



Inspecting policing
in the public interest



DELIVERING THE POLICING PLEDGE

Northamptonshire 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
Northamptonshire 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.

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.

GOOD

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.

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.

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

Station opening times were clearly displayed outside police stations and advertised on the website alongside maps and directions. Stations had automatic doors and portable amplifiers for those with a hearing impairment. A Disability Line operated for people whose disability affected their telephone use. There was a telephone-based interpreting service for non-English speaking customers and Policing Pledge leaflets were available in several languages. **But** visits by the inspection team to one police station found that it had changed its opening times and this had not been communicated to the public. Another visit to a different police station found it temporarily closed during advertised opening hours without any reason being given.

PLEDGE POINT 2

Northamptonshire Police refer to Neighbourhood Policing Teams (NPTs) as Safer Community Teams (SCTs). All stations and the force website displayed information about their Safer Community Teams (SCTs), including pictures and contact details. The public were kept informed through the website, newsletters, newspaper articles, posters, and leaflets. **But** posters with information about SCTs and how to work with them were not displayed in places that many people frequented, such as supermarkets and town centres.

PLEDGE POINT 3

Safer Community Team (SCT) duties were monitored so that staff were not often removed from their frontline duties. When this did occur, this needed to be authorised by a senior officer. Co-ordinators had been employed across the force to provide administrative support, allowing SCTs to be freed up to tackle local issues and patrol key locations. An additional 40 officers had been identified specifically for SCT duties. **But** SCTs communication with other officers was sometimes slow and was generally by email. Improved information should be provided to the public about how often SCTs were visible in their areas.

PLEDGE POINT 4

SCTs could access emails whilst on patrol and had mobile phones to increase their availability to the public. In some stations the team voicemails were checked daily. **But** the new voicemail system that automatically emailed the SCT co-ordinator to prompt them to deal with the voicemail did not meet the Pledge commitment. Research found that 30% of internal extensions had unanswered voicemails. A total of 1,965 messages had not been checked.

PLEDGE POINT 5

In the year to July 2009, local monitoring showed that 92% of 999 calls were answered in 10 seconds, exceeding its 90% target. All callers were given an estimated time of arrival, based on the urgency of the incident. Arriving safely at incidents was critical and this was emphasised to all staff. **But** the performance target to attend 90% of emergency calls within 15 minutes in urban areas and 20 minutes in rural areas was not consistently met as only 82% of urban calls and 77% of rural incidents were attended on target in July 2009.

PLEDGE POINT 6

Staff have received guidance on recognising 'vulnerable' or 'upset' callers and identifying neighbourhood priorities. SCT availability and details of community meetings were up to date and easily viewed by call operators. **But** neighbourhood priorities were not recorded in sufficient detail on the control room systems for staff to deal with Pledge requirements. There was not enough thought given at the start to identify the best police person to deal with the incident. This meant that a member of the public dealt with more than one officer unnecessarily. In the 12 months to July 2009, local performance showed that only 51% of calls requiring police attendance within 60 minutes were attended within target.

PLEDGE POINT 7

Details of community panel meetings and police surgeries were available on the internet and in local police stations, and there were some advertisements via the local media. An “interaction card” provided the public with a quick and simple way to identify neighbourhood priorities on a postcard, and these were considered at quarterly community panels. **But** although communities had a say in influencing priorities, it was unclear to what extent they were actually involved in agreeing them. Hundreds of “interaction cards” had been handed out through officer contacts and community representatives but the cards were not freepost and this affected the response rate.

PLEDGE POINT 8

Each SCT used the media to inform their community on neighbourhood policing issues and details of actions taken to tackle neighbourhood priorities. This included a newsletter, a force newspaper and podcasts (downloadable internet broadcasts). All websites were linked to crime mapping information and also to four other regional forces. **But** updates giving details of what had happened to offenders was patchy, and only 50% of SCT websites had evidence of partnership problem solving.

PLEDGE POINT 9

The force had monitoring in place to ensure that the “Victims’ Code of Practice” and “National Call Handling Standards” were checked. The majority of victims of crime received monthly updates. The force was committed to improving confidence in the service given to victims. **But** while victims were regularly updated in line with national standards, current arrangements were not tailored to the specific needs of the victim and did not yet meet commitments promised by the Pledge.

PLEDGE POINT 10

A Customer Relations Unit was operated by the Communications Centre with staff providing support and updates to callers. Control room staff were trained in what action to take in response to complaints and dissatisfaction. A chief officer personally dealt with issues relating to Pledge delivery, including visibility of SCTs, their unauthorised absences from their neighbourhoods, and SCT vacancies. **But** of the public dissatisfaction letters and emails checked, none were responded to within the 24 hour target. Other than complaints, dissatisfaction reports were not collated and no analysis was done. The website provided automated responses to users but was not checked by staff on weekends. Responses to the caller could take between five and ten days.

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.

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Ashley House
2 Monck Street
London SW1P 2BQ

This report is also available from the HMIC website
<http://inspectors.justice.gov.uk/hmic>

Published in October 2009.

Printed by the Central Office of Information.

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ISBN: 978-1-84987-009-2

Ref: 297705