



Inspecting policing
in the public interest

Crime inspection 2014

Gwent Police

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How effective is the force at cutting crime?

Overall summary

HMIC is concerned that Gwent Police is not as effective as it needs to be at cutting crime and anti-social behaviour. After a number of years of reducing crime, levels of recorded crime and anti-social behaviour have increased in Gwent over the past year. Recorded crime and anti-social behaviour are both now higher in Gwent than for England and Wales as a whole.

Victim satisfaction with police services in Gwent is one of the lowest of all forces in England and Wales. We found some pockets of good practice where there is a strong victim focus and where the force works innovatively with local partners to reduce crime, prevent re-offending and protect victims. Overall, however, a number of important areas for improvement have been identified.

In addition to the recommendations in this report, HMIC will re-visit Gwent by May 2015 to undertake a diagnostic inspection. This inspection will utilise external expertise, with the aim of identifying any further measures to assist the senior leadership of Gwent Police to improve the service it delivers.

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 Gwent Police'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?

Requires improvement

Reducing and preventing crime are clear priorities for both the police and crime commissioner and the force. Reported crime has reduced by 28% in Gwent over the last four years, although there has been an increase in the crime rate over the last year. Crime rates are higher in Gwent than the overall rate for England and Wales.

The quality of victim contact remains a real concern in Gwent. The force has one of the lowest victim satisfaction ratings of all forces in England and Wales. Despite efforts to date the force has been unable to improve the situation. In fact, victim satisfaction is continuing to decline according to the force's own data. The force is aware of the urgent need to improve this position and shortly will be launching an initiative that aims to tackle it.

How effective is the force at investigating offending?

Requires improvement

The force recognises the importance of assessing the risks faced by victims and providing a level of service that is appropriate. However, in practice there are serious inconsistencies in the quality of victim risk assessment and the force's ability to identify victims who are particularly vulnerable. This means that they may not be getting the level of service they need from the police.

Specialist teams within the force adopt a highly victim-centred approach, for example the domestic abuse co-ordination team and the onyx team, which deals with serious sexual assaults. It is evident that these teams place the victim at the heart of everything they do, and provide good safeguarding for victims.

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

Requires improvement

Reducing anti-social behaviour is an explicit priority for Gwent Police and there is clear leadership as to its importance in local policing. However, the incidence of anti-social behaviour (per 1,000 population) is higher in Gwent than the rate for England and Wales and there has been an increase in the number of anti-social behaviour incidents in the last 12 months. The force is not clear as to the reasons behind this increase.

Gwent Police continues to invest resource into dealing with anti-social behaviour and works effectively in partnership with local authorities and other agencies to deal with anti-social behaviour.

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

Requires improvement

The force has made some good progress in measuring and understanding the nature of demand for its services which means that it is better placed than it was to target resources at the areas of greatest threat and risk. However, the quality and reliability of information are hampering the force's ability to measure the outcomes of its work and plan effectively for the future.

How effective is the force at investigating offending?

Requires improvement

HMIC found some serious weaknesses in the quality and consistency of investigations in Gwent. There is limited supervision and oversight of investigations. Of particular concern are new arrangements for investigating cases of domestic abuse. These have created risks that victims may not be getting the level of service they need, and offenders may not be brought to justice as effectively as possible.

The force is starting to tackle so-called hidden crimes. For example, there has been some recent positive work to investigate human trafficking and child sexual exploitation. Gwent Police works well with partners on its integrated offender management programme, which is well-resourced and well-managed.

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

Requires improvement

There are weaknesses in the force's ability to identify at the first point of contact those victims of anti-social behaviour who may be vulnerable or have been a previous victim. This means that these victims may not be getting the enhanced level of service they need.

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 the 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.

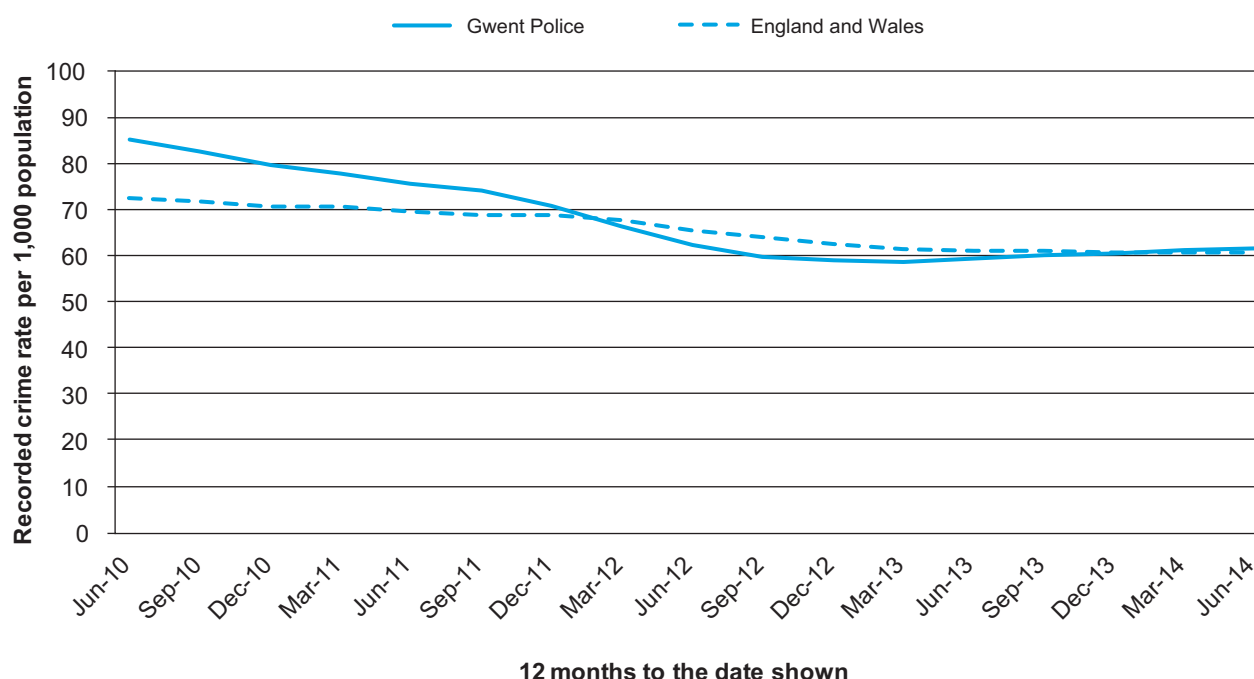
Crime

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 28 percent in Gwent 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 29 percent in Gwent, 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 Gwent increased by 4 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 Gwent (per 1,000 population) compared with the rest of England and Wales.

12 months to June 2014	Gwent Police rate (per 1,000 population)	England and Wales total rate (per 1,000 population)
Crime excluding fraud	61.7	60.7
Victim-based crime	54.7	53.9
Sexual offences	1.1	1.2
Violence with injury	6.3	5.9
Burglary in a dwelling*	7.5	8.9
Anti-social behaviour incidents*	46.2	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.

Gwent's detection rate (for crimes excluding fraud) for the 12 months to the end of March 2014 was 28 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

Reducing and preventing crime are clear priorities for the police and crime commissioner and for the force, as is the priority to provide the best quality service available. The force carries out an annual assessment of current and future threats and risks facing communities in Gwent, based on its own analysis of local, regional and national issues. It uses this assessment to develop its control strategy which drives police activity. The analysis is shared with the police and crime commissioner and informs his strategies. The assessment is reviewed and refreshed quarterly by the force in consultation with the police and crime commissioner's office.

Quality of victim contact

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, Gwent Police had a victim satisfaction rate of 78.1 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 80.0 percent (± 1.8 percent) recorded for Gwent in the previous year.

The force is aware of the need to make significant improvements in the quality of victim contact. It has been working for some time to understand the reasons behind the dissatisfaction, and address them. Despite this work, satisfaction levels fell again last year and are continuing to fall according to the force's own figures which, at the time of inspection, showed satisfaction levels at 78 percent.

In common with other forces, Gwent Police routinely surveys people who have used its services to gather feedback on their experiences and learn lessons from this information. The force has found that one of the most frequent causes of dissatisfaction among victims is the failure of the police to maintain good communication during the course of an investigation and keep the victim updated on progress. To gain a deeper insight, the force recently supported further research known as Project Undivided which considers the victim's journey through the whole criminal justice process. Its findings show that in general people are complimentary about the quality of initial contact with the police in Gwent, but once again are dissatisfied with updates and contact throughout the investigation. HMIC did find that there are pockets of good practice where a strong victim focus is evident. For example, trained sexual offences liaison officers are allocated to victims of serious sexual assaults. Voluntary sector partners who support victims of sexual offences told us that in general the quality of victim care from the police is very good. However, an example was highlighted to HMIC of an occasion when a victim of a serious offence was kept waiting for two

months without being updated on the progress of the investigation. The force is planning to launch an initiative at the end of October 2014 known as Gwent Cares, which will be led by an assistant chief constable and is aimed at improving victim satisfaction. Gwent Cares will provide a clear framework for staff, setting out what is the required standard of victim contact.

In addition the police and crime commissioner is preparing to set up a 'victim's hub', which will bring together a range of agencies and organisations providing support to victims to enable them to work more efficiently and effectively for victims of crime. It is expected to be operational by April 2015.

Use of police tactics

Gwent Police uses a broad range of tactics to prevent crime. HMIC found that there is good multi-agency partnership working across local policing units at the operational level, producing some effective local projects and initiatives. The force has been at the forefront of a national campaign to reduce metal theft, and was the first force to use the 'no cash for payment' scheme at scrap metal dealers. Its efforts have led to a significant reduction in this type of crime.

Gwent Police actively encourages people to join its online watch link (OWL). It is used not only to complement the neighbourhood watch schemes, but also to provide regular two-way communication with residents and their local police teams, and to disseminate important crime prevention and community safety messages. The force has over 45,000 residents using OWL, which represents around one in five households in Gwent.

The force has recently made good progress in understanding and analysing demand for its services. This means that it should be better placed to ensure that resources can be targeted at areas of greatest threat and risk. However, HMIC found that there is room for improvement in the quality and reliability of the information on police systems on which the force is basing its assessment of future threats and risks. This appears to stem from a migration to a new IT platform onto which data inputting is incomplete or inaccurate. This places an additional burden on analysts and makes accurate information retrieval uncertain.

Partnership working and information sharing

There is some good and effective partnership working to protect victims and prevent offending. Partnership work and information sharing are particularly strong in the context of domestic abuse. The force has a dedicated team of specialist officers which reviews every domestic abuse incident, and considers the risks faced by the victim. Details of each case are circulated on a daily basis to all relevant partners and there is a daily telephone

conference between the police and partners to agree on a joint approach to supporting and protecting victims, and any children in the families who may be affected. The cases which are assessed as highest-risk are also discussed at a formal monthly multi-agency risk assessment conference (MARAC) which is a wider partnership meeting. In the 12 months to 31 July 2014 Gwent Police presented 970 cases to a MARAC.

Another good example of strategic partnership working in Gwent is the force's approach to dealing with the most serious offenders through an integrated offender management (IOM) programme. The programme brings relevant agencies together with the police and probation service to provide a coherent approach to the prevention of further re-offending. The IOM team in Gwent is well-resourced, well-managed and works well with IOM Cymru.¹

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 has made an initial consideration of the action plan submitted by Gwent Police. We found that the plan follows the national template, and outlines activity that is in line with the agreed national priorities outlined above. Whilst there is not a clear direct reference to the specific HMIC recommendations for the force, there is evidence within the action plan that supports the activity required by these recommendations.

¹ IOM Cymru is a partnership approach to integrated offender management commissioned by Wales Probation and the Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) Cymru.

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.

While the action plan submitted was positive, HMIC observed problems during the inspection with the service provided to victims. We were particularly concerned to see that there is a lack of clarity among officers about who is responsible for investigating high-risk domestic abuse cases. Following recent organisational changes, specialist investigators are no longer responsible for any domestic abuse investigations, but it is not clear that the force has put in place the necessary checks and balances to assure itself that the new arrangements provide all victims of domestic abuse with an appropriate service. Nor is it evident that steps are always taken to ensure that offenders are effectively brought to justice. Compliance with completing domestic abuse victim risk assessments has improved but is still not good enough, and there is limited supervision of risk assessments. The force has used the new powers to deal with domestic abuse offenders, resulting in two domestic violence prevention orders being issued by magistrates' courts.

Recommendations

- Gwent Police should continue to implement action 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.
- Gwent Police should immediately develop and commence the implementation of an action plan to improve the quality of information available on force systems for analysis to enable the better understanding of threat, harm and risk and inform decision-making regarding resources and tactics.
- Gwent Police should immediately take steps to ensure in relation to domestic abuse investigations that:
 - (a) there is clarity in relation to roles and responsibilities for investigations and safeguarding action, and that this is communicated to relevant staff;
 - (b) risk assessments are carried out at the earliest opportunity and are properly supervised;

- (c) officers and staff with the appropriate level of professional skills and knowledge are used to conduct investigations, especially in relation to cases assessed as high risk; and
- (d) officers and staff have knowledge of powers available and the process by which to obtain them to assist in safeguarding victims.

Summary

Requires improvement

- Reducing and preventing crime are clear priorities for both the police and crime commissioner and the force. Reported crime has reduced by 28% in Gwent over the last four years, although there has been an increase in the crime rate over the last year. Reported crime rates are higher in Gwent than those for England and Wales.
- The quality of victim contact remains a real concern in Gwent. The force has one of the lowest victim satisfaction ratings of all forces in England and Wales. Despite efforts to date the force has been unable to improve the situation. In fact, victim satisfaction is continuing to decline according to the force's own data. The force is aware of the urgent need to improve this position and shortly will be launching an initiative that aims to tackle it. The force has made some good progress in measuring and understanding the nature of demand for its services, which means that it is better placed than it was to target resources at the areas of greatest threat and risk. However, the quality and reliability of information are hampering the force's ability to measure the outcomes of its work and plan effectively for the future.

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

The force recognises the importance of assessing risks to victims of crime at the earliest opportunity. It also understands the importance of identifying those people who are particularly vulnerable, or have been repeatedly affected by crime. The force's daily meetings where work is allocated to officers now focus on dealing with high-risk victims as well as serious offences.

HMIC was concerned to see that there is inconsistency in the force's ability to identify risk and vulnerability. Although the force has introduced a victim risk assessment (VRA) process which should begin at the first point of contact, we found that staff in the force control room, who receive the initial call for police help from victims, are not consistently using the VRA process. Local police officers do not understand which aspects of this process they are responsible for. This means that vulnerable and repeat victims may not get the level of service that they need from the police to manage the risk they face.

The force recognises the importance of making staff throughout the force aware of their individual responsibilities to victims under the new national Code of Practice for Victims of Crime. It has started to provide training and has designated 18 champions across the force. These champions have received training and can provide advice and guidance to others on the code. Specialist teams within the force adopt a highly victim-centred approach, for example the domestic abuse co-ordination team and the onyx team, which deals with serious sexual assaults. It is evident that these teams place the victim at the heart of everything they do, and provide good safeguarding arrangements for victims.

Investigation

HMIC found some serious weaknesses in the quality and consistency of investigations in Gwent. We found that there is limited supervision and oversight of investigations by line managers. Our review of a sample of recent investigations showed that investigation plans did not contain sufficient details, victim risk assessments were unclear and the actions taken to support vulnerable victims were inconsistent. Collectively, these shortcomings are likely to have a negative impact on the force's ability to conclude investigations successfully, and bring offenders to justice.

The force has a clear and consistent approach to providing professional training, accreditation and continuing professional development for the detectives who carry out investigations into more serious crimes. However, there has been a lack of training and development in investigative skills for uniformed officers who carry out the vast majority of investigations in Gwent. This is particularly important given that uniformed response officers may now be investigating high-risk domestic abuse cases as a result of the recent restructuring of the public protection team. In summary, the force cannot be confident that investigations are consistently being carried out effectively.

The force is starting to tackle so-called hidden crimes. For example, there has been some recent positive work to investigate human trafficking and child sexual exploitation, with dedicated police resources and positive partnership working to support victims. The hub for missing children is another good example of constructive partnership working in the force.

Tackling repeat and prolific offenders

Gwent Police works well with the probation service and other partners through the integrated offender management (IOM) process. This is a multi-agency approach to managing persistent offenders who commit a lot of crime, causing harm and nuisance to communities. This approach recognises that repeat offenders have multiple problems which contribute to their offending and cannot be addressed by a single agency. The force has made a significant investment of resources in IOM with 40 police staff working across three units throughout Gwent. Partners include probation, local authorities, drug and alcohol services, housing and health providers. The co-ordinated approach aims to cut re-offending and address issues which contribute to their criminal lifestyle such as drug and alcohol addiction, homelessness, unemployment, health problems and access to state benefits. Historically, it has tended to be offenders involved in burglary and theft that have been selected for IOM programmes in Gwent, but the force has plans to broaden the span to include domestic abuse offenders, women offenders, offenders who are themselves at high risk of harm and armed service veteran offenders. According to the force's definition², Gwent Police had 249 prolific offenders being managed through the IOM programme as of 31 July 2014.

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

Learning from experience

HMIC found that there is a lack of focus on monitoring and improving the quality of investigations. Weaknesses in the quality of the information the force uses is limiting its ability to measure the impact of its activities on crime and offending. This means that the force is losing potential opportunities to learn from what has worked (or not worked) and share this learning to drive improvement in outcomes.

Recommendations

- Immediately, Gwent Police should take steps to ensure they can identify and assess risk and vulnerable victims, in relation to both crime and anti-social behaviour, at the initial point of contact and as any investigation progresses. The force should ensure roles and responsibilities in relation to the victim risk assessment process are clarified and communicated with relevant staff.
- Within three months Gwent Police 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) uniformed officers have received learning and development required to fulfil their investigative duties;
 - (c) supervisors know what is expected of them in driving up standards; and
 - (d) there is appropriate monitoring and oversight of investigative quality and timeliness.
- Within six months Gwent Police should ensure that there are methods in place to:
 - (a) improve the quality and accuracy of information derived from force systems to improve its approach to dealing with crime and anti-social behaviour;
 - (b) systematically record learning and good practice in crime prevention, local problem solving and investigations; and
 - (c) share learning and good practice across the force.

Summary

Requires improvement

- The force recognises the importance of assessing the risks faced by victims and providing a level of service that is appropriate. However, in practice there are serious inconsistencies in the quality of victim risk assessments and the force's ability to identify victims who are particularly vulnerable is limited. This means that victims may not be getting the level of service they need from the police.
- Specialist teams within the force adopt a highly victim-centred approach, for example the domestic abuse co-ordination team and the onyx team, which deals with serious sexual assaults. It is evident that these teams place the victim at the heart of everything they do and provide good safeguarding arrangements for victims.
- HMIC found some serious weaknesses in the quality and consistency of investigations in Gwent. There is limited supervision and oversight of investigations. Of particular concern are new arrangements for investigating cases of domestic abuse. These have created risks that victims may not be getting the level of service they need, and offenders may not be brought to justice as effectively as possible.
- The force is starting to tackle so-called hidden crimes. For example, there has been some recent positive work to investigate human trafficking and child sexual exploitation. Gwent Police works well with partners on its integrated offender management programme, which is well-resourced and well-managed.

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

There is a clear and explicit focus on tackling anti-social behaviour within Gwent Police. Force leaders drive this priority from the police and crime plan through to operational activities within local policing units. The force continues to invest dedicated resources in anti-social behaviour through community support officers, crime and disorder reduction officers, schools officers, and jointly funded anti-social behaviour co-ordinators. Local staff work closely with their communities to gain a good understanding of community concerns; online watch link (OWL) is used extensively by local policing teams to communicate with residents and feed back to them on actions taken to address their concerns. A quarterly survey is conducted using OWL to identify local priorities. The main formal mechanism for engaging with local communities to identify priorities and provide feedback is through local PACT (police and communities together) meetings, which bring together the police and local authority with local people. However, they are seen by local officers as not inclusive or truly representative of the community, as they tend to be poorly attended by the public.

The inconsistencies described above in relation to identifying victims of crime who may be vulnerable also apply to victims of anti-social behaviour. The victim risk assessment system does enable the call-taker to request a follow-up visit from neighbourhood staff. There is also a clear way for neighbourhood staff to complete an action plan for high-risk anti-social behaviour victims that may include, for example, reassurance visits and extra patrols at particular times. However, call-takers are not systematically starting the victim risk assessment process for all anti-social behaviour callers, and the force cannot be certain that repeat and vulnerable victims of anti-social behaviour are always identified at this first point of contact. They may therefore not get the enhanced level of service that they need.

Partnership working

The local policing units (LPUs) provide an effective structure which enables neighbourhood officers to maintain close and regular communication with their communities. The LPUs follow the same boundaries as the five local authorities covering the Gwent Police area, which enables constructive joint work and information sharing with principal local partners. We found some good examples of strong local partnerships leading to effective joint work to tackle anti-social behaviour problems, divert young offenders and protect victims. We also found some good examples of the local communities themselves working in partnership with the police, through a variety of 'watch schemes', including farm watch, pub watch and allotment watch schemes.

Improving services to the public

The incidence of anti-social behaviour in Gwent is higher than the rate for England and Wales. In addition, there has been an increase in reported anti-social behaviour in the last year. In the 12 months prior to the end of March 2014, Gwent Police recorded 26,744 incidents of anti-social behaviour. This is an increase of 5 percent against the previous 12 months. The force is not clear about the reasons behind this increase. Tackling anti-social behaviour effectively is a priority in the police and crime commissioner's police and crime plan. The force control strategy, an internal document which sets out priorities for the force, also identifies reducing anti-social behaviour as a force priority.

The force uses a range of methods to prevent and tackle anti-social behaviour, many of which are done in partnership with local authorities. Neighbourhood staff have good knowledge of the powers available to them to deal with anti-social behaviour, and the force makes effective use of these powers. In the 12 months to the end of July 2014, six anti-social behaviour dispersal orders were issued, 1,620 anti-social behaviour warning notices were issued and 47 anti-social behaviour orders were issued. The force has invested in training for staff in how to use the additional powers coming into force through new anti-social behaviour legislation, and has trained specific anti-social behaviour champions in each LPU.

In addition to a range of diversionary activities to ensure that young people do not become involved in anti-social behaviour, neighbourhood teams operate a 'three strike' approach to dealing with young anti-social behaviour offenders. It starts with an initial letter, and if the behaviour continues a second more strongly worded letter is sent and finally at the third 'strike' the offender will be discussed at a joint anti-social behaviour group meeting and an appropriate course of action agreed.

Although a range of tactics and projects are used in each of the five LPUs, we found limited evidence of any meaningful measurement or evaluation of the effectiveness of the various tactics and activities in preventing and tackling anti-social behaviour. This means that the force is not making the most of any learning from these activities, and is not able to record or share good practice across the force and with partners.

Recommendations

- Immediately, Gwent Police should conduct analysis to understand the reasons for the high incidence of reported anti-social behaviour and the increased reports of anti-social behaviour over the last 12 months. By March 2015 the force should have commenced implementation of an action plan to tackle this.

Recommendations 1 and 3 from investigating offending also apply in this section.

Summary

Requires improvement

- Reducing anti-social behaviour is an explicit priority for Gwent Police and there is clear leadership as to its importance in local policing. However, the incidence of anti-social behaviour (per 1,000 population) is higher in Gwent than the rate for England and Wales and there has been an increase in the number of anti-social behaviour incidents in the last 12 months. The force is not clear as to the reasons behind this increase.
- Gwent Police continues to invest resources into dealing with anti-social behaviour and works effectively in partnership with local authorities and other agencies to deal with anti-social behaviour.
- There are weaknesses in the force's ability to identify at the first point of contact those victims of anti-social behaviour who may be vulnerable or have been a previous victim. This means that these victims may not be getting the enhanced level of service they need.

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.