

10 March 2017

HMIC inspection report into Police effectiveness

Report of Police, Crime and Victims' Commissioner



1. Purpose of report

To brief the Police and Crime Panel on the findings of the recent assessment by HM Inspectorate of Constabulary into Police effectiveness.

2. Summary

HMIC undertakes a programme of four inspections with each Force, each year, covering

- Efficiency
- Legitimacy
- Leadership
- Effectiveness

The results of inspections (except for Leadership) are categorised as follows:

- Outstanding
- Good
- Requires Improvement
- Inadequate

On 2 March, the results of the *effectiveness* inspection were released, and Durham Constabulary was rated as 'outstanding'.

3. Findings of the Effectiveness Inspection

The overall assessment for Durham in this inspection is 'Outstanding'.

There are five components to the assessment:

How effective is the force at preventing crime, tackling anti-social behaviour and keeping people safe? Outstanding

The assessment highlights:

- Durham Constabulary is outstanding at preventing crime, tackling anti-social behaviour and keeping people safe. Its approach centres on its problem-solving ethos, which is ingrained within the culture of the organisation. Neighbourhood policing remains the hub of the constabulary's problem-solving activity.

Local officers have excellent relationships with partner agencies, ensuring that the constabulary can offer an outstanding service to all the communities it serves. Staff at every level are constantly looking for new and innovative ways to work with partner organisations and the community to identify and solve problems at the earliest possible opportunity.

- The constabulary has invested heavily in ensuring staff employ a consistent methodology when seeking solutions to problems. It is excellent at analysing and evaluating its work and has good systems in place to ensure that learning and effective practice is identified so that future problem-solving approaches can be constantly improved.
- Neighbourhood officers are responsible for tackling localised concerns, such as anti-social behaviour and crime. The constabulary's policing model also gives responsibility to local neighbourhood officers for managing and disrupting the day-to-day activities of organised crime groups and some sex offenders. There are examples of innovative approaches which demonstrate how Durham Constabulary is maximising use of its resources to effectively keep its communities safe, prevent crime and tackle anti-social behaviour.

How effective is the force at investigating crime and reducing re-offending? Good

The assessment highlights:

- Durham Constabulary is good at conducting initial investigations. While the use of the THRIVE risk assessment at the first point of contact is not always consistent, the focus on deployment to all incidents suggests that this is not adversely affecting the quality of the service the caller may receive or the first response. The focus from the constabulary extends to obtaining an appropriate final outcome for the victims, and this is evidenced by the good outcome rates for investigations as well as good victim satisfaction rates.
- However, the constabulary does have a backlog of digital evidence awaiting forensic examination. This presents the potential risk for some crimes, victims and perpetrators remaining unidentified for longer than necessary.
- Durham Constabulary has excellent working relationships with all its partners with which it works to provide joint services that support victims and manage offenders.

The assessment identifies one area for improvement:

- The constabulary should improve its ability to retrieve digital evidence from mobile phones, computers and other electronic devices quickly enough to ensure that investigations are not delayed.

How effective is the force at protecting those who are vulnerable from harm, and supporting victims? Good

The assessment highlights:

- Durham Constabulary takes its responsibilities to all victims very seriously and this is reflected in how it tailors and provides its services. The constabulary has amended its vision statement to include the word 'victim' and the police and crime commissioner is referred to as the police, crime and victims commissioner. This is a clear statement of intent describing how the constabulary regards its responsibilities to victims.
- The constabulary has engaged and consulted with groups of victims including those considered more vulnerable who have suffered domestic abuse, child sexual exploitation or hate crime. As a result it has a good understanding of the issues they face and has considered these issues in the design and delivery of the services it provides.
- The constabulary's partner organisations are very clear that vulnerability is a priority. The result is that Durham Constabulary's service to victims of crime is of a high quality, and is provided by staff who understand the importance of placing the victim first, and supporting and protecting the most vulnerable people in society. The constabulary also effectively investigates crimes involving vulnerable victims. Confirmation of the good work that officers do with vulnerable victims is found within the public surveys conducted with victims that demonstrate high levels of satisfaction with service they receive.

How effective is the force at tackling serious and organised crime? Outstanding

The assessment highlights:

Durham Constabulary continues to tackle serious and organised crime in an outstanding way.

The constabulary has a comprehensive understanding of the risk and threat posed by serious and organised crime. It manages these threats and risks effectively with partners through diversionary schemes, neighbourhood management of groups and enforcement activity.

The constabulary manages organised crime groups (OCGs) well with a multi-agency approach where all organisations work together to prevent, disrupt and dismantle OCGs.

The engagement strategy to prevent and divert people from becoming involved in serious and organised crime is comprehensive and this work is enhanced and supported by the troubled families programme.

The constabulary uses a wide range of enforcement methods against OCGs and regularly engages ineffective disruption tactics to target identified OCGs.

Rather than relying solely on specialists, the constabulary has also given neighbourhood officers some responsibility for managing OCGs and some lower risk sex offenders. The constabulary considers that these locally-based teams are well placed to manage and disrupt the day-to-day criminal activities of these groups in their communities.

How effective are the force's specialist capabilities? (not graded)

Durham Constabulary has the necessary arrangements in place to satisfy itself that it can respond to national threats. It has thoroughly assessed its capacity and capability to tackle the threats described in *The Strategic Policing Requirement*. It is very well prepared to fulfil its national policing responsibilities. The constabulary regularly tests its ability to respond to national threats with partners and constantly adjusts its response based on learning from these exercises. It has reviewed its response to each of the strategic policing threats, in line with national standards and best practice.

The constabulary is well prepared to respond to an attack requiring a specialist armed response and has effective collaboration arrangements with Cleveland Police in relation to firearms unit capacity and capability. A good governance process provides strong scrutiny of the constabulary's readiness for any existing and emerging threats. The constabulary is quick to amend its plans and its responses to any new threats that may emerge.

Comment on effectiveness inspection

Durham was the only force rated as 'outstanding' in the 2016 effectiveness inspection.

HMIC's assessment concludes: Durham Constabulary has been assessed as outstanding in respect of its effectiveness at keeping people safe and reducing crime. The constabulary has an outstanding approach to preventing crime and tackling serious and organised crime. It investigates crime to a high standard, and provides good support to victims and vulnerable people. Our overall judgment this year is the same as last year, when we judged the constabulary to be outstanding in respect of effectiveness.

4. Recommendation

That the Panel notes the content of the inspection report

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