



Inspecting policing
in the public interest



Anti-social Behaviour Inspection Report

West Mercia Police

West Mercia experiences a relatively moderate level of anti-social behaviour (ASB) and a lower level of crime per head of population.

Our ASB review

In Spring 2010, Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC) carried out a review of anti-social behaviour in England and Wales. This included asking victims about their experience of reporting ASB to the police, and inspecting the quality of the processes that forces use in tackling and responding to the problem.

Working with the Police Science Institute at Cardiff University, we then used these results to answer the question of how the police can best tackle ASB.

What works?

Forces have the best chance to give victims a good service if they do three key things:

- Brief all relevant officers and staff (including neighbourhood policing teams, officers who respond to emergencies and CID officers) regularly and thoroughly about local ASB issues;
- Regularly gather and analyse data and information about ASB places, offenders and victims in their area, and use this information to allocate resources to tackle the problems; and
- Provide their neighbourhood policing teams with the right tools and resources to tackle ASB, and then monitor the plans the teams put in place to resolve local ASB issues.

This is how West Mercia Police is performing in these areas.

Are all relevant officers and staff regularly and thoroughly briefed about local ASB issues?

Response staff and local policing teams (LPTs, the West Mercia Police term for Neighbourhood Policing Teams) can access regular briefings on the force computer about ASB issues in their area. The quality of these briefings varies widely; sometimes there is too much information and it is out of date. However, in Shrewsbury, HMIC found good examples of comprehensive and up to date ASB briefing. All staff have access to an excellent IT system that analyses ASB in detail for their area for the last five days; this can be customised to any requested time period.

Good morale, positive attitudes and co-operation between LPTs and response officers is consistent across the force. However, CID staff are not routinely involved in briefings on ASB.

Is the force using ASB information to target its work in tackling ASB?

ASB performance is managed by analysing data and information about ASB to identify problem areas. Meetings to decide where police resources should be allocated are held at least once a month, and information on repeat and vulnerable ASB victims is considered in making these decisions in almost all neighbourhoods. Plans for ensuring the care of vulnerable ASB victims are in place across the force. These are referred to in management meetings and often include daily updates on any new developments. HMIC found some inconsistency in processes for allocating resources and plans for ensuring the care of vulnerable ASB victims, but this had already been identified through internal checks and plans to improve that had already started.

Do neighbourhood policing teams have the right tools and resources to tackle ASB, and are the plans they put in place to resolve local ASB issues monitored?

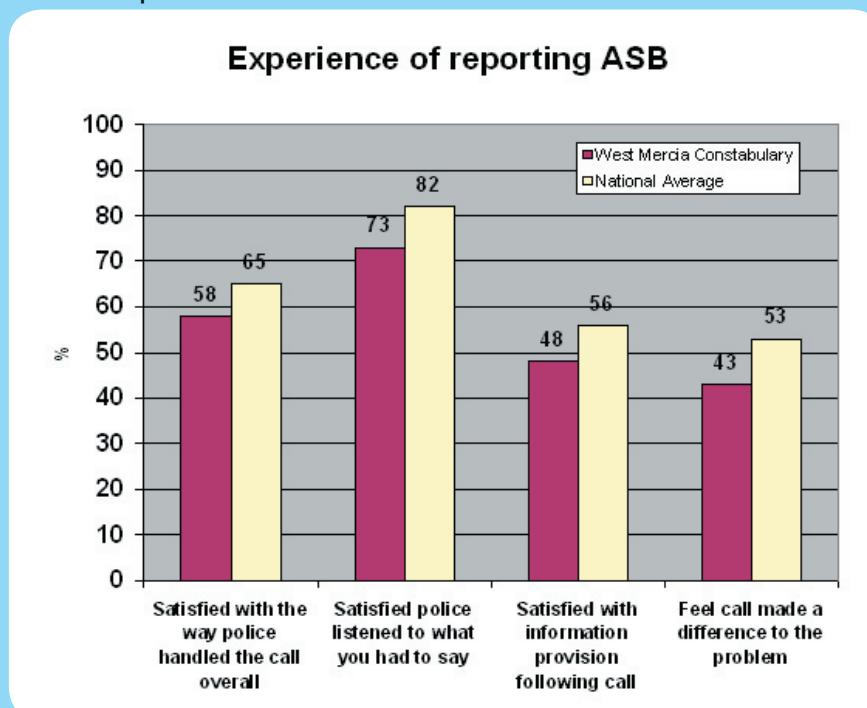
The local ASB units take responsibility in implementing the various tactics available to staff in tackling ASB, and these staff are clearly very up to date with available tactics and legislation to tackle ASB. The LPTs provide support, often in partnership with other agencies. HMIC found that all areas were putting in place detailed plans to solve long-term ASB problems. One example is the village of Highley where positive work, involving other agencies, to tackle ASB problems has resulted in the Highley 'Oscar' awards recognising the hard work of the community and public services. This often directly involves and supports young people and families in the area. Progress on actions to solve particular ASB problems is monitored, but there is no consistent force-wide system in place to manage and store ASB plans. This means that, while the outcomes speak for themselves, it was not easy to look at how decisions are made or how problems were solved, in order to evaluate success and identify what works best.

Is ASB a priority for the force?

ASB is a force priority and features strongly in the policing plan. This commitment to tackling ASB by partners is strong and has been evident over several years. Public expectations of tackling ASB are high and staff are aware of the importance of prioritising ASB. The 2010-2011 'ASB Strategy' was launched recently with a focus on partnership, offenders and supporting vulnerable victims. The level of resources devoted to ASB and the data and information analysed demonstrates a clear commitment to tackling ASB.

Results of the victim satisfaction survey

We surveyed 105 people who reported ASB in West Mercia during September 2009. They were asked a range of questions about their perceptions of ASB generally and their experience in reporting ASB to the police.



From the results, it can be seen that the force is performing broadly in line with the national average for the areas considered in the survey.

In addition to the above results, only about two thirds of those surveyed were satisfied the police had taken them seriously – significantly less than the national average. The force should look to improve this.

