



Inspecting policing  
in the public interest



## **DELIVERING THE POLICING PLEDGE**

Essex Police

# “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 Essex Police 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.

GOOD

### 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.

FAIR

### 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.

FAIR

### 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.

GOOD

### 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

Of the 49 operational police stations in Essex, 12 were open to the public all day every day. All had facilities for people with disabilities including impaired sight and hearing. The Pledge had been reproduced on the force website in 10 languages and there was a short video with subtitles and sign language. A Braille version was also available. **But** police station opening times had been set without having asked the public what would suit them. There was no force-wide oversight, assessment or analysis of dissatisfaction reports which were managed by divisions.

### PLEDGE POINT 2

The force website contained details of all Neighbourhood Policing Teams (NPTs), was searchable by postcode and provided contact details for individual officers. Volunteers work with the police to enforce local priorities. There were 700 Special Constabulary officers working with NPTs, and the force was seeking to increase this to 1,000 by March 2010. **But** neighbourhood newsletters, containing NPT officers' contact details, were last produced in November 2008 and were no longer current.

### PLEDGE POINT 3

All NPT officers were required to serve on a team for a minimum of two years to develop and maintain relationships with the community. Neighbourhood priorities were communicated to staff using the force briefing system. The force was planning to increase the number of officers in NPTs by 500 by 2013. **But** the force did not record whether NPT staff were being used for duties outside their neighbourhood and it was not able to say reliably if the 80% level was met. The force did not plan for staff leaving NPTs which led to gaps in service at times.

### PLEDGE POINT 4

NPT mobile telephone numbers and email addresses were publicised on the force website and in NPT publications. Correspondence registers were well maintained, with enquiries allocated to named officers. The force leadership programme was aimed at developing the best possible public service, and set out Guaranteed Customer Service Standards for police station reception areas, responding to telephone calls, management of mobile telephones by NPT staff, letters, emails and text messages. **But** NPT officers did not always switch on automated email replies or voicemail when they were not available. The force's "Mystery Shopping" programme and HMIC testing identified that NPTs do not respond to every message from the public within 24 hours.

### PLEDGE POINT 5

The force graded calls in order to identify emergencies and provide the most appropriate response. Comprehensive performance management systems were in place to record and monitor performance against call handling and response times, and this information was regularly provided to management teams and Chief Officers. **But** the Force was not complying with National Call Handling Standards in the grading of emergency and priority calls when responding to some crimes where a crime was still taking place and the offender was present. The force policy was written in 2006 and needed updating.

### PLEDGE POINT 6

In 2008-09 94% of non-emergency calls were answered in 60 seconds, against a target of 90%. Effective systems were in place to manage calls effectively including comprehensive training and regular quality monitoring by supervisors. The terms 'vulnerable' and 'upset' had been defined, were fully understood by staff and correctly applied to calls. **But** the force did not have a facility to offer appointments within 48 hours. The force was not achieving its target to attend 90% of Pledge Point 6 incidents within 60 minutes.

### PLEDGE POINT 7

A wide range of innovative community consultation and engagements were used by NPTs at least monthly. Mobile police stations were used to engage rural communities and surgeries were held in reopened Post Offices. Local priorities were agreed at meetings with the community which were attended by a broad spectrum of people and well managed. **But** agreed priorities and progress reports were not published promptly on the force website.

### PLEDGE POINT 8

Crime mapping had been available on the force website since 2008, with a range of data available at neighbourhood level. Force web pages such as “Essex Police Newslines” and “Unsolved crimes” featured high profile stories and appeals for information, whilst district level web pages contained local stories and news items. **But** NPT staff did not know whether offenders had been convicted.

### PLEDGE POINT 9

Victims of crime that HMIC spoke to were complimentary about the methods and frequency of contact provided by investigators. The force was effective at liaising with the families of victims. It monitored the relationship between officers and bereaved families and took action to improve this where necessary. Witnesses were cared for by staff dedicated to this purpose. **But** the force was constrained by the deficiencies of a paper based crime investigation system. Limited knowledge of the requirements of the Policing Pledge and the “Victims’ Code of Practice” was displayed by staff interviewed.

### PLEDGE POINT 10

An email address was available on the force website for people to register concerns. Staff rosters had been adjusted to ensure a response was made within 24 hours including over weekends and public holidays. The force used quality assurance checks and user satisfaction telephone surveys to identify dissatisfied customers and implement recovery actions. **But** dissatisfaction reports made at police station front counters were resolved immediately by explanation or apology without any record being made. The force did not routinely analyse complaints or records of dissatisfaction so that they could learn from them.

## 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.

FAIR

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.

GOOD



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This publication is printed  
on 50% recycled paper

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

Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary  
Ashley House  
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