



Inspecting policing
in the public interest

Crime inspection 2014

North Wales Police

November 2014

© HMIC 2014

ISBN: 978-1-78246-640-6

www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmic





Contents

| | |
|--|----|
| How effective is the force at cutting crime? | 4 |
| Introduction | 7 |
| Methodology | 8 |
| How effective is the force at reducing crime and preventing offending? | 9 |
| How effective is the force at investigating offending? | 17 |
| How effective is the force at tackling anti-social behaviour? | 21 |
| What each judgment means | 23 |

How effective is the force at cutting crime?

Overall summary

North Wales Police has reduced recorded crime over the past four years. The rate of reduction during this period of time is broadly in line with that for England and Wales. The likelihood of being a victim of crime is less in North Wales than across England and Wales as a whole.

North Wales Police is collaborating with forces in the north west of England as well as those in Wales in order to deliver a more efficient service to the public and to meet the demands of austerity. However, the force remains committed to delivering policing through its local policing teams. The local policing service comprises neighbourhood teams based in ten local policing commands which span North Wales' six counties. Major crime is investigated in the force by a centrally-based team.

The force has sophisticated joint working arrangements with councils and other local service providers to support victims who are vulnerable or persistently targeted. Service providers work closely with the force to manage offenders who are the most likely to cause harm in communities and criminals who are most likely to re-offend.

North Wales Police has a strong focus on the most vulnerable, and individuals who cause most harm in society, making the area a safer place for residents, businesses and tourists.

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 found a need for improvement in the timeliness of North Wales Police's crime recording decisions. Individual force reports are available at <http://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmic/>

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

Good

The force is moving away from traditional performance targets to prioritising investigations based on threat, risk and harm.

There has been a reduction in the recorded crime rate of 15 percent in North Wales over the last four years, which is broadly in line with the figure for England and Wales. There are signs of the rate of reduction slowing down.

The police and crime commissioner's top priority is to 'Put Prevention First'. The priority is reflected in all operational activity ranging from the protection of the vulnerable, the prevention of re-offending and the provision of physical security measures to those who most need them.

How effective is the force at investigating offending?

Requires improvement

The force works well with other organisations to manage the most prolific offenders. This approach provides support to individuals with specific needs, e.g., drug dependency, as well as targeting those who turn away from rehabilitation and continue to break the law.

HMIC has concerns about the quality of criminal investigations, in particular in relation to ensuring that crime investigations are allocated to appropriately qualified staff.

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

Good

North Wales Police has developed strong relationships with other organisations in order to tackle anti-social behaviour. This is primarily based on routine information-sharing, timely needs assessments of victims and active participation of other organisations. The force's role is pivotal in uniting public services to support the most vulnerable.

The force uses communication well to set out its values and to gain a better understanding of community needs. Local press, social media and community alerts inform the public and seek out feedback on what is most important to them.

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

Good

The force has a systematic approach to reducing crime. The deployment of resources is flexible and closely aligned to seasonal crime trends and emerging offending patterns.

How effective is the force at investigating offending?

Requires improvement

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

Good

The force takes early action to encourage offenders to moderate their behaviour, and to target those who offend repeatedly. The commitment to victims means that anti-social behaviour is a clear priority in North Wales.

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 and 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 organisations such as social services to reduce crime.

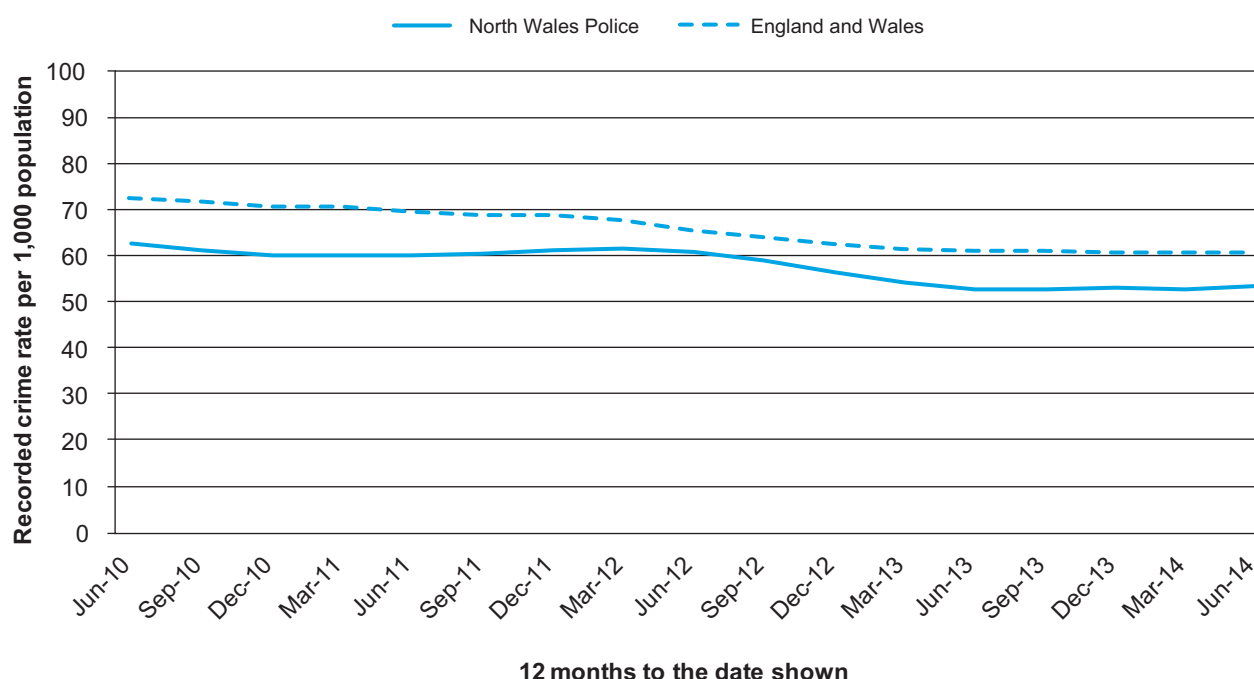
Crime

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 15 percent in North Wales 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 10 percent in North Wales, compared with a reduction of 16 percent across England and Wales.

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

| 12 months to June 2014 | North Wales Police rate (per 1,000 population) | England and Wales total rate (per 1,000 population) |
|----------------------------------|--|---|
| Crime excluding fraud | 53.5 | 60.7 |
| Victim-based crime | 47.8 | 53.9 |
| Sexual offences | 1.4 | 1.2 |
| Violence with injury | 5.9 | 5.9 |
| Burglary in a dwelling* | 5.5 | 8.9 |
| Anti-social behaviour incidents* | 35.8 | 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

North Wales' detection rate (for crimes excluding fraud) for the 12 months to the end of March 2014 was 30 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

The key priorities for policing in North Wales are set in the police and crime commissioner's four year police and crime plan. North Wales Police also prepares an annual strategic assessment to examine current and emerging trends in crime and related activity. This assessment uses data from external organisations to identify the strategic priorities for the force; this is known as a control strategy. North Wales Police uses this process to re-align resources to the most prevalent risks, for example, the force has increased its capacity to investigate rape as a result of a rise in reporting of offences.

North Wales Police conducts structured consultation across the force to gather the views and needs of local communities. This results in the publication of annual crime and anti-social behaviour reduction plans. These plans reflect a difference in crime priorities in line with demographics and show how the force tailors its activity to the different communities it serves. Once a plan is agreed with local communities, neighbourhood teams work with other local service providers to resolve the identified problems.

HMIC found that the force is skilled at tackling criminality at all levels, from crime and incivilities which present as day-to-day nuisances, to serious offending which is less prevalent but potentially more harmful. HMIC found good evidence of this in the training of frontline staff in the SARA problem solving model (scanning, analysis, response and assessment). This was put to good use to curb the behaviour of youngsters gathering outside fast food outlets; officers work with staff to resolve problems and talk with the youths to identify reasons for their presence. Further examples include working with Barnardo's to provide support to young people who may be targeted by child sexual exploitation (CSE) offenders and concerted efforts to track down and convict criminals who repeatedly offend or create the most harm in North Wales.

HMIC found that the prevention of offending is a strong focus in North Wales. This supports the police and crime commissioner's intention to 'Put Prevention First' which he states: "will always be at the top of the agenda".

Quality of victim contact

The force is working to improve victim satisfaction, in particular in relation to follow-up enquiries, although victim satisfaction rates in North Wales are among the lowest in England and Wales. In the 12 months to the end of June 2014, North Wales had a victim satisfaction rate of 80.8 percent (± 1.9 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 81.2 percent (± 1.7 percent) recorded for North Wales in the previous year.

HMIC found evidence that North Wales Police is moving away from a traditional target regime to prioritising investigations based on threat, risk and harm. The force has also taken measures to obtain a more qualitative view of the difficulties faced in securing the confidence of victims. These measures include an academic study with the University of Bangor to review the impact of both positive and negative comments on frontline staff, scrutiny by control room supervisors of the service provided to vulnerable victims and follow-up calls to victims by shift supervisors by way of quality control. HMIC found evidence that frontline supervisors are not always willing to challenge their staff if standards of victim care are inadequate.

Use of police tactics

North Wales Police shows a strong commitment to diverting those at risk of offending out of the criminal justice system, to working with other organisations to prevent re-offending and to putting in place 'target hardening' measures to prevent individuals or neighbourhoods from being victimised.

The force has strong working relationships with other organisations that increase the range of solutions that can be used to tackle a problem. These tactics are used to target the offender, support or protect the victim or to secure the location. For example; the youth offending team intervenes at an early stage to reduce the opportunities for particular groups to offend by organising bike rides and other activities on occasions when higher crime levels are anticipated such as Halloween. They also use a 'yellow card' scheme to administer warnings, with incentives for good conduct where appropriate.

The force also makes effective use of preventative legislation; for example, domestic violence protection notices (DVPNs) where offenders can be removed from a household, and the recent use of a sexual offences prevention order resulting in imprisonment of a registered offender who had breached requirements.

The force has recently started to use predictive crime analysis. This is a system capable of forecasting crime patterns, the likelihood of victims being re-victimised and the likelihood of individuals being released from prison to re-offend. The effect of predictive crime analysis will be subject to its own analysis in due course. HMIC found evidence that the force is actively pursuing new technology and ideas in efforts to fight crime. An example of this is the use of PCSOs on high impact patrols in violence hotspots.

In cases of more serious and sustained offending, working arrangements with other organisations in the force area make use of a range of tactics to stop offending behaviour which involve drugs intervention, the use of curfews and tagging schemes.

Traditional crime prevention, or 'target hardening', continues to be at the heart of the policing approach in North Wales. This is primarily area-based on the establishment of 'priority protection zones' in which residents are alerted to burglaries near to their homes and advised of security measures. This approach is directed towards individuals: for example, by widening access to personal attack alarms, to locksmiths for victims of domestic abuse and sexual assault or by introducing seasonal initiatives like property-marking schemes (Project Hermes) at the start of the university academic year.

Partnership working and information sharing

North Wales Police has a constructive approach to working with others across the county councils in North Wales. The relationships are at different levels of maturity. There is good evidence of joint working to reduce crime and to prevent re-offending at every level of criminality. There is an agreement between the police and the organisations with which it works that the needs of victims and the management of offenders must be addressed in parallel in the overall fight against crime.

'Putting prevention first' is also a strong characteristic of working with others in North Wales. HMIC found that other organisations were positive about the efforts of North Wales Police to identify potential young offenders at an early stage and refer them for support. This is done by identifying precursors to criminal behaviour (e.g. absence from school) and referring the young people into safeguarding programmes. Schools liaison officers deliver presentations in schools to raise awareness of domestic abuse and sexual violence.

North Wales Police assesses the vulnerability of a victim of crime or anti-social behaviour by using a risk assessment process that has been developed in agreement with other organisations. The completed assessment is used by the force and organisations which work with it to put in place support for vulnerable victims.

The support provided is determined by the risk and vulnerability factors associated with the victim and the likelihood of re-offending. These involve problem-solving groups at neighbourhood level, multi-agency safeguarding hubs (MASH) (Wrexham only), multi-agency risk assessment conferences (MARAC) for higher-risk cases, and the integrated offender management unit (IOMU) which manages the most prolific offenders.

HMIC reviewed how North Wales Police addressed the urgent needs of vulnerable victims or worked to put in place support for individuals who were likely to reoffend immediately. Daily management meetings include cases that present these risks on the agenda. A particularly good example was observed at St Asaph when an officer secured emergency housing support for two homeless, heroin-addicted shoplifters prior to their release from custody to reduce the likelihood of them re-offending.

Domestic abuse

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

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

HMIC has made an initial consideration of the action plan submitted by North Wales Police. We found that the force has produced an extensive action plan in relation to the HMIC force recommendations. However, the action plan does not set out the force's responses to some of the broader issues identified as national priorities for the police service to tackle.

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 North Wales Police had made some progress to improve its response to domestic abuse. There was widespread knowledge and use of domestic violence protection orders by staff. These civil orders allow the removal of offenders from an address for a period of time to lower the risk of further abuse. Additionally, an initiative where schools liaison officers attended two-day domestic abuse seminars in order to raise the awareness of younger people and make this challenging area everyone's business, was well received. 'Predictive analysis' has also been introduced. This allows staff and partners to assess better where, and when, victims may be subject to further abuse, and allows safety measures to be put in place.

However HMIC found a mixed picture when looking at a small sample of assault cases - more could have been done in relation to initial evidence gathering. HMIC found there was an inconsistent allocation policy with cases allocated on levels of injury and not necessarily continuing risk to victims. HMIC found that uniformed response officers are routinely investigating domestic abuse cases with insufficient training. In addition, PCSOs are being asked to attend to deal with initial reports when they do not feel sufficiently equipped to do so. The use of staff with insufficient training or skills to attend and investigate domestic abuse cases means that the force cannot be confident that victims are consistently getting the service they need; an area that has previously been highlighted which requires improvement.

Recommendations

- Within three months, North Wales Police should develop and begin 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, especially in for keeping victims informed, and have the professional skills and knowledge to fulfil their duties;
 - (b) supervisors know what is expected of them in driving up standards and provide appropriate feedback to staff;
 - (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.
- North Wales Police should immediately take steps to ensure in relation to domestic abuse investigations that:
 - (a) there is clarity around roles and responsibilities for investigations and this is communicated to relevant staff; and
 - (b) officers and staff with the appropriate level of professional skills and knowledge are used to conduct investigations.

Summary



Good

- The force is moving away from traditional performance targets to prioritising investigations based on threat, risk and harm.
- There has been a reduction in the recorded crime rate of 15 percent in North Wales over the last four years, which is broadly in line with the figure for England and Wales. There are signs of the rate of reduction slowing down.
- The police and crime commissioner's top priority is to 'Put Prevention First'. The priority is reflected in all operational activity ranging from the protection of the vulnerable, the prevention of re-offending and the provision of physical security measures to those who most need them.
- The force has a systematic approach to reducing crime. The deployment of resources is flexible and closely aligned to seasonal crime trends and emerging offending patterns.

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

North Wales Police is victim-focused in much of its activity, although in a number of specific areas we found shortcomings in relation to the identification and management of vulnerable victims.

HMIC found good knowledge of the Code of Practice for Victims of Crime among investigators, and a review of a small number of assault investigation files showed that 'victim contracts' are used to set out victims' expectations about frequency and means of contact. The force uses victim personal statements which outline factors such as the psychological and emotional consequences of becoming a victim. However, the force should do more to understand and address low levels of victim satisfaction, particularly relating to the follow-up service that they receive.

Frontline staff explained to us that they are more satisfied at work focusing on care and compassion for victims rather than traditional performance targets which are more focused on whether or not a case could be brought before court. The force also has safeguarding arrangements in place with effective support provided by external service providers for vulnerable victims. These range from housing support for those affected by anti-social behaviour to independent advocates in the sexual assault referral centres (SARC¹).

There is a degree of continuity in victim care from the point that calls for assistance to North Wales Police are received, through to the time that a victim is called to court to give evidence. This is demonstrated by, for example, the way that call management operatives assess each caller using a threat, risk and harm matrix.

One positive development is the recent introduction of the first North Wales MASH in Wrexham. The hub is council-managed and well-staffed. The service addresses vulnerability relating to child protection, domestic abuse and vulnerable adults. It has representatives from social care, health, education and probation and is in receipt daily of high-risk referrals from North Wales Police. It is supported by all organisations involved and considered a good mechanism for addressing high-risk vulnerability and will soon be expanding its remit to receive referrals from other service providers. The force should continue negotiations with other county councils to embed this model across the force area.

¹ SARC: a medical facility to deal with victims of rape and sexual assault. The facility provides welfare services for the victim as well as a medical examination that collects any available forensic evidence.

Investigation

HMIC found some inconsistency in the quality of investigations carried out by North Wales Police, and is particularly concerned by the way in which crimes are allocated to investigative teams. In some cases, the allocation of domestic abuse investigations to detectives appears to lack a clear rationale, or information about risk assessment of the victim. There is also evidence to suggest that crimes are not routinely allocated to investigators on the basis of risk and victim vulnerability, but rather on the basis of the offence type.

The force should also consider the effect of this variance on other organisations. Independent domestic abuse advisors who support victims enjoy first class interactions with specially trained officers in the public protection unit (PPU), but this is not true of other investigative units who do not understand the advisors' role and refuse to pass on information for fear of data protection breaches.

Investigation plans are used across the force to varying degrees. They are most effective in specialist investigation teams. This is notably so in the Amethyst teams who investigate allegations of rape. There is some good use of investigation plans by first line supervisors in directing burglary investigations. However, HMIC found evidence that the use of investigation plans is less consistent in relation to non-specialist crime. Our review of investigation files revealed incomplete application of investigation plans and occasional 'golden hour' opportunities being missed. There were a number of occasions when the timeliness and supervision of the victims' needs were lacking, and one instance where a case was discontinued as a result of enquiries not being completed.

HMIC found that training, skills and accreditation of investigators is generally of a good standard. The force takes a considered approach to the professional development of detectives. They are tutored in addition to their initial accreditation and career pathways then ensure their exposure to different experiences in the force's diverse investigative teams. This has the dual benefit of both valuing the workforce and building resilience and capability in the force.

Tackling repeat and prolific offenders

The force considers that a minority of offenders commit the most crime and cause the most harm to the communities of North Wales. HMIC found that offender management plays an important role in preventing crime at different levels of criminality. A dedicated integrated offender management unit (IOMU) team has been established in Wrexham to address the most problematic and prolific offenders. The IOMU complies with a model promoted by the All Wales Criminal Justice Board known as the Cymru 'eight ways' scheme. This outlines the services or 'pathways' that offenders can access, e.g. drugs intervention, support with benefits and debt, training and employment. The unit is regularly represented by the police, probation and councils who collectively consider the most meaningful way to manage an individual's cycle of offending and provide pathway support.

Offenders who are on the offender management programme are assessed by way of a risk-scoring matrix. Offenders are either supported through 'rehabilitate and resettle' schemes, or are identified through a 'catch and convict' policy if they do not comply with the requirements of the programme.

Frequent criminal record checks are made to assess the impact of the programme; repeated arrests and convictions have dropped markedly among the unit's cohorts.

Other individuals whose offending patterns do not justify IOMU intervention, are nevertheless referred to multi-agency problem-solving groups or anti-social behaviour tasking meetings where community based interventions e.g., breaches of tenancy or parenting orders, are designed to curb offending.

Learning from experience

HMIC found evidence that the force is committed to organisational learning. A learning and development programme is chaired bi-monthly by an assistant chief constable to examine sources of learning, for example, the IPCC's 'Learning the Lessons' publication. At an operational level there is evidence of energy and enthusiasm to seek out continual improvement, for example, best practice from other forces regarding burglary prevention and reference to the 'What Works' toolkits made available by the College of Policing.

There have also been operational benefits from a pilot programme being conducted in Flintshire known as 'systems thinking'. This involves working with frontline staff to find out their ideas about how best to improve efficiency. This has led to adjustments to how prosecution files are assembled and how best to embed a new system of digitised interviewing of detainees.

At a strategic level, the use of statistical control charts and predictive analysis software are affording the service a better understanding of offending patterns and how best to deploy resources to reduce crime and prevent re-offending.

However, a number of operational staff stated they were unaware of how learning from the past and learning from others is collated and prioritised by the force. A number also expressed uncertainty about how expertise could be disseminated, despite being aware of case studies which would be of benefit to others.

In the 12 months to the end of 31 July 2014, North Wales Police opened three serious case reviews. During the same period, no serious case reviews, including action plans, were completed.

Recommendations

- North Wales Police should continue to work with all local authorities in North Wales to secure their participation in the established multi-agency safeguarding hub (MASH).
- Within three months North Wales Police should develop and begin 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 for 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;
 - (c) investigations are allocated to appropriately trained staff in accordance with an assessment of threat, harm and risk; and
 - (d) there is appropriate monitoring and oversight of investigative quality.

Summary

Requires improvement

- The force works well with other organisations to manage the most prolific offenders. This approach provides support to individuals with specific needs, e.g., drug dependency, as well as targeting those who turn away from rehabilitation and continue to break the law.
- HMIC has concerns about the quality of criminal investigations, in particular in relation to ensuring that crime investigations are allocated to appropriately qualified staff.

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

Procedures in relation to the reporting of anti-social behaviour, assessing the risk factors of victims and engagement with external service providers are rigorous. This means that victims are protected and measures are put in place to tackle offending.

An initial assessment of victim vulnerability is made by control room staff using all of the force intelligence systems, victims with particular needs are then referred to problem solving groups which provide ready access to support. A good example was noted in Flintshire where council neighbourhood wardens work closely with PCSOs; here victims who feel unsafe in their homes can be referred to the wardens who are trained to upgrade household security with locks and window bars.

Repeat victims of anti-social behaviour are subject to more intensive case management. For example relationships developed between the Association of Voluntary Organisations in Wrexham (AVOW) and the local police have been effective in resolving repeated anti-social behaviour nuisances by providing family support.

HMIC observed detailed victims contracts and effective PCSO-led case management. This shows that the force supports victims and tackles those people whose behaviour reduces the quality of life in North Wales.

Partnership working

HMIC found evidence of strong relationships between the force and partners in relation to tackling anti-social behaviour. Problem solving groups or anti-social behaviour meetings provide forums to which vulnerable victims can be referred. Data-sharing forms the basis upon which joint working actions plans are developed and monitored. Data-sharing appears to work best in established joint-working forums such as the SARC and IOMU. This appears to be less evident when it is used ad hoc on occasions which are dependent on different protocols with six different councils.

Local knowledge and service provision are strong factors in success. HMIC found the same problem solving approach being adopted across the different council areas to address anti-social behaviour nuisances. Addressing parking problems associated with Friday prayers in a Mosque and the removal of benches on which youngsters gathered outside takeaway

shops are good examples. More in-depth work is also under way with Bangor University to understand the causes of anti-social behaviour and their effects on communities. This has led to the evaluation of targeted patrols in Abergele and Conwy in preparation for this tactic to be used more widely.

Improving services to the public

HMIC found good evidence of force communications both to promote its values and to gain better understanding of community needs. A 'social matrix' approach is adopted and messaging is tailored to local need. Corporate, bi-lingual use of social media/local media is used to communicate strongly branded crime-fighting campaigns e.g. Operation Scorpion, Operation Spider, using the headline, 'One punch can ruin two lives'.

To identify local concerns, officers and PCSOs use micro-blogs, Facebook and Twitter as well as more traditional 'surgeries' to canvas opinions of communities. Twitter and Online Watch Link (OWL) are also used on a daily basis to message crime alerts and witness appeals.

The force's policing style is founded on 'Put Prevention First'. It is geared to identifying early indicators of offending and speedy disposal. This is universally supported by partners and communities as the best method of supporting residents and keeping young people out of trouble. Partners believe the police are the most adept at identifying these indicators and consider the service they provide to communities is first class.

In the 12 months to March 2014, North Wales Police recorded 24,761 incidents of anti-social behaviour. This is a reduction of 2 percent against the previous 12 months.

Summary

Good

- North Wales Police has developed strong relationships with other organisations in order to tackle anti-social behaviour. This is primarily based on routine information-sharing, timely needs assessments of victims and active participation of other organisations. The force's role is pivotal in uniting public services to support the most vulnerable.
- The force uses communication well both to set out its values and gain a better understanding of community needs. Local press, social media and community alerts both inform the public and seek out feedback on what is most important to them.
- The force takes early action to encourage offenders to moderate their behaviour, and to target those who offend repeatedly. The commitment to victims means that anti-social behaviour is a clear priority in North Wales.

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.