



Inspecting policing  
in the **public interest**

## **Cheshire Constabulary's response to the funding challenge**

**July 2013**

# Contents

<b>Cheshire Constabulary: Executive summary</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The challenge</b>	<b>5</b>
Progress in making savings: Years 1–2	5
Plans for Year 3–4	5
Looking beyond the current spending review	5
The scale of the challenge in Cheshire	6
Demand	6
<b>Response to the challenge</b>	<b>7</b>
Changes to workforce numbers	7
Changes to the proportion of workforce on the front line	7
Collaboration	9
Managing change	10
How is the force engaging police officers, PCSOs and staff in the change programme?	10
How effective has the response been?	10
<b>Impact of the changes on the public</b>	<b>11</b>
Visibility	11
Calls for service	12
Crime	12
Victim satisfaction surveys	13
Changes to how the public can access services	13
<b>Conclusion</b>	<b>14</b>

# Cheshire Constabulary: Executive summary

Cheshire Constabulary needs to cut spending by nearly £37m between 2011 and 2015. It already spends less on policing per head than most other forces, but it has broadly the same amount of police officers per head of population.

HMIC is confident that the force can deliver the saving it needs, it has made a good start and has a strong track record in reducing its costs. It has been at the forefront of some innovative and constructive collaboration arrangements.

HMIC considers that the force has a well-managed, comprehensive change programme, which balances the delivery of savings with improvements in service delivery and engages with staff across the organisation. Cheshire Constabulary is in a good position to move forward with further transformation<sup>1</sup> to meet future challenges and has started a positive and ambitious programme to identify further savings.

## Financial challenge

Cheshire Constabulary has identified that it needs to save £36.8m over the four years of the spending review (i.e. between March 2011 and March 2015).

While as a proportion of its overall budget (18%) this savings requirement is broadly in line with other forces, because the amount of money it receives<sup>2</sup> is comparatively low, given the size of the population in Cheshire. The number of staff it employs is similar to other forces while the amount it spends on each officer is comparatively low. The amount it spends on each staff member is comparatively high compared to most other forces.

## Progress in making savings

Cheshire Constabulary has planned how it will save the whole of the £36.8m required by March 2015.

## Changes to the workforce

All forces spend most of their money on staff costs (such as wages and overtime), and so have focused on reducing this expenditure in order to cut costs.<sup>3</sup> Cheshire Constabulary is no exception.

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1 Transformation is a process of radical change that orientates an organisation in a new direction and takes it to an entirely different level of effectiveness. It implies a fundamental change of character, with little or no resemblance to the past configuration or structure.

2 From the central police funding grant, and from other sources like council tax.

3 See *Adapting to Austerity*, HMIC, London, July 2011, p.13. Available from [www.hmic.gov.uk](http://www.hmic.gov.uk).

It is reducing police officer numbers by limiting recruitment and holding vacancies and as a result, by the end of the spending review period, it is planned there will be 241 fewer police officers in the force. This means the number of police officers is planned to reduce by 11% between March 2010<sup>4</sup> and March 2015. This is a similar reduction to most other forces.

There is evidence that the force is successfully protecting frontline posts as it makes these cuts. Between March 2010 and March 2015, the proportion of police officers in frontline, crime-fighting roles is planned to increase from 89% to 93%. This reflects the overall increase across England and Wales from 89% to 93%.

The force has also made some police staff redundant and not replaced others as they have left (e.g. through retirements and resignations), and as a result, by the end of the spending review period, it is planned there will be 417 fewer police staff in Cheshire Constabulary. This would mean a reduction in the number of police staff of 27% between March 2010 and March 2015. This is considerably higher than in most other forces. The force plans to reduce the number of police community support officers (PCSOs) by 17, or 7%, which is fewer than in most other forces.

## **Impact on the public**

HMIC expects forces to make savings without damaging the service provided to the public. We monitor whether they are achieving this by examining crime rates and the results of the victim satisfaction surveys which all forces conduct.

Over the first two years of the spending review, recorded crime<sup>5</sup> (excluding fraud) fell by 10%, which is lower than the figure for England and Wales (13%). Victim satisfaction remains high at 88.9%<sup>6</sup> which is higher than most other forces.

## **Future challenges**

Cheshire Constabulary has planned how it will save the whole of the £36.8m required by March 2015. The force has now started to look beyond this spending review period and recognises that further radical transformation to its operating model will be necessary to meet the challenge of a further savings target after 2015. The Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) has commissioned a detailed review of all activities to develop plans from 2015 to 2018.

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4 We use 2010 as our baseline as many forces started to make staff reductions in anticipation of the spending review.

5 Crime excluding fraud, as per the new crime classifications released in July 2013 by the Office for National Statistics.

6 ± 1.7%.

## The challenge

Over the four years of the spending review (March 2011 to March 2015), Cheshire Constabulary identified that it needs to find savings of £36.8m, which equates to 18% of its total expenditure<sup>7</sup> (which in 2012/13 was £197.7m). Across England and Wales a 17% reduction in total expenditure is required.

### **Progress in making savings: Years 1–2**

The force successfully made 49% (£18.2m) of the total savings required by March 2015 in the first two years of the spending review period. It achieved this by: reducing its recruitment of new police officers; reducing the number of police staff it employs; and restructuring how the force delivers elements of its policing, for example by reducing the size of its business support and bearing down on non-pay costs.

### **Plans for Year 3–4**

The force has plans in place to achieve further savings of £8.4m in 2013/14 and another £10.2m in 2014/15. This amounts to the total the force is required to save up to the end of the spending review period. Plans include a combination of savings through reducing the workforce and focusing again on bringing down non-pay costs, for example, this year the force plan to take 47% of savings from non-pay budgets.

### **Looking beyond the current spending review**

The force has started to consider what savings it might need to make after March 2015 and the force's medium-term financial plan looks further forward to 2017/18. The force are carrying out a detailed review of all their savings plans and are developing a four year plan from 2015 to 2018 that will transform the operating model into one capable of achieving this level of savings.

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<sup>7</sup> Based on a gross expenditure baseline in 2010/11.

## The scale of the challenge in Cheshire

Cheshire Constabulary faces a moderate challenge because it has a savings requirement which is broadly in line with other forces. However, it has limited options for savings, because:

- it spends less per head of population than most other forces in England and Wales so it is relatively low cost already;
- it has broadly the same number of police officers per head of population as in most other forces in England and Wales;
- the amount it spends on each officer is comparatively low; but
- the amount it spends on each staff member is comparatively higher than most other forces in England and Wales, which may give the constabulary opportunities to identify savings.

## Demand

Forces face different levels of demand for the service they provide to the public. This section looks at three of the key indicators of demand to provide an overall impression of the challenges each force faces:

- the number of calls the force receives from the public;
- the number of crimes the force deals with; and
- the number of prosecutions (suspects charged with offences) the force brings.

<b>12 months to March 2013</b>	<b>Cheshire Constabulary</b>	<b>England and Wales</b>
Emergency and priority calls per 1,000 population	199	134
Victim-based crime per 1,000 population	48.6	54.5
Prosecutions (charges) per 1,000 population	8.6	10.2

In 2012/13 Cheshire Constabulary received more emergency and priority calls from the public than other forces. It dealt with fewer crimes per head of population than in other forces, and supported fewer prosecutions than elsewhere.

# Response to the challenge

Over 80% of police budget (on average) is spent on staff costs,<sup>8</sup> it is not surprising that forces across England and Wales are planning to achieve most of their savings by reducing the number of police officers, PCSOs and police staff they employ.

Cheshire Constabulary is no exception. It made an early start and slowed its recruitment of new police officers and police staff, and reduced the number of police staff. The force plans to make 73% of its spending review savings requirement from its pay budget. This is similar to most other forces.

## Changes to workforce numbers

The following table shows the force's planned changes to workforce numbers over the spending review period and compares these to the change for England and Wales.<sup>9</sup>

	31 March 2010 (baseline)	31 March 2015	Change	Cheshire change %	Change for England and Wales %
Police Officers	2,155	1,914	-241	-11%	-11%
Police Staff	1,550	1,133	-417	-27%	-16%
PCSOs	237	220	-17	-7%	-17%
<b>Total</b>	<b>3,943</b>	<b>3,267</b>	<b>-676</b>	<b>-17%</b>	<b>-13%</b>
Specials	300	630	+330	+110%	+60%

Overall, the table shows that Cheshire Constabulary plans to lose a similar percentage of officers to other forces but a bigger percentage of police staff than other forces, and will reduce the number of PCSOs, but by less than other forces.

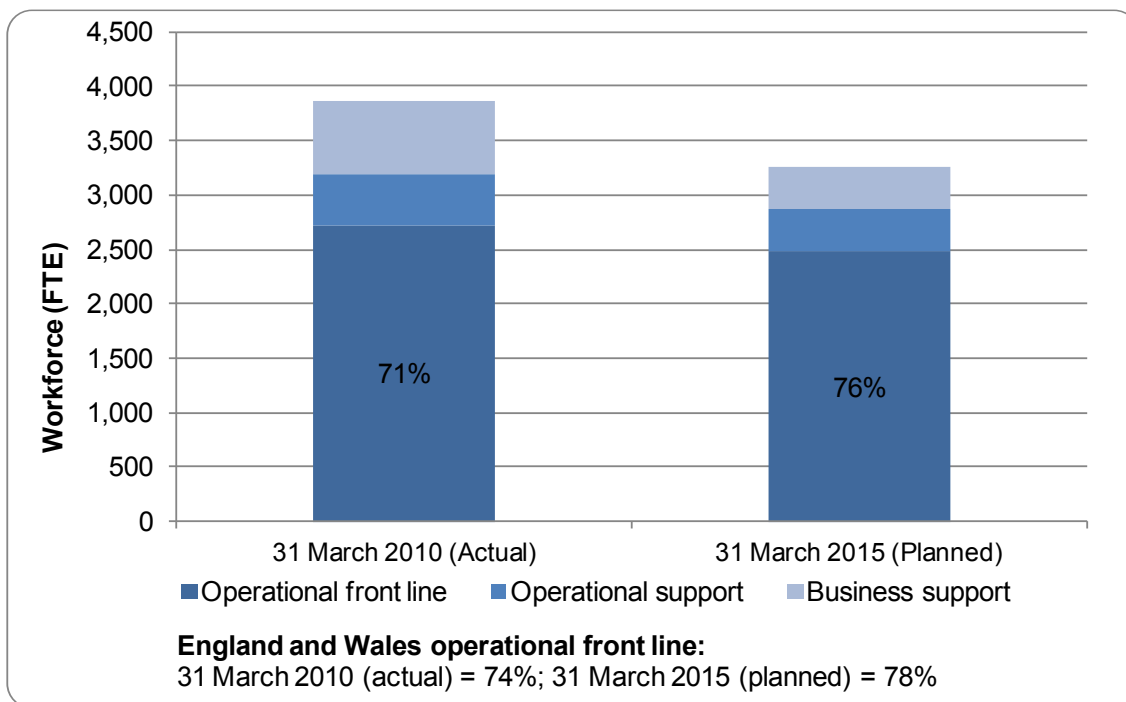
## Changes to the proportion of workforce on the front line

HMIC defines the people who work on the police front line as: "*those who are in everyday contact with the public and who directly intervene to keep people safe and enforce the law*". It is important that as forces reconfigure their structures and reduce workforce **numbers**, they focus on maintaining (or if possible increasing) the **proportion** of people in these crime-fighting roles.

<sup>8</sup> See *Adapting to Austerity*, HMIC, London, July 2011, p.13. Available from [www.hmic.gov.uk](http://www.hmic.gov.uk).

<sup>9</sup> Workforce figures for March 2010 show the actual number of people working for the force in permanent posts on the 31 March in that year. People on long-term absences (such as maternity leave) are included in these 'actual' figures, but vacant posts are not. Workforce projections for March 2015 are for budgeted posts, so the actual number of people who will be working for the force at that point in reality may be different, because some posts will be vacant or filled by temporary staff. Forces' projections may also exclude people who will be on long-term absences. The difference between actual workforce numbers and projected numbers should therefore be taken as an approximate expected change.

The following chart shows the change in the workforce frontline profile in Cheshire Constabulary.<sup>10</sup>



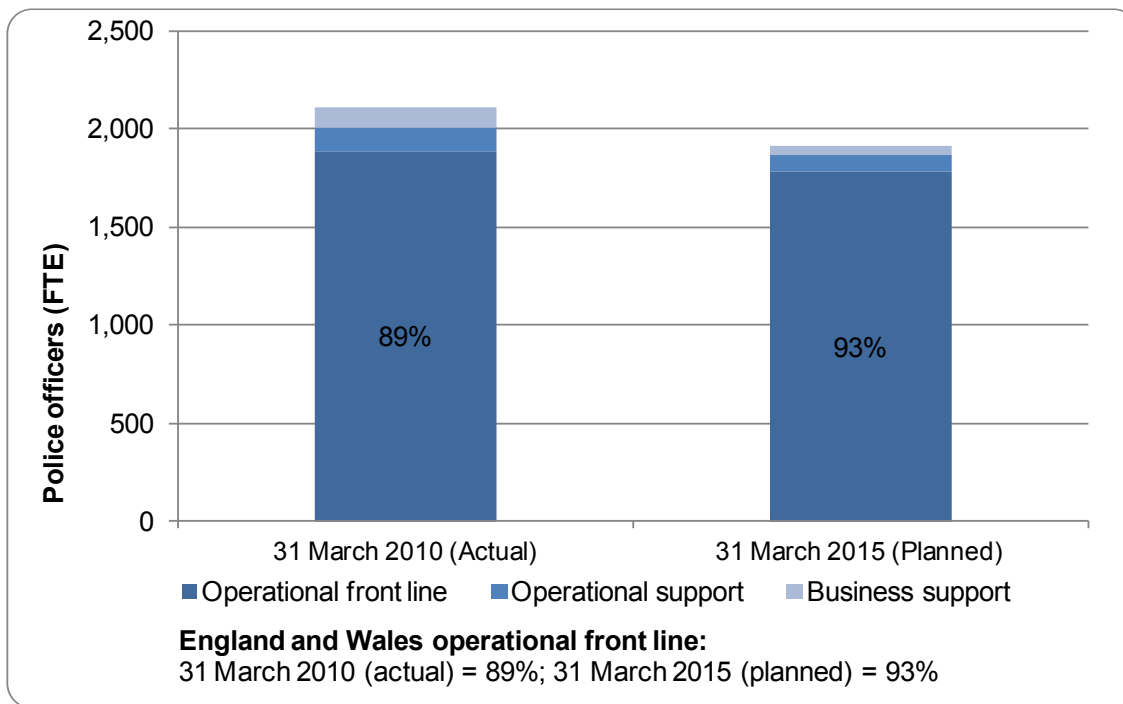
The **number** of officers, PCSOs and staff (i.e. of the force’s total workforce) working on Cheshire’s front line is planned to reduce by 9% between March 2010 and March 2015 (from 2,725 to 2,477).

Over the same period, the **proportion** of the force’s total workforce allocated to frontline roles is planned to increase from 71% to 76%. This compares with an overall increase across England and Wales from 74% to 78%.

The **number** of Cheshire’s police officers in frontline roles is planned to reduce by 6% from 1,888 in March 2010 to 1,781 in March 2015, as the chart on the next page shows. The **proportion** of those remaining on the front line is planned to increase from 89% to 93%. This compares to an overall increase across England and Wales from 89% to 93%.

<sup>10</sup> From 2010, Gwent, the Metropolitan Police Service, Wiltshire and North Wales police forces chose to code those officers and staff who are on long-term absence from duty due to maternity/paternity leave, career break, full-time education or suspension, and those on long-term leave, to their normal working role. This has the effect of inflating their workforce and frontline figures by up to 1% compared to other forces.





## Collaboration

HMIC monitors a force's progress on collaboration<sup>11</sup> because it offers the opportunity to deliver efficient, effective policing and help achieve savings.

HMIC found that Cheshire Constabulary has a mature and open approach to collaboration. The force is working across a wide range of collaborations at a local, regional and national level. With other regional forces they have a number of policing services working in collaboration, such as serious and organised crime teams and roads policing. They also collaborate with Northamptonshire Police in a multi-force shared service and use private sector partnering to help deliver efficiencies.

The PCC has made it clear that he will continue to support collaboration with other police forces, private sector partnerships and other agencies to drive down the costs of buying products and providing services. The force is exploring other opportunities for further collaboration.

Despite this, in 2014/15 the force expects to spend only 2% of its total expenditure on collaboration, which is lower than the 11% figure for England and Wales. Overall, collaboration is expected contribute to 10% of the force's savings requirement, which is above the 7% figure for England and Wales.

<sup>11</sup> HMIC defines collaboration as "all activity where two or more parties work together to achieve a common goal, which includes inter force activity and collaboration with the public and private sectors, including outsourcing and business partnering".

## **Managing change**

Reductions in police budgets have inevitably led to a shrinking workforce. HMIC expects forces also to have an eye within their change programme on the longer term transformation which can help maintain or improve the service they offer to the public and prepare for future funding reductions.

The force made an early start on its savings targets and used a continuous improvement approach. It looked critically at what it did, how and why it did something and challenged itself to get better through, for example, eliminating a step in a process to make it faster. The force reports that this approach has enabled it to meet the challenges to date and achieve transformational change and savings across a range of activities. This is because the force's approach to improvement has been based on a 'bottom-up' approach, involving staff at all levels in identifying areas for improvement and developing new processes.

The scale of the future challenge requires the force to take a different approach to develop its current operating model. The force reports that its design will need to be flexible, as well as achieve service quality, rather than just being 'cheaper'.

## **How is the force engaging police officers, PCSOs and staff in the change programme?**

HMIC found that staff understood the need for change and the scale of the financial challenge. They said that they had opportunities to engage with senior leaders and influence change and that the change programme had been well communicated in a number of different ways, for example, through newsletters and briefings. They acknowledged that the chief officer group had actively engaged with staff throughout the change process and had shown a commitment to understand and manage the impact, especially on staff.

The force has listened to the findings of staff surveys and the chief officer group have conducted a number of discussion days with members of staff.

## **How effective has the response been?**

The force has embraced new ways of working and has a good track record in achieving improved service and cost savings from working in partnerships. It is continuing to actively explore other collaborative approaches. There is a genuine commitment to balance the achievement of savings with improvements in service delivery, especially at a local level. Both the PCC and Chief Constable are clear that they are seeking to protect local policing.

# Impact of the changes on the public

The challenge for forces is not just to save money and reduce their workforce numbers, but to ensure the choices they make in deciding how to achieve this do not have a negative impact on the service they provide to their communities. HMIC therefore looked for evidence that the force had kept a consideration of the effect on the public at the heart of their choices.

## Visibility

The work done by police officers and staff in visible roles (such as officers who respond to 999 calls, deal with serious road traffic collisions or patrol in neighbourhoods) represents only a part of the policing picture. Chief constables need to allocate resources to many other functions in order to protect the public, such as counter terrorism, serious and organised crime, and child protection (to name just three).

That being said, research shows that the public value seeing visible police officers on patrol in the streets, and that those who see police in uniform at least once a week are more likely to have confidence in their local force.<sup>12</sup> HMIC therefore examined how far the changes being implemented by the force had affected the visibility of the police on the streets of Cheshire.

In March 2013, Cheshire Constabulary allocated 58% of its police officers to visible roles. This is two percentage points higher than it allocated in 2010, and is higher than the figure for most other forces (which was 54% across England and Wales).

Police visibility is further enhanced by PCSOs who principally support community policing. Looking at the proportion of police officers and PCSOs, the force allocates 62% to visible roles. This is one percentage point higher than it allocated in 2010 and greater than the 59% figure for England and Wales.

HMIC conducted a survey<sup>13</sup> of the public across England and Wales to assess whether the public had noticed any difference in the way their area is being policed. Of those people surveyed in Cheshire, 14%<sup>14</sup> said that they have seen a police officer more often than they had 12 months ago; this is broadly in line with the 13% average across all survey respondents in England and Wales.

Of those people surveyed, 78%<sup>15</sup> said they felt either as safe or safer in the areas where they live compared with two years ago. This is broadly in line with the figure for most other forces which is 75%.

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12 See *Demanding Times*, HMIC, London, 2011. Available from [www.hmic.gov.uk](http://www.hmic.gov.uk).

13 A YouGov survey was carried out during a four-week period during March 2013. Satisfaction and confidence surveys are also carried out at a national level by the Crime Survey of England and Wales. These use larger sample sizes and are carried out quarterly over a rolling-year period. Some forces also carry out their own surveys of the general public. More information can be found at [www.crimesurvey.co.uk](http://www.crimesurvey.co.uk), [www.hmic.gov.uk](http://www.hmic.gov.uk) or from force websites.

14 ± 5%.

15 ± 5%.

## Calls for service

HMIC examined whether the force was taking longer to respond to calls for help, as a result of its workforce reductions and other changes designed to save money. Forces are not required to set response times or targets and are free to determine their own arrangements for monitoring attendance to calls so information between forces is not comparable.

From 2010<sup>16</sup> to 2013, Cheshire Constabulary went through a period of transition in respect of how they graded their calls. The force is only able to provide data in respect of attendance time for the year 2010/11.

The attendance time for calls classed as 'emergency' (also known as grade 1) is set at within 15 minutes. For 2010/11 the force met its response time for 'emergency' calls 81% of the time.

The attendance time for calls classed as 'priority' (also known as grade 2) is set at within 60 minutes. For 2010/11 the force met its response time for these calls 82% of the time. As there is no comparative data it is difficult to know if this is an improving picture or not, however, the force is monitoring attendance and within the force control room there are staff who proactively decide on the most appropriate response to each call.

## Crime

In 2010 the Home Secretary, Theresa May, set a clear priority for the police service to reduce crime.

Between 2010/11 and 2012/13 (the first two years of the spending review), the force reduced crime (excluding fraud) by 10% compared with 13% in England and Wales. Over this period, victim-based crime (that is, crimes where there is a direct victim – an individual, a group, or an organisation) reduced by 9% compared with 12% in England and Wales.

By looking at how many crimes occur per head of population, we can see how safe it is for the public in that police area. The table below shows crime and anti-social behaviour rates in Cheshire (per head of population) compared with the rest of England and Wales.

<b>12 months to March 2013</b>	<b>Rate per 1,000 population in Cheshire</b>	<b>England and Wales rate per 1,000 population</b>
Crimes (excluding fraud)	54.2	61.4
Victim-based crime	48.6	54.5
Burglary	6.6	8.2
Violence against the person	10.5	10.6
Anti-social behaviour incidents	44.5	40.7

It is important that crimes are effectively investigated and the perpetrator identified and brought to justice. When sufficient evidence is available to say who has committed a crime, it can be described as detected.

<sup>16</sup> We use 2010/11 as a baseline to show response times prior to the spending review period.

The force's sanction detection<sup>17</sup> rate (for crimes excluding fraud) for the 12 months to March 2013 is 24.4%. This is below the England and Wales sanction detection rate of 27.0%.

We have chosen these types of crime to give an indication of offending levels in Cheshire. For information on the frequency of other kinds of crimes in your area, go to [www.hmic.gov.uk/crime-and-policing-comparator](http://www.hmic.gov.uk/crime-and-policing-comparator).

## Victim satisfaction surveys

An important measure on the impact of changes to service delivery for the public is how satisfied victims are with the overall service they receive when they seek police assistance.

In the 12 months to March 2013, 88.9%<sup>18</sup> of victims were satisfied with the overall service provided by Cheshire Constabulary. This is higher than the England and Wales figure of 84.6%.<sup>19</sup>

## Changes to how the public can access services

Forces are exploring different ways in which the public can access policing services. Cheshire Constabulary is planning to close four police stations and open five shared access points<sup>20</sup> between 2010 and 2015.

They are making more use of the internet and social media to communicate with the public and developing different mechanisms for the public to contact the police. The force is:

- making better use of officer time and visibility by holding partnership meetings in public community spaces, for example at shopping centres;
- using a software product which maps an area that has been, for example, subject to a rise in burglaries. When a police officer enters that area, it triggers an alert in the force control room and the radio operator is able to direct them to the problem and exactly where to patrol; and
- developing an improved personal digital assistant (PDA) for the workforce, so they have mobile access to police information.

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17 A sanction detection is a 'solved crime' where a suspect has been identified and notified as being responsible for committing that crime and what the full implications of this are, and has received an official sanction. Official sanctions include charges, cautions, penalty notices, offences taken into consideration (TICs) and cannabis warnings.

18  $\pm$  1.7%.

19  $\pm$  0.2%.

20 A non-police building open to the general public to obtain face-to-face access to police services. For example, shared facilities with council services (e.g. libraries or offices), the fire service or other partners.

## Conclusion

Cheshire Constabulary has a good track record in operating with greater efficiency and achieving savings. It has been at the forefront of some innovative and constructive collaboration arrangements, including with the private sector. HMIC considers that the force has a well-managed change programme, which balances the delivery of savings with improvements in service delivery. The force report that they will be able to achieve the savings required and HMIC considers that it is in a good position to move forward with further transformation to meet future challenges.

The force has started to consider what savings it might need to make after March 2015. It is carrying out a detailed review of all their savings plans to develop a four-year plan from 2015 to 2018 that will transform the operating model into one capable of delivering additional future savings. This puts them in a strong position to manage further reductions and continue to provide a good service to the public.

In October 2010, the Government announced that central funding to the Police Service in England and Wales would reduce by 20% in the four years between March 2011 and March 2015.

HMIC's Valuing the Police Programme has tracked how forces are planning to make savings to meet this budget demand each year since summer 2011. This report identifies what we found in this third year.

Our inspection focused on three questions:

1. How is the force responding to the budget reduction?
2. What is the impact for the workforce and the public?
3. How is the force managing current and future risks?

To answer these questions, we collected data and plans from forces, surveyed the public to see if they had noticed any changes in the service they receive from the police as a result of the cuts, and conducted in-force inspections. We also interviewed the Chief Constable, Police and Crime Commissioner and the chief officer leads for finance, change, human resources and performance in each force, and held focus groups with staff and other officers.

National findings and patterns across all 43 forces are given in our thematic report, *Policing in Austerity: Rising to the Challenge*, which is available from [www.hmic.gov.uk](http://www.hmic.gov.uk).

This report provides the findings for Cheshire Constabulary.