HMICFRS

Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary
and Fire & Rescue Services

PEEL

Police effectiveness, efficiency and legitimacy 2018/19

An inspection of Bedfordshire Police

Contents

What this report contains

This report is structured in four parts:

1. Our overall assessment of the force's 2018/19 performance.
2. Our judgments and summaries of how effectively, efficiently and legitimately the force keeps people safe and reduces crime.
3. Our judgments and any areas for improvement and causes of concern for each component of our inspection.
4. Our detailed findings for each component.

Our inspection approach

In 2018/19, we adopted an integrated PEEL assessment (IPA) approach to our existing PEEL (police effectiveness, efficiency and legitimacy) inspections. IPA combines into a single inspection the effectiveness, efficiency and legitimacy areas of PEEL. These areas had previously been inspected separately each year.

As well as our inspection findings, our assessment is informed by our analysis of:

- force data and management statements;
- risks to the public;
- progress since previous inspections;
- findings from our non-PEEL inspections;
- how forces tackle serious and organised crime locally and regionally; and
- our regular monitoring work.

We inspected all forces in four areas:

- protecting vulnerable people;
- firearms capability;
- planning for the future; and
- ethical and lawful workforce behaviour.

We consider the risk to the public in these areas important enough to inspect all forces every year.

We extended the risk-based approach that we used in our 2017 effectiveness inspection to the efficiency and legitimacy parts of our IPA inspections. This means that in 2018/19 we didn't inspect all forces against all areas. The table below shows the areas we inspected Bedfordshire Police against.

IPA area	Inspected in 2018/19?
Preventing crime and anti-social behaviour	Yes
Investigating crime	Yes
Protecting vulnerable people	Yes
Tackling serious and organised crime	No
Firearms capability	Yes
Meeting current demands	Yes
Planning for the future	Yes
Treating the public fairly	No
Ethical and lawful workforce behaviour	Yes
Treating the workforce fairly	No

Our 2017 judgments are still in place for the areas we didn't inspect in 2018/19.

Force in context

999 calls per 1,000 population
12 months ending 31 March 2019

Bedfordshire rate	England and Wales rate
182	175

Recorded crime per 1,000 population
12 months ending 31 March 2019

Bedfordshire rate	Most Similar Forces rate
85	90

Bedfordshire workforce

	FTE in post on 31 March 2019	FTE in post on 31 March 2014	Percentage change
Police Officer	1164	1019	14%
Police Community Support Officer	54	96	-44%
Police Staff	940	690	36%

Spend per head of population
2019/20 projection

Bedfordshire spend	England and Wales spend
£166	£203

Overall summary

			Last inspected
⚙ **Effectiveness**	●●●○ **Good**		**Last inspected**
Preventing crime and tackling anti-social behaviour	●●●○ Good		2018/19
Investigating crime	●●●○ Good		2018/19
Protecting vulnerable people	●●●○ Good		2018/19
Tackling serious and organised crime	●●●○ Good		2017
Armed response capability	Ungraded		2018/19

			Last inspected
£ **Efficiency**	●●●○ **Good**		**Last inspected**
Meeting current demands and using resources	●●●○ Good		2018/19
Planning for the future	●●○○ Requires improvement		2018/19

⚖️ **Legitimacy**	🟠🟠🟠⚪ **Good**	**Last inspected**
Fair treatment of the public	🟠🟠🟠⚪ Good	2017
Ethical and lawful workforce behaviour	🟠🟠🟠⚪ Good	2018/19
Fair treatment of the workforce	🟠🟠🟠⚪ Good	2017

How does the force compare with similar forces?

We compare Bedfordshire Police's performance with the forces in its most similar group (MSG). MSGs are groups of similar police forces, based on analysis of demographic, social and economic factors. For more information about MSGs, see our website.

Bedfordshire Police's MSG forces are Leicestershire Police, Nottinghamshire Police, Hertfordshire Constabulary, Kent Police, Hampshire Constabulary, Essex Police and South Yorkshire Police.

Figure 1: Pillar judgments for Bedfordshire Police, compared with forces in its MSG

Outstanding	⚙	0
	£	1
	⚖	1
Good	⚙	8 including Bedfordshire
	£	6 including Bedfordshire
	⚖	7 including Bedfordshire
Requires improvement	⚙	0
	£	1
	⚖	0
Inadequate	⚙	0
	£	0
	⚖	0
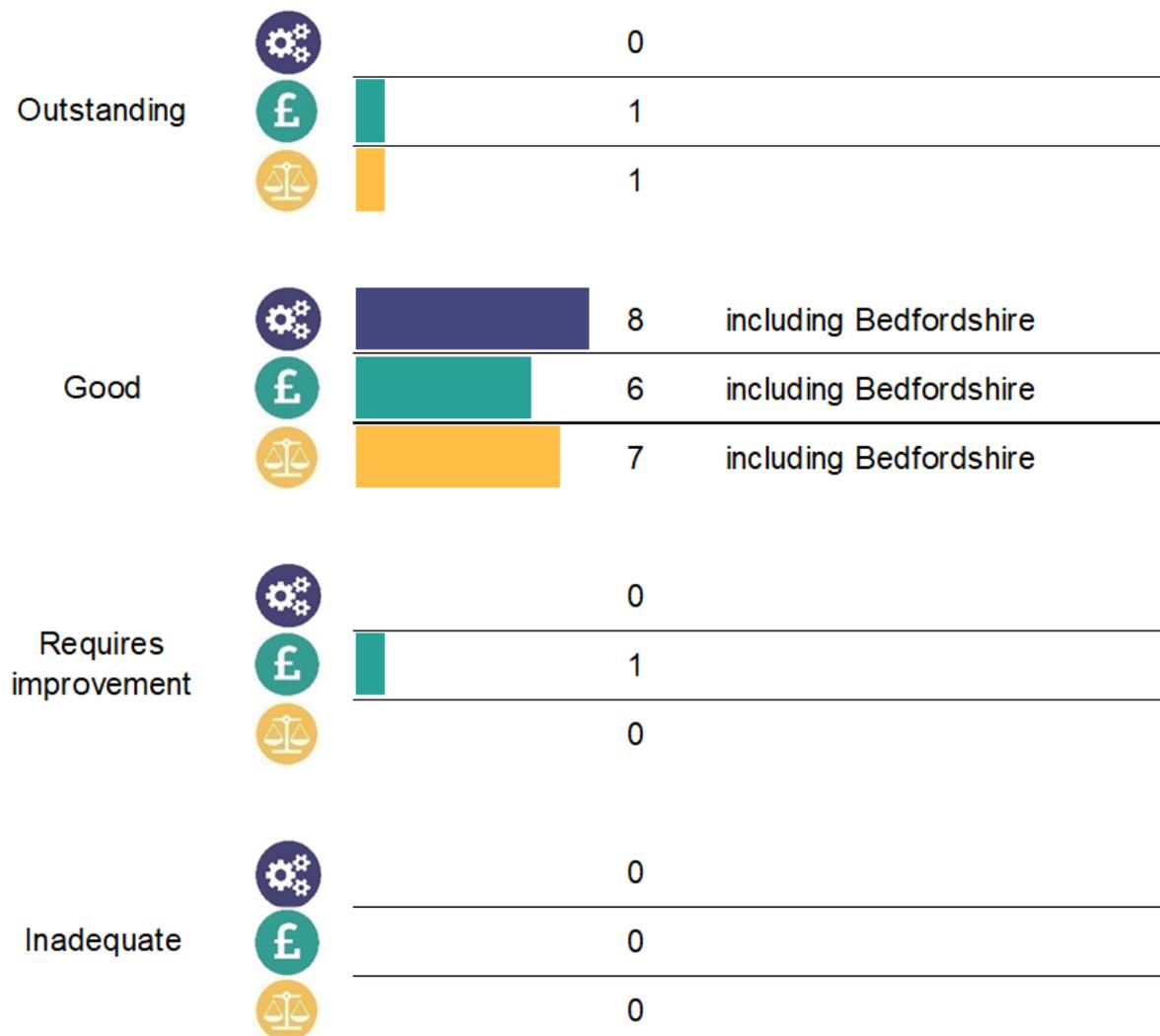
HM Inspector's observations

I am very pleased with Bedfordshire Police's performance in keeping people safe and reducing crime. In particular, I note the improvements the force has made since 2017 in its efficiency and effectiveness.

Since our last inspection, the force has improved how it prevents and investigates crime. It has also developed better ways to make sure that it identifies and protects vulnerable people.

The force has improved some of its crime recording processes but still has more work to do.

The force has a good understanding of the current demand for its services. This influences the annual planning cycle to ensure that resources are directed to force priorities. The force needs to gain a better understanding of the skills its workforce currently has and those it is likely to need. This will enable it to develop strong, sustainable financial and workforce plans for the future.

Senior leaders ensure that the workforce understands the importance of treating the public and each other with fairness and respect. The force continues to uphold an ethical culture and promote the standards of professional behaviour it expects.

Overall, I commend Bedfordshire Police for the progress it has made over the past year, which provides a good foundation for continuing improvement in the year ahead.

Matt Parr

HM Inspector of Constabulary

Effectiveness

Force in context

Proportion of officers in a neighbourhood or response function

in post on 31 March 2019

Bedfordshire proportion	England and Wales proportion
42%	40%

Victim-based crime per 1,000 population

12 months ending 31 March 2019

	Bedfordshire rate	Most Similar Forces rate
Violence against the person	23	30
Sexual offences	3	3
Theft Offences / Robbery	40	34
Criminal damage and arson	9	10

Crime Outcomes

12 months ending 31 March 2019

	Bedfordshire proportion	England and Wales proportion
Proportion of crimes where action was taken	12%	12%
Proportion of crimes where suspect was identified	43%	46%
Proportion of crimes where victim did not support police action	24%	24%

Outcomes for crimes flagged as domestic abuse

12 months ending 31 March 2018

	Bedfordshire proportion	England and Wales proportion
Charge/summonsed	16%	16%
Evidential difficulties: suspect identified; victim does not support	54%	49%

How effectively does the force reduce crime and keep people safe?

● ● ● ○

Good

Summary

Bedfordshire Police is effective at reducing crime and keeping people safe. The force continues to experience significant and long-term pressure on its resources. The need to respond to serious incidents quickly means that the force has diverted community officers from prevention work to deal with them. And frequently these incidents occur in its urban centres.

The force is good at preventing crime and tackling anti-social behaviour, and it has worked hard to increase resources in community hubs. But it should make sure that staff have access to analytical support when they need it, so that the force can achieve a more detailed understanding of problems. The force should also make sure that staff routinely evaluate problem solving, so that they understand what works in given situations and can access this knowledge in the future.

The force is good at investigating crime. It carries out effective investigations. But it needs to make sure that investigations are better supervised. Staff need to be held to account, and also to receive support and guidance. The force is aware of resource shortages in high-risk departments. It should seek to ease the burden on officers who are working in child abuse investigation teams. It should also continue its work to reduce the delays in digital examinations of mobile phones, computers and other devices. This will ensure that evidence is passed quickly to investigators in all cases.

The force is good at protecting vulnerable people, and it works well with partners to do this: for example, officers greatly value the work of the mental health street triage team. Staff know the importance of protecting vulnerable people, and they treat victims well. But the force needs to make sure that body-worn video evidence is available to staff who are investigating domestic abuse incidents. That way, they can secure better evidence, leading to more prosecutions.

In 2017, we judged Bedfordshire Police as good at tackling serious and organised crime.

Preventing crime and tackling anti-social behaviour

Good

The force is good at preventing crime and tackling anti-social behaviour. It gets local communities involved, and agrees priorities with them. The force trains staff well, and its structures support effective crime prevention.

But the force recognises that it needs more staff. Too often, it redeploys some officers in community policing teams to spontaneous incidents in support of response teams. This means that these officers can't always work on their core duties. The force is committed to increasing staff in this area.

The force understands the threats facing its communities. But it needs to improve the analytical support that it gives to officers in community teams. It has a structured problem-solving approach, which gives community policing officers a standard framework. During our inspection fieldwork, we found many good examples of problem solving. But staff don't routinely evaluate this activity, and so they don't always learn from experience or have a local knowledge base of what works.

Areas for improvement

- The force should improve its ability to analyse information and intelligence, to provide a better understanding of crime and anti-social behaviour, and to enable it to focus activity effectively.
- The force should evaluate and share effective practice routinely, both internally and with other organisations, to improve its prevention of crime and anti-social behaviour.

We set out our detailed findings below. These are the basis for our judgment of the force's performance in this area.

Prioritising crime prevention

Bedfordshire Police is good at prioritising crime prevention. In January 2019, the force launched its *Local Policing Strategy*. The strategy is comprehensive, and it meets the standards set by the College of Policing. A communications plan aims to help staff understand the strategy. Most community staff showed a good knowledge of it. They told us that they had gained this through staff briefings.

The force has a clear local policing model. Community policing teams are based in eight county-wide hubs. These teams are responsible for talking to and working with their communities to understand and identify risk, and to agree local crime, community safety and anti-social behaviour priorities. A senior officer chairs the community implementation group. This group gives clear strategic direction for local teams.

In 2017, we found that, while the force had made some progress, it still wasn't resourcing community teams well enough to prevent crime and anti-social behaviour.

During our most recent fieldwork, we saw that the force had better resourced these teams and there were minimal staff vacancies. But community officers in most locations reported that they couldn't always complete their work. This was because they were frequently supporting response officers at busy times. The force has guidance that states that community staff should devote 80 percent of their time to core tasks. It is often a challenge for the force to comply with this requirement and staff told us they couldn't achieve the target. As a result, some important community priorities are delayed.

The force recognises that it still needs to increase the number of community officers in Bedfordshire, even though it has improved staffing levels. It intends to increase police constable posts by 60 force-wide. It also intends to allocate an extra 24 officers to of the community hubs, and to create 10 posts to form a new neighbourhood enforcement team. This new team will support community teams by dealing with incidents that cause the most harm. The force aims to recruit these extra staff by January 2020. We will monitor its progress.

The force trains community staff well. It gives all staff an induction course, and they all complete problem-solving training. The force has also introduced community policing conferences. These quarterly events allow staff, and colleagues from partner agencies, to hear from guest speakers. To date, the conferences have covered many relevant topics, such as ancillary orders, and case studies involving community issues, such as homelessness. Staff who attend these conferences value them and regard them as useful development opportunities.

The local policing performance board holds staff to account for preventing crime. The board monitors indicators such as how often staff use ancillary orders, and how often they use social media to connect with the public. Senior officers challenge performance at an area level. But there is an absence of formal arrangements locally. This means that the force may not always be monitoring the performance of individual staff members, and supervisors may not be as likely to challenge poor performance. Also, problem-solving activities lack effective supervision. This may lead the force to miss opportunities in problem solving.

Protecting the public from crime

Bedfordshire Police is good at protecting the public from crime. It has a good understanding of the threats facing its communities. At priority-setting meetings, staff meet with communities and try to understand their problems.

Community policing teams use local policing plans. These plans contain valuable local information about ongoing crime and anti-social behaviour. The teams also have access to a computer database (called 'Inspire'). This contains a range of information about threat, risk and harm (for example, people who frequently go missing, registered sex offenders and organised crime groups). This information is available at ward level. It is up to date, and staff are expected to keep updated about crime and anti-social behaviour in their area. During our inspection fieldwork, we found officers and police community support officers (PCSOs) who were working in community policing teams to be knowledgeable and well briefed.

Community policing teams don't always have ready access to analytical support. This is because of competing demands for analysts from other parts of the force. This sometimes limits the teams' ability to fully understand community problems. And the force isn't yet making best use of analytical resources. It doesn't routinely use MOSAIC data, and so, for example, it may have limited knowledge about where vulnerable people live. Also, it doesn't use predictive analytical techniques. It is currently reviewing its structure to give community teams more analytical support and more sophisticated analytical resources'.

In 2017, we found that the force needed to work with local people and partner organisations (such as local authorities) to improve its understanding of local communities. It has improved its work in this area, and it is supported by formal information-sharing agreements with many organisations. During our fieldwork, we saw examples of the force carrying out analysis with partners (most recently, an assessment of the local drug market).

In 2017, the force didn't use a structured and consistent problem-solving process. It has since improved in this respect. During our fieldwork, community staff were using the SARA problem-solving model consistently. This is held on the SafetyNet computer system, which some partner organisations (such as local authorities) also use. But their usage wasn't consistent, and many staff weren't aware that partner organisations had access to SafetyNet. This lack of knowledge may be limiting opportunities for information sharing.

The force is good at using tactics to prevent crime when problems exist. There are some examples of it having made early interventions with partner organisations. These include Project Amber, a partnership between Bedfordshire Police and Luton Youth Offending Service. This project seeks to help young people who are at risk of becoming involved in serious violence.

The community cohesion team monitors community tensions. It seeks to solve problems at an early stage and prevent future escalations. The team has limited resources, but its work in identifying and mitigating community threats is generally excellent. A range of early interventions have prevented anti-social behaviour, crime and unrest.

The force now makes good use of ancillary orders, including community protection notices and dispersal powers. It has given guidance to staff about how to apply for them. The anti-social behaviour co-ordinator advises colleagues. As a result, the number of orders that the force has brought has increased from 57 in 2017/18 to 169 in 2018/19.

The force has the structures and staff in place to prevent online crime. The cyber hub works with businesses, schools and groups of vulnerable people to offer advice about how to avoid becoming a victim of cyber-related crime. The cyber prevention and protection officer visits schools to advise students about online threats, and works with other young people who are at risk of committing crime online. The aim is to prevent offending, and to divert young people into positive activities whenever possible.

In 2017, the force wasn't routinely evaluating and sharing best practice internally or with partners. This remains the case. During our fieldwork, there was no evidence to

suggest that staff regularly reviewed tactics to establish lessons learned. This means that staff may be missing opportunities to learn from experience, and to identify which tactics work best in certain situations. The force has written plans to train its staff in evaluation. But it has limited processes in place to make sure that evaluation translates into continuous improvement. Whenever possible, the 'what works' steering group develops evidence-based policing projects with academic institutions.

Investigating crime

Good

The force is good at investigating crime, and it conducts good-quality investigations. But it needs to improve its supervision of crimes. Good supervision supports investigations and holds investigators to account. The force accepts that it isn't always effective in this respect. During our inspection fieldwork, there was evidence to suggest that Athena (the new crime, custody and intelligence system) may not have helped supervisors in keeping up to date with their workloads.

The force faces a significant challenge in addressing a shortage of detectives. This is particularly urgent in its child and vulnerable adult abuse (CAVAA) unit. The force is using recruitment methods that aim to fast-track recruits into detective posts. But it is yet to fully benefit from this approach.

The force is good at catching criminals. It pursues wanted suspects, and it has effective ways of making sure that arrested foreign nationals are checked and processed. It has adapted to changes in bail legislation, and it has established a clear structure to monitor bail.

Areas for improvement
- The force should ensure regular and active supervision of the quality and progress of investigations. This supervision should be properly recorded.
- The force should ensure that opportunities to reduce the workload of CAVAA officers are taken. It should review the sustainability of its current remit against its available resources and identify opportunities for tasks not requiring specialist accreditation to be considered for allocation to non-specialist officers.
- The force should improve its ability to retrieve digital evidence from mobile phones, computers and other electronic devices quickly enough to ensure that medium and low-risk investigations are not delayed.

We set out our detailed findings below. These are the basis for our judgment of the force's performance in this area.

Investigation quality

Bedfordshire Police is good at investigating crime. Senior leaders have prioritised improving the quality of the force's investigations. The Investigation Standards meeting identifies gaps in investigation quality and monitors investigative resources.

The investigation standards meetings discusses and highlights staff shortages. As a result, the force responds to shortages quickly. In October 2018, it allocated ten extra detectives to the 'emerald team', which investigates domestic abuse, rape and other serious sexual offences. Recently, it reviewed its investigative capacity and capability. As a result, it is preparing to merge its community crime team (where police constables investigate volume crime, such as shoplifting) and its serious crime investigation team (where detective constables and trainee investigators deal with more complex crimes, such as fraud and burglary). Force leaders expect the merging of these two teams to improve investigative resilience and quality.

However, detective shortfalls still present a serious challenge to the force. Currently, it doesn't have enough detectives. It has 175 detective constable posts, but only 107 accredited detective constables are in post. Seventeen trainee detectives and nine police constables are also in post. The remaining 42 posts are vacant.

The shortage of detectives is a national problem. Bedfordshire Police has responded by implementing a detective resilience action plan, which reflects guidance from the College of Policing. It has also introduced the accelerated detective constable programme. This gives 16 weeks of initial training to new recruits who have no prior policing experience. The force planned to recruit 48 potential detectives in 2019/20. In January 2019, 16 of them began their training.

In our effectiveness report of 2017, we said that the force should increase the number of qualified detectives in high-risk departments, and make sure that workloads are manageable. The force has now allocated more experienced detectives to the emerald team to investigate rapes. During our fieldwork, we found that these officers still had high workloads, due to an increase in cases. However, the situation had improved overall as a result of the extra staff.

The force has now identified a critical need for trained staff in the CAVAA unit. This unit manages [safeguarding](#) investigations involving children and vulnerable adults. The force reports that crimes assigned to this department have increased by 42 percent since January 2018. During our fieldwork, workloads were high within the unit: some officers were managing more than 20 complex cases, and the force wasn't filling staff vacancies. As well as causing delays to investigations, staff shortages can have a significant impact on the wellbeing of existing staff. The force is trying to attract staff into this team. But the nature of the work, and the accreditations needed to do it, means that it is limited in whom it can post to the unit. We were pleased to note that there is an organisational focus on the wellbeing of staff who carry out this unit's vital work.

In 2017, there were delays in the examination of mobile phones, computers and other electronic devices. In turn, these were contributing to delays in investigations. The digital forensic unit completes these examinations. There are still frequent delays but these are linked to low and medium-risk investigations. The delays can be lengthy.

However, the unit now prioritises high-risk cases. It has also invested in triage machines, which enable a quicker examination of devices at crime scenes. So the situation is improving. Officers who investigate high-risk, complex investigations (such as the possession and distribution of images of child abuse) reported that forensic results were available in less than a fortnight. We will monitor the progress that the force makes in this respect.

During our fieldwork, the force allocated crimes to appropriately trained and experienced staff. Response officers had a minimal investigative workload that was appropriate to their role. Some student officers were on three-month attachments in the community crime and emerald teams. Supervisors supported the student officers, who carried out tasks in support of more experienced colleagues.

The force is good at telephone investigations. Staff were well trained and supervised. And their investigations took account of victims' vulnerability from the start.

During our inspection fieldwork, we found that investigators in most departments took opportunities to secure and preserve evidence in the initial stages. In 2017, the force didn't always assess incidents thoroughly and offer an appropriate response to keep victims safe. This was because investigators were attending too many of the more serious incidents on a fixed appointment basis. The situation has now improved. The improvement is due to better risk management procedures, including call handlers' use of the national risk assessment tool, known as THRIVE (threat, harm, risk, investigation, vulnerability and engagement). Call handlers in the force's contact centre used effective questioning to elicit relevant information from callers, so that the appropriate response could be given. There were also examples of call handlers giving good advice to victims about preserving forensics at burglary crime scenes, which may help investigators to identify suspects.

During our fieldwork, we reviewed 60 crimes and found supervision to be generally poor. But officers were still familiarising themselves with Athena. Many, being unused to the system, had recorded their supervisory entries incorrectly. Officers in several investigative departments told us that Athena didn't support effective supervision of investigations. This was because it generated reminders for supervisors, but the prompts didn't only relate to cases that needed supervision. As a result, some staff struggled to determine which cases weren't a priority and which didn't need supervision at all. Only 23 out of 60 cases had an effective level of supervision, or a limited but appropriate level of supervision. However, there was better supervision of rape investigations. And some supervisors had clearly actively supervised some cases without documenting this fact on the crime report.

When supervisors did make written entries, these frequently lacked detail. And some crimes didn't have a documented supervisory input at the point of finalisation. This means that the force may not always be identifying further investigative opportunities or safeguarding considerations. The force accepts that its supervision of investigations needs to improve. Senior leaders now review individual cases in the investigation standards meetings and hold supervisors to account for failures in supervision.

Despite clear gaps in supervision, the force's investigations are of a good standard. According to our crime file review, 45 of the 60 investigations were of a good standard,

with the force pursuing all available lines of enquiry in 44 of them. The internet child abuse investigation team investigates internet child abuse, online paedophilia and the distribution of child abuse images. The quality of its investigations was good. And robust supervision arrangements in the serious crime investigation team meant that the force was holding officers to account for the quality of their investigations.

The force is good at victim care during investigations. According to our crime file review, victim care was good in 52 out of 60 investigations. The force has a clear and comprehensive crime management procedure. Staff must offer victims the chance to make a personal statement for all victim-based crimes. The force also has sound governance arrangements. These aim to encourage officers to consider evidence-led prosecutions in appropriate cases where victims don't support a prosecution.

In April 2018, the force launched the Bedfordshire 'signpost hub'. The police and crime commissioner instigated and provided funding for its creation. It exists to offer support to anyone who has been affected by crime, whether they have reported the crime to the police or not. Officers complete a victim needs assessment for every crime. Victim care co-ordinators from the hub then contact victims to offer advice and support (when it is appropriate for them to do so). The hub offers restorative justice solutions when victims don't want to support a prosecution – for instance, victims can meet their offenders to explain the personal impact of their crime, as a way for victims to have closure.

Catching criminals

The force uses Athena to record and manage investigations, intelligence and police custody. Athena automatically uploads the details of wanted suspects to the Police National Computer. This means that details of wanted suspects are quickly circulated nationally.

Individual units are responsible for locating their own wanted suspects. The force circulates briefings about high-risk suspects to response officers. During our fieldwork, the force circulated the details of wanted suspects promptly. Cases were well supervised, and investigators were focused on finding wanted suspects.

Often, the emerald team needs to find and arrest suspects who are wanted for sex offences or domestic abuse. The team has developed its own policy of circulating the details of suspects at an early stage of an investigation. It has also introduced maximum time limits to prompt investigating officers to take this action, because of the risk that these suspects may pose. During our fieldwork, officers were complying with these time limits.

In 2017, we found that the force wasn't routinely carrying out checks of foreign national offenders regarding identity, nationality and overseas convictions. This situation has improved. The force now completes and effectively manages ACRO checks. It works well with immigration agencies. And it makes effective enquiries to confirm foreign nationals' entitlement to remain in the UK. The force carries out identity checks in custody suites, in line with College of Policing guidance. And it has developed a contingency for when the UK leaves the European Union.

In April 2017, the Home Office amended legislation to change the way in which police bail was granted. As a result, some police forces were releasing suspects under

investigation in cases where bail with conditions may have better protected victims. In quarters one to four of 2018/19, the force has a [released under investigation](#) (RUI) rate of 30.8 percent. This compares with 25.7 percent for England and Wales. But, given that Bedfordshire Police custody is a collaborated function with Cambridgeshire and Hertfordshire constabularies, the RUI rates for the same period are similar to those of Cambridgeshire Constabulary at 41.5 percent and Hertfordshire Constabulary at 33 percent.

The force recognised that it needed to closely monitor bail changes – specifically, the alternative to bail (that is, RUI), which has no limitation to date or time. Routine monitoring of bail and RUI cases now takes place in custody suites. Supervisors monitor the performance of their teams.

In January 2019, the force reinforced its guidance to staff: when a remand in custody isn't sought, police bail with conditions will be primarily considered in cases where suspects are detained for a violent offence or where the victim is defined as vulnerable. During our fieldwork, we found that officers and staff are following this guidance, and consider victim safeguarding to be paramount. Risk assessments in custody units routinely consider the risk that detainees pose to victims, themselves and others.

It is important for staff to understand [disclosure](#) rules when preparing cases for court, because omissions can lead to the collapse of criminal trials. The force has given all staff online disclosure training. This training is mandatory. At the time of our fieldwork, staff were aware of their disclosure obligations. The force has also given more in-depth training, including an advanced disclosure conference for staff in all three collaborated forces (Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire and Hertfordshire) who are more likely to deal with more complex cases. Some staff in high-risk departments (such as the emerald team and the CAVAA unit) were yet to attend the more in-depth course. The force has also introduced disclosure champions in some teams, to offer advice to staff. Most staff were aware of the champions and their role. Some staff had received advice from them.

The force scrutinises outcomes at its performance board meetings. It is aware that its use of [outcome 16](#) for domestic abuse crimes is higher than the England and Wales rate. Forces use this classification when a victim doesn't support an investigation. In the year April 2017 to March 2018, the force finalised 54 percent of its crime in this way. This compares to 49 percent in England and Wales.

The force believes that the way to improve victims' support for investigations is to offer them more support in the first instance. For example, it has recognised that it has a low number of independent sexual violence advocates (ISVAs). ISVAs support victims of recent and non-recent sexual abuse, and help them to access support services. Bedfordshire Police only has two ISVAs. It is now scoping how to increase this number. And it has already allocated five victim engagement officers, who work with the emerald team, to further improve its service to victims.

The force makes effective attempts to understand reductions in the numbers of positive outcomes. It also acts to improve performance. Recently, it carried out research and found that its officers were activating body-worn video at domestic abuse incidents only 39 percent of the time. This may have contributed to lower

prosecution rates. This finding has led the force to focus on educating staff about the need to upload all footage from domestic incidents. Recent force analysis suggests that compliance is improving. The force now estimates the rate of body-worn video activation in domestic cases to be 54 percent in incidents of violence against the person.

Protecting vulnerable people

Good

The force is good at understanding and identifying vulnerable people. It has worked hard to make sure that officers and staff identify vulnerability when people contact the police. The control centre uses a consistent risk assessment process, as do departments that carry out investigations.

The force is good at supporting vulnerable victims. And it works well with the signpost hub to assess victims' needs and respond to them. But it needs to further improve compliance rates in relation to officers making their body-worn video footage available to investigators in incidents of domestic abuse. In this way, the force may be able to improve outcomes for victims of domestic abuse.

The force is good at responding to people who have mental health conditions, and it works effectively with partner organisations to do this.

Bedfordshire Police manages sex offenders well. It also carries out effective investigations of people who are suspected of possessing and distributing child abuse images online.

Areas for improvement

- The force should make efforts to improve its domestic abuse charging rate by ensuring that response officers take all opportunities to secure and preserve body-worn video evidence at incidents of domestic abuse.

We set out our detailed findings below. These are the basis for our judgment of the force's performance in this area.

Understanding and identifying vulnerability

Bedfordshire Police is good at understanding and identifying vulnerability. It has a clear definition of vulnerability, and an effective strategy for protecting vulnerable people. Staff have access to a vulnerability handbook and to internal communications through the force's intranet, which reminds staff of their responsibilities and the force's definition of vulnerability.

During our inspection fieldwork, staff at all levels showed a consistently good understanding of protecting vulnerable people. The force has instilled this through a sustained, imaginative training and awareness programme. This programme has included a two-day training course for new recruits about responding to incidents

involving people who have mental health conditions, and expert speakers give specific guidance to response officers during their briefings.

The force understands the nature and scale of vulnerability in Bedfordshire. Sometimes, it is hampered by partner organisations lacking the resources to give it information. But the force works well with partner organisations and agencies to share information relating to high-risk victims, offenders and locations. For example, officers from the child sexual exploitation and missing people investigation team meet weekly with partners, including representatives from the NHS and local authorities. Together, they identify opportunities to safeguard victims of exploitation, and to bring offenders to justice. A force analyst provides intelligence to support the decision making.

The force has a good understanding of how some forms of vulnerability can affect demand. It has completed an analysis of the demand created by incidents involving people who have mental health conditions. It has done this by reviewing every such incident that it encounters. It has established recurring locations and risk factors, such as substance misuse, homelessness and self-harm. The force can use these results to inform prevention activities with partner organisations.

The force has a well-developed modern slavery and human trafficking improvement plan. There are clear lines of accountability. An intelligence analyst, who has given a detailed profile of modern slavery and human trafficking in Bedfordshire, analyses intelligence that informs the plan.

The force has clear processes in place for control centre staff to identify repeat and vulnerable victims. It makes good use of address-related comments on the Storm command and control system. These comments give call handlers valuable information about previous incidents relating to certain addresses. Control centre staff also have access to Athena and the Police National Computer. They make good use of both systems. They complete intelligence searches and record results on the incident log.

In 2017, we found that call handlers in the force's control centre weren't consistently completing risk assessments to the appropriate standards and recording them on the force systems. During our most recent fieldwork, call handlers were completing risk assessments, using the THRIVE model, to a good standard. Call handlers record each risk assessment on the incident log. Colleagues can then read and review the log, and adjust it if circumstances change. During our fieldwork, call handlers dealt with both 999 and 101 calls, and also reviewed previous calls that the control centre had received. Staff were professional, and showed empathy in their communications – for example, they communicated compassionately with a caller who was intoxicated, had a documented history of mental health conditions, and was calling to report a theft by her partner.

Responding to incidents

The force is good at responding to incidents involving vulnerable people. It uses a 'fast and fixed' method to grade its own police response. It attends a so-called 'fast' incident within one hour and deals with a 'fixed' incident by arranging an appointment with the caller. Other forces don't use this method, which makes comparisons difficult.

In 2017, we identified an area for improvement and said that the force should improve its service to vulnerable victims, especially victims of domestic abuse, by re-assessing risk and taking appropriate safeguarding action in incidents where attendance hadn't happened or had been delayed. During our most recent inspection fieldwork, there were clear improvements. The force's contact centre staff quickly risk assess incoming calls. Staff carry out THRIVE risk assessments for all incidents that callers report through the control centre. These inform the category of response. Supervisors then monitor the incidents and change the risk grading if they need to, particularly if circumstances change. When attendance at an incident is delayed, there was evidence of the incident being subject to an updated risk assessment by supervisors. And, in most cases, the attendance time for vulnerable victims was appropriate to the risk that the incident presented.

Incidents can only be closed once a supervisor has completed a review. This gives extra assurance. At the time of our fieldwork, investigators routinely revisited and updated the THRIVE risk assessment when cases were allocated to them. They did this in all departments. And officers attending incidents also had to complete a victim needs assessment. This highlighted any vulnerability to the signpost hub, so that victim care co-ordinators could better support victims.

During our fieldwork, we reviewed a small sample of crime files. These suggested that, in most cases, officers were achieving target response times when a victim had been assessed as being vulnerable. Also, the initial grading based on the risk assessment had been appropriate. Despite high levels of demand, officers were clear that, when they needed to safeguard vulnerable people, they would make time to complete the risk assessment and arrange aftercare (ensuring that people were safe, supported and emotionally stable).

In 2017, we found that officers needed to improve the quality of their domestic abuse, stalking and honour-based violence (DASH) risk assessments at initial response. During our most recent fieldwork, we found that this situation had improved: it was no longer an area for improvement, because of better supervision. Staff review risk assessments within the multi-agency safeguarding hub (MASH). Staff in the MASH can modify the risk assessment, based on other information that is available from police and partner databases. The emerald team (then completes a second review. We were told that the force plans to restrict the MASH review of domestic abuse risk assessments to high-risk cases, because of competing demands. But it plans to dip-sample medium-risk assessments, to monitor their quality and inform staff about learning.

Between quarter one and quarter four of 2018/19, Bedfordshire Police made 2,052 arrests for domestic abuse offences. This means that it made arrests in 28 percent of domestic incidents. This is also the rate for England and Wales in the same period.

But response officers still aren't always making body-worn video footage available for investigators in domestic abuse investigations. And this is despite it being a mandatory task. The lack of video evidence means that the force may be losing vital supporting evidence from the initial response to an incident. The force has identified this as a training issue, and estimates that officers preserve footage in only 54 percent of domestic abuse cases. It has introduced an internal communications programme to change practices to improve footage upload rates.

The force is good at responding to people who have mental health conditions. It has a mental health street triage team, which is a partnership between mental health professionals, paramedics and police officers. The Bedfordshire Mental Health Crisis Care Concordat governs the team. The force's contact centre deploys the team to incidents where the initial risk assessment indicates that a person may need help.

The team told us that they could also divert people away from scarce mental health services. Sometimes people wanted to gain access to mental health wards inappropriately and repeatedly. In these instances, the team diverted them to other, more appropriate support services. Response officers greatly value the service that the team gives. They told us that, previously, they were too often supervising people who had acute needs for extended periods. This had an impact on their ability to respond to other incidents.

The force has evaluated the mental health street triage team from the period April 2018 to the end of March 2019. The analysis showed that the service had prevented 3,082 ambulance call-outs; 2,269 police call-outs; and 20,103 attendances at hospital accident and emergency departments. It also concluded that it had prevented 588 police detentions of people under section 136 of the Mental Health Act 1983 (this gives the police powers to remove a person from a public place to a place of safety if they appear to be suffering from a mental disorder).

Supporting vulnerable victims

Community policing teams are involved in safeguarding. But, often, their involvement is restricted to ad hoc response rather than specific ownership of long-term issues. Local policing plans contain useful information for community staff, such as the details of vulnerable people who repeatedly go missing. During our fieldwork, we saw that a chief officer chaired the force's daily management meeting and prioritised the protection of vulnerable people. Officers in community teams told us that a similar meeting took place locally every day.

In 2017, we identified an area for improvement in the force's use of legal powers in relation to domestic abuse. We asked the force to review its use of domestic violence protection orders (DVPOs) and notices (DVPNs), and Clare's Law. The force has reviewed its use of DVPOs and DVPNs following our 2017 area for improvement. Despite this, the level of applications remains low. Between quarter one and quarter four of 2018/19, the force made only 0.05 DVPN and 0.04 DVPO applications per 1,000 of the population. During the same period in England and Wales, there were 0.10 DVPN and 0.11 DVPO applications per 1,000 of the population. We will continue to monitor how the force progresses in increasing the use of these powers.

The force has improved the process governing Clare's Law disclosures: it has given extra responsibility to the signpost hub, and monitored its use in the domestic abuse gold group. The results are as follows:

- Between quarter one and quarter four of 2017/18, the force made 7 'right to know' applications and 7 disclosures.
- Between quarter one and quarter four of 2017/18, the force made 33 'right to ask' applications and 8 disclosures.

- Between quarter one and quarter four of 2018/19, the force made 52 'right to know' applications and 34 disclosures.
- Between quarter one and quarter four of 2018/19, the force made 50 'right to ask' applications and 28 disclosures.

Extra protection for domestic abuse victims can be achieved by using pre-charge bail conditions and the force has increased its use of pre-charge bail conditions to protect such victims. It monitors the use of the conditions at strategic meetings so that it can better understand risk. And between quarter two and quarter four of 2018/19, the force's use of RUI in domestic abuse cases reduced from 152 cases to 108.

The force actively contributes to three MASH facilities at Bedford, Dunstable and Luton. These are aligned to the three unitary authorities in Bedfordshire. There are local variations in practice and in what each MASH deals with. But Bedfordshire Police has worked hard to achieve standardisations wherever possible (for example, by introducing a single referral form for all three MASHs). Only one MASH is in a police station (in Luton). Officers considered this to be the most effective arrangement because it promoted closer working relations between police and partner organisations at that location. The county MASH centres administer the RELAY scheme. This scheme supports children who have potentially witnessed an incident of domestic abuse that was reported in the previous 24 hours. The scheme notifies the child's school, so that appropriate safeguarding and support measures can be arranged.

The force contributes well to multi-agency risk assessment conferences (MARACs). These protect victims in high-risk domestic abuse cases by sharing information and agreeing safeguarding actions. Staff in the signpost hub are aware of their responsibilities to refer high-risk domestic abuse cases to a MARAC, and they do so. They also have access to MARAC records, so that they can better support victims. The force's integrated offender management team works with high-risk perpetrators of domestic abuse to prevent further re-offending. It receives referrals directly from MARAC meetings.

The force also seeks feedback from all victims who have used the services offered by the signpost hub. It does this through satisfaction surveys. Victim care co-ordinators contact victims who have expressed dissatisfaction with the service to address their concerns.

The force is good at managing high-risk convicted sexual and violent offenders. In the six months from 1 October 2018 to 31 March 2019, the courts issued 26 sexual harm protection orders. The force acted on 14 orders that were breached.

The violent and sex offender management (VSOM) team works with partners to manage registered sex offenders or dangerous or violent offenders who live in the community. The force reported increases in the number of sex offenders it was monitoring, from 524 in January 2017, 569 in January 2018 and 605 in November 2018 to 633 as of December 2019. The force has assessed 52 percent of sex offenders living in Bedfordshire as medium risk, and only 29 percent as low risk. As a result, it is analysing whether staff are taking a risk-averse approach (that is, designating low risk as medium risk). At the time of our fieldwork, staff working in the VSOM team had manageable workloads and were well supervised.

The VSOM staff brief community and response officers on a case-by-case basis. And the Inspire computer system allows community staff to research registered sex offenders in their area. We saw a request from the VSOM team regarding the release from prison of a high-risk sex offender who was seen in public spaces near children. When we returned for our inspection fieldwork, we established that community officers had arrested the offender shortly after they were tasked to do so. Most community officers did research the Inspire system and were aware of registered sex offenders in their area.

The internet child abuse investigation team investigates the threat posed by those who share child abuse images online. In 2017, we found that the team was struggling to cope with backlogs, and ten intelligence packages with search warrants were waiting to be executed. At the time of our most recent inspection fieldwork, the team had cleared the backlogs and could respond quickly, prioritising high-risk cases. The force is effective in its approach to identifying those who share indecent images of children online. It also shows a proactive approach to reducing this threat.

Tackling serious and organised crime
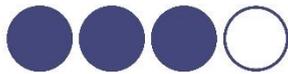
Good

This question was not subject to inspection in 2018/19, and our judgment from the 2017 effectiveness inspection has been carried over.

However, Bedfordshire Police had two areas for improvement in the 2017 effectiveness inspection: we said that the force should improve the awareness of organised crime groups among neighbourhood teams, so that it could reliably identify these groups, collect intelligence and disrupt their activity; and that the force should take steps to identify those who were at risk of being drawn into serious and organised crime, and make sure that preventative initiatives were put in place with partner organisations to deter offending.

We assessed these areas for improvement, and both have been addressed. Community officers now have an up-to-date knowledge of organised crime groups, having briefed themselves via the Inspire system. They regularly collect intelligence, and liaise with officers from Operation Boson, to investigate serious and organised crime, and work in covert support roles when appropriate in support of specific operations.

When opportunities exist, community officers seek to divert young people from being drawn into serious and organised crime. The force and its partners work together on specific initiatives. One example is Project Amber based in Luton. This partnership is aimed at supporting young people who are identified as being at risk of becoming involved in serious youth violence.

Armed policing

We have previously inspected how well forces provide armed policing. This formed part of our 2016 and 2017 effectiveness inspections. Subsequent terrorist attacks in the UK and Europe have meant that the police service maintains a focus on armed capability in England and Wales.

It is not just terrorist attacks that place operational demands on armed officers. The threat can include the activity of organised crime groups or armed street gangs and all other crime involving guns. The Code of Practice on the Police Use of Firearms and Less Lethal Weapons makes forces responsible for implementing national standards of armed policing. The code stipulates that a chief officer be designated to oversee these standards. This requires the chief officer to set out the firearms threat in an armed policing strategic threat and risk assessment (APSTRA). The chief officer must also set out clear rationales for the number of armed officers (armed capacity) and the level to which they are trained (armed capability).

Understanding the threat and responding to it

Bedfordshire Police works jointly with Cambridgeshire and Hertfordshire constabularies to provide armed policing. This means that the standards of training, armed deployments and command of armed operations are assured in all three forces.

The force has a good understanding of the potential harm facing communities in Bedfordshire. Its APSTRA conforms to the requirements of the code and the College of Policing guidance. The APSTRA is published annually and accompanied by a register of risks and other observations. The designated chief officer reviews the register frequently to maintain the right levels of armed capability and capacity.

Last year, we identified some areas where the force's APSTRA could be improved. For example, it did not include details of how rapidly armed response vehicles (ARVs) respond to incidents. This is important to determine whether the force has sufficient armed officers to meet operational demands. The most recent APSTRA includes this detail.

All armed officers in England and Wales are trained to national standards. There are different standards for each role that armed officers perform. Most armed incidents in Bedfordshire are attended by officers trained to an ARV standard. However, incidents sometimes occur that require the skills and specialist capabilities of more highly trained officers.

We found that Bedfordshire Police has adequate arrangements in place should specialist capabilities be needed. Tried and tested arrangements in place with the Cambridgeshire and Hertfordshire forces mean that specialist officers can be mobilised should their skills be required.

However, we believe there is scope to extend joint working beyond these three forces to include others in the region. This would strengthen operational resilience and bring greater assurance that officers with the right skills are on hand to manage the highest threats anywhere in the East of England.

Working with others

It is important that effective joint working arrangements are in place between neighbouring forces. Armed criminals and terrorists have no respect for county boundaries. As a consequence, armed officers must be prepared to deploy flexibly in the knowledge that they can work seamlessly with officers in other forces. It is also important that any one force can call on support from surrounding forces in times of heightened threat.

Because Bedfordshire Police provides armed policing jointly with neighbouring forces, armed officers can deploy effectively into adjoining counties if they need to. This means that greater armed response capacity is available to tackle armed criminals and protect the public.

We also recognise that a programme of work is underway to bring a number of policing services into joint venture in forces in the East of England. This is known as the 'seven-force collaboration' programme and is designed to make policing services more efficient and economical. We welcome the fact that armed policing forms part of this programme. In addition to our earlier comments about greater sharing of specialist capabilities, we also recognise that the available firearms training facilities available to the Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire and Hertfordshire forces are limited. We believe that improved training facilities and greater sharing of specialist capabilities should be prioritised within the programme.

We also examined how well prepared forces are to respond to threats and risks. Armed officers in Bedfordshire Police are trained in tactics that take account of the types of recent terrorist attacks. Also, Bedfordshire Police has an important role in designing training exercises with other organisations that simulate these types of attack. We found that these training exercises are reviewed carefully so that learning points are identified and improvements made for the future.

In addition to debriefing training exercises, we also found that Bedfordshire Police reviews the outcome of all firearms incidents that officers attend. This helps ensure that best practice or areas for improvement are identified. We also found that this knowledge is used to improve training and operational procedures.

Efficiency

Force in context

	Bedfordshire spend	England and Wales spend
Spend per head of population 2019/20 projection	£166	£203

Spend per head of population by category

2019/20 projection

	Bedfordshire spend	England and Wales spend
Visible frontline	£53	£68
Non-visible frontline	£60	£66
Frontline Support	£15	£17
Business support	£33	£45
Other	£5	£8

How efficiently does the force operate and how sustainable are its services?

Good

Summary

Bedfordshire Police operates efficiently, and provides services that it can sustain in the future.

The force is good at assessing current demand and it has a detailed knowledge of current demand for its services. This knowledge has been aided by two processes: a detailed strategic demand assessment (SDA) and an effective budgeting process.

The force needs to reduce backlogs in crimes that are awaiting administrative finalisation. It is important for the force itself and the public to have full confidence in its crime data.

The force has a long-standing commitment to co-operating and collaborating with other police organisations. It has a history of collaboration with Cambridgeshire and Hertfordshire constabularies, and the forces have an existing tri-force collaboration. Through collaboration, Bedfordshire Police has improved its demand management in key areas, including major crime.

The force needs to quickly resolve its issues with the new crime, custody and intelligence system. These are having an acute operational impact, and are reducing productivity in areas such as crime investigation.

The force requires improvement in the way it plans for the future. It should make sure that it understands public expectations better and monitors changes in them, to improve its decision making about future services.

The force should ensure that an effective human resources department supports its ambitious recruitment and staff development plans. It also needs to develop a comprehensive skills strategy to make sure that its staff have the right skills, and are prepared for future challenges.

Meeting current demands and using resources

Good

Bedfordshire Police is good at assessing current demand. It has a detailed knowledge of the level of demand for its services. It has achieved this through a mature and effective process of monitoring demand, through its SDA). It is also completing a budgeting process, which has costed a range of services.

The force works well with statutory partners, such as Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Service, and Cambridgeshire and Hertfordshire constabularies. Sometimes, Bedfordshire Police has experienced difficulty in gaining the support of the three Bedfordshire unitary authorities in various areas of work. But it continues to develop a shared understanding of demand, so that it can scope future work.

The force's recent changes in information and communications technology (ICT) haven't led to operational benefits. Also, many key policing functions are being made more difficult because of issues with the operation and reliability of Athena. The force needs to make sure that staff process crime reports that are awaiting finalisation more quickly, and that they reduce current backlogs. The public relies on accurate crime data.

The force has carried out an SDA. This has involved risk assessing each of its functions and arriving at a risk rating for them. The force carries out this process every year, and revisits it mid-yearly for functions that it assesses as being "substantial, severe or critical" risks. The SDA has enabled the force to quickly align budgets and allocate resources to some areas of exceptional need. These areas include the emerald team. The force is still limited by a lack of detectives in some key areas. This process reliably informs the force management statement and the force's priority-based budgeting processes. These enable the force to plan accurately.

> **Areas for improvement**
> - The force should ensure that it has enough, suitably trained officers aimed at reducing the current high levels of crime reports waiting to be categorised and closed correctly, so that confidence in force outcome data can be maintained.

We set out our detailed findings below. These are the basis for our judgment of the force's performance in this area.

Assessing current demand

In 2017, we identified two areas for improvement: we said that the force should develop its understanding of demand, obtaining data from wider sources; and we said that the force should ensure that its assessment of emerging and future demand is fully developed and regularly updated.

There are no longer such concerns. The force has made impressive progress. It is now good at assessing current demand. It has a detailed knowledge of the current demand for its services, because it has sophisticated processes in place to analyse demand from different sources. It has an effective SDA, which it uses to assess demand in all operational and support functions. This includes those collaborated functions with Cambridgeshire and Hertfordshire constabularies. Bedfordshire Police carries out the assessment annually. The SDA assesses how effectively the force is currently meeting demand. It also measures the force's gap in resources (that is, the availability of staff or technology), which affects how it manages demand. This allows the force to manage demand in a way that is better informed.

The SDA also estimates anticipated changes in future demand levels and types in subsequent years. The force then categorises areas according to demand risk. It re-assesses areas that face a substantial, severe or critical risk in an interim SDA. This takes place at mid-year. The force's SDA process is aligned to its budget planning timetable. This means that it can respond to emerging trends in demand, because it can allocate budgets and resources quickly and adjust services accordingly.

In 2017, we identified an area for improvement: we said that the force should have adequate plans in place to ensure that it can provide services, while also making necessary cost savings. The force has made good progress in this respect. It is completing a priority-based budgeting (PBB) process, with support from external consultants. Its objective is to establish a costed assessment of its services, so that it can reliably make investment or efficiency decisions now and in the future. Phase one is complete. At the time of our fieldwork, phase two was in progress. We were impressed with the level of detail that was being examined in the PBB process, and the energy that the force had invested in it. The process indicates that the force is making decisions based on reliable data. However, the process doesn't overtly take account of public expectations of the police. This may lead the force to miss opportunities to reduce demand or adjust services, because it isn't monitoring changes in public expectations.

Recently, the force has made attempts to understand the hidden demand that it shares with other agencies. For example, a recent drugs market profile, which the force created with partners, gave a detailed and costed assessment of the impact of controlled drugs on the community and agencies. The profile used data from health, local authority and drug support organisations. The force also has a good understanding of some issues that are affecting communities. It has enlisted the support of an external police advisory organisation to give a detailed assessment of the true cost to Bedfordshire Police of dealing with anti-social behaviour and incidents involving people who have mental health conditions.

Understanding factors that influence demand

Bedfordshire Police understands that efficient working practices can reduce demand. The force's quality improvement programme (FQIP) aims to achieve more efficient processes and end wasteful ones. For example, the force has identified opportunities to work with Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Service to reduce unnecessary demand on both services, and to reduce the costs involved in internal mail deliveries by sharing resources. When the force identifies efficiencies, it holds workshops (sometimes with partner agencies) to agree changes. It then implements and monitors those changes. It has involved frontline staff in the workshops, and has prioritised high-demand, high-harm areas of policing. Most recently, it prioritised the processes within domestic abuse and child protection investigation.

Chief officers have established a positive culture for change. A chief officer chairs the business change and continuous improvement board. This board holds staff to account for progress in the PBB process, as well as the FQIP and other projects. The board scrutinises performance at each meeting. It quickly identifies benefits. For example, through a detailed assessment of current demand in the contact centre, the PBB process quickly identified and implemented efficiencies. This resulted in the removal of a vacant radio operator post, as well as six staff posts and two management posts. The removal of these posts has contributed to overall savings of £3.31m in 2019/20 and £1.03m in 2020/21.

During our fieldwork, there were no examples of the force intentionally or inadvertently suppressing demand by failing to record or respond to certain types of incident. However, the force isn't allocating and finalising investigations quickly enough. Its performance board has identified this issue. At the time of our fieldwork, the force had approximately 500 cases that were awaiting finalisation so that it could correctly categorise crimes. Also, approximately 200 low-risk investigations were awaiting allocation. The force has some controls in place: department leads and chief officers monitor queues regularly, and Athena automatically ensures the swift prioritisation and allocation of high-risk crimes (such as domestic abuse). But the force needs to do more to increase the number of senior officers who are available to complete the administrative task of categorising and finalising crimes. The public depends on local crime outcome data, and backlogs can affect the data's overall reliability.

Working with others to meet demand

The force is good at working with partner organisations. It fully understands that it can't manage demand alone. It has a strong history of collaboration with the Cambridgeshire and Hertfordshire constabularies. It regards this approach as mutually beneficial, because all three forces can achieve more together than in isolation. Through collaboration, Bedfordshire Police has improved its demand management in key areas. These include major crime (where homicides would have had a heavy impact on the force and, most likely, have led to longer investigations) and firearms (where planned operations are easier and quicker to resource – that is, find and allocate staff to – because the forces have more staff available for them).

The force makes sensible choices about which organisations to work with to innovate, and to reduce demand and costs. It bases its decisions on sound judgments. Generally, the forces that it collaborates with are local and of a similar size. The force is an active part of the seven-force Eastern Region collaboration. This is a recent collaboration: its current priorities include scoping better demand management in vetting, procurement and forensics.

The force also has a positive relationship with Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Service, with an established governance structure at a strategic and tactical level. This has led to innovations such as the fire and rescue service providing the county's service for forced entry to premises when there is a medical emergency. The fire and rescue service is also starting to train Bedfordshire Police's drivers. This may reduce costs and delays in the force's driver training. Police community teams share accommodation with fire service colleagues at Ampthill, Bedford and Leighton Buzzard.

The force is aware of the increased demand that is created by changes and financial constraints within partner agencies. It is taking steps to establish a strategic demand partnership, to create an understanding of shared demand and how partners can work better together. It has experienced difficulties in progressing this work: it recognises that it needs to be effective within agencies to improve their understanding of demand, and the benefits that can be derived from closer working arrangements.

Innovation and new opportunities

The force does seek new opportunities to improve services and increase efficiency. Senior leaders have well-established ways of communicating with the workforce, and they make sure that communication is a two-way process. The 'ask the exec' question and answer sessions are online live chats that take place within the force. They are open to all staff, on any subject. This invites challenge. The force also encourages staff suggestions, and acts on them. One example is the merging of the community crime team and the serious crime investigation team to increase resilience. A staff focus group came up with this idea.

The force also looks outside the organisation to improve services. At the time of our fieldwork, the force was trialling a crime solvability tool, called 'B-EBIT' (Bedfordshire evidence-based investigation tool). The tool was developed from a similar project led by Kent Police, and Bedfordshire Police has worked with Kent Police to learn lessons. The tool aims to help staff decide whether to allocate a crime for investigation on the basis of eight questions. It is potentially applicable to 30 percent of crime but is limited to less serious offences that are statistically less likely to be solved. It is too early to assess the impact of this trial, but we will monitor how the force applies the tool.

Investment and benefits

The force has invested in technology and makes sensible decisions based on sound research. It has provided operational officers with laptops and mobile phones, and it has three hubs offering technical support. Staff report that the devices enable them to complete administration tasks more flexibly, which saves them time. However, the force has yet to complete a full assessment of all benefits.

The contact centre has seen changes in demand. For example, some members of the public now want to contact the police online. As a result, the force has invested in a webchat facility. This may have the potential to reduce demand in the contact centre, and give a good quality of service to those who want to communicate in this way. But the contact centre has no dedicated webchat team. Currently, staff who have other duties are taking on the webchats. This resource challenge means that the force isn't always prioritising the webchats, and so it isn't realising the full benefits of this facility. This situation is likely to continue.

Prioritising different types of demand

The PBB process has given the force a clear understanding of its current demand, and what resources it needs to meet that demand. The force has carried out sophisticated research with external advisers to establish that the number of available workforce hours is already being outstripped by the hours needed to meet demand. This research has included all frontline services.

In 2017, we identified an area for improvement: we said that the force needed to ensure that it had sufficient officers and staff to resource its policing model, while also monitoring the wellbeing of staff. At the time of our most recent fieldwork, the force was better at matching resources to demand. This matching meant less impact on staff wellbeing, which is a clear consideration in the force's decisions about allocating resources. The force is comparatively small, and it needs officers and staff to be omni-competent in some roles. Senior officers often assign detective officers to uniform duties (on the basis of operational need), and contact centre staff work in a variety of roles, including call handling and crime bureau tasks. There is a strong team ethic.

The force uses its tactical meeting structures to flexibly allocate resources, to manage changing demands. The monthly force tactical tasking and co-ordination group reviews and allocates resources to policing operations. The force's daily management meeting coordinates the response to daily changes in demand. But the force hasn't yet supported these structures with effective strategic workforce plans. Too often, local managers are carrying out tasks (such as succession planning) in isolation, without regard for other departments in the force or the wider collaboration.

The force has a clear rationale for its resource allocation decisions. It allocates budgets and resources (including staff) according to the:

- priorities in its control strategy;
- priorities of the police and crime commissioner;
- national priorities in the national strategic policing requirement; and
- strategic demand risks in the SDA.

The force is good at managing risk in the demand that it assesses as lower priority. At the time of our fieldwork, contact centre staff were frequently reviewing the risk assessment when an incident was deemed to be low risk or when police attendance was delayed. These reviews resulted in them escalating some incidents for a quicker response. When attendance was delayed, staff explained the delay to callers and gave subsequent updates.

Assigning resources to demand and understanding their costs

The force has an advanced knowledge of the costs of its services. Its PBB process has created a costed service catalogue for services that the force is reviewing. This involved the force defining cashable savings for 2019/20 and 2020/21, as well as identifying future opportunities for change, and designing options and recommendations for a re-balanced budget in 19 business areas. Through this process, the force identified options to change the level of service that it gives, along with associated risks and benefits. The PBB process assigned all the force's business areas at a certain level (minimum, intermediate or current). For some of the force's business areas, the PBB process also described an improved service level. As a result, the force knows well the costs and impacts of changing its own service levels. At the time of our fieldwork, phase two of the PBB process was ongoing. This phase will give a complete overview of all services.

As a result of the PBB process (and with support from the SDA), the force can reallocate resources quickly when need arises. It has invested in five victim engagement officers (who support victims of serious sexual or domestic abuse offences) by using unfilled detective constable posts. However, in some areas, the force hasn't seen these benefits. In 2018, the SDA designated the cyber hub as 'critical' due to staff shortages and high workloads. Earlier this year, the force moved two staff members from the CAVAA unit to the cyber hub. The risk was diminished. But the CAVAA unit has now been risk assessed as 'critical' due to staff shortages. So, although the force has well-established processes for identifying changes in demand, it is sometimes less able to mitigate impacts elsewhere because of underlying capacity and capability limitations.

Workforce capabilities

Bedfordshire Police is making some progress in developing its workforce to meet current and future demands. The force is helped by its comprehensive knowledge of the type and scale of current demands on its services, as gained through the ongoing PBB and SDA processes. But the force doesn't yet have a completed skills audit or gap analysis to identify the skills it lacks.

Together with Cambridgeshire and Hertfordshire constabularies, the force is currently developing its understanding of current staff capability and critical gaps. The learning and development department works closely with department heads to gain a better understanding of training and development needs. It is doing this through a training needs analysis. Department heads are responsible for development and succession planning, and they have access to a 'toolkit' to help them identify critical posts. Departmental heads and managers are keeping local skills records, and some officers told us that they had recently been asked about their current skills. But the force's human resources ICT system doesn't allow ready access to skills records, and a new system won't be available until mid-2020. This may limit current understanding, because senior leaders can't look across departments easily.

The force has developed clear plans to improve support to leaders at all levels. In 2018, it launched two leadership and development programmes: the 'further you' programme aims to improve the leadership skills of all staff, and the 'be you' programme aims to improve the leadership skills of those at chief inspector level

and above. These programmes have clear objectives, such as improving how leaders manage cultural change. The force is also focusing on succession planning. It knows that it has work to do in mitigating the impact of impending retirements, particularly at the superintendent rank.

More efficient ways of working

The force has clear plans to make better use of technology. The ICT department is working closely with human resources to make sure that officers have the skills they need to get the best from technology, now and in the future.

The force has sound arrangements to identify the benefits from change programmes, and to monitor their impact. However, there are times when the force isn't realising these benefits quickly enough, and sometimes there are limited options to mitigate against this. Often, these delays are caused by unforeseen changes in demand or staffing levels. For example, the increase in numbers of new recruits have placed an added burden on overtime budgets without the operational benefits because officers are new to policing and inexperienced. But such delays are referred quickly to chief officers through effective management structures.

The force has a track record of making savings. It is also making further savings and achieving measurable outcomes from savings plans. The PBB process has improved decision making by giving the force:

- reliable information on the relative priority of its services;
- opportunities for reinvestment, through better identification of priority areas; and
- an improved understanding of the impact on the public of changing those services.

This has led to savings in the contact centre, for example. The force quickly streamlined existing senior management structures there, and recruited a single police officer lead for the control centre and crime bureau.

Working with others

The force is highly committed to working with partners and external organisations to give the public a better service. During our fieldwork, we spoke to the force's partner organisations. They were positive about the progress that the force has made, as shown by its understanding of some people as both victims and offenders. They were also aware that the force had commissioned an evaluation of its approach to child sexual exploitation by external national organisations. There was also a positive view of a recent knife crime awareness event, where police and partner organisations had discussed likely causes of knife crime, and better ways of working.

Bedfordshire Police has a long-standing commitment of co-operation and collaboration with other police forces, as well as emergency services and organisations.
This approach realises efficiencies and gives the best service to the public. The force continues to derive benefits through its strategic tri-force collaboration with Cambridgeshire and Hertfordshire constabularies, and now the seven-force Eastern Region collaboration.

The collaboration with Cambridgeshire and Hertfordshire constabularies is mature. It confers benefits through a range of shared services including human resources, custody and specialist armed capabilities. All three forces regularly evaluate and monitor the collaboration. Because of its enduring and progressive nature, this collaboration continues to identify more efficient ways of working. A recent example is the joint procurement of a Police Education Qualification Framework provider.

Using technology

Bedfordshire Police and Cambridgeshire and Hertfordshire constabularies have a clearly defined ICT strategy. They also have a separate digital strategy, which aims to support local and national policing plans. The three forces have a clear objective to improve operational efficiency and public engagement.

In 2018, Bedfordshire Police introduced the new crime, custody and intelligence computer system, Athena. Staff had worked hard to avoid delays in introducing the system. During fieldwork, we spoke to staff in focus groups and interviews, and saw them at work. Users widely regard Athena as an obstacle to the effective discharge of many important duties.

Staff told us that Athena has caused more work for officers who are preparing case files for the Crown Prosecution Service. It takes them far longer to complete the process than before. We were also told that the system is unstable, and can be unavailable for extended and frequent periods. We reviewed a selection of crime files that were held on Athena, and experienced an extended period of the system's unavailability first-hand.

The force told us that Athena hasn't yet given it the benefits or savings it had anticipated, and that it was speaking with its supplier to agree solutions. The need for solutions to these problems is clear, because the current operational impact is acute: the system is reducing productivity in key areas such as crime investigation. We will monitor this situation closely in the months ahead.

Planning for the future

Requires improvement

Bedfordshire Police requires improvement in its planning for the future. It understands trends in demand and has effective ways of monitoring changes in demand. But these structures don't yet take account of what the public views as important priorities, or how these views may change in the future. If the force is to reduce services in the future, it may find this knowledge valuable.

The force is working hard to increase staff numbers in critical areas and has embraced new ways of attracting the right people. It has implemented leadership programmes for officers and police staff. But current pressures on the human resources department, which it shares with collaborated forces, mean that support in recruitment and staff development isn't always effective. Also, the force doesn't yet have a good knowledge of its workforce's existing skills, and what skills it will need in the future.

The force has clear priorities and a financial plan. But because of the way in which police budgets are set, the force is wholly reliant on short-term grants from central government. Also, it has limited reserves to draw on. This means that its current financial planning is based on unreliable assumptions.

Areas for improvement

- The force should ensure that it has a better understanding of public expectations, so it can monitor changes to them and consider opportunities to provide a better, more efficient service.
- The force should make sure that future recruitment and staff development are supported by a functional and adequately resourced human resources team.
- The force should develop a comprehensive skills strategy to identify what future capabilities its workforce will need.

We set out our detailed findings below. These are the basis for our judgment of the force's performance in this area.

Assessing future demand for services

Bedfordshire Police is good at analysing demand trends. And the force uses the outcomes from its demand analysis to guide its planning for the future. It uses the SDA to assess demand. This helps it to understand its key demand risks by assessing and comparing the sufficiency, effectiveness and efficiency of its assets to meet current demands, and expected future demands. Five of the seven functions that the SDA has judged as facing a critical or severe demand risk are detective functions.

In February 2019, the force commissioned an external agency to give quantitative estimates of future demand. These projections are based on statistical techniques and spanned more than 50 aspects of public contact, crime and safeguarding, to ensure that the predictions included areas of high and emerging risk. The research found that the number of available police hours has been outstripped by the hours needed to meet demand since early 2017. Also, the shortfall in available officer hours per month is forecast to reach 31,500 hours by 2023. According to the force, this means that it will need 282 additional officers by 2023, at an estimated cost of £20.5m over three years. Currently, the force doesn't have this funding.

The force has sought to secure ICT improvements to achieve efficiencies. Its digital strategy with Cambridgeshire and Hertfordshire constabularies aims to offer the public additional ways to contact them. All three police organisations are aware that some people don't want to contact the police through established channels, such as by dialling 101. Consequently, it is planning to launch a 'police single online home' in 2020. Simple enquiries from the public will be handled in an automated way, so the force can direct staff to where they are most needed. Given the resourcing challenges it faces, the force needs to make sure that its technology-related projects maximise benefits.

Understanding public expectations

The force requires improvement in how well it talks to and works with members of the public, to find out their expectations and to monitor how those expectations may be changing. The force does carry out surveys of particular groups (such as victims of crime). And it works well with communities. It keeps them well informed, and they give the force feedback about their priorities or concerns.

But some of the force's change programmes (such as the PBB process) don't take direct account of public expectations. Also, they are limited to focusing on the force's priorities, with the force trusting that these priorities reflect public expectations. Consequently, the force doesn't yet have a developed knowledge of how public expectations are changing, and what potential challenges or opportunities these changes present. This understanding is likely to be essential if the force is to reduce any of its services in the future.

Prioritising

The force's priorities are informed by its understanding of future demand. A strong link exists between its priorities and its resource allocation plans. Recently, it has allocated extra resources to areas of the organisation that are likely to experience increases in future demand. It has received additional funding from a recent council tax precept increase. It is investing this funding in strengthening its workforce in areas that are public and force priorities, such as community hubs. This approach also supports the police and crime commissioner's aim of offering a balanced service in both urban and rural areas. The force's recruitment of 160 officers will allow it to fully replace those who leave in 2019/20, as well as increasing overall resources by a further 60 police officers. This is a significant investment for the force, and its largest for more than a decade. It means that the force can build its preventative and problem-solving capability. Specifically, it can do this by increasing its community presence, which will give it more ability to reduce the level of demand that it needs to respond to and investigate.

Future workforce

The force has a three-year workforce plan to ensure that it and its two collaborated police organisations have sufficient officers, community special constables, PCSOs and police staff with the necessary skills. Chief officers review the plan every year. Mid-year adjustments take account of changes in resourcing needs.

However, the force may not yet have enough understanding of its future workforce skills and capabilities. There have been delays in the procurement of new human resources software. These delays have hindered the force's progress in achieving a detailed plan. This means that the force's future workforce needs are currently unclear, which may make financial planning problematic.

The force has embraced innovative recruitment methods and is attracting suitable candidates, including through the accelerated detective constable programme. It has made good use of the Police Now graduate entry programme. Currently, 12 officers are fulfilling a variety of roles in the force. The SDA informs workforce training schedules. These schedules are planned to meet forecasted demands across

the three collaborated forces of Bedfordshire Police and Cambridgeshire and Hertfordshire constabularies. However, the prudent nature of police budgeting also means that training courses have to be booked on the basis of reliable forecasts. At the time of our inspection fieldwork, there was more recruitment activity across all three forces than had been anticipated. This activity is challenging Bedfordshire Police's ability to secure enough training in some areas, such as driver training courses for new staff. In turn, this has an impact on the number of officers who can respond to emergencies. The force has responded to this issue by reaching an agreement for driver training with Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Service.

Finance plans

In the 2016 PEEL inspection reports, we said:

"Bedfordshire Police has low levels of funding compared with other forces."

"The volume and complexity of crimes it deals with in some parts of the county, for example Luton, compares with the crime profile of a London borough."

"Bedfordshire Police faces a more acute financial challenge than most other forces and in Luton the complexity and high volume of crime represent a significant operational challenge for a small force with very stretched resources."

In our 2017 efficiency report, we found that Bedfordshire Police continued to face significant financial challenges. The force has worked hard to understand current and future demand, and to match its resources accordingly. But its financial future is precarious. And current central funding arrangements don't allow it to plan with any degree of certainty.

The force aligns its medium-term financial plan to other plans, such as the PBB process. The force is projecting that it will face a funding gap of £13.8m over the medium term, from 2019/20 to 2022/23. The assumptions within the medium-term financial plan are based on no further increase in the central government grant, and on council tax increases being capped at two percent from 2020 onwards. These are sound assumptions. The force has also made provision for staff salary increases, as the large number of recently recruited staff progress through the pay scales. The force appears to be planning that it will continue to receive the £1.1m pensions grant each year. Currently, there can be no certainty of this. Also, it doesn't cover the force's increased pension costs of £2.5m.

The challenge for the force is clear. And, over several years, the force has drawn on the police and crime commissioner's reserves to support annual revenue spending. The reserves had been built up, but are now at low levels. In March 2018, they stood at £8m. By 2021, they are predicted to total just £2m. This means that the force has very limited reserves to fall back on, both now and in the medium term, if spending continues to outstrip income.

The force is making savings. At the same time, it is continuing to invest in priority areas that matter to local people. However, some of its redundancy costs have been higher than expected, and it hasn't realised some of its planned savings in this financial year. In 2018/19, it was facing a serious financial challenge in funding the shortfall between its income and its expenditure on policing. To meet this gap, it was successful in obtaining a Home Office special grant of £4.6m to support spending on

policing organised crime and gang violence. This grant contributed to an underspend of £400,000. In addition, the police and crime commissioner increased the council tax precept by the maximum allowable amount (that is, by £24 per household), which supported the force's ambitious recruitment plans.

The force is still reliant on securing a Home Office special grant in 2019. Again, it needs this to offset the cost of dealing with gang violence. But special grants are intended for unexpected and exceptional events. And the force shouldn't presume that financial assistance will be available, particularly for a policing problem that now appears to be established and persistent. The force may be better served by an initial funding settlement that more accurately reflects the high demand being placed on it by established crime types in its urban centres.

Leadership and workforce development

In 2017, we identified an area for improvement: we said that the force needed to ensure that it understands its leadership capacity and capability below the rank of chief inspector, including police staff equivalents.

There has been slow progress in the force's understanding of, and plans for, its future workforce skills and capabilities. It still doesn't have a comprehensive audit of skills and capabilities. But it has some basic understanding of operational and technical competencies of police officers, including some wider skills such as leadership.

Bedfordshire Police's human resources function is provided through the tri-force collaboration arrangement with Cambridgeshire and Hertfordshire constabularies. The human resources function has limited capacity to offer Bedfordshire Police consistent levels of strategic support. This applies to the force's need to make sure that its workforce planning, and learning and development, align fully with future demand and future finances. This lack of capacity is having an impact on the ability of the human resources function to support important workstreams, such as talent management and succession planning.

Despite these challenges, the force has embraced new recruitment programmes, including Police Now. And this year it has recruited 13 interns as part of its summer internship scheme. Ten of the interns will work in the force for nine weeks, and three will remain in post for ten months. The 'further you' and 'be you' leadership and development programmes have proved successful in improving the force's talent management support, and promoting diverse leadership teams. But this success hasn't yet translated into results.

Ambition to improve

Bedfordshire Police is an ambitious force with a positive culture. The force has prioritised greater joint working with statutory partners, particularly where there is shared demand (such as for safeguarding). For example, it is supportive of a single MASH for the county. However, there are political and demographic differences between the three unitary authorities in Bedfordshire. The single MASH and other plans involving the local authorities may not be a realistic ambition in the short or medium term, if the savings of such arrangements aren't highly persuasive. Currently, the force doesn't have a clear estimate of the efficiencies to be made through its vision for better joint working. But it is aware of the need to construct convincing business cases to support its ambitions.

The force has also shown its ability to effectively plan and manage change. For example, during 2018/19, it successfully implemented a significant change programme: the launch of Athena. Initially, the launch was subject to major delay, and there have been subsequent ongoing operational problems. But, once agreed, this change programme was well led and well managed: it was achieved on time, with minimal disruption to the force. However, the pace of future change may be slowed by resource shortages in key support areas such as human resources, and learning and development. And this risk may be heightened by the pressure of more recruits.

Currently, the force has no firm plans to reduce services. It is clear that if, in the future, it wants to reduce its services, it will need to consult the public. The PBB process has focused the police budget on the force's priorities, and has fully costed each function. But the force will find it challenging to make future investments in infrastructure or assets to save money. This is because of tight financial constraints and ongoing uncertainty about funding.

Legitimacy

Force in context

Comparison of Bedfordshire workforce ethnicity with local population

as of 31 March 2019

	Bedfordshire proportion	Local population proportion
Black, Asian and minority ethnic as % of those with stated ethnicity	8.9%	22.5%
White as % of those with stated ethnicity	91.1%	77.5%
Not Stated as % of total	3.6%	

	Bedfordshire proportion	England and Wales proportion
Proportion of female officers in post as of 31st March 2019	33%	30%

Stop and search by ethnicity

12 months ending 31 March 2019

Bedfordshire disproportionality

Stop and Search likelihood of BAME individuals compared to white individuals

2.5

Stop and Search likelihood of Black or Black British individuals compared to white individuals

3.6

	Bedfordshire rate	England and Wales rate
Number of stops and searches per 1,000 population 12 months ending 31 March 2019	3.4	6.4

How legitimately does the force treat the public and its workforce?

Good

Summary

Bedfordshire Police treats the public and its workforce legitimately.

The force is good at making sure that its staff behave ethically and lawfully. Without exception, every member of the workforce we spoke to was clear about the importance of behaving ethically.

Force leaders are ethical role models. They encourage staff at all levels to talk to them, and to challenge them when this is justified and appropriate. Recently, the force has introduced ways for staff to receive advice about ethical dilemmas.

The force takes its vetting responsibilities seriously. But it needs to make sure that its staff can command the public's full confidence, and that staff have at least the minimum level of vetting required. It also needs to make sure that its backlogs in vetting are cleared, and that it complies with the national guidelines.

Bedfordshire Police is good at identifying and tackling corruption. The force has counter-corruption plans, and is aware of its main corruption risks. However, it needs to make sure that its counter-corruption unit has the staff and skills available to use more proactive tactics to prevent and detect corruption.

During our fieldwork, staff showed a good awareness of ethics and their duties under the code of ethics. But the force should do more to improve the knowledge of staff, particularly those in high-risk roles, in relation to abuse of position for a sexual purpose. It should improve their recognition of warning signs and encourage them to report incidents.

In 2017, we judged Bedfordshire Police as good at treating both the public and the workforce fairly.

Treating the public fairly

Good

This question was not subject to inspection in 2018/19, and our judgment from the 2017 legitimacy inspection has been carried over.

However, Bedfordshire Police had an area for improvement in the 2017 legitimacy inspection: we said the force should ensure that its data for use of force (including body-worn video footage) is monitored by an internal and external group to provide oversight.

During our inspection fieldwork, we assessed this area for improvement and found that the force has clear plans to establish an internal scrutiny group. This will be comprised of officers from different departments. But the force has no firm plans to implement an external group, which would give greater transparency and varied challenge. We will monitor the force's activity in this area in the coming year.

Additionally, we reviewed a representative sample of 100 stop and search records to assess the reasonableness of the recorded grounds. We found that 82 percent of those records contained reasonable grounds. Our assessment is based on the grounds recorded by the searching officer, and not the grounds that existed at the time of the search.

In our 2017 legitimacy report, we recommended that all forces should:

- monitor and analyse comprehensive stop and search data to understand reasons for disparities;
- take action on those; and
- publish the analysis and the action by July 2018.

We found that the force has complied with some of this recommendation. But it doesn't identify the extent to which find rates differ between people from different ethnicities and across different types of searches (including separate identification of find rates for drug possession and supply-type offences). Additionally, it isn't clear that it monitors enough data to identify the prevalence of possession-only drug searches or the extent to which these align with local or force-level priorities.

We reviewed the force's website and were pleased to find a report of a review of black, Asian and minority ethnic searches setting out analysis that the force had undertaken in attempting to explain the reason for the disproportionality rate. However, this did not include analysis on find rates, nor was there mention of action the force intended to take.

Ethical and lawful workforce behaviour

Good

Bedfordshire Police is good at behaving ethically and lawfully. Force leaders show how to make ethical decisions. Officers and staff have a good understanding of how to police ethically. The force has started to encourage the workforce to seek advice about how to respond to individual ethical dilemmas.

The force is making progress with vetting compliance, and it has a credible improvement plan. But it isn't yet fully compliant, and some staff in high-risk posts aren't sufficiently vetted.

The force has a plan for preventing and dealing with corruption. But it needs to set out how it intends to respond to each individual area of corruption. It needs to make sure that it addresses current capacity and capability shortages in its counter-corruption unit, so that the unit can use a full range of tactics to prevent and detect corruption.

The force is making good links with groups that work with vulnerable people. This will help it to identify staff who abuse their position for a sexual purpose. But the force needs to make sure that all staff are aware of this corruption risk, and of their duties to report any concerns.

Areas for improvement

- The force should ensure all staff have received at least the lowest level of vetting clearance for their roles and clear any backlogs, ensuring it is fully compliant with the national vetting guidelines.

- The force should ensure that its counter-corruption unit has enough capability and capacity to counter corruption effectively and proactively.

- The force should take steps to improve workforce knowledge and understanding of the abuse of position for a sexual purpose.

We set out our detailed findings below. These are the basis for our judgment of the force's performance in this area.

Maintaining an ethical culture

During fieldwork, we spoke to many officers and staff in different ranks, roles and parts of the force. Without exception, every member of the workforce was clear about the importance of ethical behaviour. Many said that the code of ethics was an important resource for them. Staff had a positive view of their supervisors as sources of ethical guidance and support for them. They also regarded senior leaders in the force as ethical role models. The workforce showed a good working knowledge of ethics and their duty to report business interests, notifiable associations, and gifts and hospitality.

The ethics, equality and inclusion group offers strategic governance. If staff members encounter an ethical dilemma, they can refer it to the regional ethics committee.

This committee is available to members of all seven regional forces. Members of the committee offer ethical advice, with support from an academic expert in ethics. Staff we spoke to were generally unaware of the committee, but it was only established in January 2019. We will monitor how the force promotes the committee to its staff.

The force's sergeants and inspectors spoke positively about the professional standards department (PSD). There was consensus that the force encourages a 'no blame' culture, where mistakes can be learned from. There was a clear focus on prevention by the PSD. This takes the form of prominent reminders in shared spaces (such as canteens) and staff training. The PSD evaluates the training that it offers. It also seeks good practice from outside the service. This includes the construction industry and ethics departments in local academic institutions.

In 2017, we identified an area for improvement: we said that the force should improve the quality and distribution of its printed information about how to make a complaint, in line with the Independent Office for Police Conduct (IOPC)'s statutory guidance. The force has now updated this material and distributed it to enquiry offices. We saw the updated material. It was clear and prominently displayed. It also meets the public's needs.

A collaborated, tri-force vetting department completes workforce vetting checks. In 2017, we identified an area for improvement and said the force should have a credible plan to comply with all aspects of the national vetting standards by December 2018, in line with a national HMICFRS recommendation from 2016. The force does now have a credible plan. But it doesn't yet comply with all elements of national vetting standards. This is largely due to extensive recruitment across the three forces. The situation is improving, however: in January 2019, 77 percent of staff in Bedfordshire Police had sufficient security clearance. By the end of June 2019, this figure had increased to 83 percent. As a result of a recent restructure of responsibilities, the force has assigned a further six posts to vetting checks.

Although the force does take its vetting responsibilities seriously, we researched a small sample of designated posts that require the highest level of vetting because of the nature of their work. Some staff weren't sufficiently vetted. We are satisfied that chief officers frequently monitor plans, and will act to ensure that full vetting compliance is met. But the force should reassure itself that staff in designated posts have the correct level of current vetting.

All forces need to understand whether people's ethnic background disproportionately affects the results of vetting checks. Bedfordshire Police does monitor and scrutinise these outcomes, which senior staff check for any learning or bias. Vetting officers routinely attend recruitment events to offer the best advice and guidance to potential applicants.

We spoke with staff and examined how the force communicates outcomes from misconduct cases to improve its own understanding. Staff were aware of Shield, the professional standards publication that contains information and lessons learned from local and national cases. The force's intranet was an important form of guidance, and the main source of updates about recent misconduct outcomes.

Recently, the head of the PSD carried out face-to-face sessions with staff of Bedfordshire Police, as well as Cambridgeshire and Hertfordshire constabularies. The aim was to offer useful information about professional standards investigations, ethics and culture. The sessions included a four-hour workshop on sexually predatory behaviour in the workplace. These sessions have supported understanding among staff. Across the tri-force area, 77 staff have volunteered to become PSD champions in their own departments. The champions are intended to be local points of contact for officers and staff who want to access professional standards information.

Tackling corruption

The force is good at identifying and tackling corruption. It has a local strategic counter-corruption threat assessment that meets its needs. This assessment identifies the force's priorities as sexual misconduct, vulnerability and disclosure of information. However, the force doesn't explicitly identify the associated control measures for each of these priorities (for example, the proposed intelligence, prevention, enforcement, communication and engagement activity to counter each of the identified threats).

The force's use of proactive tactics in tackling corruption is limited because of resources. But it does use the information it holds about its employees to identify staff who may become a corruption risk to the force. This information includes staff with high overtime or mileage claims, or credit card usage. The force also considers other data relating to sickness absence, complaints and misconduct. But the force doesn't discuss these indicators at a single meeting, where it could make decisions based on the intelligence and agree consistent actions.

The force consistently records comprehensive information for all gifts and hospitality. It publishes the register for the whole workforce annually, and its own policy requires publication of chief officers' data every quarter. The force also has a business interests policy and register. But it doesn't routinely review rejected applications. It should address this issue to make sure that staff are abiding by the decisions. The force has conversations about integrity with the workforce during annual performance reviews. As a result, staff have a good knowledge of their obligation to declare a business interest. However, the force's own assessment is that it needs to improve compliance with its professional development review (PDR) process. There is work in progress with the human resources function, including a new PDR ICT system, to make supervisors more accountable.

The force acknowledges that current staffing levels are good enough to deal reactively with incoming intelligence, but that there is only a limited capacity for proactivity. It hasn't made use of intrusive, covert tactics as part of its investigative response for several years.

The force has the capability to monitor all its ICT systems and the data contained within them. But it doesn't make proactive use of its ICT monitoring software to check that employees' use of the data within their systems is appropriate and lawful. The strategic assessment outlines plans for more proactive scanning (for example, in relation to staff who exhibit sexually predatory behaviour). But the force doesn't yet have these plans in place to help identify those staff.

The force has developed good links with external agencies that support vulnerable people. Since June 2018, the force has given presentations to a range of partner agencies that support refugees and victims of domestic abuse, as well as to drug and alcohol-related support agencies.

The force has confidential reporting systems so that staff can report internal wrongdoing. These comprise a direct telephone line to the counter-corruption unit and an email inbox. The force also uses the Crimestoppers system to allow colleagues to submit intelligence anonymously. During our fieldwork, the force handled this material appropriately.

In 2017, we identified an area for improvement: we said that the force should ensure that all allegations that meet the mandatory criteria for referral to the IOPC are so referred, and that it updates witnesses and subjects regularly. This is no longer a concern. The force has links with IOPC counterparts and meets them regularly. The force also dip-samples cases, to make sure that referrals have been made. And the IOPC confirms that, when necessary, the force seeks its guidance about more complex cases.

The force recognises the abuse of position for a sexual purpose as serious corruption. This is reflected in the force's local counter-corruption strategic threat assessment, which identifies this issue as the main corruption threat facing Bedfordshire Police.

In 2017, the force submitted a plan to address our 2016 national recommendation regarding the abuse of position for a sexual purpose. It hasn't yet fully implemented this plan, because of the counter-corruption unit's lack of resources. And some Bedfordshire Police staff told us they are yet to receive training on identifying the signs of abuse of position for a sexual purpose.

Treating the workforce fairly

Good

This question was not subject to inspection in 2018/19, and our judgment from the 2017 legitimacy inspection has been carried over.

However, Bedfordshire Police had two areas for improvement in the 2017 legitimacy inspection. The first identified a need for the force to ensure that the grievance process complies with the Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service codes of practice and guidance, particularly relating to timescales, records, audit trail, updates and support to witnesses and staff who have lodged grievances.

We reviewed a selection of grievance files. They showed that the force dealt with all but two of these grievances effectively, giving regular updates to witnesses and staff, and completing the grievances within the recommended timescales. This was partly due to the efforts of the human resources team in monitoring and (when necessary) chasing progress in individual cases, to make sure that the force dealt with them promptly and to the required standard.

The second area for improvement identified that the force should make sure that it develops and supports its supervisors and managers to conduct fair, effective and consistent assessments that support continuing professional development and manage poor performance, including establishing an effective quality assurance process.

The force has made some progress in this respect, but its work isn't complete. In July 2019, the force was due to introduce its new PDR framework ('my conversation'). This new framework contains a second line manager's quality assurance, and emphasises the need to address staff performance, development and wellbeing. We will monitor the implementation of this new approach.

Annex A – About the data

Data in this report is from a range of sources, including:

- Home Office;
- Office for National Statistics (ONS);
- our inspection fieldwork; and
- data we collected directly from all 43 police forces in England and Wales.

When we collected data directly from police forces, we took reasonable steps to agree the design of the data collection with forces and with other interested parties such as the Home Office. We gave forces several opportunities to quality assure and validate the data they gave us, to make sure it was accurate. For instance:

- We shared the submitted data with forces, so they could review their own and other forces' data. This allowed them to analyse where data was notably different from other forces or internally inconsistent.
- We asked all forces to check the final data used in the report and correct any errors.

We set out the source of this report's data below.

Methodology

Data in the report

British Transport Police was outside the scope of inspection. Any aggregated totals for England and Wales exclude British Transport Police data, so will differ from those published by the Home Office.

When other forces were unable to supply data, we mention this under the relevant sections below.

Most similar groups

We compare each force's crime rate with the average rate for forces in its most similar group (MSG). MSGs are groups of similar police forces, based on analysis of demographic, social and economic factors which relate to crime. We could not identify any forces similar to City of London Police. Every other force has its own group of up to seven other forces which it is most similar to.

An MSG's crime rate is the sum of the recorded crimes in all the group's forces divided by its total population. All of the most similar forces (including the force being compared) are included in calculating the MSG average.

Population

For all uses of population as a denominator in our calculations, unless otherwise noted, we use ONS mid-2018 population estimates.

Survey of police workforce

We surveyed the police workforce across England and Wales, to understand their views on workloads, redeployment and how suitable their assigned tasks were. This survey was a non-statistical, voluntary sample so the results may not be representative of the workforce population. The number of responses per force varied between 0 and 372. So we treated results with caution and didn't use them to assess individual force performance. Instead, we identified themes that we could explore further during fieldwork.

BMG survey of public attitudes towards policing (2018)

We commissioned BMG to survey public attitudes towards policing in 2018. Ipsos MORI conducted a similar version of the survey in 2015–2017.

The survey consisted of about 400 respondents for each of the 43 forces. Most surveys were completed online, by members of online research panels. However, a minority of the surveys (around 750) were conducted face-to-face. These face-to-face surveys were specifically targeted to groups that are traditionally under-represented on online panels. This aimed to make sure the survey respondents were as representative as possible of the total adult population of England and Wales. A small number of respondents were also surveyed online via postal invites to the survey.

Results were weighted by age, gender, ethnicity and indices of multiple deprivation to match population profiles. The sampling method used is not a statistical random sample and the sample size was small, which may be more problematic for larger force areas compared to small ones. So any results provided are only an indication of satisfaction rather than an absolute.

Review of crime files

We reviewed police case files for these crime types:
- theft from person;
- rape (including attempts);
- stalking;
- harassment;
- common assault;
- grievous bodily harm (wounding); and
- actual bodily harm.

Our file review was designed to provide a broad overview of how well the police:

- identify vulnerability;
- conduct investigations; and
- treat victims.

We randomly selected files from crimes recorded between 1 June and 31 August 2019 and assessed them against several criteria. We reviewed 60 case files in each force, except for West Yorkshire Police where we reviewed 90.

For our file review, we only selected a small sample size of cases per force. So we didn't use results from as the only basis for assessing individual force performance, but alongside other evidence.

Force in context

999 calls

We collected this data directly from all 43 police forces in England and Wales.

Recorded crime and crime outcomes

We took this data from the October 2019 release of the Home Office police recorded crime and outcomes data tables.

Total police-recorded crime includes all crime (except fraud) recorded by all forces in England and Wales (except BTP). Home Office publications on the overall volumes and rates of recorded crime and outcomes include British Transport Police, which is outside the scope of this HMICFRS inspection. Therefore, England and Wales rates in this report will differ from those published by the Home Office.

Police-recorded crime data should be treated with care. Recent increases may be due to forces' renewed focus on accurate crime recording since our 2014 national crime data inspection.

Other notable points to consider when interpreting outcomes data are listed below.

- Crime outcome proportions show the percentage of crimes recorded in the 12 months ending 31 March 2019 that have been assigned each outcome. This means that each crime is tracked or linked to its outcome. So this data is subject to change, as more crimes are assigned outcomes over time.
- Under the new framework, 37 police forces in England and Wales provide outcomes data through the HODH every month. All other forces provide this data via a monthly manual return.
- Leicestershire, Staffordshire and West Yorkshire forces participated in the Ministry of Justice's out of court disposals pilot. As part of the pilot, they stopped issuing simple cautions or cannabis/khat warnings and restricted their use of penalty notices for disorder for adult offenders. These three forces continued to follow these procedures since the pilot ended in November 2015. Later, other forces also limited their use of some out of court disposals. So the outcomes data should be viewed with this in mind.

For a full commentary and explanation of outcome types please see the Home Office statistics, Crime outcomes in England and Wales: year ending March 2019.

Domestic abuse outcomes

In England and Wales, 29 police forces provide domestic abuse outcomes data through the Home Office data hub (HODH) every month. We collected this data directly from the remaining 14 forces.

Domestic abuse outcome proportions show the percentage of crimes recorded in the 12 months ending 31 March 2018 that have been assigned each outcome. This means that each crime is tracked or linked to its outcome. So this data is subject to change, as more crimes are assigned outcomes over time.

Workforce figures (including ethnicity and gender)

This data was obtained from the Home Office annual data return 502. The data is available from the Home Office's published police workforce England and Wales statistics or the police workforce open data tables. The Home Office may have updated these figures since we obtained them for this report.

The data gives the full-time equivalent workforce figures as at 31 March. The figures include section 38-designated investigation, detention or escort officers, but not section 39-designated detention or escort staff. They include officers on career breaks and other types of long-term absence but exclude those seconded to other forces.

Spend per head of population

We took this data from the HMICFRS value for money profiles.

These profiles are based on data collected by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy, through the Police Objective Analysis. The spend over time figures are adjusted for inflation. The population figures are ONS mid-year estimates, with the 2019/20 value calculated by assessing the trend for the last five years. More details on this data can be found on our website.

Stop and search

We took this data from the Home Office publication, Police powers and procedures, England and Wales year ending 31 March 2019. Stop and search totals exclude vehicle only searches and searches where the subject's ethnicity was not stated.