A Step in the Right Direction

The policing of anti-social behaviour

ISBN: 978-1-84987-761-9

www.hmic.gov.uk

Contents

Executive summary

> *Anti-social behaviour (ASB) is a blight on the lives of millions who are directly affected by it; on the perceptions of millions more for whom it signals neglect in their neighbourhoods and the decline of whole towns and city areas; and on the reputation of the police who are often thought to be unconcerned or ineffectual. We need a new start.*
>
> HMIC (2010) *Stop the Rot*

Around 3.2 million incidents of anti-social behaviour were recorded by the police in England and Wales in 2010/11.[1] Accessible, transparent and regular information on what works best in tackling the problem will help the police to meet the needs of ASB victims, and to assess whether progress is being made.

In Spring 2010, Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC) therefore conducted a review to determine how well forces understood and responded to their local ASB problems. We also surveyed more than 5,500 members of the public who had recently reported ASB to the police (taking a sample from each force area), to find out about their experiences.

We committed at the time to repeating the review in 2012, to check on progress. This report summarises the national picture; individual force reports and the 2010 review is available on the HMIC website (www.hmic.gov.uk).

What we did

We repeated the main elements of our last review so that we could track progress since 2010. HMIC therefore inspected all 43 forces (which included holding focus groups and conducting interviews with relevant staff), and conducted a telephone survey of ASB victims (although we increased the sample size to more than 9,300).

For the first time, we also listened to recordings of more than 4,400 calls made to the police by victims of ASB, in order to assess whether they received the right response. Combined with our survey findings, this provided an unprecedented insight into what works from the victim's point of view, and so into how best to improve service.

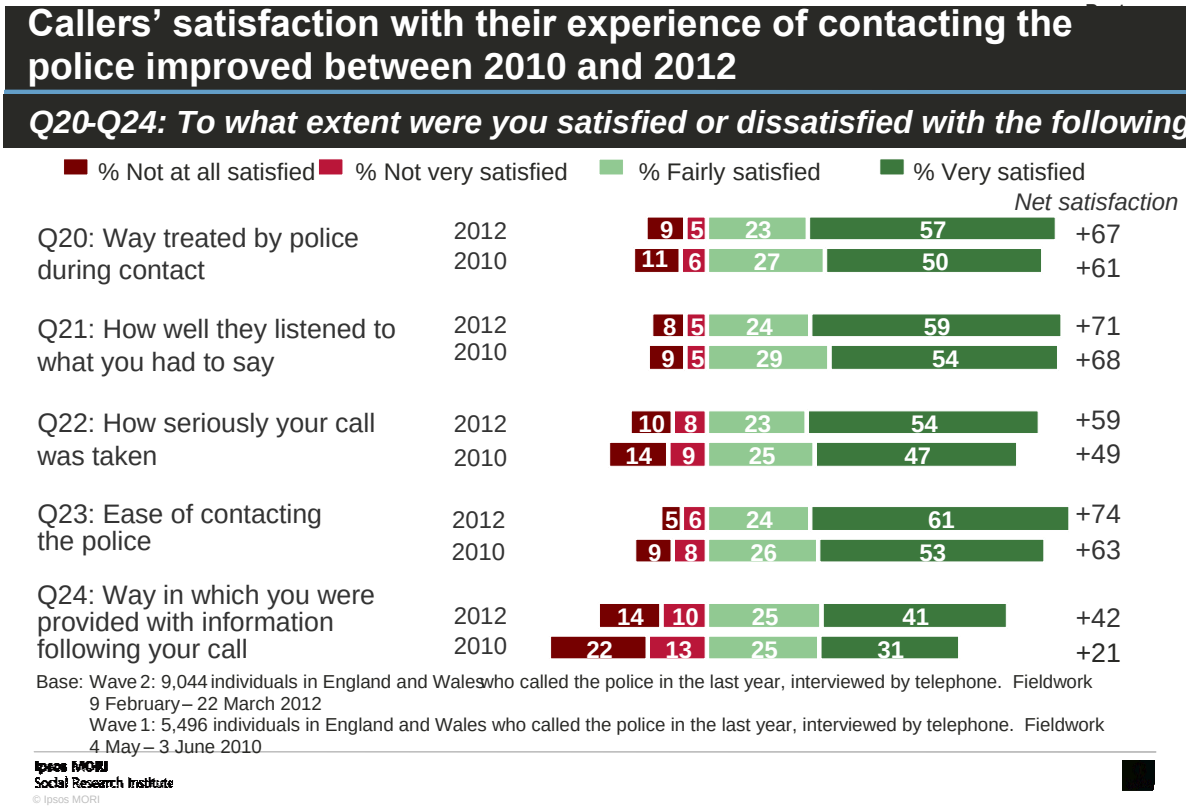
[1] Recorded by the police; the actual total of incidents is estimated to be far higher, as 'It is estimated that the public only report just over a quarter of incidents of ASB to the police.' See HMIC (2010) *Stop the Rot* p.2. Available from www.hmic.gov.uk

What victims said

Survey results indicate that since 2010 there has been an increase in victim satisfaction across a range of measures that focus on aspects of caller experience (although the levels still vary from force to force). The full Ipsos MORI survey findings are available at www.hmic.gov.uk; key findings are given below.

How the police dealt with the ASB incident they had called about

Victims are more satisfied than in 2010 with how well they were treated when they called; with the action taken as a result of their call; and with how seriously they were taken (although there was still variation between forces in all these responses).



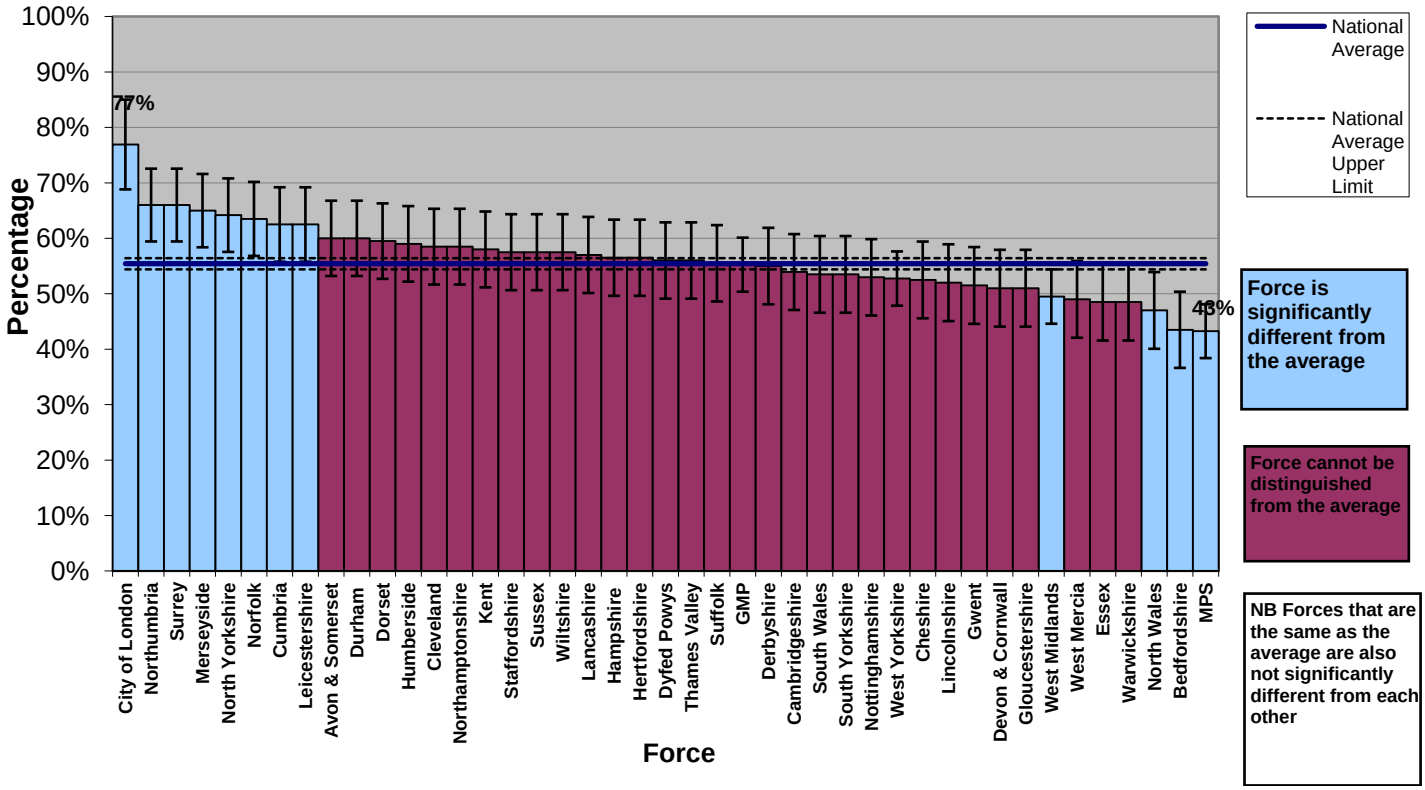
In cases where the police subsequently took action, 84% of victims (on average) were satisfied with what was done. The most frequent action taken was 'attending the scene'. A few forces received outstanding results in this area: for instance, when the police took action as a result of a call about ASB in Merseyside, 97% of victims were satisfied with the action taken.

Those forces at the higher end of the satisfaction scale were those that had both an effective policy outlining how to respond to ASB (including in what circumstances officers should attend in person), with call handlers who were clearly focused on the needs of the victims.

How the police deal with ASB in their local area

When asked for a view on how well the police deal with ASB in the local area, overall 55% of those surveyed reported that they were satisfied with this – although as the following chart shows, this figure masks variation from force to force (from 43% to 77%).

2012 Percentage of complainants who are satisfied with the way that anti-social behaviour is dealt with by the police in their local area



While this 55% is encouraging, 32% overall were still dissatisfied.[2] While again there was variation (from 17% to 43%), it cannot be acceptable that one in three victims across England and Wales does not get the service they feel they should: there is still therefore some way to go.

How good a job the force does in general

When asked to think about their force in general, 74% felt the police were doing a good job, compared with 69% in 2010.

Causes of ASB

We also asked victims for their views on the main causes of ASB. Alcohol was the most frequently given answer, with 28% citing it as the principal cause.[3]

[2] A further 3% of respondents answered 'Don't know', and 10% 'Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied'.

[3] Forces might wish to consider community alcohol partnerships, as mentioned in the recently published Government Alcohol Strategy, which sets out proposals "to crackdown on our 'binge drinking' culture, cut the alcohol fuelled violence and disorder that blights too many of our communities, and slash the number of people drinking to damaging levels." HM Government (2012) *The Government's Alcohol Strategy.* Available from www.homeoffice.gov.uk

What do these results tell us?

There are some statistically significant differences between the results of the 2010 and 2012 surveys, indicating that there have been some genuine improvements. However, there is also an indication that there is yet a way to go in terms of public perception. For instance, while there has been an increase in the proportion saying that the police took action (49% from 39%), half still do not think that this was the case.

Inspection findings

Victim satisfaction is also only one measure HMIC used to assess whether forces had improved how they tackled ASB; we also looked at the processes, systems and people in place to identify ASB problems early on, so that forces can act quickly to nip them in the bud, or deploy more resources to tackle longer term issues.

We found that there has been a noticeable improvement in leadership around tackling ASB (with many chief officers making it clear to staff that this is a priority for everyone in policing). The Service also has a better overall grip of the issue, as evidenced by improvements in the four areas that our 2010 research indicated were key to forces achieving good results for victims ('what works'). These improvements are summarised here, and covered in detail on pp.20-6.

Identifying repeat victims and vulnerable victims at the point of report

HMIC found that call handlers in every force were generally very clearly focused on the needs of the victims. There is also evidence of improvement in terms of follow-up contact and the information provided to victims on the progress of their cases.

In addition, forces have made efforts (some strenuous) to improve the way they identify repeat and vulnerable victims at the point of report, so they can prioritise calls and target resource to give extra support to those most at risk. Thirty-three forces now have computer systems which help them to identify repeat victims (compared to 28 in 2010), while 21 forces have computer systems that can flag vulnerable victims (which only eight could do in 2010).

However, it was clear from listening to calls made to forces that this investment in technology has not translated into consistent identification of these victims. Some forces still rely on IT systems to identify repeat victims. IT may help, and undoubtedly can do some of the 'heavy lifting' in spotting patterns: but even the most sophisticated programme cannot do all the work. For example, IT systems cannot identify if changed circumstances mean that someone who was not considered vulnerable when they called before should be classified as such now.

Similarly, software cannot pick up if a caller has repeatedly suffered ASB before, but is calling the police about it for the first time. This means some forces are only able to consider repeat *calls* rather than repeat *victimisation*. The distinction between 'caller' and 'victim' is a very important point and needs to be understood by forces.

The key element in identifying repeat victimisation and vulnerability at the point of report is the questioning carried out by the police officer or member of staff who is taking the call. We found that only five forces consistently question the caller to establish repeat victimisation, and no forces regularly use verbal checks to determine vulnerability. This means some victims are effectively slipping through the net, and not getting the extra support they may need. Improvements in this area must be the next important step in the journey to tackling ASB effectively.

Thoroughly and regularly briefing relevant staff on ASB issues

HMIC found that there have been improvements in the way officers and members of police staff are briefed about ASB. Briefings are generally delivered more regularly, in more depth, and to more staff, including those who respond to 999 calls, and investigative teams.

Tracking what is happening locally using data and intelligence

Performance management (i.e. oversight of how work on ASB cases is progressing) and the use of intelligence and analysis to spot trends and issues has improved across the Police Service. As a result, forces are now far more aware of the ASB issues facing them and their communities.

However, more needs to be done. While all forces have adopted new, simpler definitions of ASB (which describe incidents as personal, nuisance or environmental),[4] we found 30 forces did not consistently record the calls we listened to in the correct category. Incidents targeted personally are more likely to involve higher risk of harm: but of the 4,442 incidents we reviewed, 569 incidents which should have been recorded as personal were not.

Failing to categorise incidents correctly can mean that victims don't get the service they need, and that force's analysis of their local ASB issues is undermined (as they don't know the true 'full picture').

Ensuring neighbourhood teams are properly equipped and resourced to tackle ASB, and their actions are monitored

Many forces showed evidence of improvements to the way neighbourhood policing teams are managed and monitored. Indeed, we found that the performance of these teams in many forces makes up for shortcomings elsewhere in the system.

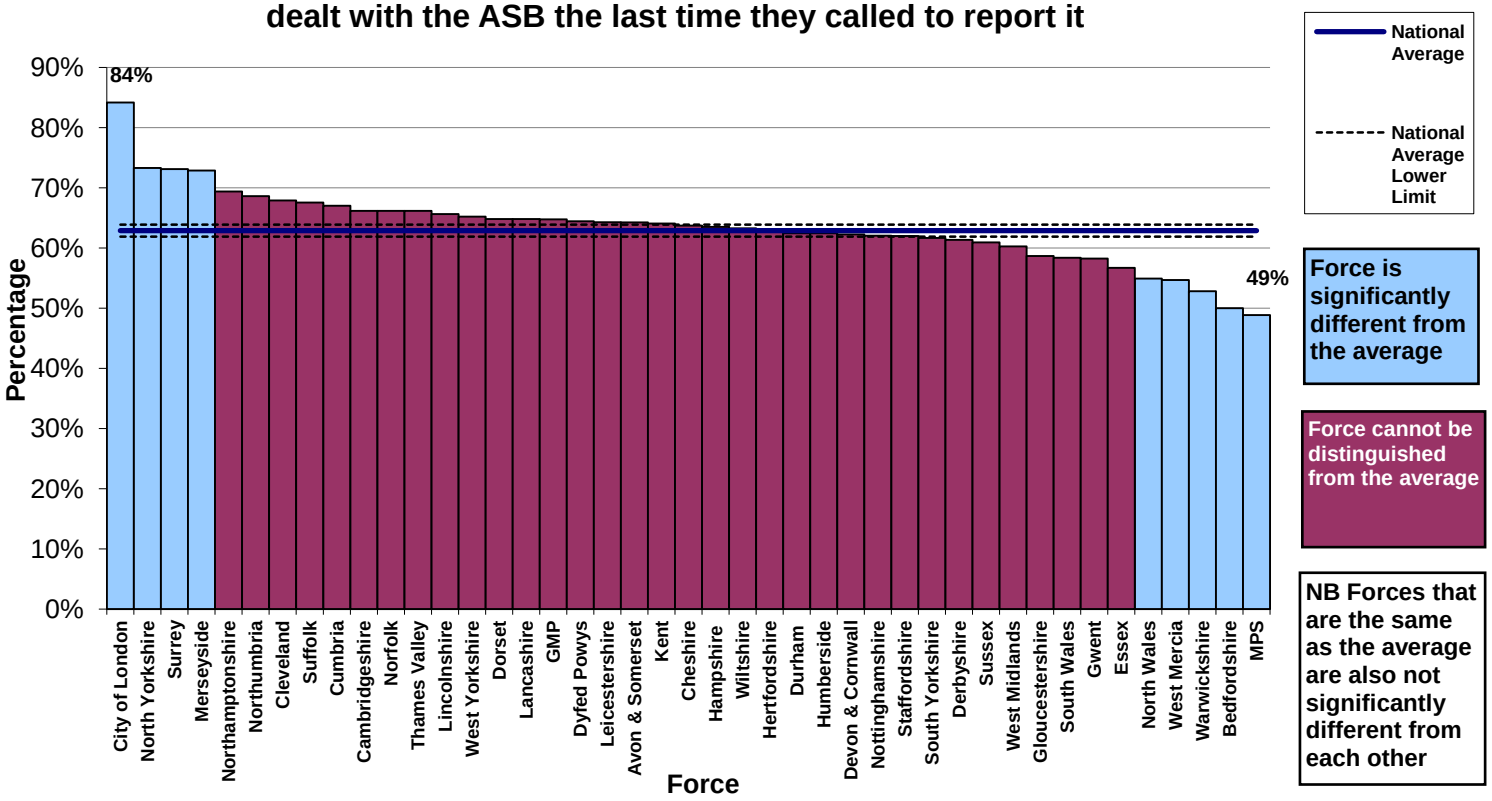
[4] These categories have been simplified from the 14 classifications previously used to allow more effective response to and analysis of ASB.

The link between the inspection and survey findings

HMIC compared each area's victim survey results with inspection findings for that force, to see if there was a link between the two sets of information. This analysis shows that:

- the forces performing less well in terms of victim satisfaction also performed less well in at least two of the four areas associated with success in tackling ASB (as outlined above); and
- those forces which performed well in these four success areas tended to be associated with higher victim satisfaction.

2012 Percentage of complainants satisfied overall with the way that the police dealt with the ASB the last time they called to report it



Conclusion

While we found variation in practice and performance, there is no doubt that the Police Service has improved its responsiveness to victims of ASB since HMIC last reported on this issue in 2010, with progress made in every force. The survey results confirm that victims have noticed these improvements.[5]

This is in spite of resource cutbacks, and is an achievement to be commended. However, although HMIC found improvements across all of England and Wales, not all forces are performing to consistently high standards: some were much weaker at tackling ASB to start with, and the pace and extent of progress since 2010 also varied. This is therefore only another step in delivering a much better service to victims.

[5] HMIC (2010) *Anti-social Behaviour: Stop the Rot.* Available from www.hmic.gov.uk

Introduction

> *I'm tired, nobody is wanting to help me. He's making my life miserable. Everybody is aware but nobody can help. I hope someone can help me eventually.*
>
> ASB victim (2012)

In 2010 HMIC carried out an extensive review of ASB, and identified the key things that forces should do to give themselves the best chance of providing good outcomes for the victims. The resulting report, *Anti-social behaviour: Stop the Rot,*[6] explained what we found; identified some good work; highlighted some issues that needed to be addressed; and identified 'what works' in dealing with the problem. It concluded that, even in times of financial constraint, the evidence suggested it would be a significant mistake for chief constables and police authorities to reduce the amount of work they do to tackle ASB.

HMIC committed at the time to return to assess the progress forces were making in tackling this corrosive issue. This report fulfils our commitment. Individual reports (which detail how each force is doing) are available from www.hmic.gov.uk.

The extent of the current problem

> *Research shows that the public draw no meaningful distinction between crime and ASB.*
>
> HMIC (2010) *Stop the Rot*

Last year (2011/12) the police recorded around 3.2 million incidents as ASB; but the *British Crime Survey* suggests that less than a third of ASB is reported.[7]

While there is available data regarding the number of incidents reported to the police, there is no information available nationally on how many are reported to other agencies (such as councils or social landlords, etc). This means both that the police, together with all partners, are already working with limited information as they try to better understand the nature of ASB as it impacts on their communities; and that, at best, they can analyse and understand only a fraction of the whole picture.

It is therefore critical that the data they do have is accurate and relevant. As Sparrow (2008) says *'…what gets…. reported might represent a thin sliver of*

[6] Available from www.hmic.gov.uk

[7] *British Crime Survey 2008/2009*. Available from www.homeoffice.gov.uk

the total underlying volume. Those responsible for controlling these problems clearly should treat properly those cases that come to light.'[8]

Our 2010 findings

In 2010, HMIC inspected all 43 forces in England and Wales to determine how well they understood and responded to their local ASB problems. We also asked 5,699 people who had called the police to report ASB about their experiences and how they were treated. This was the largest ever survey of ASB victims, and enabled a much better understanding of their views.

Research supported by Professor Martin Innes of the Universities Police Science Institute at Cardiff University showed 'what works' (i.e. that give forces the best chance of delivering a good result for victims):

- Identifying repeat victims and vulnerable victims at the point of report
- Thoroughly and regularly briefing relevant staff (including neighbourhood officers, those who respond to emergencies, and CID) on ASB and in particular on local ASB issues.
- Gathering intelligence and information about local ASB and analyse it to identify issues
- Ensuring that public contact staff (including neighbourhood officers) are properly equipped and resourced to tackle ASB, and their actions are monitored.

It also found two practices that did not work:

- Deciding not to respond to ASB calls; and
- Giving too much emphasis to partnership processes.

What we did in 2012

In 2012, we carried out a second review of how the police are tackling ASB. This followed a similar methodology to the 2010 inspection, but focused principally on 'what works'. There were however two key differences:

- In 2010 systems and processes were assessed by HMIC to establish whether forces were capable of identifying repeat and vulnerable victims. In 2012 at least 100 calls were assessed in each force. By listening to the call and examining the associated records it was ascertained whether they were actually doing it. In total, we reviewed 4,442 calls.
- We increased the sample size of the telephone survey of ASB victims to a total of over 9,300 individual victims.

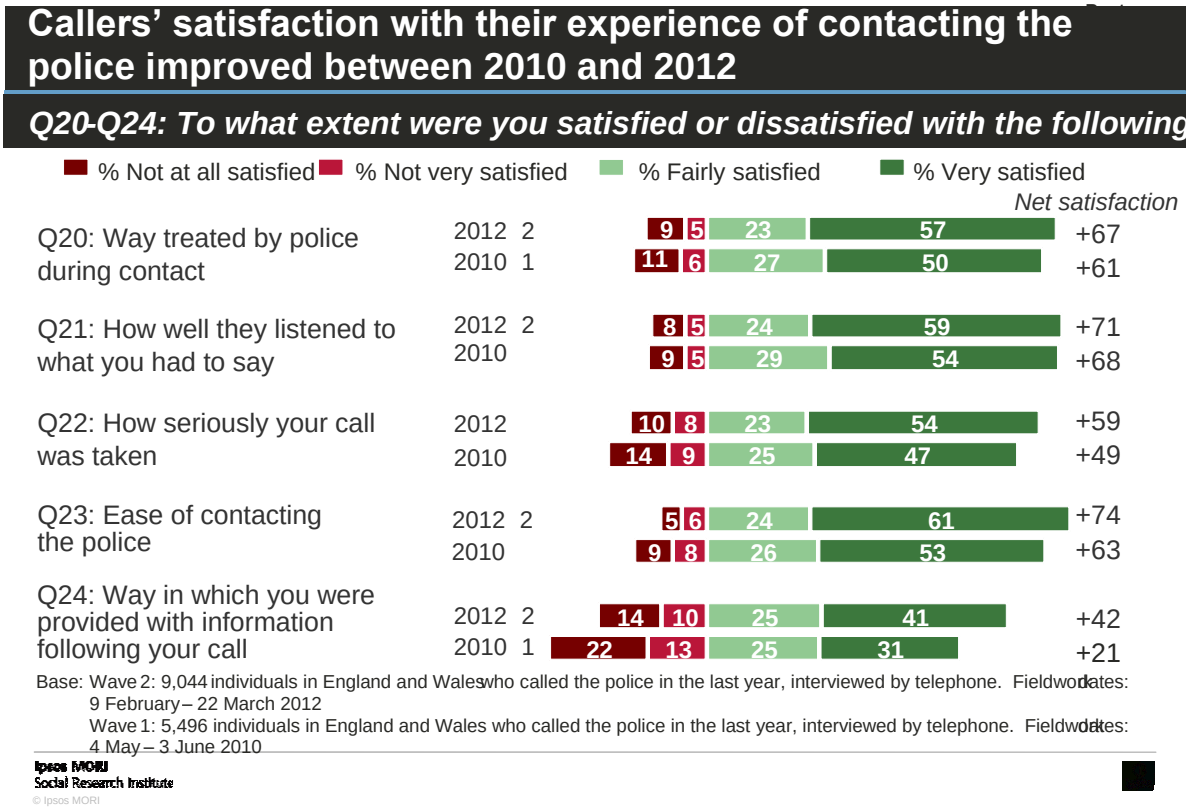
[8] Sparrow, M.K. (2008) *The Character of Harms*, p.182. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Victim perspectives

Survey results indicate that victims perceive an improvement from 2010 in relation to how the police respond to ASB. The full Ipsos MORI survey findings are available at www.hmic.gov.uk; the rest of this section outlines the key findings.

Satisfaction with the service received from the police

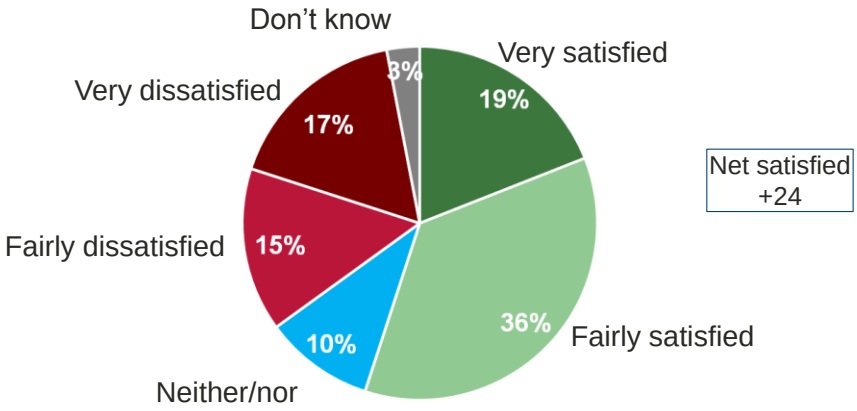
A higher percentage of victims now report being very or fairly satisfied with the way they were treated by the police; listened to; taken seriously; and provided with information following the call. This indicates that forces have invested and improved how they manage the initial contact with victims who call in to report ASB.



A total of 45% of victims reported that they are very or fairly satisfied with the way police deal with local ASB generally, as the following chart shows.

Satisfaction with way that the police deal with local ASB generally

Q7b: Overall, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the way that anti-social behaviour is dealt with by the police in your local area?



Base: 7,984 individuals in England and Wales recorded as having called the police to report anti-social behaviour in September 2011, interviewed by telephone . Fieldwork dates: 9 February – 22 March 2012

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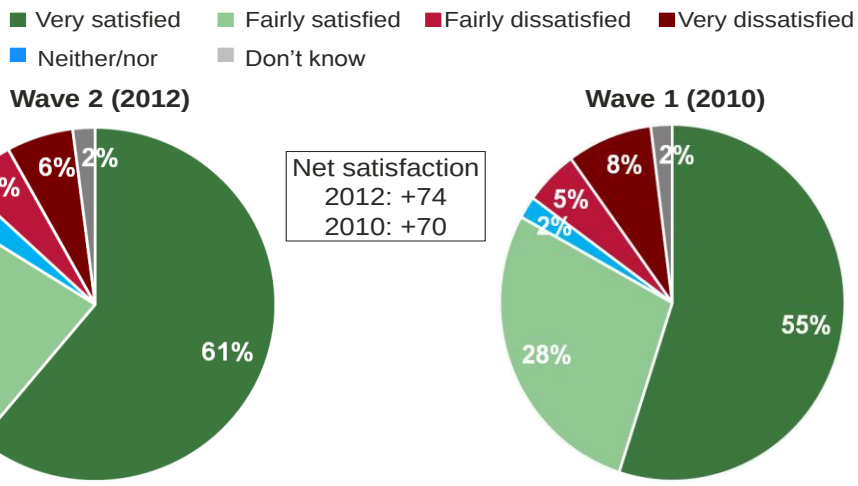
However, where the police take action, an average of 84% said they were very or fairly satisfied with the action taken by the police.

Satisfaction with police action [redacted]

Q27: How satisfied or dissatisfied were you with action taken by the police?



Base: Wave 2: All who say that the police took action as a result of their call (4,428). Fieldwork dates: 9 February – 22 March 2012
Base: Wave 1: All who say that the police took action as a result of their call (2,129). Fieldwork dates: 4 May – 3 June 2010

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In addition, far more victims are now aware that the police have taken action in respect of their call: 49%, compared to only 39% in 2010. This is an improvement – but there is still a significant way to go.

A third (33%) of respondents felt their call made a big difference to the problem. This is a small improvement on the 31% found in 2010.

ASB targeted at individuals or families

There are still indications that a significant amount of ASB is targeted at individuals or their families, with 39% of the victims surveyed feeling that their incident was the result of them being personally targeted (rather than a random act). Twelve percent felt the motivation for the incident was due to factors such as race, religion, sexual orientation or disability. It is important to emphasise here that such motivation constitutes 'hate', and therefore these incidents must be considered as hate crimes.

Perception of ASB levels

Twenty per cent of victims perceived there to be less ASB in their area than a year ago. While 29% of victims perceive there to be more (the same as when we asked about this in 2010), on average they assess that it is having less of an impact and believe that it is generally being dealt with well by the police.

It is of note that the proportion of victims who thought ASB was a very big problem in the area fell slightly, from 23% to 20%.

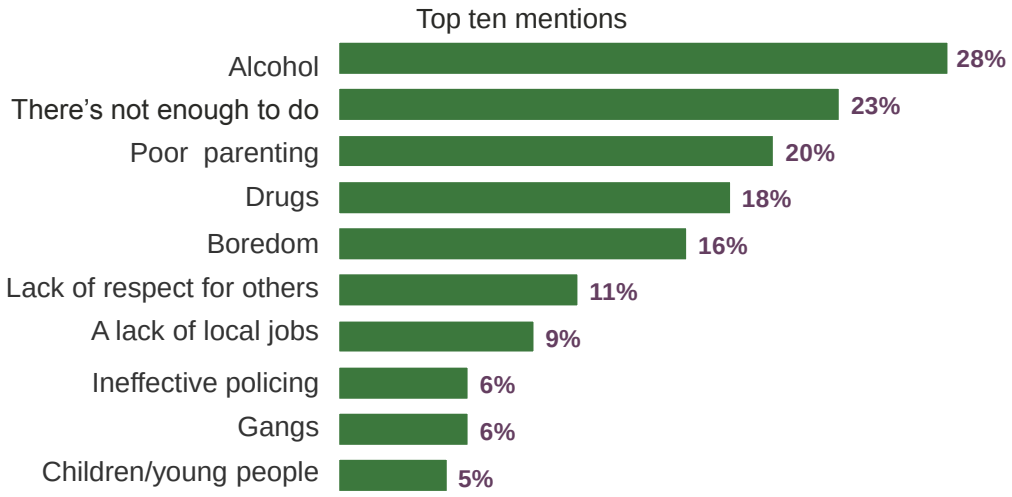
The causes of ASB

When asked about the causes of ASB the most frequent reason quoted was, by far, alcohol, as the chart on the following page shows.[9]

[9] When asked about causes of ASB, respondents were not prompted and were able to select multiple responses. It should be noted that the Government's national alcohol strategy launched after the survey was carried out so it and the surrounding publicity would not have impacted on the victims' views. See http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/publications/alcohol-drugs/alcohol/alcohol-strategy

Alcohol is seen as a major cause of anti-social behaviour

Q10b: What do you think are the main causes of anti-social behaviour in your local area?



Base: 9,311 individuals in England and Wales recorded as having called the police to report anti-social behaviour in September 2011. Fieldwork dates: 9 February – 22 March 2012.

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This is further reinforced by the results to the question: 'What types of ASB have you been thinking about when answering [these] questions?', to which 27% of respondents answered 'street drinking/drunken behaviour/under-age drinking/youths drinking'.

What do these results tell us?

There are some statistically significant differences between the results of the 2010 and 2012 surveys, indicating that there have been some genuine improvements. However, there is also an indication that there is yet a way to go in terms of public perception. For instance, while there has been an increase in the proportion saying that the police took action (49% from 39%), half still do not think that this was the case.

Recording and categorising ASB

Our 2010 *Stop the Rot* report highlighted that more effective intelligence gathering and analysis of ASB data was key to the Police Service getting as true a picture as possible of the extent and nature of the problem. While our 2012 review found that there have been some improvements in this area, gaps remain and more needs to be done.

Recording ASB

In the course of listening to the calls on ASB received by each force, HMIC assessed whether or not a crime should have been recorded, based on the information given by the caller and what was registered on the incident record. It should be noted that while this offers an accurate assessment it cannot be used statistically, as other factors not associated with the call may influence the decision on whether to record a crime (for instance, if subsequent investigation reveals that a crime has not occurred). However, any indication that ASB is not being consistently recorded remains an important issue, as it affects a force's ability to properly understand the size and nature of the problem in their area.

We found a wide variation in the quality of decision making associated with the recording of ASB. This reflects the findings in HMIC's 2012 inspection into crime recording, *The Crime Scene: A review of police crime and incident reports*,[10] and potentially has an impact on the accuracy of recorded crime levels in some categories, especially for those forces that made poorer decisions. In particular, *The Crime Scene* highlighted that there may be significant under-recording of harassment and public order offences.

Where discretion is exercised some variation is inevitable: but given the potential impact on the understanding and analysis of ASB, and of crime associated with ASB, this matter must be addressed. A resolution should be found that avoids unnecessary bureaucracy while enabling all the options.

During this ASB review, HMIC found instances of:

- Forces failing to identify crimes, instead wrongly recording them as ASB.
- Reported ASB not being recorded on force systems, for instance if the victim had reported it directly to the neighbourhood team or via email (as opposed to by telephone).
- Reported ASB being recorded as something else, such as suspicious behaviour.
- Incidents that weren't ASB being recorded as ASB.

[10] Available from www.hmic.gov.uk

We also found that the ASB elements of some offences may be being missed, because not all forces flag these up when recording a crime.

Without the best possible picture of ASB and the harm it is doing, forces cannot diagnose the problem properly. They then risk applying the wrong tactical remedies, are in greater danger of not addressing the problem, and (in some cases) may allow matters to further deteriorate.

However, it is important to note that deficiencies in the systems used to record, analyse or plan to address ASB do not automatically result in a bad service for victims.

Case study 1: Effective use of ASB analysis

One force considers analysis of ASB at force and partnership meetings, so they can target resources to tackle particular issues or trends. For instance, they have recently focused on incidents taking place at hospitals, and put in place a joint plan to reduce these.

The chief officer responsible for tackling ASB also commissioned further analysis ahead of meetings of the local strategic board to further assist in setting joint ASB targets.

At the divisional and neighbourhood level, ASB analysis (focused on helping to reduce the number of repeat victims and on maintaining a quality service) is carried out on a daily, fortnightly and monthly basis to inform tasking meetings. This includes analysis of partnership data, which is done by the divisional partnership analysts.

Engaged senior managers are key to tackling ASB effectively; and in this force, daily tasking is led by chief inspectors at divisional level, and by local neighbourhood sergeants in their areas.

ASB information on repeat and vulnerable victims is readily accessible by all staff on force computer systems and is used at team briefings before they go out on patrol.

ASB categories

On 01 April 2011, the 14 codes previously used for ASB incidents were simplified and reduced to just three: personal, nuisance, and environmental ASB. [11] We found that all forces had adopted these new definitions.

Based on the 4,442 incidents we reviewed:

- 891 were correctly recorded as personal; but a further 569 incidents which should have been were not. Of those, 484 were wrongly categorised as nuisance.

- 35% of all incidents reviewed were considered to be incorrectly categorised.

Incidents targeted personally are more likely to involve higher risk of harm. Failing to categorise these correctly can mean victims don't get the service they need.

[11] Definitions in Annex B of the *National Standard for Incident Reporting*, introduced on 01 April 2011. Available from www.homeoffice.gov.uk

What works – What progress has been made?

1. Identifying repeat and vulnerable victims at the point of report

Definitions

Victims who suffer ASB repeatedly are at particularly heightened risk of harm.[12] Yet we found that forces use a variety of definitions for what constitutes a repeat victim, ranging from an individual suffering three incidents in 30 days, to two incidents in 12 months. Clearly these varying definitions mean varying responses to similar issues, and this should be addressed so that a repeat victim in one force area does not receive a different service to a similar victim in a neighbouring county.

In addition, some forces do not recognise that a victim calling the police for the first time might have already suffered numerous incidents in silence. They therefore consider repeat *calls* rather than repeat *victimisation*. The distinction between 'caller' and 'victim' is a very important point and needs to be understood by forces.

HMIC also finds use of terms such as 'persistent caller' to describe repeat victims to be unhelpful. At best they undermine the impact on the victim, and at worst could be interpreted as suggesting the caller is somehow a nuisance.

If all forces shared a view of what 'repeat victim' means, then identifying the best remedies becomes simpler. Forces should therefore consider the definitions they use.

Training

HMIC found that the training on ASB issues for staff who have contact with the public was effective in 19 forces. While there was some level of training in the other 24 forces, knowledge was inconsistent; this affected the police's ability to identify repeat and vulnerable victims of ASB.

Use of IT systems

Some forces still rely on IT systems to identify repeat victims. Such technological solutions (which flag up if a number or person has rung before) may help, and undoubtedly can do some of the 'heavy lifting' in spotting patterns: but even the most sophisticated software cannot do all the work. For example, IT systems cannot identify if a caller has repeatedly suffered ASB but is calling the police for the first time (which, with the bulk of ASB not being reported, is often likely to be the case: people suffer in silence for a while – sometimes a long while – before picking up the phone).

[12] Innes, M. (2010) *Rethinking the policing of anti social behaviour.* Available from www.hmic.gov.uk

Equally, a person who was not assessed as being vulnerable when they called last time might be so when they call today. Software solutions cannot identify such changes in circumstance.

Notwithstanding the quality of any automatic or manual process, the only truly effective method of identifying repeat or vulnerable victims at the point of report involves consistently[13] asking appropriate questions of the caller. This was a clear feature of our 2010 *Stop the Rot* report.

Call sample results

In 2010 we assessed call-handling systems and processes to ascertain whether the forces were *capable* of identifying repeat and vulnerable victims. This time, by listening to around 100 calls in each force, we checked whether they were actually doing it, and doing it *consistently* (by which we mean seven or more times out of ten).

HMIC found that 33 forces were able to identify *repeat victims* automatically via computer systems. Eight of the other 10 forces attempted to 'work around' by manually trawling systems. However, in six of these the solution was not considered effective: either the manual search was inadequate, or it was not always carried out. This is nevertheless an improvement on 2010 (when 28 had automatic subsystems, 16 used manual trawling, of which 14 were found to be ineffective).

Having effective systems and processes is one thing; using them consistently is entirely another. The assessment of calls found that only five forces were consistently questioning callers to establish repeat victimisation. There is therefore a danger that those most at risk are not being identified and are unlikely to receive the priority service they may need.

We found that 21 forces could automatically identify via IT systems if callers had previously been considered *vulnerable* (an improvement on 2010, when only eight forces were able to identify such callers in this way). Of the remaining 22 forces, 14 'worked around' the issue by trawling systems manually – but HMIC found that these processes were only effective in two forces. (In 2010, 29 forces used manual trawling, of which 12 were effective.)

However, as we mention above, the vulnerability of a caller can change and therefore it is vital that effective questioning is carried out in every call. In our call sample no forces consistently asked questions of callers to establish vulnerability.

HMIC found real progress. However, in the absence of consistent questioning of callers, no force was effectively and consistently identifying both repeat victims and vulnerable victims (who are at highest risk) at the time the call was made.

[13] By 'consistently' we mean seven or more times out of ten.

Force	Number of calls in which repeat victimisation was checked	Number of calls in which victim vulnerability was checked
Avon and Somerset	53 of 100	63 of 100
Bedfordshire	30 of 100	22 of 100
Cambridgeshire	60 of 107	37 of 107
Cheshire	44 of 100	21 of 100
Cleveland	57 of 100	27 of 100
City of London	19 of 73	01 of 73
Cumbria	69 of 100	29 of 100
Derbyshire	55 of 100	27 of 100
Dorset	52 of 120	33 of 120
Devon and Cornwall	34 of 100	06 of 100
Durham	51 of 100	16 of 100
Dyfed-Powys	82 of 100	56 of 100
Essex	53 of 100	25 of 100
Gloucestershire	50 of 113	18 of 113
Greater Manchester	39 of 100	30 of 100
Gwent	32 of 100	13 of 100
Hampshire	53 of 110	14 of 100
Hertfordshire	52 of 100	24 of 110
Humberside	77 of 100	40 of 100
Kent	41 of 100	13 of 100
Lancashire	44 of 100	20 of 100
Leicestershire	62 of 107	34 of 107
Lincolnshire	75 of 100	30 of 100
Merseyside	68 of 100	21 of 100
Metropolitan	40 of 100	28 of 100
Norfolk	63 of 98	14 of 100
Northamptonshire	54 of 104	34 of 104
North Wales	58 of100	43 of 100
North Yorkshire	42 of 100	30 of 100
Northumbria	33 of 99	07 of 99
Nottinghamshire	43 of 100	25 of 100
Staffordshire	62 of 129	39 of 129
South Yorkshire	70 of 100	40 of 100
South Wales	25 of 100	10 of 100
Suffolk	42 of 100	36 of 100
Surrey	51 of 100	15 of 100
Sussex	66 of 120	38 of 120
Thames Valley	60 of 100	30 of 100
Warwickshire	47 of 100	12 of 100
West Mercia	74 of 100	46 of 100
West Midlands	48 of 100	19 of 100
West Yorkshire	29 of 100	18 of 100
Wiltshire	55 of 120	27 of 120

Forces must do something about this. They must check that the systems and processes they have in place to help identify repeat and vulnerable victims is in place is being carried out consistently and effectively.

Recommended questions
While software or a consistent manual trawl of previous reports can help call handlers to identify repeat and vulnerable victims, nothing can replace targeted questioning of the caller. Whilst this is in essence an assessment of risk, it needn't be lengthy, bureaucratic or mechanical. If there is no time to delve more deeply, the following four fundamental questions can easily and quickly be woven into the conversation and will do the majority of the work to establish if the caller is a repeat or vulnerable victim:

- Have you or your household/family suffered this or similar incidents before?
- What is the impact on you and your household/family?
- Would you consider you or anyone in your household, to be disabled or suffering a long term illness?
- Is there any reason why you think this has happened/is happening?

Case study 2 is an example of how such an approach can work; while case study 3 shows how information can otherwise be missed.

Case study 2: Effective use of tactful and targeted questions

Caller reports youths throwing things at her house. It has become a regular occurrence and a window was smashed two weeks previously. The caller is upset. The call handler gathers information about previous incidents by opening with 'So has this happened before?' and subsequently probes if the caller might be vulnerable by continuing with 'So why are they targeting you, do you think?'. The repeat status and vulnerability issues are explored further and identified in a conversational style without undue delay, and recorded on the incident log. Attendance is prioritised and the call is concluded with a summary of the actions that will be taken.

(From the 2012 call listening sample)

Case study 3: A call handler's missed opportunity

Caller reporting on-going issues with a neighbour's 10-year-old son continually being abusive towards caller's wife and their 10-year-old disabled daughter. He is frequently abusive about her disabilities and has made sexually explicit abusive remarks to her which had 'left her in pieces'. None of the detail was recognised by the call handler and there was no mention of it on the incident record. There was no indication that it was picked up later, nor any indication of any alert to child protection or social services about either child.

(From the 2012 call listening sample)

Research carried out as part of our 2010 inspection[14] clearly showed that people self-defining as *disabled*, or who report a *long-term health condition*, are far more susceptible to being harmed by ASB. This research strongly supports the need to gather this information in order to minimise that risk. However, discussions with police officers and police staff during the inspection suggested there might be some reluctance to question callers to find out if they have a disability or long term illness.

HMIC suggests that this reluctance is misplaced. Ipsos MORI, an organisation vastly experienced in public surveys, routinely asks such questions. They are readily answered by respondents, with challenges received very rarely.

Of course well-trained call handlers will identify vulnerability through other intuitive means (such as tone of voice etc); but those victims who are most at risk of harm from ASB are more likely to be identified if relevant questioning is carried out every time. Without it, forces are relying on software that can at best only do part of the job.[15]

2. Analysing data and information

HMIC's inspection found 28 forces gathered and analysed data in an effective way, and with a focus on repeat victims and vulnerable victims. This is an improvement on 2010, when 17 forces were doing this.

We also found that:

- 33 forces have carried out work at force, area and local level to understand what data is held by partners (such as local councils), which might help to tackle ASB.
- 24 forces manage ASB performance through an intelligence-led approach, using information on repeat victims/locations, and vulnerable victims (supported by analytical work) to decide where to target resources.
- 28 forces carry out analytical work at the force, area, and neighbourhood levels to inform decisions on what action needs to be taken.
- 30 forces carry out some degree of analytical work to identify if ASB is linked to or forming part of recorded crime: but only four consider the analysis as part of their performance management.

[14] Innes, M. (2010) *Rethinking the policing of antisocial behaviour*. Available from www.hmic.gov.uk

[15] Recent Home Office call-handling trials carried out in eight forces offer information on the approaches tested by forces around identifying repeat and vulnerable victims at the point of report, and how they consider they have improved their procedures and ultimately their service to the victims. Some report identifying vulnerable victims who, without the pilot approach, would have otherwise gone unnoticed. See Home Office (2012) *Focus on the Victim: Summary Report on the ASB Call Handling Trials.* Available from www.hmic.gov.uk

Importance of analysing victim satisfaction levels
Some forces set themselves targets to reduce ASB, and often measure their success using the recorded ASB incident rate. However, the recorded rate is only a small part of the story – lots of ASB is not recorded (either because it is not recorded/wrongly categorised by the police, or because it is not reported in the first place).

In addition, having a reduction target based solely on the incident rate recorded by the police means that the force may see a decrease in recorded incidents as positive and vindication that their strategies are working. In reality the real reason might also be that recording practices are skewing the figures; or that communities have lost faith in the way the police deal with ASB and no longer report incidents.

If either of these is the case the force is potentially patting itself on the back whilst being completely unsighted on the true picture. Forces should consider in parallel the victim/public satisfaction levels, to add context to the recorded incident rate. If satisfaction levels are reducing there may be a problem which incident rates alone cannot diagnose.

Recording and categorisation of ASB incidents
In April 2011 the previous 14 categories of ASB (describing behaviour) were replaced by three categories (describing impact); personal, nuisance, and environmental. All forces have adopted the three new categories.

However, our review of calls highlighted that in some forces the codes were being applied incorrectly on many occasions. See pp.16-18 above for the possible implications of this.

3. Briefing relevant staff

Ensuring that all relevant staff are thoroughly and regularly briefed about ASB in general, and about local issues specifically, is an important element of understanding and responding to ASB.

HMIC's inspection found that briefing of relevant staff was evident in all 43 forces. Twenty-seven forces were considered to be effective at doing this regularly and thoroughly to all staff that required it, compared to 21 in 2010.

However, briefing of CID staff, while improved, still needs to occur more regularly.

Informing attending staff of a caller's past history and whether the call relates to a local priority means they can deal far more effectively with victims and take the most appropriate action. We found that more forces were now doing this, up from 13 in 2010 to 18 in 2012. (A further 14 forces showed evidence that they sometimes advised attending staff of this information, but this was not done consistently.)

Case study 4: Effective briefing of relevant staff

In one force, response and neighbourhood staff are regularly briefed about ASB issues. Following the force restructuring, the size of local policing neighbourhood teams has been increased, and their role widened to include investigating crimes. Investigative teams have been reduced in size and are now a centrally controlled resource. They support local policing areas on ASB incidents involving crimes, repeat or vulnerable victims.

There is a close integration and sharing of intelligence between neighbourhood policing teams and response officers. The Force Intelligence Bureau (FIB) sends out a daily intelligence document to all areas and briefing screens are used to update local staff. These include ASB information together with hotspots and are regularly updated by the Force Intelligence Bureau

4. Resourcing neighbourhood policing teams[16] and monitoring what they do

In general, HMIC found neighbourhood policing teams were made up of committed, passionate and industrious staff with a very good knowledge of their communities and the prevailing issues. All showed a clear understanding of the ASB incidents in their area.

Guidance on and use of the tools available to tackle ASB

Guidance to help officers and staff to understand the various tactics that can be employed to tackle ASB is now *available* in 41 forces (an improvement on 2010, when this was the case in 34 forces). However, the evidence indicates that this guidance is only *actually being used* in 28 of these forces.

HMIC found that in 35 forces neighbourhood policing teams have procedures for implementing the tactical and problem solving options available to help them deal with ASB, and for tracking and recording the progress of these actions.

Risk assessments

Evidence was found in 41 forces that the police were assessing the risk of harm to those affected by longer term ASB. However, 25 forces did not do this consistently. Risk can change and it is important to assess it regularly to identify and respond to any alteration.

Follow-up contact

Follow-up contact with the victim is a key element of tackling ASB, as it is likely to improve confidence in the police. It also increases the likelihood that victims will report incidents in the future. In all forces we found evidence that follow-up contact with victims was taking place, and in 31 forces this was recorded consistently. This is a significant improvement from 2010, when only 18 forces were doing this.

[16] Some forces use different names for these teams, such as safer neighbourhood team.

However, we found that only 19 forces were conducting regular checks to make sure follow-up contact had taken place to update victims on the progress of their cases

Monitoring what NPTs do
There has been a rise in the number of forces that ensure supervisors:

- monitor the progress of plans put in place to solve particular ASB problems (31 in 2012, 15 in 2010); and
- sign off these plans when they are complete (30 in 2012, 14 in 2010)

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Link between 'what works' and performance

Our analysis shows that at force level there is a link between improvement in victim satisfaction, and performing well in these four key areas. This is illustrated by comparing the approach to tackling ASB of a force achieving high victim satisfaction rates (Merseyside) with one that is doing less well (Bedfordshire).[17]

Satisfaction with…	Bedfordshire Police	Merseyside Police
The police do a good job	63%	80%
The way police deal with ASB in local area	44%	65%
The way police dealt with ASB they called about	50%	73%
The way the call was handled	72%	87%
The way they were treated by police	71%	89%
Information provided after the call	55%	83%
Action taken by police	70%	97%
Call made a difference to the problem	41%	65%

Victim satisfaction: Comparison of Bedfordshire Police and Merseyside Police

[17] The three best performing forces in terms of victim satisfaction with the way the police deal with ASB in the local area are Northumbria Police, Surrey Police, and Merseyside Police. The four worst performing forces in this category are the Metropolitan Police Service, Bedfordshire Police, North Wales Police and West Midlands Police.

Inspection findings:–'What works': Comparison of Bedfordshire Police and Merseyside Police

	Bedfordshire	Merseyside
 Briefing staff on local ASB problems	Neighbourhood staff self brief; limited self-briefing by response and investigative officers	Regular briefing of response, neighbourhood and investigative staff
 Analysing information on ASB to spot trends and patterns	Some work on data held by partners	Partner data accessed through shared IT systems, co-located teams and close working relationships, and regularly analysed
	ASB receives lower priority at meetings to decide where police resource should be targeted	ASB issues monitored and high on the agenda of meetings to decide where police resource should be targeted
	ASB receives lower priority when allocating analysis resource	ASB analysed at local and force level, including regular monitoring of cases involving repeat and vulnerable victims
 Resourcing neighbourhood policing and monitoring the work they are doing to tackle ASB	Extra training for PCSOs available – but not yet fully delivered	Training on tools and powers to deal with ASB provided consistently.
	Toolkit of tactics to deal with ASB available, but staff are generally unaware of it. ASB leads offer guidance, and while they are knowledgeable on the options, other staff were less so	Toolkit of tactics to deal with ASB available and promoted
	No formal process for monitoring, reviewing or signing off plans to tackle particular ASB problems	Plans to tackle particular ASB problems are monitored and signed off by supervisors (although not always consistently)
 Consistently identifying repeat and vulnerable victims	No IT system to automatically flag up repeat or vulnerable victims	IT systems automatically flag up if a phone number, address or name relates to a repeat or vulnerable victim
	Targeted questions asked to help establish if a repeat victim 30 times out of 100 calls; if a vulnerable victim 22 times out of 100 calls	Targeted questions asked to help establish if a repeat victim 68 times out of 100 calls; if a vulnerable victim 21 times out of 100 calls

Partnership working

In 2010, research showed that long-winded and ineffective partnership approaches can have a detrimental affect on the ability to provide good results for victims.

In this review, we found evidence that the Police Service has worked hard to improve the work undertaken by local partnerships, in order to make the process more productive:

- All forces now engage effectively with appropriate partner agencies to tackle short, mid, and long term ASB, with 35 also sharing targets and performance management processes.

- All forces are active members of Community Safety Partnerships, while in 34 forces there was evidence that problem-solving plans (which aim to tackle particular ASB problems) were being monitored and progressed through the Community Safety Partnership.

- 31 forces share ASB information with appropriate partner agencies in an effective way. In eight of these this also includes comprehensive analysis of incidents.

- 17 forces have systems that are integrated with partnership systems. However, only one of these forces consistently gathers information on previous vulnerability or repeat victimisation.

Victim perspectives

Our telephone survey showed that the extent to which local public services are thought to be dealing with the ASB issues that matter is associated with callers' satisfaction with how they were treated by the police. The majority (60%) who are satisfied feel that local public services are dealing with ASB; of those dissatisfied with the way they were treated, only 21% feel that this is the case.

Similarly, 22% of callers who are satisfied with their treatment by the police think that public services are better than a year ago at dealing with ASB; only 8% of those who are dissatisfied with their treatment by the police feel the same.

Conclusion

Our 2012 survey found that victims are more satisfied than in 2010 with several aspects of the way the police dealt with the specific ASB incident they reported. Over half of victims are satisfied with how well the police deal with ASB in the local area, and almost two thirds with the overall way the police dealt with the incident they reported.

Inspection work also revealed a marked improvement in terms of police leadership around ASB, and overall grip of the issue. Performance management and the use of intelligence and analysis has improved across the service, with the result that forces are now far more aware of the ASB issues facing them and their communities. We also found improvements in the way staff are briefed about ASB, and in how neighbourhood policing teams are resourced and monitored.

But more needs to be done, particularly in relation to identifying and categorising different forms of ASB correctly (especially those that are personally targeted), and considering any ASB forming part of or linked to recorded crime as part of the whole ASB picture. This is currently not happening in most forces and represents a significant gap in knowledge.

In addition, while all forces now have IT systems in place to help identify repeat and vulnerable victims (by automatically flagging up if they have called before), no force consistently bolsters this functionality by ensuring that tactful and targeted questioning of the caller takes place. This means they are missing an opportunity to establish if, for instance, the victim has suffered repeatedly, but has only just plucked up the courage to phone the police; or if a change in circumstances means they should now be considered vulnerable. Some of the callers who most need the police's help are therefore not getting the extra support they need. For this to improve, forces must ensure that call-handlers consistently check for repeat victimisation and vulnerability; and more widely, that their technology, systems and people all work seamlessly together to get help to those who need it most.

In general though, there is a lot to commend. The group of 43 forces as a whole has improved its understanding and response to ASB since 2010. But when looking in more detail, the picture is mixed and there is substantial variation in practices and performance. Every force has improved in some aspects of what they do, but some more than others. And in concentrating on improving on some issues, some forces have taken their eye off the ball in respect of others. For instance, over half of forces have improved their follow up contact with victims, whilst over a third have fared less well than in 2010 in relation to checking the quality of call takers' performance.

But overall, victims are getting a better service: and the survey results show that they have noticed.

Next steps

The results of this assessment will be fed into HMICs ongoing programme of inspection relating to crime recording and data quality. It will also inform the analysis of the disparity between BCS and recorded crime levels currently being undertaken with the Office of National Statistics and the Home Office.