



Inspecting policing  
in the public interest



## **DELIVERING THE POLICING PLEDGE**

Durham Constabulary

# “Are the local police delivering for you?”

The ‘Policing Pledge’ sets out ten minimum standards that the police service promised to deliver from 31 December 2008.

Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC) has reviewed how well the 43 forces in England and Wales are delivering the standards they promised the public.

This report provides members of the public with information on the performance of their local force.

Each Pledge standard and the three areas relating to how the force is working towards its delivery have been graded. HMIC has combined these assessments to give an overall grade for the force.

The overall grade for  
Durham Constabulary is:

**FAIR**

## The different grades

**EXCELLENT**

is awarded for exceptional performance which is consistently above and beyond the required standard.

**GOOD**

is defined as meeting the standard, although there may be minor dips in performance.

**FAIR**

is awarded where performance is variable and falls short of the required standard. Remedial action is needed.

**POOR**

is used when performance fails to meet an acceptable level. Immediate remedial action is needed.

## THE POLICING PLEDGE POINTS

## HMIC GRADING

### PLEDGE POINT 1

Always treat you fairly with dignity and respect, ensuring you have fair access to our services at a time that is reasonable and suitable for you.

FAIR

### PLEDGE POINT 2

Provide you with information so you know who your dedicated Neighbourhood Policing Team are, where they are based, how to contact them and how to work with them.

FAIR

### PLEDGE POINT 3

Ensure your Neighbourhood Policing Team and other police patrols are visible and on your patch at times when they will be most effective and when you tell us you most need them. We will ensure that your team is not taken away from neighbourhood business more than is absolutely necessary. Officers will spend at least 80% of their time visibly working in your neighbourhood, tackling your priorities. Staff turnover will be minimised.

FAIR

### PLEDGE POINT 4

Respond to every message directed to your Neighbourhood Policing Team within 24 hours and, where necessary, provide a more detailed response as soon as we can.

FAIR

### PLEDGE POINT 5

Aim to answer 999 calls within 10 seconds, deploying to emergencies immediately, giving an estimated time of arrival (ETA), and getting to you safely, and as quickly as possible. In urban areas, we will aim to get to you within 15 minutes and in rural areas within 20 minutes.

GOOD

### PLEDGE POINT 6

Answer all non-emergency calls promptly. If attendance is needed, send a patrol, giving you an ETA, and:

- if you are vulnerable or upset, we will aim to be with you within 60 minutes;
- if you are calling about an issue that we have agreed with your community will be a neighbourhood priority and attendance is required, we will aim to be with you within 60 minutes;
- alternatively, if appropriate, we will make an appointment to see you at a time that fits in with your life and within 48 hours;
- if agreed that attendance is not necessary, we will give you advice, answer your questions and/or put you in touch with someone who can help.

GOOD

### PLEDGE POINT 7

Arrange regular public meetings to agree your priorities at least once a month, giving you a chance to meet your local team with other members of your community. These will include opportunities such as surgeries, street briefings and mobile police station visits, which will be arranged to meet local needs and requirements.

FAIR

### PLEDGE POINT 8

Provide monthly updates on progress, and on local crime and policing issues. This will include the provision of crime maps, information on specific crimes and what happened to those brought to justice, details of what action we and our partners are taking to make your neighbourhood safer, and information on how your force is performing.

FAIR

### PLEDGE POINT 9

If you have been a victim of crime, agree with you how often you would like to be kept informed of progress in your case and for how long. You have the right to be kept informed at least every month if you wish, and for as long as is reasonable.

FAIR

### PLEDGE POINT 10

Acknowledge any dissatisfaction with the service you have received within 24 hours of reporting it to us. To help us fully resolve the matter, discuss with you how it will be handled, give you an opportunity to talk in person to someone about your concerns and agree with you what will be done about them and how quickly.

FAIR

## SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

### PLEDGE POINT 1

Customers with physical disabilities and impairments were assisted in various ways such as providing digital electronic hearing loops. The public was asked about how they wanted public meetings to be run, and about when they thought police stations should be open. **But** police stations' premises were poor and no police station was open between the hours of 8pm and 8am. The force reported that because of budget restrictions, they had not published information about the Pledge in languages other than English. The force did not have review systems in place that ensured lessons were learnt from complaints made by the public.

### PLEDGE POINT 2

Information about Neighbourhood Policing Teams (NPTs) was published on the force's website and in external newsletters, together with information about planned community meetings and events. Local Pledges were displayed in police station enquiry areas. **But** the force did not provide the public with enough information about their Neighbourhood Policing Team, who the officers were, and how to contact them. The force did not display opening times prominently in all stations.

### PLEDGE POINT 3

The force had guidelines about how much time staff could spend away from their neighbourhood. **But** the removal of NPT staff from their neighbourhoods still occurred in some parts of the force. In some areas, targets were met, but in other areas, staff spent less than 80% of the time visible in their neighbourhoods.

### PLEDGE POINT 4

All emails from the public were sent to a single NPT address which was regularly monitored to ensure a response within 24 hours. The force ensured all letters received by post were responded to in a timely manner. All correspondence to the public clearly identified the police officer who was dealing with their individual case. **But** there was no consistent guidance for how the force responded to members of the public, although a formal response system was being developed.

### PLEDGE POINT 5

The force tried to ensure all 999 calls were responded to quickly and safely. Performance was good. Callers to the force were provided with an estimated time of arrival. The force tried to make sure there was enough staff on hand at all times. Officers worked individually as well as in pairs.

### PLEDGE POINT 6

The force answered and responded to non-emergency calls well. Staff were trained to recognise 'vulnerable' or 'upset' callers' needs, and to know what the community's priorities were. The force also knew about non-police services that could help callers. A 'by appointment' system was introduced in 2008. This ensured that police made contact with callers at a time that was convenient to the caller. The force aimed to arrive within one hour for all priority incidents. The force did not always respond quickly enough to calls that were about prioritised local issues. The force identified a lack of finance as the reason for this.

## PLEDGE POINT 7

Members of the public could meet their NPT in a variety of ways. The force consulted with the public and as a result a number of meetings were jointly held with community partners, such as the Parish Council. Details about upcoming meetings were available on the force website and innovative ways to communicate, such as Bluetooth, were used. Neighbourhood priorities were determined through discussion with local communities and meetings attended by the inspection team showed the police focused on these priority issues. **But** some meetings did not take place as advertised. Meetings were cancelled or venues changed without sufficient notice being given. There was not enough local publicity, such as posters displayed in post offices that advertised meetings.

## PLEDGE POINT 8

Regular updates about local crime and the action taken in response to crime were provided. This included monthly crime mapping information on the force website. The force had considered that some people did not have internet access and effort was made to communicate with these individuals in other ways. **But** the force did not listen fully to what the community wanted to know about their force's performance. The community was also not sufficiently updated on local crimes and action taken against offenders.

## PLEDGE POINT 9

Officers asked victims about how they wished to be contacted and how often they wanted updates. Officers also asked crime victims at what point they wished to no longer be informed of no progress in their case. This information was recorded on the victim's statement form. There were guidelines in place for helping 'vulnerable' or 'intimidated' victims. A small sample of victims were interviewed during the inspection and the majority were positive about the quality of service provided by the force. **But** the force did not check that staff kept the agreements with crime victims.

## PLEDGE POINT 10

The force ensured that a response was provided to dissatisfaction within 24 hours. Effort was made to resolve the dissatisfaction at the earliest opportunity. **But** the force itself identified areas for improvement, including the need to establish who was responsible for dealing with dissatisfaction and how lessons were learned.

## WHAT THE FORCE WAS DOING TO IMPROVE ITS PERFORMANCE

As well as reporting on the force's delivery of each Pledge standard, HMIC has also assessed and graded the efforts it was making to improve performance:

### HMIC GRADING

Surveys and management meetings were being used to improve performance; public satisfaction and confidence data were taken into account.

GOOD

The force had identified deficiencies in its delivery of the Pledge and was taking action in those areas.

FAIR

Implementation was led by the force's senior team, the Police Authority was involved, staff were being trained and the Pledge was communicated to staff and the public.

FAIR



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The report is available in alternative languages and formats on request.

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