



## HUMBERSIDE POLICE AUTHORITY

# PRESS INFORMATION

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### **Police Authority's Mystery Shopping Shows Improvements**

The outcomes of a mystery shopping programme to check how well Humberside Police are performing in relation to key strands of the Policing Pledge have been revealed by Humberside Police Authority at its Communities and Partnerships Committee meeting. Overall, the Force was found to be continuing to deliver the high standards required by the Pledge although the mystery shoppers were able to identify some areas where the Force can take steps to improve delivery even further.

Mystery shopping is increasingly used to ascertain how well a service is being provided in both the public and private sector. It involves contracting a company or organisation to make unannounced visits to counters and calls to switchboards requesting routine information. The quality of the service is then reported on and graded. Humberside Police Authority has used mystery shoppers previously, in 2007 and 2005, and the 2009 programme provides a level of comparison to be drawn against the previous results. Key findings include;

- Significant improvements in many areas when compared to the results from 2007;
- The excellent levels of personal service provided by PCSOs;
- A need to improve the provision of information on opening times and public meetings and the way in which some telephone calls are handled.

The Police Authority, which is the independent local 'watchdog' for policing, has a responsibility to drive improvements in the service provided on behalf of the public. Through its own scrutiny, supported by the mystery shopping exercise, the Authority is confident that there have been significant improvements to service delivery since 2007.

A key finding from the mystery shopper exercise was the consistently high levels of personal service provided at police station counters, particularly by PCSOs

who provided reassurance through the information they gave and the emphasis on public safety.

Welcoming this verification of the value of PCSOs, Alene Branton MBE, Chair of the Police Authority, said: "The Police Authority is particularly pleased to have impartial confirmation that these PCSOs are providing help and reassurance to the public. The Authority has worked hard over the last few years to provide both the necessary funding and people to enable the delivery of a local service that makes people feel safe and reassured. I am delighted to see Humberside's PCSOs doing exactly what the Authority wanted."

Although the standard of 'face to face' contact was consistently high, mystery shoppers did feel there was room for improvement in the manner and telephone skills of some switchboard operators.

Alene Branton commented: "The public told us very clearly how important it was for calls to be answered swiftly. With the encouragement and support of the Police Authority the Force is now one of the top performing forces in the speed with which it answers the phone. We know that the quality of the conversation with the majority of calls is also very high but we need to make sure the way in which operators listen and respond does not suffer due to speed. We will ask the Force to look at this aspect of their work and we will use mystery shopping again in order to ensure service is improved."

The work of the Mystery Shoppers has been supported by Police Authority Members who have also been out in their communities and visiting stations to make personal scrutiny checks on the quality and consistency of local policing.

Both pieces of work showed that 'Access to services and fairness' at stations was well maintained and public areas were accessible. All divisions were found to have an evident commitment to the visibility of patrols, with a logical rationale for the times and locations for deployment of officers. There was also clear evidence that Neighbourhood Teams have systems in place to both receive and respond to messages from the public. Ways to improve the provision of information on Neighbourhood Policing Teams, particularly when stations are closed, have been put forward as a result of the inspections made.

Ros Taylor, MBE, Vice Chair of the Communities and Partnership Committee, said she was pleased with the level of scrutiny provided by the Authority in relation to the Policing Pledge, and pointed out that the findings were very positive.

"One of the main aims of the Policing Pledge is to ensure equality of access and services for all members of the community," she said. "As an Authority we are pleased to see that Humberside Police is generally meeting the standards of the Pledge so well."

“It’s important that both the Mystery Shopping and the members own visits considered policing by putting themselves in the public’s shoes. Scrutinising things from the user’s angle is an illuminating experience and I believe that this approach will bring further improvements to customer service for our residents.

“Where there are areas highlighted for improvement, the Authority, acting on behalf of the public will make suggestions as to how service can be improved and equally, where good practice has been identified, we will seek to have that replicated across all the divisions. The Authority has asked the Chief Constable to respond on the progress made at the next meeting of the Communities and Partnerships Committee in May.”

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