



Inspecting policing
in the public interest

Valuing the Police: Preparedness Inspection

**Durham Constabulary
July 2011**

Purpose of the review

The Police Service, along with all other parts of the public sector, is facing its biggest financial challenge in a generation. This could be seen either as an opportunity to innovate and refresh – or as a reason to continue as is and see services cut back.

Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC) has been heavily involved in monitoring the Service's reaction and preparedness for cutting crime while reducing costs. As part of this, in Spring 2011 we carried out an inspection of all 43 forces and authorities in England and Wales, to assess:

- how they are planning to meet the financial challenge; and
- what the impact will be on the service they provide to the public.

This report summarises the findings for Durham Constabulary. A thematic report, *Adapting to Austerity*, which brings together findings from all 43 forces, is also available from www.hmic.gov.uk.

Findings for Durham Constabulary

What is the financial challenge in Durham?

Durham Constabulary and Durham Police Authority reported that they are facing a **£24m** cash reduction to their budget over the four years of the comprehensive spending review period (2011/12–14/15). In real terms (ie when inflation is taken into account), this equates to 16% of their gross revenue expenditure.

Are the force and authority prepared to meet this financial challenge?

The constabulary and authority clearly showed that they understood the scale of the challenge facing them, and had considered a range of options in developing a plan to meet it. At the time of inspection, this plan detailed enough cost reductions to realise most of the savings required for the full four years of the comprehensive spending review period, with the majority due to be made in the first two years. This placed the force in a strong position.

The force had already started making savings before 2011/12, via voluntary and compulsory redundancy programmes for police staff. With this complete, the focus moved to developing a new force operating model, which was intended to ensure the delivery of effective policing with reduced resources. Governance and project management processes were in place in both the force and the authority to ensure effective oversight during the implementation of this new model.

What will be the impact on the number of police officers and staff?

Durham Constabulary planned to make the following changes to its workforce numbers.

	Police Officers	Police Staff	PCSO
31 March 2010 (actual)	1,507	920	175
31 March 2015 (proposed)	1,315	618	166

March 2010 figures have been used as the baseline, because most forces began a recruitment freeze in that year, and as a result workforce numbers started to fall. The proposed figures shown for March 2015 were provided to HMIC by the force in June 2011.

The force and authority's plans for the workforce will continue to be refined as the change programme progresses.

What will be the impact on service to the public?

Durham Constabulary and Police Authority have identified the potential impact of the proposed changes on the service they deliver to their community. However, it is their intention that there will be no reduction in service delivery; and indeed, in many cases they anticipated that performance would improve (as a result of the new force operating model and underpinning processes to increase productivity).

There was a joint force and authority engagement strategy, and a force communications plan to ensure that the implications of the changes were explained to key stakeholders and the public. They have also consulted with the public about the changes, and there was evidence that this feedback has influenced the change programme.

Does the force have targets to reduce crime and ASB?

The first job of the police is to reduce crime and keep the peace; and in 2010, Theresa May, the Home Secretary, stated that she expects forces and authorities to make financial cuts while still reducing crime and without damaging the front line.

Durham's *Policing Plan* includes targets to reduce crime and around anti-social behaviour (ASB) in the coming year.

