire Constabulary makes good use of available legislation and a range of diversionary and enforcement tactics reflecting community priorities, for example its use of restorative justice. The constabulary needs to do more to understand what works in tackling anti-social behaviour and share evaluated results widely so that all can learn from good practice.

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 focussed 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 the how the leadership of the constabulary deploys its resources to reduce the volume of crimes being committed, maximise the quality of victim contact, and ensure that the constabulary focuses on community priorities whilst mitigating national threats.

We looked at how the constabulary 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.

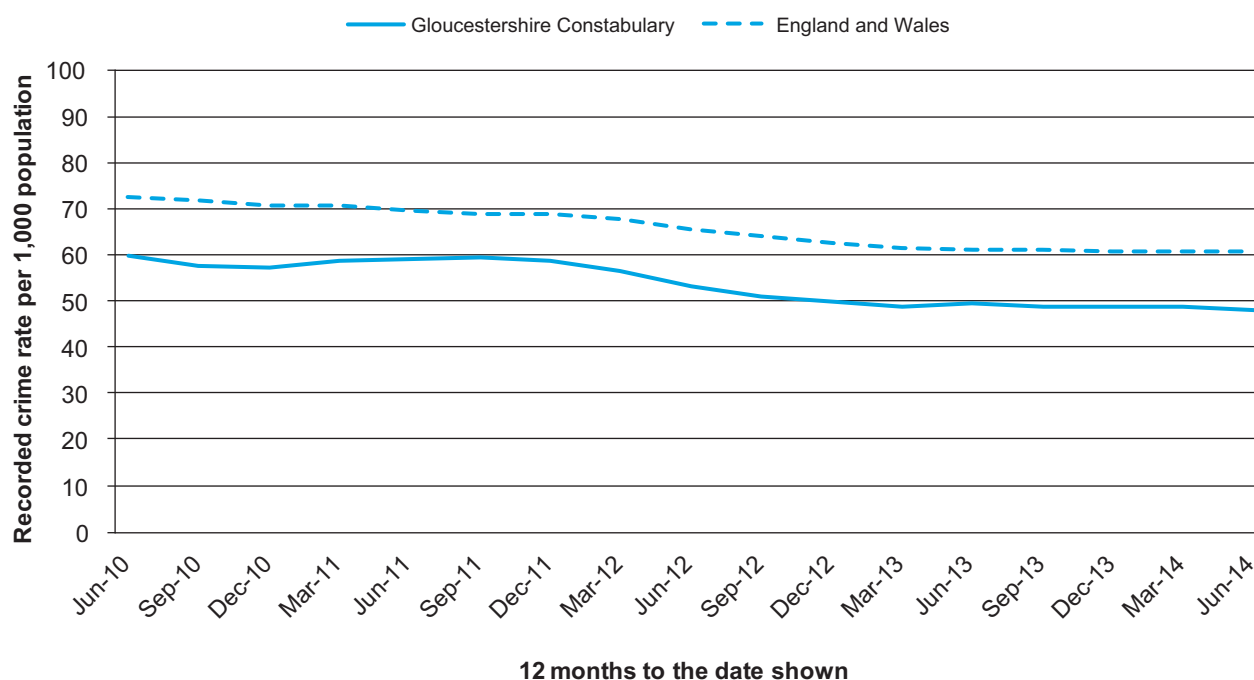
Crime

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 20 percent in Gloucestershire 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 18 percent in Gloucestershire, 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 Gloucestershire reduced 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 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 Gloucestershire (per 1,000 population) compared with the rest of England and Wales.

12 months to June 2014	Gloucestershire Constabulary rate (per 1,000 population)	England and Wales total rate (per 1,000 population)
Crime excluding fraud	47.9	60.7
Victim-based crime	44.1	53.9
Sexual offences	1.0	1.2
Violence with injury	4.5	5.9
Burglary in a dwelling*	9.4	8.9
Anti-social behaviour incidents*	42.3	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.

Gloucestershire's detection rate (for crimes excluding fraud) for the 12 months to the end of March 2014 was 23 percent, which was lower 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

The approach taken by Gloucestershire Constabulary to identify policing priorities is robust. It has carried out a full assessment of the threat, risk, and harm that it faces, drawing on a range of information and intelligence. Strategic priorities include domestic abuse, dwelling burglary, and tackling anti-social behaviour during the large scale badger cull (Operation Themis). The constabulary is committed to preventing crime and working with communities. The police and crime plan has six priorities, each one led by senior staff either from the constabulary, local authority, fire service or a local charity. The constabulary has a significant role in each priority but shares its responsibilities with other partner organisations.

The constabulary has identified risks to victims and the wider community and has aligned resource to priorities. The constabulary is able to recognise emerging threats at a strategic level with priorities being reviewed quarterly with a change of emphasis as required. Current proposed priorities include broader safeguarding, an improvement in victim satisfaction and tackling dangerous drugs networks. The force consulted widely with the public prior to, and after Operation Themis, understanding the contribution this makes to public confidence. High burglary rates are still a problem; the constabulary believes this is predominantly in and around Cheltenham. The constabulary recognises reducing burglary is a priority but it needs a better understanding of why this type of crime has increased and what tactics it should use to reduce levels of burglary, drawing on evidence of what works from other forces.

Quality of victim contact

Gloucestershire Constabulary has put the victim at the centre of the call handling and investigation processes with the introduction, in June 2014, of the Incident Assessment Unit – this is designed to immediately assess threat and vulnerability and identify the appropriate level of police action. It has introduced specialist teams to investigate serious sexual offences, child sexual exploitation, and domestic abuse. It has strong relationships with partners and is improving services for victims.

The constabulary has provided a week's 'catch and convict' training course for some qualified officers and cyber-crime training for all officers. It has recognised that both investigations, and the way victims are looked after, need improvement. As a consequence, it is monitoring closely the timeliness and quality of case files, and improved witness care. Reviews of domestic abuse interviews have been conducted, and the lessons learned from our domestic abuse inspection in 2013 have been communicated widely to staff. These are all good examples of the constabulary's commitment to continuous improvement.

However, despite these and other initiatives some officers are failing to provide a consistently high quality of service to the public. Results of surveys and feedback from some victim support services confirmed the view of HMIC that officers and staff are not yet providing sufficient support for victims of crime consistently, particularly in the area of keeping them informed.

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, the Gloucestershire had a victim satisfaction rate of 82.3 percent (± 1.7 percent) which is lower than the satisfaction rate in England and Wales of 85.0 percent (± 0.2 percent). Its current rate is broadly in line with the 80.8 percent (± 1.8 percent) recorded for Gloucestershire in the previous year.

Use of police tactics

The constabulary has a comprehensive process for assigning tasks which directs how resources are allocated to tackle crime and prevent offending. This provides clear direction and focus of the policing priorities and any current or emerging threats and risks identified. Dwelling burglary is an enduring problem in Gloucestershire with levels higher than those seen in England and Wales. The problem is currently subject to a detailed improvement plan. This plan sets out the broad range of tactics the constabulary will now use to tackle the problem. These include: ensuring that occupiers of dwellings in the vicinity of a burglary are spoken to and advised that a burglary has occurred with prevention advice given; increased publicity and media campaigns; free distribution of 'Smartwater' (a forensic traceable liquid to mark property which helps deter and detect crime) to 1,000 households; lock and key initiatives and targeting of offenders through the integrated offender management process.

HMIC found evidence of initiatives to reduce violent crime and anti-social behaviour caused by the night time economy in Cheltenham, and constructive partnerships involved in preventative activity, making use of diversionary tactics. The Aston project was a good example of this with children involved in crime being given community tasks in return for 'credits' which could be used for activities. Restorative justice is also widely and effectively used where appropriate to avoid the criminalisation of young people at an early stage.

The constabulary works well with a range of partners to reduce the risks of harm to those most vulnerable. These include: a recent campaign with 16 days of action in relation to domestic abuse and sexual violence; the sexual assault referral centre providing training for new officers to raise awareness of the needs of vulnerable victims; and a recent, well-received open day at the crown court where police and partners engaged with the public to provide a better understanding of how the criminal justice system works for victims and witnesses. Partners that were spoken to stated that relationships with the police have been strengthened with the advent of multi-agency safeguarding hubs where a range of partners and the police are working together in one building, adjacent to police headquarters.

HMIC also found investigators understand the benefits of preventing further offences, and are using Domestic Violence Protection Orders and Sexual Offences Prevention Orders to minimise contact between offenders and potential victims. Gloucestershire Constabulary has processes in place to identify and manage organised crime groups. The main responsibility for these processes is held centrally, in an organised crime unit. Inspectors hold regular discussions and prioritise activity aimed at disrupting these groups, including some from outside Gloucestershire which operate within the county.

Partnership working and information sharing

The constabulary has good relationships with a wide range of partners, working closely with the sexual assault referral centre (SARC), Gloucestershire domestic abuse support services, independent sexual violence advisors and independent domestic violence advisors. The importance of these partnerships is consistently communicated by senior leaders, partners, and the office of the police and crime commissioner. The constabulary provides the SARC with access to its constabulary information systems improving communication between police and partners and the service provided to victims.

HMIC found some evidence that the constabulary identifies and tackles hidden and unreported crime. An example of this is through their relationship with the Gloucestershire sexual assault referral centre where there is close liaison regarding trends and provision of information on unreported offences and offenders. The constabulary has also raised awareness amongst staff of other under-reported crime types by providing training on the subjects of female genital mutilation, hate crime, and homophobia. A freephone number has also been provided for members of the public wishing to report hate crime anonymously. Officers spoken to also stated awareness has been raised in relation to modern slavery at events like the Cheltenham festival.

The constabulary has taken a bold approach in one crime reduction partnership in particular - designed to divert young people from a life of crime. This has involved the use of convicted lifetime criminals working with officers to engage with young children to divert them from crime and consider alternative lifestyles. This initiative was shortlisted for a Nolan Trust Award and is indicative of the innovative approach taken by the Gloucestershire Constabulary to work with others to reduce and prevent crime.

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.

As a result of its initial inspection, HMIC had significant concerns about Gloucestershire Constabulary's ability to deal consistently and appropriately with victims of domestic abuse and to reduce the risk of harm to them.

The constabulary developed a detailed action plan in response to this report and was re-inspected in June 2014. This inspection found clear progress had been made in identifying risk and keeping victims safe

The crime inspection provided us with a further opportunity to test whether changes in the force's approach to domestic abuse were continuing to improve the constabulary's response to domestic abuse.

During the crime inspection, we found evidence that reinforced the findings of the June 2014 re-inspection, and have concluded that domestic abuse is a priority for Gloucestershire Constabulary. The constabulary has invested a considerable amount of time and resource over a short period to improve the way they protect victims of domestic abuse. The constabulary has understood the areas of concern highlighted by the domestic abuse inspection and put measures in place to improve service delivery to victims and make people safer. The identification of victims, particularly vulnerable and repeat victims, has improved, and there is a greater understanding of the need to safeguard victims. There has been particular progress with frontline officers and staff who provide the initial response to victims of domestic abuse.

Summary

Good

- Leaders and staff at all levels demonstrate a commitment to prevent and reduce crime using a broad range of tactics. The constabulary has carried out an assessment of the demand, threat, risk, and harm that it faces. HMIC found that well-established partnerships are having a positive impact on crime and anti-social behaviour.
- The constabulary is committed to crime prevention activity, working with communities to reduce offending, and recognising how this contributes to public confidence. For most types of crime Gloucestershire remains a comparatively safe place although Gloucestershire's dwelling burglary rate is higher than that of England and Wales. There has been a bigger reduction in crime in Gloucestershire over the last year than that seen across England and Wales as a whole.
- Gloucestershire Constabulary provides staff with appropriate learning and development to improve their ability to prevent and reduce crime. It is improving the way it identifies risks to victims and it now prioritises those people at greatest risk of harm.

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

Gloucestershire Constabulary has recognised it needs to improve its identification of those who are vulnerable. It has recently trained call handlers in the use of a new set of questions which helps them identify repeat victims and those most at risk from harm, at the first point of contact. The Incident Assessment Unit (IAU), also housed within the control room, is designed to identify if a caller is vulnerable and may need an enhanced level of service from the police and partners. Additionally, by resolving some calls over the phone in the IAU, frontline officers are able to respond promptly to more urgent calls, and focus on victims that need their services most. This closer alignment of resource to objectives is a positive step although the assessment of vulnerability by this unit does not extend to 999 calls which is an area of risk for the constabulary. HMIC also found evidence that IAU staff were still sending officers to incidents after they had been satisfactorily resolved over the phone. If the processes implemented are not fully adopted by staff there is a danger that the IAU will have introduced an additional layer of call handling.

HMIC found that the constabulary demonstrated a real commitment to a victim-centred approach. For example, it has undertaken an assessment of officers' knowledge of the Code of Practice for Victims of Crime, and provided additional training to officers and control room staff. The constabulary has also established a group to ensure compliance, provide an enhanced victim support service, and monitor whether officers have given victims the opportunity to provide victims' personal statements.¹

Despite provision of training and positive reviews by partners about the constabulary's commitment to victims, there is still a lack of consistency in the way officers provide support. There is a particular weakness in keeping victims informed as their case progresses. While senior leaders are committed to a victim-centred approach, the message has not consistently reached the front line. This means that victims of crime are not getting updates they are entitled to, with repeat victims not consistently getting the enhanced support they need. Other than in relation to domestic abuse, we found some officers do not understand the definitions of repeat victims, and are unaware of the enhanced entitlements within the Code of Practice for Victims of Crime.

¹ These are statements in which victims can explain such things as the trauma they have suffered or the psychological impact of being victimised.

Investigation

HMIC found that the quality of Gloucestershire Constabulary's crime investigations is inconsistent. There is no dedicated forensic resource management team and the 18 scenes of crime officers (SOCOs) are responsible for deciding which scenes to attend, although it is acknowledged that some force priorities help staff decide which incidents to attend. We found that some SOCOs have not received refresher training since their initial course on joining the constabulary. This needs to be addressed to ensure that staff have the necessary skills and up to date knowledge to complete their work to a high standard. Although there have been recent improvements, the constabulary's own data shows that the outcome rate for burglary, (where the offender has been identified and dealt with) has been low from April-July 2014 at only 15.1 percent.

Currently, the constabulary only has a dedicated burglary team in Cheltenham (Operation Spa). This has been running for about three years. HMIC found officers are enthusiastic and committed but teams are sometimes under-resourced and many officers lack accredited investigative skills. Burglaries outside Cheltenham are tackled by local policing and neighbourhood teams with occasional assistance from the Force Crime Team; although the majority of these officers are also not accredited. HMIC learnt that the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) leadership does not have oversight of burglaries, which is unusual, and there is a lack of detailed expert supervision. This means that investigators may not receive appropriate guidance and direction on tactics and procedures which could improve the outcome of the investigation.

As part of this inspection, HMIC reviewed a sample of recent investigation files. We found that a small sample of investigations into assaults also had inconsistent supervision, with not all identifiable enquiries being completed. Investigators from the CID and specialist teams dealing with more serious crime are subject to closer supervision, with case reviews being conducted appropriately. The screening of crime types is consistent. Additionally, on most occasions a duty CID supervisor is called by the control room to assess the response to serious crimes with attendance of CID officers from the outset where appropriate. This approach maximises initial evidence gathering opportunities.

HMIC found the constabulary uses a broad range of tactics from diversionary through to covert investigative activities: for example, increased use of automatic number plate recognition systems, and specialist officers being used to investigate serious crime and support victims of serious sexual offences.

Tackling repeat and prolific offenders

The constabulary has strong partnership arrangements in place for managing the most prolific offenders who pose a risk to the public. The constabulary recognises that preventing these people re-offending requires a joined-up approach from all partners locally. This integrated offender management approach (IOM) has county-wide governance through a quarterly strategic meeting which is attended by the office of the police and crime commissioner and a range of other partners. A monthly meeting makes decisions on who to include in the IOM programme. This is based on new referrals received from all partner agencies and the police. These decisions are made by the joint partnership management team comprising the police, probation service, drugs agencies and the prison service.² As of 31 July 2014 the constabulary had 50 offenders under integrated offender management.

The IOM is staffed by a civilian manager and five staff who are co-located and work closely with drug partnership workers, and housing officers. Probation officers are engaged in the structure but are not co-located. There are good links with local neighbourhood officers who refer people to the scheme if they believe them to be an emerging threat. Intelligence on this group of offenders is provided to local officers; although, the offenders are managed on a standalone IT system which is only accessible to those in the unit. The constabulary should adapt this to enable better sharing of information.

Learning from experience

HMIC is encouraged by Gloucestershire's approach to learning. Strong progress has been made to improve how the constabulary tackles vulnerability and domestic abuse following HMIC's inspection report in 2013. The constabulary has acted quickly to implement change: for example, there have been audits of files to understand if the decisions on whether or not to prosecute have been appropriate, and why cases have not progressed; interviews have been dip sampled to assess the quality; the constabulary has reviewed how custody officers make decisions and how this affects outcomes; and officers have received extra investigative training which includes understanding the importance of gathering additional evidence in the event of a victim being unable to attend court.

Across all volume crime the 'catch and convict' and 'achieving best evidence' training packages that are being provided to all staff are good examples of improvements being made.

² There is no standard national definition of who should be considered for integrated offender management arrangements. Gloucestershire Constabulary decides who needs to be managed under these arrangements using its own scoring system.

As part of wider changes to the way investigations are completed, specialist departments have been created and resourced by trained investigators to protect those most at risk of harm. The constabulary plans to introduce teams to investigate rape, sexual exploitation of children, domestic abuse and a major crime department to investigate homicide. In addition, accredited investigators have been put in the control room to provide an enhanced service for vulnerable people. At this time HMIC cannot make an assessment of whether these measures have improved the effectiveness of investigations but applauds the constabulary's desire to do so.

The constabulary is aware it needs to do more to learn what works and is starting to explore evidence-based approaches, including using a service improvement team that seeks feedback from the community. A recent review of stop and search powers included inviting members of the public to accompany officers to witness the use of these powers to provide confidence and reassurance that the police use their powers appropriately. This initiative has resulted in fewer complaints being received from the community. The chief constable and the police and crime commissioner also hold online discussions and have hosted a webcast to address community concerns.

Recommendations

- Within three months Gloucestershire Constabulary should develop and commence the implementation of an action plan to improve the quality of investigations which will ensure that:
 - (a) investigating officers and police staff are aware of the standard required and have the professional skills and expertise to fulfil their duties;
 - (b) supervisors know what is expected of them in driving up standards;
 - (c) the right resources are targeted in the right areas; and
 - (d) there is appropriate monitoring and oversight of investigative quality and timeliness.
- Within three months Gloucestershire Constabulary should develop and commence the implementation of an action plan to improve the quality of victim service and contact which will ensure that:
 - (a) investigating officers and police staff are aware of the standards required within the Code of Practice for Victims of Crime and have the professional skills and knowledge to fulfil their duties;
 - (b) supervisors know what is expected of them in driving up standards;
 - (c) there is appropriate monitoring and oversight of quality and timeliness of victim service and contact; and

(d) feedback from victims is used to improve the service provided.

- Within three months Gloucestershire Constabulary should review the process for prioritising the deployment of crime scene investigators and implement a plan to ensure this is aligned to priorities. In addition by September 2015 the constabulary should ensure that crime scene investigators have the appropriate learning and development to fulfil their duties.
- Within three months Gloucestershire Constabulary should review the process for investigating and supervising burglary dwelling offences and ensure that appropriately trained and accredited staff are being used effectively. By March 2015 the constabulary should implement any changes required.
- Within three months Gloucestershire Constabulary should review the operation of the Incident Assessment Unit in relation to the process of assessment of calls for service and the deployment of staff. By March 2015 the constabulary should implement any changes required.

Summary

Requires improvement

- HMIC found that the quality of Gloucestershire Constabulary's crime investigation is inconsistent. There is room for improvement in the levels of skills and training for staff involved in investigations. We also found that the quality of supervision is inconsistent. This means that the constabulary may be missing opportunities to solve crimes and bring offenders to justice.
- Gloucestershire Constabulary has recognised the importance of becoming more victim-centred in the way it provides policing services. It has made some progress, it has invested in new procedures and training for staff to help them better identify vulnerable victims at the first point of contact. HMIC found some areas of good and improving practice in victim care. However there is still room for improvement for this to be fully translated into all operational activity. Victim satisfaction levels remain lower here than those of most other forces.
- The constabulary has strong partnership arrangements in place for managing the most prolific offenders who pose a risk to the public. It has also responded quickly and decisively to address the weaknesses identified in our domestic abuse inspection in 2013. The introduction of new specialist teams should provide an improved approach to investigations and additional focus on victims of sexual exploitation, serious sexual offences and domestic abuse.

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

Gloucestershire Constabulary remains committed to the value of neighbourhood policing teams and there are strong partnerships with statutory and voluntary agencies, focused on tackling anti-social behaviour and working closely to accurately identify risks and provide high standards of care to victims. A good example of this is Project Solace where police officers are co-located with housing providers and provide a joint response to recurring anti-social behaviour, and tackling the problems that cause the most harm to communities. This, and other initiatives, was highly praised by partners.

Despite financial constraints over recent years, Gloucestershire has protected its frontline neighbourhood police teams from cuts, as far as possible. The presence of dedicated teams aligned to six local authority areas allows them to problem-solve with partners on community priorities. They are supported by special constabulary-led initiatives like Operation Focus that concentrate on reducing anti-social behaviour. The neighbourhood teams each have a good understanding of their local community concerns and priorities, engaging well with local people through local forums where issues are discussed and actions agreed and followed up. Neighbourhood officers make good use of social media and attend a wide variety of community meetings. These are used as opportunities to ensure officers are responding to the needs of the community and communicating results of police activity to them.

Partnership working

The constabulary works in partnership on a range of diversionary initiatives including the Avenger Task Force, which focuses on diverting young people from gang crime. This incorporates different approaches - one of which uses lifetime offenders mentoring young people away from crime and providing a sanitised understanding of the realities of prison life – this particular project was the winner of an award from the Howard League for Penal Reform, youth diversion category. The Aston Project in Cheltenham similarly diverts young people from offending and deters anti-social behaviour - children are assessed and can engage on tasks and community work to earn credits for organised trips. Over 100 children have been involved in the project since 2011 and the constabulary is in the process of evaluating it with a view to further enhancement. An evaluation of its effectiveness would be useful to assess whether this should be introduced in other parts of the county.

HMIC found that the constabulary identifies the risks of anti-social behaviour escalating, and is working closely with its partners across the county to assess risks to victims. The Incident Assessment Unit carries out an assessment of the risks when incidents are first reported to the police to help officers recognise whether anti-social behaviour may escalate into sustained abuse and serious crime. The constabulary has also trained some of its PCSOs as mediators, who can use these skills to help resolve complex neighbourhood disputes, and prevent their escalation. There is also CID involvement where anti-social behaviour is likely to lead to an escalation in risk - recent examples include investigating graffiti and damage to a mosque, and the defacing of a war memorial.

Improving services to the public

The rate of anti-social behaviour for Gloucestershire is higher than that for England and Wales and the county has seen an increase in the last 12 months, whereas incident numbers have been declining in most force areas. In the year to March 2014, Gloucestershire Constabulary recorded 25,647 incidents of anti social behaviour. This is an increase of 3 percent against the previous 12 months.

The constabulary has a strong commitment to tackling anti-social behaviour. It understands areas of risk and, in partnership with Restorative Justice Gloucestershire (a group of statutory and voluntary partners), is developing classroom-based training to educate all frontline staff on how to use the new powers contained within the Anti-social Behaviour Policing and Crime Act 2014. Restorative justice is widely used in Gloucestershire as an alternative to court prosecutions. This is a process where all the parties involved in a particular incident come together to resolve collectively how to deal with it. When used appropriately, restorative justice can provide a better solution to tackling low-level offending, particularly for young people. The constabulary reports that over 80 restorative justice disposals are completed every month, with a discernible shift in attitude of officers towards an approach that aims to reduce the frequency and costs of reoffending. Recent initiatives also include the introduction of a dedicated ethnic minority officer and a PCSO receiving funding to learn Polish.

The constabulary policed the protest against the badger cull between July and December 2013 under Operation Themis. This extensive cull received national attention resulting in widespread media interest, considerable increases in anti-social behaviour, and disturbance to local residents. The constabulary learned lessons from this and has been proactive, engaging widely with the community to listen to their concerns and setting up a multi-agency group of people affected by the cull. This meets monthly, and has introduced measures to reduce the impact on residents and tackle this strategic priority.

HMIC found that although there are many examples of good practice and constructive partnerships, the constabulary does not systematically measure the effectiveness of its interventions or anti-social behaviour reduction schemes. Whilst there are good examples of mechanisms used to seek feedback and report back to the community on what has been done, supervisors or senior leaders do not actively seek information or analyse data on the impact when police powers have been used. With no central database to record activities being carried out within neighbourhood teams, this means the constabulary may be missing opportunities to share learning and good practice and may be repeating activities that are not effective.

Recommendations

- Within six months Gloucestershire Constabulary should ensure that there are methods in place to:
 - (a) systematically review and evaluate the benefits from both current tactics and new crime fighting and anti-social behaviour initiatives;
 - (b) systematically capture learning and good practice in crime prevention and local problem solving;
 - (c) share learning and good practice across the constabulary.

Summary

Good

- The rate of incidents of anti-social behaviour for Gloucestershire is higher than that for England and Wales and the county has seen an increase in the last 12 months, whereas incident numbers have been declining in most force areas. Strong and constructive partnerships, both statutory and voluntary, focus on tackling anti-social behaviour. The dedicated neighbourhood policing teams aligned to local council areas allow the constabulary to link up with partners to better understand local community concerns and find joined-up solutions.
- Gloucestershire Constabulary makes good use of available legislation and a range of diversionary and enforcement tactics reflecting community priorities, for example its use of restorative justice. The constabulary needs to do more to understand what works in tackling anti-social behaviour and share evaluated results widely so that all can learn from good practice.

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.