



Inspecting policing
in the **public interest**

Crime inspection 2014

Hertfordshire Constabulary

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How effective is the force at cutting crime?

Overall summary

Hertfordshire Constabulary has invested in crime prevention initiatives, which have had a positive effect in terms of keeping crime levels down and protecting the public from harm.

The constabulary is focused on the needs of victims, and has implemented good arrangements for ensuring that the quality of victim contact is consistent. The victim satisfaction rate in Hertfordshire is higher than the figure for England and Wales.

The constabulary understands vulnerability, and a broad range of tactics is used appropriately to tackle crime. However, its partnership engagement could be improved in relation to youth crime and youth anti-social behaviour. Vulnerable adult victims, in particular, would benefit from the formation of at least one multi-agency safeguarding hub in Hertfordshire.

Investigation of crime in the county is of a good standard. Integrated offender management (IOM) is effective at tackling prolific burglars. Anti-social behaviour is a priority for the constabulary and is well integrated within daily activity in neighbourhood teams. Victims of anti-social behaviour are risk assessed carefully, and the SafetyNet system functions well as a tool for managing cases. The system could be used more widely by partners, and more fully exploited as a means of capturing what works.

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 serious concerns about Hertfordshire 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 constabulary at reducing crime and preventing offending?

Good

Hertfordshire Constabulary has a sound and effective approach to preventing crime and reducing offending. It is proactive in its approach, which means problems are resolved before they escalate.

The constabulary has invested in crime prevention initiatives which have had a positive impact on communities. It is focused on the needs of victims, and has implemented good arrangements for ensuring that the quality of victim contact is consistent. The victim satisfaction rate in Hertfordshire is higher than the figure for England and Wales.

The constabulary has a strong partnership with children's services, but a multi-agency safeguarding hub could improve its ability to protect vulnerable adult victims of crime.

How effective is the constabulary at investigating offending?

Good

Vulnerability is well understood in Hertfordshire Constabulary, and vulnerable victims – particularly elderly victims – receive a good service.

The quality of investigation is good overall with a high level of specialist capability, particularly in relation to the investigation of rape and sexual offences, although the level of supervision applied to all investigations is variable.

The integrated offender management approach is well accepted and, understood and is effective, although it is predominantly applied to prolific burglars. The choices and consequences scheme is a particularly good example of effective multi-agency intervention.

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

Good

Community contact is good in Hertfordshire in the context of anti-social behaviour, and the constabulary's community focus desk plays an important role in ensuring that victims receive a high quality service.

The SafetyNet system is used effectively to record actions in cases of anti-social behaviour, but it could be more fully exploited as a learning resource and used more widely by partners.

Some victims of anti-social behaviour in Hertfordshire have had to wait longer for a police response because neighbourhood officers normally based in their community have had to cover shifts elsewhere. This is a manageable risk of which the constabulary is aware, and the public receives a good overall service on anti-social behaviour.

Introduction



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

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

Methodology

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

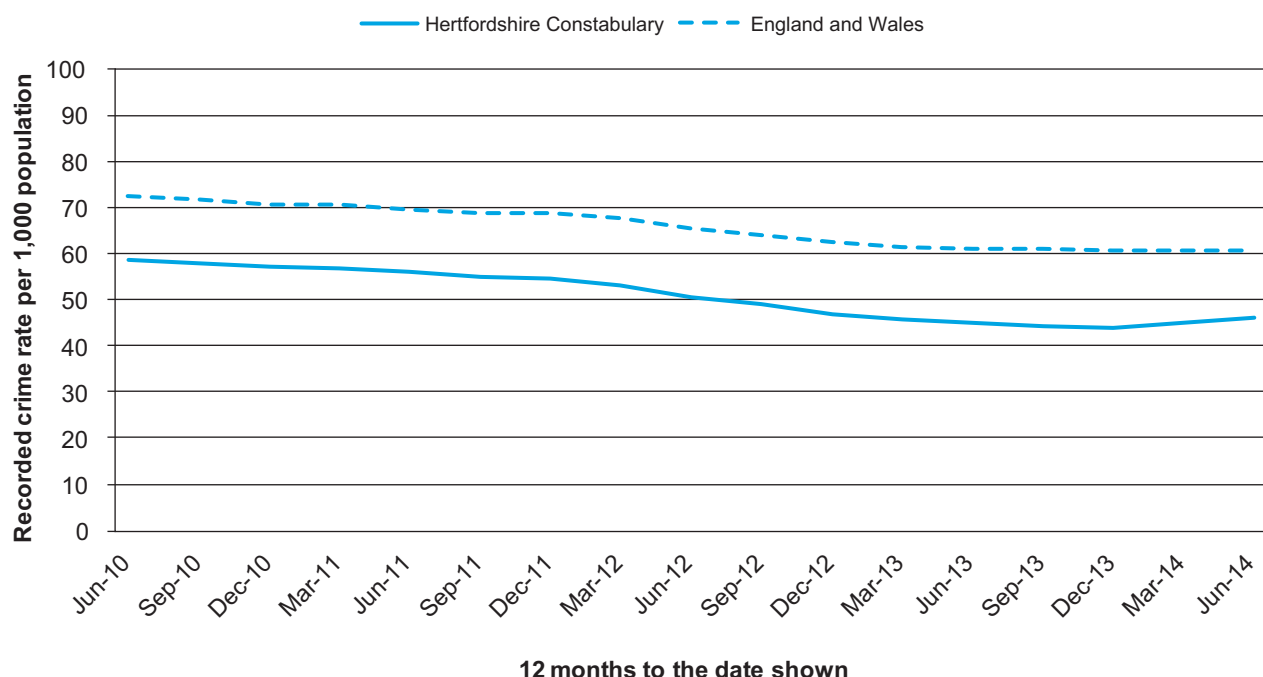
Crime

In 2010 the Home Secretary set a clear priority for the police service to cut crime. When compared with the 12 months to June 2010, recorded crime (excluding fraud) in the 12 months to June 2014 reduced by 21 percent in Hertfordshire 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 22 percent in Hertfordshire, 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 Hertfordshire increased by 3 percent, compared with a 1 percent reduction across England and Wales.

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



By looking at how many recorded crimes and incidents of anti-social behaviour 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 Hertfordshire (per 1,000 population) compared with the rest of England and Wales.

12 months to June 2014	Hertfordshire Constabulary rate (per 1,000 population)	England and Wales total rate (per 1,000 population)
Crime excluding fraud	46.3	60.7
Victim-based crime	39.4	53.9
Sexual offences	0.8	1.2
Violence with injury	4.0	5.9
Burglary in a dwelling*	6.4	8.9
Anti-social behaviour incidents*	21.5	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

Hertfordshire'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

Hertfordshire Constabulary has a clear set of priorities which are linked to the priorities of the police and crime commissioner. The constabulary carries out a strategic assessment which identifies threat and risk, and this is used to inform the priority setting process. This assessment is refreshed every six months and includes information from partner organisations. Local councillors and members of the public can participate in the constabulary's priority-setting process, although attendance at these sessions is low and their value correspondingly limited. Current constabulary priorities include anti-social behaviour, victim satisfaction, domestic abuse and repeat victimisation, but neighbourhood teams are empowered to identify and pursue their own local priorities. This is done in an effective and co-ordinated way across the constabulary area.

The constabulary carries out daily management meetings which match police resources to demand using analysis. These meetings are well structured, focused and supported by clear intelligence products. The constabulary is able to identify and prioritise street-level hotspots for particular crimes such as burglary, and target its patrol activity accordingly. Hertfordshire Constabulary has a good understanding of short and medium term threats to its communities, and is sufficiently flexible to allow teams across the constabulary to support one another with specific problems. Scorpion teams, for example, offer a proactive capability such as executing search warrants, which can be called upon to assist any part of the constabulary.

Quality of victim contact

The quality of victim contact in Hertfordshire is generally good, and the majority of victims are updated at points agreed with them as their case progresses. Police IT systems automatically remind officers when these points are approaching. However, this victim contact is not always documented by officers on the constabulary IT system. As a result, officers dealing with cases do not always have access to this information, and there are occasions when victims are not contacted when they should be.

There is good oversight of victim contact, which is monitored by a central crime service team. In cases where the officer responsible for a case has not contacted the victim, the crime service team makes contact with victims directly to provide them with an update. It is also helping the constabulary to obtain feedback from victims and ensure that this is acted on by officers.

Focus on victims is growing across the constabulary, and they are increasingly at the centre of what Hertfordshire Constabulary does. A number of victim focus forums have been held to allow victims to engage directly with officers. These have the potential to offer those attending a positive experience; low attendance to date, however, has limited the value of these meetings in providing the constabulary with representative views that it can use to adapt its services for victims.

Victim satisfaction levels in Hertfordshire are closely monitored by the constabulary, and survey data is analysed to pinpoint the reasons for increases and decreases.

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, Hertfordshire Constabulary had a victim satisfaction rate of 88.8 percent (± 1.3 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 88.2 percent (± 1.3 percent) recorded for Hertfordshire in the previous year.

Use of police tactics

Hertfordshire Constabulary uses a broad range of tactics to reduce and prevent crime. It has successfully imposed banning orders and a violent offender order, for example, which restricts the ability of offenders to enter certain premises or interact with specified individuals in order to protect the public. The constabulary also works collaboratively with housing partners in the county to use their powers of eviction, although this occurs to a greater extent in some areas than others.

A focus on offenders rather than offences is driven by senior officers and is well understood by frontline staff. This enables the constabulary to exploit a fuller range of tactical options in order to combat crime. For example, a member of an organised crime group could be pursued for traffic offences in order to disrupt their activity. The constabulary has a strategy which details how it will tackle organised crime and a process for assessing the threat posed by organised crime groups (OCG's). The force has the facility to use specialist resources against the groups assessed as posing the most risk in order to disrupt them. The constabulary is also working with partner agencies e.g., local councils to use non-police powers to effectively disrupt the criminal activities of such groups.

Hertfordshire Constabulary has several well-established and effective schemes which help to prevent crime. These include Operation Guardian, which is aimed at reducing residential burglary. Local residents are given a holiday pack which helps them to create the impression

that their house is occupied when they are away. Analysis of Operation Guardian conducted by the constabulary, while not comprehensive, suggests that the operation works well. In more general terms, however, limited use is made of results analysis by the constabulary to evaluate the success of tactical approaches, and there is little central recording of what works for practitioners to access when they encounter problems. Instead officers and staff tend to consult one another informally as and when problems are encountered – most of the time this is done verbally, which makes it more difficult for officers and staff tackling similar challenges several years later to access learning.

Partnership working and information sharing

Hertfordshire Constabulary has a good set of partnerships, but with a relatively narrow range of organisations. The constabulary has a high level of engagement with children's services, with whom it runs an effective joint child protection unit. Cases involving child abuse are routinely assessed for referral to the unit, which provides the constabulary with specialist capability in this area. Operation Halo is a police-led, multi-agency team dealing specifically with child sexual exploitation. It has taken 160 referrals since its launch in 2013, and is well established within local operational procedures in Hertfordshire.

However, adult services and health sector representatives are not part of the constabulary's partnership activity. The introduction of multi-agency safeguarding hubs (MASH) in Hertfordshire could improve the level of service to vulnerable adult victims of crime. Although the constabulary intends to develop its partnership with children's services into a MASH, this process is still in its infancy, and there is no timescale for the introduction of a MASH at present.

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 Hertfordshire Constabulary. We found the plan sets out the force's response to tackling domestic abuse, which is in line with the agreed national priorities outlined above. There is no direct reference to the specific recommendations HMIC made for the force, but information contained within the plan details the activity required by these recommendations.

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 Hertfordshire Constabulary had made good progress to improve their response to domestic abuse.

Multi-agency risk assessment conferences (MARAC) are held regularly in Hertfordshire for cases of domestic abuse where there is a high risk of harm to the victim. In the 12 months prior to 31 July 2014 Hertfordshire Constabulary presented 203 cases to a multi-agency risk assessment conference. These meetings are relatively effective, although adult services are not routinely present at MARAC meetings which diminishes the amount of information shared as well as the options which the police and other agencies can explore. The constabulary is reviewing the process for referring cases to MARAC, and is showing openness to the views of its partners as part of this review, with the aim of enhancing the service it can provide to victims. There is also an external review of domestic abuse in Hertfordshire being carried out by the charity, co-ordinated action against domestic abuse (CAADA). This is to be welcomed and should highlight areas for further improvement which the constabulary is well placed to address.

Recommendations

- Hertfordshire Constabulary should continue to work with partners to establish a multi-agency safeguarding hub (MASH) as soon as practicable.

Summary



Good

- Hertfordshire Constabulary has a sound and effective approach to preventing crime and reducing offending. It is proactive in its approach, which means problems are resolved before they escalate.
- The constabulary has invested in crime prevention initiatives which have had a positive impact on communities. It is focused on the needs of victims, and has implemented enhanced arrangements for ensuring that the quality of victim contact is consistent. The victim satisfaction rate in Hertfordshire is higher than the figure for England and Wales.
- The constabulary has a strong partnership with children's services, but the introduction of multi-agency safeguarding hubs (MASH) in Hertfordshire could improve its ability to protect vulnerable adult victims of crime.

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

Victim vulnerability is well understood by officers, staff and police community support officers (PCSOs) working for Hertfordshire Constabulary. Vulnerability is thoroughly assessed at the first point of contact by well-trained staff, and the information gathered influences the measures subsequently taken to respond to individual victims. Repeat and vulnerable victims are identified and referred to a community focus desk to determine whether officers should attend non-urgent incidents of crime or anti-social behaviour due to vulnerability considerations. For example, an elderly victim might receive a reassurance visit from a specialist officer following a burglary. Methods used to assess and record victim vulnerability in cases of anti-social behaviour, domestic abuse and missing persons are more rigorous than they are for other types of crime such as assault. With these other crime types, officers are not automatically prompted by the system to complete a structured assessment of victim vulnerability and supervisors do not scrutinise every case. This creates scope for human error, although HMIC inspectors did not find examples where victim vulnerability had not been properly assessed.

Specific training on the Code of Practice for Victims of Crime has not been provided to the entire workforce in Hertfordshire Constabulary, although some relevant information has been disseminated within other training material. The constabulary is generally compliant with the requirements set out in the code, which are reasonably well understood by those who have contact with victims. Special measures for vulnerable victims or witnesses, such as providing evidence behind screens, are offered to those who need them. Victim personal statements are taken in appropriate cases, although there are instances where just a few lines are added to the bottom of the victim's statement. This does not provide a sufficient level of detail for victims to fully describe the effects of the crime upon them and whether they require support.

Hertfordshire Constabulary has invested in a number of positive initiatives aimed specifically at protecting vulnerable people, and in particular elderly people. For example Operation Manhunt is helping elderly residents to prepare for attempts to commit burglaries where the victim is distracted while the crime takes place. As part of this operation, the police offer both advice and equipment to help people to secure their homes. Closed circuit TV cameras have been installed to protect elderly victims from bogus salesmen, and dedicated older person liaison officers provide support and advice. The Operation Manhunt team offers

a high quality service to victims of burglary as well as those who may become victims in the future. Similarly, Operation policy has begun to offer protection to potential victims of internet-enabled fraud by discouraging people from giving their credit card details out over the telephone to unknown callers.

Investigation

The constabulary has a mandatory attendance policy at a number of specific types of crime and incidents. These are well documented and primarily involve burglary, domestic abuse, crimes involving vulnerable people, serious assaults and robbery. Additionally an officer will attend where the offender is nearby or has been identified.

The quality of investigation in Hertfordshire is good, and the constabulary has a strong specialist investigative capability, for example in respect of rape and serious sexual offending. There is early identification and clear prioritisation of high-risk cases, and for the most part investigators have access to the specialist support services that they need to resolve investigations. However the specialist team that carries out examination of mobile phones and computers seized in connection with crime are not sufficiently well resourced. This leads to delays of several months in some cases.

Detectives in Hertfordshire are adequately trained and qualified to perform investigative roles. However, there are no career pathways for them, with the result that their professional development is limited. Few opportunities exist for detectives to shadow colleagues working in different units, which would help them to acquire and maintain a more rounded skill set. There is also a shortage of detectives across the constabulary. Some roles – including posts within specialist teams – are filled by junior officers aspiring to become detectives, but they do not have all of the skills and experience that these roles require. The constabulary is managing this situation and does not allow officers to remain in these posts if they do not pass the assessments for trainee investigators.

Supervision of investigations is adequate overall, but variable across the constabulary. Sergeants in different areas check officers' work at different intervals, and investigation plans are held in different systems and formats. Unannounced visits conducted by HMIC inspectors as well as interviews and a review of 20 investigation files all found that some investigation plans are agreed verbally between an officer and supervisor for example, which may not compromise the quality of a local investigation at the time it is conducted, but inhibits the constabulary's ability to review cases and to retain knowledge and understanding of what works at a corporate level over a longer period of time.

Resources are allocated to restorative justice, which is used to resolve investigations without the need for prosecution. Restorative justice and conditional cautions are routinely considered at an early stage by Hertfordshire officers, with arrest used as a last resort. This approach is proportionate, and helps to make out-of-court disposals part of day-to-day police activity. Supervisors scrutinise the use of restorative justice and some longer term evaluation has also been conducted, indicating that satisfaction among victims is high.

Tackling repeat and prolific offenders

Hertfordshire Constabulary is able to identify and tackle those who are committing the most crime in the county. The Hertfordshire Constabulary operational intelligence unit is focused and dynamic, and there are effective links between this unit and the specialist investigation team. Prolific burglars and other offenders known through intelligence to be involved in linked series of crimes are proactively targeted and, in many cases, successfully managed in order to reduce offending. The constabulary also uses a tracking system to monitor offenders who are released from prison.

Integrated offender management¹ arrangements are focused predominantly on those involved in serious acquisitive crime. As of 31 July 2014, the constabulary had 150 offenders under the integrated offender management (IOM) programme. Within this IOM programme, the “choices and consequences scheme”, which the constabulary runs together with partners, has provided an effective alternative to custodial sentences for a smaller group of offenders, most of whom are prolific burglars. The scheme has helped to bring about a reduction in re-offending among this group.

The integrated offender management structure is very well managed, accepted and understood. However, the constabulary is reviewing the scoring matrix and risk management process which are used to identify those offenders likely to cause the most harm, to make sure that they are fit for purpose. There was evidence of the IOM team working well to proactively manage offenders. The constabulary also has a Hertfordshire offender tracking system. This contains in one place all information on known offenders, for example the date of their last arrest (and what for), the date of their release from prison, any intelligence held on that person and their activities. This system means that officers can search the system and get a good understanding of which offenders are in their area, and who could be committing crime.

¹ Hertfordshire Constabulary use the following criteria to decide if an offender should be part of the IOM programme: “Matrix system designed by the Constabulary with weighted offences for SAC on arrest and charge data: this is then compared to OGRS scoring from CRC and multi-agency conversations before adoption.”

Learning from experience

HMIC found that Hertfordshire Constabulary has effective ways to drive continuous improvement at a strategic level. These processes include the strategic performance board which is chaired by an assistant chief constable. This meeting reviews operations; identifies and shares good practice, and reviews ongoing development plans e.g., the force plan to improve how rape is dealt with to monitor progress.

The head of human resources and the head of training and development attend this meeting to ensure that identified development areas are included in future training for staff. HMIC saw evidence of commitment and enthusiasm among senior leaders to learn from experience and share information about what works.

Safer neighbourhood officers receive one training day every five weeks and staff felt that this was generally useful and informative. Officers in more specialist teams stated that they were not given the same opportunity to regularly update their skills and knowledge due to heavy workloads.

Detectives within the force are already accredited, or in training to be professionalising investigation programme level two trained. More specialised staff e.g., within the public protection units receive additional training to fulfil their role. The force recognises that it currently has a shortfall in detectives and has a plan to rectify this.

HMIC found some evidence of organisational learning being translated into operational practice. Operations such as a child sexual exploitation operation, Operation Halo and Operation Polygraph, which uses lie detectors to help reduce re-offending, are two such examples. The force does record its organisational learning on a spreadsheet but HMIC found limited evidence that this was widely available to staff or was used across the force to learn from previous experience.

Recommendations

- Within three months, Hertfordshire Constabulary should review the resourcing and process for prioritising the examination of telecommunication and computer equipment seized as part of criminal investigations. By March 2015 the constabulary should commence the implementation of a plan to improve the prioritisation and timeliness of these examinations.
- Within three months Hertfordshire 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, especially in relation to investigation plans, and have the professional skills and expertise to fulfil their duties;
 - (b) supervisors know what is expected of them in driving up standards; and
 - (c) there is appropriate monitoring and oversight of investigative quality.

Summary

Good

- Vulnerability is well understood in Hertfordshire Constabulary, and vulnerable victims – particularly elderly victims – receive a good service.
- The quality of investigation is good overall with a high level of specialist capability, particularly in relation to the investigation of rape and sexual offences, although the level of supervision applied to all investigations is variable.
- The integrated offender management approach is well accepted and understood and is effective, although it is predominantly applied to prolific burglars. The choices and consequences scheme is a particularly good example of effective multi-agency intervention.

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

HMIC looked at how the constabulary 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 constabulary and whether victims of anti-social behaviour were dealt with in a comparable way to victims of other crimes.

Community contact and victim care

Anti-social behaviour is prioritised at a local level in Hertfordshire, and forms part of neighbourhood teams' routine activity. Dedicated anti-social behaviour officers are supporting neighbourhood teams, and helping to drive the prioritisation of anti-social behaviour. Anti-social behaviour powers are used appropriately and proportionately. In the 12 months to the end of July 2014, the constabulary received reports from 17,940 victims of anti-social behaviour. Five anti-social behaviour dispersal orders, 125 anti-social behaviour warning notices and three anti-social behaviour orders were issued during this period.

Community contact in the context of anti-social behaviour is good, and the constabulary uses a variety of methods to interact with the public. Twitter is used to provide information, and recent examples include safety advice for Halloween and bonfire night. Police community support officers (PCSOs) post pictures of the areas that they have patrolled to reassure communities. Neighbourhood teams hold regular community surgeries and are individually contactable through the Hertfordshire Constabulary website. The constabulary also has a good relationship and level of communication with its neighbourhood watch network.

Victims of anti-social behaviour are risk assessed at the first point of contact, and the case details are entered on to an anti-social behaviour IT database called SafetyNet. The constabulary has a community focus desk which reviews all recorded incidents of anti-social behaviour to ensure that the threat, harm and risk involved in each case have been assessed appropriately, that repeat victims have been identified, and that the correct action has been taken. This level of oversight is helping the constabulary to provide a consistent high level of service to victims of anti-social behaviour.

Partnership working

The constabulary's anti-social behaviour officers have good relationships with local community safety partnerships, and a multi-agency meeting infrastructure is in place with the involvement of most of the right partners (the exception to this is that there are no representatives from health services). The constabulary uses an IT system called SafetyNet to support its activity aimed at tackling anti-social behaviour. Officers record community priorities and the actions taken to support these on to this system. The constabulary adopts a problem-solving approach to local issues, such as street drinking in town centres, and

plans take into account the vulnerability of individual victims. This use of the SafetyNet system is effective in terms of logging information and anti-social behaviour action plans. However, some partner agencies do not use the system, and information about victim vulnerability entered by officers is not always sufficiently detailed to enable high quality collective decision-making. The potential of SafetyNet to serve as a database to assist with problem-solving and learning could also be further exploited. The constabulary is aware of this and is developing an IT solution that will help it to make greater use of the system. This should give it the ability to capture organisational learning in a more systematic way, and continually enhance the service it provides to victims of anti-social behaviour and the wider community in Hertfordshire.

Improving services to the public

Although tackling anti-social behaviour is clearly a priority for Hertfordshire Constabulary, some of the neighbourhood officers who share responsibility for tackling it are frequently taken away from their core duties in order to cover emergency shifts in urban centres, for example on Friday and Saturday nights when demand tends to be greatest in those areas. This places pressure on the PCSOs who work alongside those officers, whose neighbourhood workload increases as a result. It is also affecting victims of anti-social behaviour, some of whom have to wait longer for officers to deal with the incidents that they have reported. The proactive capacity of neighbourhood teams to patrol locations and offer community reassurance has also been marginally lessened. However, overall the public receives a good service from the constabulary on anti-social behaviour which has decreased in Hertfordshire. In the 12 months to March 2014, Hertfordshire Constabulary recorded 24,507 incidents of anti-social behaviour. This is a reduction of 30 percent against the previous 12 months.

Recommendations

- Within six months Hertfordshire Constabulary should assess the future use of the SafetyNet system as a means to:
 - (a) systematically record learning and good practice in crime prevention and local problem solving; and
 - (b) share learning and good practice across the constabulary and with partners.

Summary



Good

- Community contact is good in Hertfordshire in the context of anti-social behaviour, and the constabulary's community focus desk plays an important role in ensuring that victims receive a high quality service.
- The SafetyNet system is used effectively to record actions in cases of anti-social behaviour, but it could be more fully exploited as a learning resource and used more widely by partners.
- Some victims of anti-social behaviour in Hertfordshire have had to wait longer for a police response because neighbourhood officers normally based in their community have had to cover shifts elsewhere. This is a manageable risk of which the constabulary is aware, and the public receives a good overall service on anti-social behaviour.

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.