



Inspecting policing
in the public interest

Crime inspection 2014

Thames Valley Police

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How effective is the force at cutting crime?

Overall summary

Thames Valley Police has a good track record at cutting crime; it has seen one of the biggest reductions in crime and anti-social behaviour in England and Wales. The force has low overall crime levels and maintains high levels of victim satisfaction.

The force has a good understanding of local priorities and clearly targets resources at fighting crimes that matter most to local people. In spite of financial austerity and cuts elsewhere in the force, it has managed to put extra staff in frontline roles and specialist teams investigating crimes such as child sexual exploitation and on-line grooming. HMIC found that the force is effective in investigating offending, with well trained staff and well managed investigations. Although victim satisfaction is high, more work needs to be done to ensure victims receive an improved level of service from officers investigating their crimes. Victims need to be kept informed about what is happening with their cases.

Neighbourhood officers are focusing on preventing crimes and resolving local problems. They work well with partners to tackle community concerns, in particular anti-social behaviour, and there has been a reduction in the number of incidents reported. The rate of anti-social behaviour in Thames Valley is now under half that seen across England and Wales.

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 Thames Valley 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?

Good

Crime has fallen faster in the Thames Valley Police area than elsewhere over recent years. It has been cut by 30 percent since 2010. It continued to fall last year. Crime rates across most crime types are now lower than in England and Wales as a whole.

Thames Valley Police has an effective and mature approach to understanding and assessing the most important threats and risks to communities in the area. The force makes sure that it puts resources into dealing with local priorities. For example, in spite of financial austerity, it has increased the number of officers on the front line and invested in specialist teams to deal with child sexual exploitation and online grooming.

How effective is the force at investigating offending?

Good

Thames Valley Police has a comprehensive approach to assessing risks to victims of crime and ensuring an appropriate response. HMIC found that investigations of crime are generally carried out to a good standard by well trained and skilled officers.

The force works well in identifying and disrupting organised crime groups and also in working with other organisations to prevent re-offending among those who pose the greatest risk of harm to their communities.

The force has a positive and improving approach to learning. It is evident that it is striving to understand and learn from what works in order to improve services. The developments in evidence-based policing to improve investigations, and reduce and prevent crime are encouraging.

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

Good

People living in the Thames Valley police area are less likely to be affected by anti-social behaviour than almost anywhere else in the country. Rates of anti-social behaviour are lower here than in England and Wales. Tackling anti-social behaviour is a priority for the force and officers and staff understand this.

The force provides dedicated officers in each local policing area who oversee the response and provide guidance to other staff dealing with anti-social behaviour.

Thames Valley Police has a rigorous approach to assessing the level of risk posed by anti-social behaviour. Repeat victims are generally identified at first point of contact, and where a caller is assessed as being vulnerable, the police response is enhanced to meet their individual needs.

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

Good

The force works well across a complex array of local organisations and we found good examples of the police working with other local agencies to share information and provide a better joined-up response to prevent crime and reduce offending.

How effective is the force at investigating offending?

Good

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

Good

Staff have developed strong relationships with other organisations and work together effectively using a range of tactics to prevent and tackle anti-social behaviour issues.

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 other 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.

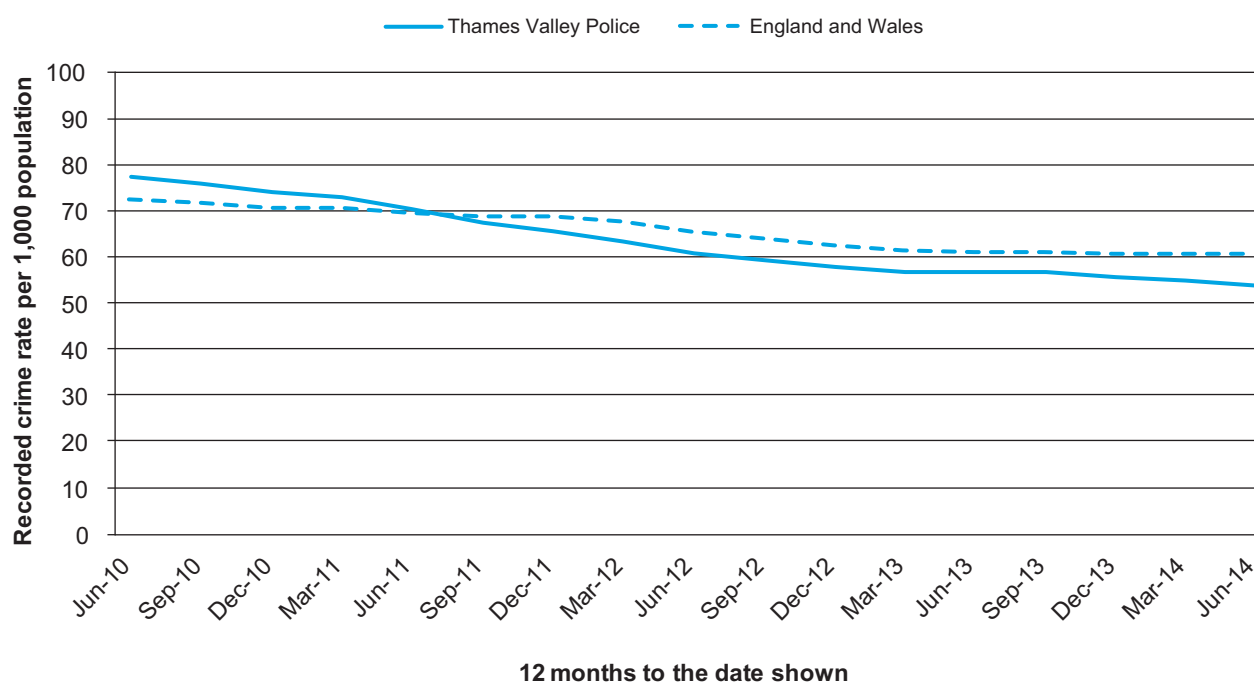
Crime

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 30 percent in Thames Valley 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 31 percent in Thames Valley compared with a reduction of 16 percent across England and Wales.

During the 12 months up to the end of June 2014, recorded crime (excluding fraud) in Thames Valley reduced by 5 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 Thames Valley (per 1,000 population) compared with the rest of England and Wales.

12 months to June 2014	Thames Valley Police rate (per 1,000 population)	England and Wales total rate (per 1,000 population)
Crime excluding fraud	53.8	60.7
Victim-based crime	47.9	53.9
Sexual offences	1.2	1.2
Violence with injury	3.7	5.9
Burglary in a dwelling*	6.0	8.9
Anti-social behaviour incidents*	15.9	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

Thames Valley's detection rate (for crimes excluding fraud) for the 12 months to the end of March 2014 was 25 percent which was broadly in line with 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

Thames Valley Police has a clear focus on preventing and reducing crime which is articulated in the force and police and crime commissioner's plans. The police and crime commissioner sets out his priorities for the police and other agencies through the police and crime plan. His first priority is to cut crimes that are of most concern to the public which includes reducing dwelling burglaries, tackling rural crime, safeguarding vulnerable people, tackling domestic and interpersonal abuse and reducing anti-social behaviour. Local organisations and communities are encouraged to contribute to these crime and community safety priorities through a series of different events. Senior police leaders sit on a variety of high-level groups with other organisations to agree and develop a joint strategic approach to tackle crime, anti-social behaviour and community concerns.

The force has a mature process for developing its own strategic assessment of the threats and risks facing the communities in the Thames Valley area, also taking into account national threats. The force is working hard to address the police and crime commissioner's priorities as well as demonstrating a strong commitment to delivering neighbourhood policing. In general, officers and staff are aware of the force priorities and understand the need to focus on threat, harm and risk particularly for those individuals identified as repeat or vulnerable victims.

In spite of severe financial constraints and cuts elsewhere in the force, Thames Valley Police has increased the number of frontline policing resources which means the force has been able to put more officers where they are most needed. An annual review of resource allocation takes into account any emerging crime risks as well as the volume of crimes and incidents reported. We saw good examples where the force has changed its approach and reallocated resources to meet priorities better, for instance in preventing and investigating child abuse, in particular child sexual exploitation, online investigations and in how it addresses rural crime.

Quality of victim contact

Thames Valley Police promotes a victim-centred approach through its policies, communications to officers and staff and how it provides policing services to victims.

Training in the requirements of the national Code of Practice for Victims of Crime has been provided to officers and staff who regularly come into contact with the public. They understand what they need to provide for victims and when to offer enhanced support where appropriate. Those working for other organisations confirmed that special measures to make court appearances less intimidating, such as enabling victims to give evidence from behind a screen, are routinely considered by the police, especially in high-risk domestic abuse cases where safety plans are created to protect victims and witnesses.

Victim contact is one area in which the force has been trying to improve. Force guidance states that it is the investigating officer's responsibility to keep the victim updated with how the case is progressing, for example, if the offender is bailed. However, the victim is not always being updated.

An important measure of the impact on 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, Thames Valley had a victim satisfaction rate of 88.7 percent (± 1.8 percent) which is higher than the satisfaction rate in England and Wales of 85.0 percent (± 0.2 percent). Its current rate is broadly in line with the 88.1 percent (± 1.8 percent) recorded for Thames Valley in the previous year.

Regular victim satisfaction surveys are undertaken as required nationally. In addition, work has been undertaken with the Rape Crisis and Victim Support Scheme to understand and improve victim service. The force also seeks feedback on a less formal basis through community groups such as Neighbourhood Watch, neighbourhood action groups (NAGs) and 'Have Your Say' neighbourhood meetings.

Neighbourhood officers have developed strong working relationships with communities in their areas. In addition to the face to face contact, the force uses a wide range of different methods to communicate with the public including Twitter, Facebook, web forums, email and text messages. A system called Thames Valley Alert has approximately 80,000 people who are signed up to receive text messages or emails about crimes and incidents in their area.

Use of police tactics

The force uses a range of tactics to prevent crime and reduce offending and there is a strong partnership commitment to divert those at risk of offending.

There is a daily tasking and co-ordinating process which examines crime patterns and areas of risk both local and force level. This includes managing vulnerable people and high risk offenders by allocating tasks to different teams to prevent further crimes from occurring. In addition to police-only meetings, local policing areas also hold tasking meetings with other organisations including housing, local authority anti-social behaviour co-ordinators and licensing officers. This allows them to work together and direct their resources jointly to prevent and tackle crime and anti-social behaviour.

There is a variety of crime prevention initiatives which have had a positive impact on individuals and communities. Thames Valley Alert system is postcode specific so messages can be targeted at specific communities. There are some good examples of the force using text message alerts to rural communities, particularly where hare coursing and hay fires are of concern. Following burglaries in urban and rural areas, neighbourhood officers use

the 'cocooning' tactic to alert residents living in the vicinity of the burglary. They warn local residents about the risk of becoming a victim and advise them of relevant security measures including giving out 'cocoon packs' with marker pens and window stickers.

Officers regularly use body worn video cameras to help reduce crime or to provide evidence when dealing with incidents. This has proved effective for evidence gathering at domestic abuse incidents, especially when a victim is reluctant to pursue the case or to give evidence themselves.

The force runs two cadet programmes to engage with young people to help divert them from committing crime. Approximately one-quarter of them are considered to be at risk of offending. The force intends that a further four programmes will begin later in 2014.

The force makes good use of prevention orders, domestic violence protection orders and abduction warning notices to prevent re-offending. In particular, child abduction warning notices are being used for safeguarding vulnerable young girls who may be at risk of being sexually exploited.

Organised crime group (OCG) management and disruption is robust with other forces and organisations being involved when needed. Dedicated intelligence and investigation teams have responsibility for identifying and disrupting OCGs. Actions to disrupt OCGs at a local level are discussed through the tasking and coordinating processes, but there is a need for more information to be shared with neighbourhood officers to understand better who is operating in their area and to assist in disrupting OCG members where appropriate.

Partnership working and information sharing

Thames Valley Police works with partners to identify and reduce vulnerability. Strong examples of joint working are the Kingfisher Unit in Oxford which has social workers and police working alongside each other to prevent and investigate child sexual abuse and the management of offenders through the integrated Offender Unit (IOM) programme.

Thames Valley Police has strong working relationships with partners. These partnerships help to identify and address crime and anti-social behaviour across the force area. Because of the scale of the Thames Valley police area, it works with 16 different local authorities which adds to the complexity of working with others and means, for example, there need to be 12 multi-agency risk assessment conferences across the force. However, the force has overcome a lot of difficulties it encountered initially when trying to develop arrangements to work with other organisations. In particular, multi-agency safeguarding hubs (MASHs) have now been introduced in three areas of the force, with more planned. Officers and staff from different organisations are able to share information and improve working together to protect vulnerable people.

The force has a good track record in addressing so-called 'hidden crimes' once they come to notice. Operation Bullfinch was a significant investigation into child sexual exploitation undertaken by Thames Valley Police. The force recognised there was a need to increase staffing within the child abuse investigation teams, and moved additional staff to assist as well as diverting the major crime team to provide support.

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 respond 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 Thames Valley Police which prioritises certain areas to improve its response to dealing with domestic abuse and responds to HMIC recommendations. The force told us that it has considered all the areas set out above and has developed an action plan which contains only those areas where most focus is required to improve the service.

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 the public in the Thames Valley Police area can have confidence that generally the force provides a good service to victims of domestic abuse and helps to keep them safe. Staff demonstrated a good understanding of what they need to do to provide a good service to victims.

Victims who are at greatest risk of harm receive a more bespoke service from specialist domestic abuse officers. However, there is more the force could do for victims assessed to be medium or standard-risk.

Recommendations

- Within three months, Thames Valley Police should ensure neighbourhood staff are provided with appropriate information and clarity regarding their roles and responsibilities in disrupting and dismantling organised crime groups.

Summary

Good

- Crime has fallen faster in the Thames Valley Police area than elsewhere over recent years. It has been cut by 30 percent since 2010. It continued to fall last year. Crime rates across most crime types are now lower than in England and Wales as a whole.
- Thames Valley Police has an effective and mature approach to understanding and assessing the most important threats and risks to communities in the area. The force makes sure that it puts resources into dealing with local priorities. For example, in spite of financial austerity, it has increased the number of officers on the front line and invested in specialist teams to deal with child sexual exploitation and online grooming.
- The force works well across a complex array of local organisations and we found good examples of the police working together with other local agencies to share information and provide a better joined-up response to prevent crime and reduce offending.

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

When members of the public contact the police for assistance it is generally by telephone. Call handlers have access to systems which enable them to check previous history about callers to assist in identifying vulnerability, for example, if they are elderly or suffering from mental illness, or if they are a victim of repeated crime and anti-social behaviour.

Following that initial assessment of risk, the call-handler decides on the most appropriate police response and how quick that should be. Examples were provided of local detectives responding in the first instance to priority crimes such as burglary or robbery, or child abuse officers responding to incidents involving children at risk.

Safety of victims of crime is a clear priority for staff and they take steps to reduce the risk of harm to the victim and others who may be vulnerable, including children. For example in the case of a domestic abuse victim, officers will make a referral to the independent domestic violence advisers who can provide additional support to the victim.

Investigation

Thames Valley Police does not have a crime screening-out policy which means each report of crime is considered for the most appropriate response. If a telephone investigation is considered appropriate, in most cases an officer will not visit; the crime is recorded by the force control room and enquiry department. HMIC has estimated that the force records approximately 38 percent of the total of its recorded crime through this method.

During HMIC's recent crime data integrity inspection, issues were identified within the appointment system used for officers to attend and deal with some types of non-priority incidents. There were instances of appointments not being finalised or crimes going unrecorded. This means that the service to the victim is not as effective as it should be, and that some crimes are being recorded late as a result.

The force has developed a process called the 'crime continuum' which provides guidance on which resource should be allocated to crimes, although it needs to be applied flexibly to ensure that professional judgment can still be used to consider the response against threat, harm and risk rather than just the seriousness of the crime. There is flexibility and

understanding of demand between local and force-wide investigation teams which allows them to provide an effective response to priority crimes such as burglary, sexual offences and violence.

The force has invested in an effective prosecution training course for officers which has improved the quality of investigations and supervision. During reality testing officers clearly understood the need to provide a good response within the first hour of a report of crime being received by police. Our review of a sample of investigation files showed them to be of a good standard and well managed with clear lines of investigation that are documented and supervised. However, we did find that on occasions, investigations were not being progressed as quickly as they should as a result of officers' shift patterns or officers being taken away to support work elsewhere in the force.

Some investigators have received a one week cyber-crime training course which will improve the force response to increases in cyber-enabled and digital crime. The force acknowledges that with this increase comes added demand for technical forensic analysis and the need to respond to this.

Tackling repeat and prolific offenders

The force has good arrangements in place to work with others to manage the most prolific offenders who pose a risk to the public. The force recognises that preventing re-offending requires a joined-up approach from all local organisations. It operates an integrated offender management ¹ (IOM) approach which brings together the police and local authorities and also involves the probation service, the prison service, the Department for Work and Pensions and housing providers. The teams work proactively with other organisations, sharing information and taking action to help serious and serial offenders reduce their offending. There were good examples of offenders who had stopped offending when they had been on the IOM programme, such as those who have been on the Buddy tagging system (an ankle tagging system which provides live-time tracking of someone wearing the device).

¹ The force (and probation service) define a prolific offender for IOM purposes as one who is assessed as presenting a high likelihood of re-offending or a high level of substance misuse, who presents high persistence in particularly serious acquisitive crime or other local community safety partnership priority concerns or who is demonstrating poor compliance with probation supervision.

Learning from experience

The force is improving how it evaluates what works, and how it shares learning and good practice. It is developing an evidence-based approach to delivering policing services. The force has set up an organisational learning group, chaired by an assistant chief constable, which aims to identify what works and make sure that learning is shared widely across the force.

Officers and staff have access to toolkits on the force intranet which assist them in dealing with particular crime and anti-social behaviour problems. We found that staff valued these toolkits as a guide to good practice and found them helpful and easy to access.

Detectives in Thames Valley Police are appropriately trained and qualified to perform investigative roles. Investigators undertake the national crime investigation programme to achieve the Professionalising Investigation Programme accreditation. Officers who investigate serious crime or deal with victims with specific needs in addition receive specialist training and development.

Recommendations

- Within three months, Thames Valley Police should develop and begin implementation of an action plan to improve the timeliness of investigations undertaken by officers on rotating shift patterns.

Summary

Good

- Thames Valley Police has a comprehensive approach to assessing risks to victims of crime and ensuring an appropriate response. HMIC found that investigations of crime are generally carried out to a good standard by well-trained and skilled officers
- The force works well in identifying and disrupting organised crime groups, and also in working with other organisations to prevent re-offending among those who pose the greatest risk of harm to their communities.
- The force has a positive and improving approach to learning. It is evident that it is striving to understand and learn from what works in order to improve services. The developments in evidence-based policing to improve investigations, and reduce and preventing crime are encouraging.

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

Thames Valley Police is focused on preventing and tackling anti-social behaviour. Neighbourhood teams consider anti-social behaviour to be their main priority area, and they demonstrated good local knowledge and a comprehensive approach to the management of local anti-social behaviour issues and community concerns.

Neighbourhood officers engage with their communities through a variety of methods to understand local issues better and provide feedback on actions taken to tackle anti-social behaviour. They include, neighbourhood action group (NAG) and have your say meetings, mobile police bus, newsletters, Thames Valley Alert and social media such as Facebook and Twitter. Neighbourhood officers also engage with specific groups such as Neighbourhood Watch, local businesses, young people and minority ethnic communities to exchange information about local issues.

The force has strengthened how it identifies repeat and vulnerable victims when a report is first received in the police control room. An initial risk assessment is completed which allows the police response to be tailored to meet victims' needs. An anti-social behaviour matrix is then used to identify the most vulnerable people or hotspot locations which can then be provided with an enhanced service, for example, allowing the police to visit victims more regularly to provide reassurance and support. The force also mounts special operations to reduce offending and tackle specific aspects of anti-social behaviour, for example, Operation VERA is aimed at providing an enhanced service for victims over a certain age with PCSOs carrying out follow-up visits. Each neighbourhood has individuals who have been identified as VERA victims. In Oxford a mental health professional and a police officer patrol together to provide a triage system for calls for assistance involving people potentially suffering from mental health issues to provide a better service.

Local policing teams make good use of anti-social behaviour toolkits which help them to manage and resolve anti-social behaviour problems. Each of the local policing areas has a dedicated officer who is able to provide advice and support to staff investigating incidents involving anti-social behaviour.

Partnership working

Thames Valley Police has established strong working relationships with partners including those from housing associations, mental health teams and licensing officers across the force area. Anti-social behaviour meetings at different levels with other organisations provide opportunities for all involved to develop joint action plans, monitor how effective their actions are in preventing and reducing anti-social behaviour, and at minimising the impact on victims.

Some local policing areas have officers and local authority staff jointly tackling anti-social behaviour and working as co-located teams from police stations or local authority premises. The local policing area anti-social behaviour officer helps to provide a consistent approach to the management of anti-social behaviour and engagement with partners. This joint working improves information sharing to address local problems. There were good examples of the police working together with others to tackle persistent anti-social behaviour, especially the mental health street triage in Oxford, and intervention programmes with troubled families.

Improving services to the public

People living in the Thames Valley police area are less likely to be affected by anti-social behaviour than almost anywhere else in the country. Rates of anti-social behaviour are lower here than in England and Wales, by over a half. The rate continued to fall last year as well; in the 12 months to March 2014, Thames Valley Police recorded 36,752 incidents of anti-social behaviour. This is a reduction of 12 percent against the previous 12 months.

There has been extensive use of a range of tactics and police powers to deal with anti-social behaviour including constructive joint work at both a strategic and an operational level with other organisations.

Training for all neighbourhood staff in the use of the new police powers for tackling anti-social behaviour has begun. The force intends that this training will reinforce the message that tackling anti-social behaviour is a priority for the force, and give staff improved awareness on how they can tackle it.

The police and crime commissioner has provided funding for staff to have restorative justice training. It is evident that restorative interventions are being used appropriately with staff speaking with the victim to ensure they are supportive of it as a means of dealing with the offender.

Summary

Good

- People living in the Thames Valley police area are less likely to be affected by anti-social behaviour than almost anywhere else in the country. Rates of anti-social behaviour are lower here than in England and Wales. Tackling anti-social behaviour is a priority for the force and officers and staff understand this.
- The force provides dedicated officers in each local policing area who oversee the response and provide guidance to other staff dealing with anti-social behaviour.
- Thames Valley Police has a rigorous approach to assessing the level of risk posed by anti-social behaviour. Repeat victims are generally identified at first point of contact and, where a caller is assessed as being vulnerable, the police response is enhanced to meet their individual needs.
- Staff have developed strong relationships with other organisations and work together effectively using a range of tactics to prevent and tackle anti-social behaviour issues.

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.