



Inspecting policing
in the public interest

Gloucestershire Constabulary's response to the funding challenge

July 2013

Contents

Gloucestershire Constabulary: Executive summary	3
The challenge	5
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 Gloucestershire Constabulary	5
Demand	6
How difficult is the challenge?	6
Response to the challenge	7
Changes to workforce numbers	7
Changes to the proportion of workforce on the front line	8
Collaboration	9
Managing change	10
How is the constabulary engaging police officers, PCSOs and staff in the change programme?	10
How effective has the response been?	10
Impact of the changes on the public	11
Visibility	11
Calls for service	12
Crime	12
Victim satisfaction surveys	13
Changes to how the public can access services	13
Conclusion	14

Gloucestershire Constabulary: Executive summary

Gloucestershire Constabulary needs to make over £19m in savings by 2015. Although this sum represents 15% of its overall budget, this is less than the average savings reduction. Nevertheless, the Constabulary will find it harder to deliver these savings because it already spends less on policing and has lower costs than other forces.

The Constabulary began planning to restructure prior to the spending review. This placed it in a good position to implement the necessary changes early and start delivering savings. As a result, the Constabulary is delivering what is required ahead of schedule, and has given itself time to pause and plan for future spending rounds. The constabulary is looking at increasing its commitment to collaboration¹ to deliver savings in the future.

HMIC has confidence the force is on track to deliver the required savings on time, while continuing to protect frontline policing and provide a good level of service to the public.

Financial challenge

Gloucestershire Constabulary has identified that it needs to save £19.4m over the four years of the spending review (i.e. between March 2011 and March 2015). This is 15% of its budget, which is less than most other forces and constabularies. However, it still faces a challenge because: it already spends less on policing per head of population than most other forces; it has a lower number of staff so has a comparatively lower pay bill; and the amount it spends on each officer and staff member is also lower than most other forces. Therefore its scope to find savings is less than other forces.

Progress in making savings

The Constabulary has planned how it will save £18.9m of the savings it needs to make by 2015, leaving a gap of £0.4m² still to find. It plans to close this gap through further reductions in spending over the remaining two years and will not use reserves. This does not cause HMIC a concern.

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.³ Gloucestershire Constabulary is no exception.

1 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”.

2 The amounts to save may not add up to the total due to rounding.

3 See *Adapting to Austerity*, HMIC, London, July 2011, p.13. Available from www.hmic.gov.uk.

It is reducing police officer numbers by limiting recruitment into vacant posts; as a result, by the end of the spending review period, it is planned that there will be 131 fewer police officers in Gloucestershire Constabulary. This means the number of police officers is planned to reduce by 10% between March 2010⁴ and March 2015; this is a similar reduction to most other forces.

The Constabulary will be broadly 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 91% to 92%. This compares to an overall increase across England and Wales from 89% to 93%.

The Constabulary 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 that there will be 154 fewer police staff in Gloucestershire Constabulary. This means the number of police staff is planned to reduce by 21% between March 2010 and March 2015; this is more than most other forces. The Constabulary plans to reduce the number of police community support officers (PCSOs) by 16%; a smaller reduction than 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 user satisfaction surveys which all forces conduct.

Over the first two years of the spending review, recorded crime⁵ (excluding fraud) fell by 17%, which is more than the figure for England and Wales (13%). Victim satisfaction at 80.6%⁶ is lower than that of most other forces.

Future challenges

Gloucestershire Constabulary has made good progress in meeting its financial challenge and has developed a detailed change programme which will allow it to reduce costs while continuing to fight crime.

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 ± 1.8%.

The challenge

Over the four years of the spending review (March 2011 to March 2015), Gloucestershire Constabulary identified that it needs to find savings of £19.4m, which equates to 15% of its total expenditure⁷ (which in 2012/13 was £116.1m). The average reduction in a force's expenditure across England and Wales is 17%.

Progress in making savings: Years 1–2

Between April 2011 and March 2013 (the first two years of the spending review period), the Constabulary successfully made 58% (£11.3m) of the total savings required. It achieved this by: limiting the number of recruits; reducing the number of police staff it employs (which it started to do in 2010); and restructuring how the Constabulary provides elements of its policing. The Constabulary has undergone two major changes in its structure: initially forming six local policing areas from three basic command units; and then the reorganisation of protective services and other specialist resources to align with these areas. The Constabulary has also streamlined operational and business support.

Plans for Year 3–4

The Constabulary has plans in place to achieve further savings of £5.6m in 2013/14, and another £2m in 2014/15. This leaves a funding gap of £0.4m⁸ at the end of the spending review period. The Constabulary has continued to achieve significant under spends which it has transferred into reserves. It is anticipating further under spends and will use this to bridge the gap. The Constabulary is planning to receive £13m from the sale of police buildings which will be used to fund capital expenditure on a custody suite near police headquarters in Gloucester and new police buildings in Gloucester and Cheltenham.

Looking beyond the current spending review

The Constabulary has started to consider what savings it might need to make after March 2015. As the Constabulary is well advanced in its change programme it is now in a good position to start to plan for the next round of spending cuts. The Constabulary's medium-term financial plan looks further forward, examining other possibilities to make savings in non-pay budgets and opportunities to collaborate, but recognises that further reductions in the numbers of officers and staff will be unavoidable.

The scale of the challenge in Gloucestershire Constabulary

Although the savings requirement is lower than in other forces, Gloucestershire Constabulary still faces a challenge.

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

⁸ Savings figures have been rounded to the nearest £0.1m. Due to rounding, the figure remaining to be saved may differ from that expected.

This is because:

- it started from a position of spending less per head of population on policing than other forces;
- it employs around the same number of police officers per head of population as most other forces in England and Wales; but
- it spends less per head of population on police officers than most other forces in England and Wales; and
- the cost of police officers and police staff per head is also lower than most other forces in England and Wales.

This means that the scope for finding savings is less than for some other forces.

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

12 months to March 2013	Gloucestershire Constabulary	England and Wales
Emergency and priority calls per 1,000 population	141	134
Victim-based crime per 1,000 population	44.1	54.5
Prosecutions (charges) per 1,000 population	6.7	10.2

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

How difficult is the challenge?

Gloucestershire Constabulary has a less difficult savings requirement than other forces. However, as it spends less and its workforce costs are also lower than most others, this is not without challenge and the Constabulary will still have to work hard to deliver further efficiencies.

Response to the challenge

Forces deliver their response to the savings requirement through a change programme. Because over 80% of a police budget (on average) is spent on staff costs,⁹ it is not surprising that the change programmes of forces across England and Wales, plan to achieve most of their savings by reducing the number of police officers, police community support officers (PCSOs) and police staff employed.

Gloucestershire Constabulary is no exception. It made an early start on this in 2010, when it slowed its recruitment of new police officers and police staff, and reduced the number of police staff. The Constabulary plans to make 78% of its spending review savings requirement from its pay budget. This is higher than most other forces, showing that the Constabulary may also have some opportunities to make savings from reducing expenditure on goods and services to at least the same levels as in other forces.

Changes to workforce numbers

The following table shows the Constabulary's planned changes to workforce numbers over the spending review period and compares these to the change for England and Wales.¹⁰

	31 March 2010 (baseline)	31 March 2015	Change	Gloucestershire change %	Change for England and Wales %
Police Officers	1,309	1,178	-131	-10%	-11%
Police Staff	729	575	-154	-21%	-16%
PCSOs	148	124	-24	-16%	-17%
Total	2,185	1,877	-308	-14%	-13%
Specials	167	250	+83	+50%	+60%

Overall, the table shows that Gloucestershire Constabulary plans to lose a similar proportion of its police officers and a higher proportion of police staff than in other forces. There is a slightly lower reduction in the number of PCSOs than the other forces in England and Wales.

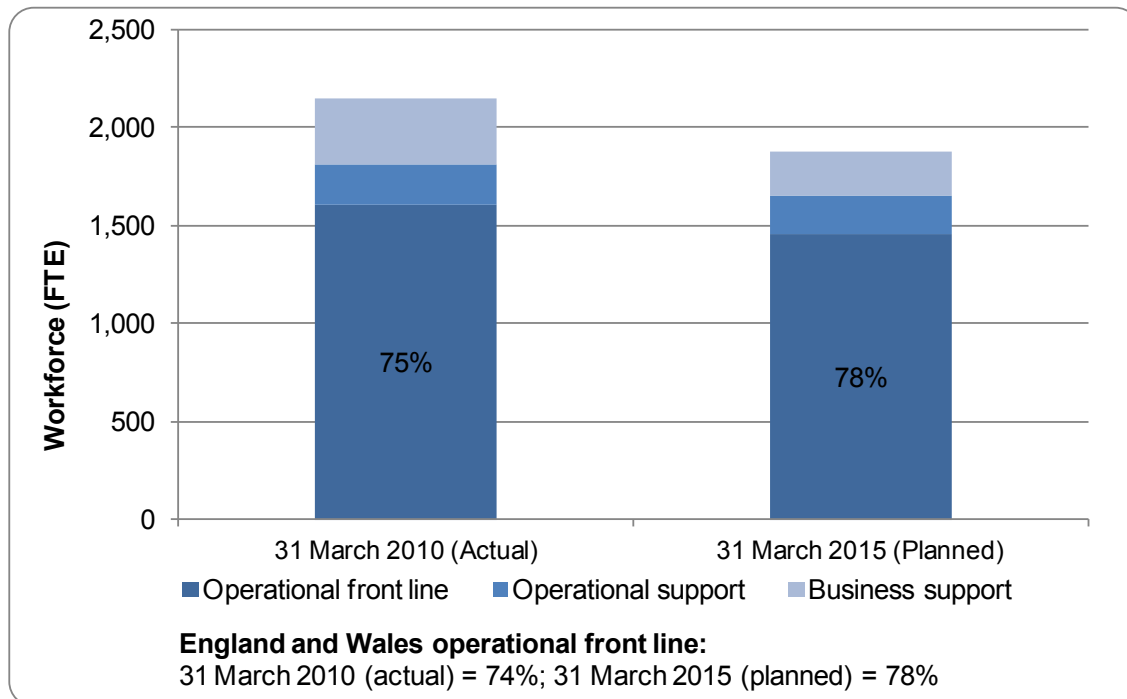
⁹ See *Adapting to Austerity*, HMIC, London, July 2011, p.13. Available from www.hmic.gov.uk.

¹⁰ 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.

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.

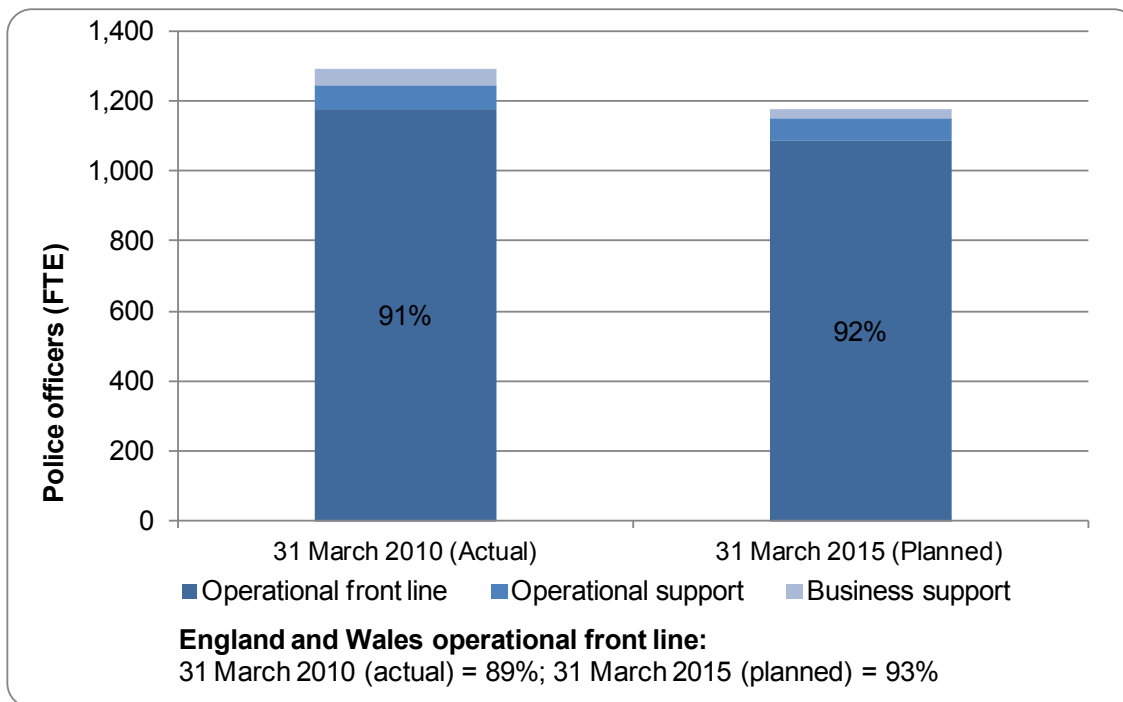
The following chart shows the change in the workforce frontline profile in Gloucestershire Constabulary.¹¹



The **number** of officers, PCSOs and staff (i.e. of the Constabulary’s total workforce) working on the front line is planned to decrease by 9% between March 2010 and March 2015 (from 1,607 to 1,458). Over the same period, the **proportion** of Gloucestershire’s total workforce allocated to frontline roles is planned to increase from 75% to 78%. This compares with an overall increase across England and Wales from 74% to 78%.

The **number** of Gloucestershire’s police officers in frontline roles is planned to reduce by 8% from 1,177 in March 2010 to 1,085 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 91% to 92%. This compares to an overall increase across England and Wales from 89% to 93%.

¹¹ 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 because it offers the opportunity to deliver efficient, effective policing and help achieve savings.

In HMIC's assessment, Gloucestershire Constabulary has made limited progress in working in collaboration with other partners, beyond small scale arrangements. However, the force recognises this and has developed a collaboration strategy and a comprehensive assessment of collaborative opportunities. It has prepared business cases for chosen priority areas for progression. The assessment ranks each opportunity based on desirability – high, medium and low – and identifies potential partner organisations. The force does not intend to embark on private sector collaboration or outsourcing.

Currently, the force is working with Avon and Somerset Constabulary and Wiltshire Police in building and equipping a new firearms range near to Portishead – a private finance initiative (PFI). It is also exploring opportunities to provide joint roads policing, dogs and firearms capability.

The Constabulary has also been exploring possibilities for working with the county council to develop a collaborative relationship to share a range of support services.

In spite of these developments by 2014/15 the Constabulary expects to spend only 3% of its total expenditure on collaboration, which is lower than the 11% figure for England and Wales. Overall, collaboration savings is expected to contribute nearly 4% to the forces savings requirement, which is below the 7% figure for England and Wales.

Managing change

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

Gloucestershire Constabulary started to plan early for the savings requirements. As a result, it was able to implement change early, and to begin to deliver savings ahead of schedule. As part of the change programme, the Constabulary has undergone significant restructure. This included moving to six local policing areas (LPAs) from three basic command units (BCUs), and reorganising protective services and other specialist resources to align with these new LPAs. Ten operational and business support areas were reduced to three executive business areas, each given a savings target that resulted in notable reductions in posts, mostly police staff. The reduction involved transforming some officer posts into staff posts; an option for eligible staff to retire early or accept voluntary redundancy; limited compulsory redundancy; and moving people to similar, vacant posts.

The Constabulary has undergone considerable transformation and the Chief Constable acknowledged the strain this has placed on the workforce. She has committed to stabilising the force this year, keeping change to a minimum in order to alleviate pressure on the workforce and properly embed the new operating model.

How is the constabulary engaging police officers, PCSOs and staff in the change programme?

HMIC found that staff associations and Unison (the main union representing police staff) felt they had a positive relationship with the chief officer group, which supported the involvement of staff groups in the change programme.

Staff told us that their involvement in the early phase of change had been superficial. However, the force had learned and improved its engagement. A 'quality outcome' group was established last year to evaluate the issues, risks, and consequences of the plans for change from a staff perspective.

We found evidence that the Constabulary leadership is listening to staff concerns, with some projects suspended as a result of feedback while the impact of proposed changes undergoes further assessment.

How effective has the response been?

Gloucestershire Constabulary has restructured the organisation to ensure efficient and effective services are provided to the public. In doing so it has protected the frontline, continued to bear down on crime and has maintained safe communities.

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 constabulary 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.¹² HMIC therefore examined how far the changes being implemented by the constabulary had affected the visibility of the police on the streets of Gloucestershire.

In March 2013, Gloucestershire Constabulary allocated 61% of its police officers to visible roles. This is four percentage points more 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, Gloucestershire Constabulary allocated 65% to visible roles. This again is four percentage points more than it allocated in 2010 and is higher than the 59% figure for England and Wales.

HMIC conducted a survey¹³ 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 Gloucestershire, 10%¹⁴ 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%¹⁵ 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%.

¹² See *Demanding Times*, HMIC, London, 2011. Available from 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, www.hmic.gov.uk or from force websites.

¹⁴ ± 5%.

¹⁵ ± 5%.

Calls for service

HMIC examined whether police forces were taking longer to respond to calls for help, as a result of its workforce reductions and other changes designed to save money. This analysis relies on constabulary collected data. As there is no requirement for forces to gather this information a number were unable to provide us with any data and others could only supply partial data.

From 2010 Gloucestershire Constabulary had maintained the same target response time of within 10 minutes for calls classed as 'emergency' (also known as grade 1) in an urban setting and within 20 minutes for calls classed as 'emergency' in a rural setting. Over the same period, calls classed as a 'priority' (also known as grade 2) had a target response time of within one hour if the call related to a dwelling burglary or the caller was identified as being upset or vulnerable. For all other types of calls classed as 'priority' the target response time was within four hours.

The force met its target response time for urban 'emergency' calls 91% of the time across 2010/11, 2011/12, and 2012/13, and for rural 'emergency' calls, 87% of the time in 2010/11, 88% of the time in 2011/12 and 86% of the time in 2012/13.

The constabulary was unable to provide data for priority calls.

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) Gloucestershire Constabulary reduced recorded crime (excluding fraud) by 17% compared to 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 17% 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 Gloucestershire (per head of population) compared with the rest of England and Wales.

12 months to March 2013	Rate per 1,000 population in Gloucestershire	England and Wales rate per 1,000 population
All Crime (excluding fraud)	48.9	61.4
Victim based crime	44.1	54.5
Burglary	7.9	8.2
Violence against the person	7.3	10.6
Anti-social behaviour	41.4	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.

The constabulary's sanction detection¹⁶ rate (for crimes excluding fraud) for the 12 months to March 2013 is 22.3%. 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 Gloucestershire. For information on the frequency of other kinds of crimes in your area, go to 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, 80.6%¹⁷ of victims were satisfied with the overall service provided by Gloucestershire Constabulary. This is lower than the England and Wales figure of 84.6%.¹⁸

Changes to how the public can access services

Forces are exploring different ways in which the public can access policing services. The constabulary is planning to close one front counter¹⁹ and 18 police stations between 2010 and 2015, however, the constabulary is planning to open 14 new shared access points²⁰ during the same period.

The constabulary is also 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.

16 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 included are: charges, cautions, penalty notices, offences taken into consideration (TICs) and cannabis warnings.

17 \pm 1.8%.

18 \pm 0.2%.

19 A police building open to the general public to obtain face-to-face access to police services.

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

The constabulary's response to the financial challenge has been strong to date. Early planning and implementation has meant that it is delivering savings ahead of schedule through a considered programme of restructuring and change. The constabulary is now able to pause and begin planning ahead for the next spending round and expand collaborative work with other forces.

This period of stability will allow the new model to embed and give the workforce time to settle into the organisational and other changes of the last few years.

HMIC is confident that the constabulary is on track deliver the savings on time and is well prepared to respond to future funding challenges.

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.

This report provides the findings for Gloucestershire Constabulary.