

PEEL 2025–27

Police effectiveness, efficiency and legitimacy

An inspection of Thames Valley Police

Contents

Overall summary	1
Our judgments	1
PEEL 2025–2027	1
Terminology in this report	2
About the data	2
HM Inspector’s summary	2
Leadership and force management	5
Areas for improvement	5
Main findings	7
Attracting, developing and retaining the workforce and creating a diverse and inclusive workplace	12
Innovative practice	12
Main findings	12
Using powers fairly, appropriately and with justification	18
Areas for improvement	18
Promising practice	21
Main findings	21
Preventing and deterring crime and antisocial behaviour, and reducing vulnerability	26
Promising practice	26
Area for improvement	29
Main findings	30
Responding to the public	35
Area for improvement	35
Promising practice	36
Main findings	37

Investigating crime	40
Areas for improvement	40
Main findings	42
Safeguarding children and adults at risk of harm	48
Areas for improvement	48
Innovative practice	50
Main findings	50
Managing fraud	54
Areas for improvement	54
Main findings	55

Overall summary

Our judgments

Our inspection assessed how good Thames Valley Police is in eight areas of policing. We make graded judgments as follows:

Outstanding	Good	Adequate	Requires improvement	Inadequate
	Developing a diverse and inclusive workforce	Police powers and public treatment	Leadership and force management	
	Preventing and deterring crime	Responding to the public	Investigating crime	
		Managing fraud	Safeguarding children and adults	

We set out our detailed findings about things the force is doing well and where the force should improve in the rest of this report.

We also assess the force's performance in a range of other areas, and we report on these separately. We make graded judgments for some of these areas.

PEEL 2025–2027

In 2014, we introduced our police effectiveness, efficiency and legitimacy (PEEL) inspections, which assess the performance of all 43 police forces in England and Wales. Since then, we have been continuously adapting our approach.

We have moved to a more [intelligence](#)-led, continual assessment approach, rather than the annual [PEEL inspections](#) we used in previous years. We assess forces against the [characteristics of good](#) performance, set out in the [PEEL assessment framework 2025–2027](#), and we more clearly link our judgments to [causes of concern](#) and [areas for improvement](#).

It isn't possible to make direct comparisons between the grades awarded in this PEEL inspection and those from the previous cycle of PEEL inspections. This is because we have increased our focus on making sure forces are achieving appropriate outcomes for the public. We have also changed the aspects of policing we inspect and added new areas.

Terminology in this report

Our reports contain references to, among other things, 'national' definitions, priorities, policies, systems, responsibilities and processes.

In some instances, 'national' means applying to England or Wales, or England and Wales. In others, it means applying to England, Wales and Scotland, or the whole of the United Kingdom.

About the data

For more information on data and analysis in this report, please [see the 'About the data' section of our website](#).

HM Inspector's summary

I am satisfied with some aspects of the performance of Thames Valley Police in keeping people safe and reducing crime. It has made improvements since [our last inspection](#) in how it responds to the public and prevents crime. But I have concerns about how it is investigating crime and supporting [vulnerable](#) people and about some aspects of its force management.

The force needs to improve its approach to change management. It has restructured its operating model and this has led to some improvements in performance. But it has equally led to some units, including those supporting vulnerable people, not properly managing or understanding the needs of [victims](#) and [officers](#) and [staff](#). I am concerned that the force's often reactive approach may affect its performance and culture in the future.

In the year ending 31 March 2025, the force received £825 million in total funding. Its total funding equals £312,536 per 1,000 population and is within the typical range for forces in England and Wales. However, the force faced significant extra financial and resourcing demands for policing high-profile state visits to Windsor Castle. The force also faces geographic and political challenges, incorporating three counties containing nine local authorities.

It was pleasing to find that the force is effective at addressing the welfare of its workforce. Officers and staff feel supported by their immediate supervisors. They have access to a range of [occupational health services](#). But the force could do more to understand the demands on its officers and staff and to provide appropriate well-being support.

The force has effective oversight and internal scrutiny of [stop and search](#). Officers have good awareness of reasonable grounds and a good [find rate](#) for prohibited items. But Thames Valley Police needs to improve its internal scrutiny and recording of use of force. And it needs to ensure greater external scrutiny of both stop and search and use of force.

[Neighbourhood policing teams](#) identify and address community problems to prevent crime, tackle [antisocial behaviour](#) and reduce vulnerability. Despite a significant resourcing demand from state visits, the force's processes aim to reduce the need to [abstract](#) neighbourhood officers from their wards. This allows the force to focus on working with people and problem solving.

However, the force also needs to improve its management of demand in some areas. For example, its response times for non-immediate calls for service, especially for [domestic abuse](#), require improvement. And its ability to progress crime investigations also requires improvement.

The force has invested in its [control room](#) and improved how quickly it answers emergency calls. It has been innovative in its use of artificial intelligence to reduce demand for calls for service. But it needs to improve its response to non-emergency calls, especially those relating to domestic abuse.

The force needs to make sure that it properly allocates, plans and supervises investigations, so that victims get the service they deserve. It also needs to make sure that it assigns crime investigations to suitably qualified investigators. And it needs to maximise opportunities to achieve [positive outcomes](#) for victims through high quality, thorough and timely investigations.

The way the force protects vulnerable people has improved since our 2023–25 PEEL inspection, but there is more work to do. It needs to improve its processes for identifying and [safeguarding](#) high-risk victims of domestic abuse so they get appropriate investigative and safeguarding support. It also needs to improve its [Operation Encompass](#) referral process so that it properly notifies the relevant school when [children](#) witness domestic abuse. And it needs to continue maintaining the resilience of its [multi-agency safeguarding hubs](#).

The force understands the impact of fraud on its communities and has made this a priority. But it doesn't always manage fraud investigations well. The specialist fraud investigators don't have the capability to investigate all fraud. So the force manages demand by closing some investigations prematurely and by leaving some fraud cases with untrained teams.

There are still areas in which Thames Valley Police must do better, and we will continue to monitor its progress. But we have seen progress and I am optimistic that the force will build on the significant improvements we have seen in some areas during this inspection.



Roy Wilsher OBE QFSM

His Majesty's Inspector of Constabulary

Leadership and force management

Requires
improvement

Thames Valley Police's leadership and force management require improvement.

Areas for improvement

The force needs to make sure all areas of its new operating model manage demand effectively

During our inspection, we found demand challenges, with some operational teams lacking both operational capacity and capability.

The force has redesigned its operating model to meet demand across the force area and locally. It implemented a model in which five local command units get support from some centrally managed units. The force introduced the model incrementally by changing each local policing unit in turn. This allowed it to learn lessons during the process. However, some parts of the force have fared better than others under the new model. For example, the force's [domestic abuse](#) units moved to local policing from central control while retaining a three-shift operating model. This means they are less resilient than the criminal investigation department teams under the same senior leadership team command, which operate a four-shift model. The force's [child](#) abuse investigation units, conversely, have remained under central command and can demonstrate effective capacity and capability.

Lack of capacity to meet demand is prevalent in, but not limited to, areas of the force linked to [safeguarding](#) and response. We found that teams, such as [management of sexual offenders and violent offenders](#) and domestic abuse investigation, were particularly under-resourced. They had too few [officers](#) and supervisors. We saw inexperienced officers managing workloads that included cases too complex for their abilities. We saw a similar lack of capacity in some response teams. This has resulted in inconsistent incident response times. Response teams often rely on other force resources, notably [neighbourhood policing teams](#), to manage demand. This, in turn, takes these neighbourhood officers away from their core duties.

We were reassured to note that the force has added more [personnel](#) in important areas, including management of sexual offenders and violent offenders, and domestic abuse investigation. But it needs to effectively assess whether increased staffing levels have proved beneficial. Equally, where it has decided to move personnel around to better manage demand it also needs to make sure that such changes don't have unintended negative consequences in other areas of the force.

The force has strategic governance arrangements, but it must strengthen tactical implementation and leadership accountability

During our inspection, we observed numerous strategic governance meetings and interviewed leaders at all levels. Operationally, we found evidence of effective local performance management in the force's health check meetings. Chief inspectors chair these meetings. They hold team leaders to account for their respective team's performance using performance data accessible in data toolkits. Equally, at strategic level, the force uses an assurance visit review process, culminating in an assessment by the deputy chief constable. This is an effective method to measure local command units against each other and internally at individual team level. It helps the force to identify good and poor performance and the reasons behind this. However, we also found meetings providing briefings and updates on performance or organisational activity, but where leaders were rarely held to account for performance concerns.

In addition, a mix of portfolio responsibilities at senior leader level has led to blurred lines of reporting and lack of governance. Examples of this included some senior leaders running operational meetings without an effective structure or consistent process to address performance requirements. And [staff](#) told us during [reality testing](#) that there was a lack of leadership visibility.

During our inspection, we highlighted to the force examples of a disconnect between strategic oversight and tactical implementation. The force has taken some steps to address this. For example, it now has a more structured approach to strategic oversight of [stop and search](#) and use of force. But it needs to do more work to improve in this area.

The force needs to show how it considers and evaluates the impact of changes to its processes, policies and procedures

During our inspection, we found numerous examples where the force had changed processes frequently and often quickly. Some of these changes had unintended outcomes in other parts of the organisation. This destabilises systems and the [personnel](#) affected by those changes.

The force has a central change team made up of programme managers and project managers. This team, however, lacks suitable capability in process mapping and interdependency mapping. As a result, changes to the force either at a programme or project level often lack the wider understanding of how those changes will affect other parts of the organisation.

We saw an example in Project Cornerstone. This programme asks its workforce for feedback on areas of the force that aren't working well so they can be improved. Though helpful for ongoing continuous improvement, some of the issues [officers](#) and [staff](#) highlighted stem from the lack of forward and wider planning.

The force isn't overseeing all change projects with a change manager or project lead. Instead, staff follow self-help project management guidance on the force's intranet. This hands-off approach allows for greater flexibility but equally can lead to situations where complex changes aren't properly thought through or overseen, leading to unsatisfactory outcomes.

During our inspection, we carried out a workforce survey open to all officers and staff between 17 November 2025 and 12 December 2025. We received 2,134 responses, which we estimate to be 22.5 percent of the workforce at the time of the survey. Only 48.8 percent of respondents (1,042 of 2,134) agreed that change is managed well in Thames Valley Police and only 61.9 percent (1,321 of 2,134) agreed that senior leaders consider the needs of the police workforce when making strategic decisions.

Main findings

In this section, we set out our main findings that relate to how good the force is at leadership and force management.

The force uses its force management statement in its annual strategic planning cycle, but needs to focus more consistently on demand

Thames Valley Police's [force management statement \(FMS\)](#) informs strategic decision-making, particularly around investment and financial planning. Thames Valley Police develops its FMS collaboratively with departmental heads and strategic leads. It also integrates partnership considerations into the assessment, making the FMS a much more influential tool than in previous years. The FMS follows the required structure for presenting service areas. Each section contains a strategic [risk assessment](#) and a discussion of both workforce and non-workforce assets including facilities, equipment and technology.

By using historical crime data, call logs, demographic trends and environmental factors, the force is creating predictive models to forecast future demand with greater accuracy. This proactive approach has helped the force to distribute officers, staff and resources more efficiently in some areas, especially where seasonal demand varies.

But the extent to which the data covers capacity and capability is inconsistent and it needs to be more detailed. The resourcing solutions may not always be the most effective or efficient. In particular, HR data on officer and staff skills isn't always aligned with specific operational requirements.

The force needs to make better use of predictive analytics to highlight emerging crime trends and to support its strategic planning

During our inspection, we found that the force's [intelligence](#) gathering was effective. We found it can assign the appropriate resources to operationally meet its strategic priorities. The force identifies emerging crime trends and addresses immediate threat, harm and risk through daily meetings on each local command unit, and then at force level. The fortnightly tasking and tactical co-ordination group process is firmly focused on implementing the force's [control strategy](#) by identifying and prioritising activities that support it.

The force is establishing a culture of data literacy to support performance for operational officers and staff. We saw evidence that local command units are using Microsoft Power BI data. It is becoming a business-as-usual activity, with supervisors at all levels seeing the benefits in holding staff to account.

But the force isn't making the best use of real-time data, predictive analytics and collaborative information-sharing networks. These would help it to better identify emerging threats, allocate resources more efficiently and prioritise operations based on risk and impact.

The force aims to underpin all operational activity with effective risk management

The deputy chief constable's monthly risk, improvement and learning meeting brings risk, improvement and learning together to improve performance. This meeting aims to increase confidence at senior level as to what should constitute a force-wide strategic risk and how to mitigate it.

For leaders more widely, the force told us there is often a difference between comfort with operational risk decisions, which involve immediate threats to safety, and organisational risks that relate to structural, financial or reputational threats. The force's risk management hub on its internal website brings together guidance, tools, and case studies to help leaders manage risk more confidently and proportionately. Promotion processes also now include assessment of risk-based decision-making at operational level.

The force aims to improve the quality of its leaders

The force's leadership academy aims to equip supervisors with tools and standards for inclusive leadership and staff development. The academy's inclusive leadership course is a mandated five-day programme that helps [first](#) and second-line leaders build their skills and confidence to create an inclusive and supportive workplace.

The force collaborates effectively with a neighbouring force to maximise use of technology to improve operational efficiency

Thames Valley Police and Hampshire and Isle of Wight Constabulary maintain a joint ICT department to implement a shared digital transformation programme. Their overarching aim is to modernise technology across both forces, increasing efficiency and enhancing public service.

Both forces working together have effective triage processes that support digital innovation but prevent the over-proliferation of IT projects. There is a process of prioritisation based on both financial and workforce needs. And there is a contingency fund for previously unidentified urgent issues.

We found that the force centres its digital transformation plans on using advanced technologies to enhance operational efficiency and service provision. With tools such as artificial intelligence, cloud storage and data analytics, the force is making workflows more efficient, improving decision-making and increasing productivity. This can enhance public safety and trust through more transparent and responsive policing.

The force is maximising the use of robotic process automation to improve operations and protect vulnerable victims

The force is problem-led. It examines an issue and assesses whether it can apply a technical solution. The force told us it has made over £4.4 million worth of savings from robotic process automation (RPA) but has always chosen operational benefits over cost savings. For example, the force told us that use of RPA within the [Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme](#) process has allowed it to complete research reports based on information in its records management system in minutes. Previously, it took hours of manual research to complete these reports. The force has also improved proactivity in Right to Know cases by using RPA to quickly identify new reports of domestic abuse by known perpetrators with new partners. The new partners can then be made aware more quickly of the full extent of their partner's offending history.

The force has improved police driving standards and fleet efficiency through the rollout of vehicle telematics technology

By actively monitoring driving behaviours such as speeding, harsh braking, and rapid acceleration, the force has improved driver accountability and mitigated occupational road risk. Telematics data flags unsafe driving events. This allows the force to identify officers who need driver retraining or interventions rather than relying on guesswork after a collision. Simply knowing that telematic devices monitor driving performance also encourages officers to self-regulate. This naturally reduces aggressive driving and ensures adherence to police response policies. Furthermore, the technology yields cost efficiencies by lowering carbon emissions, reducing fuel consumption and minimising collision damage instances.

The force told us that the number of identified unsafe driving events reduced from 1,319 in the financial year 2024/25 to 665 in 2025/26. It has also reduced force insurance costs which the force told us peaked at over £2 million per annum for an extended period but have since reduced to £990,000 in 2024/25, despite an increase in fleet size and miles covered.

The force can show how it aligns finances to its priorities and how it decides if its expenditure offers value for money

The force can show its finances and its priorities are aligned. It clearly links its budget allocations to strategic objectives and operational needs. This involves transparent financial planning that shows how it uses resources in important areas such as investigations, neighbourhood policing and technological innovation. The force uses regular performance reviews and audits to help assess whether its spending leads to measurable outcomes and makes sure it is using public funds efficiently. The force uses [benchmarking](#), cost-benefit analyses and adopts best practices in procurement and resource management to further support value for money. By maintaining this alignment and accountability, the force can create public confidence in its financial leadership and operational effectiveness.

The force has good governance and oversight of savings delivery, but faces budgeting challenges

In the year ending 31 March 2025, the force received £825 million in total funding. As for other forces in England and Wales, this is a combination of government grants, [precept](#) and other non-government grants. The precept income was around £262 million. This is equivalent to £99,549 per 1,000 population. This is within the typical range of precept funding received by forces across England and Wales. The force has maintained its general reserves of around £16 million. This is around 1.9 percent of the net budget. Most forces aim for between 3–5 percent which is considered an adequate amount.

The monthly savings delivery board, chaired by the chief finance officer, focuses on identifying savings and making sure they are realised within timescales by removing blockers. The medium-term financial plan highlights several challenges including inflation and pay awards above budgeted levels.

The force has used its 'spend to save' policy effectively to make savings. For example, within fleet management, there was funding to recruit a dedicated force fleet manager. The force leads the Chiltern Transport Consortium, which manages vehicle fleets for several police forces. The force fleet manager focuses on specific Thames Valley Police fleet issues, rather than wider regional issues. A subsequent fleet and hire vehicle utilisation review identified that the existing fleet was being underused. As a result, the force told us that since 1 January 2025, it has returned 89 long-term hire cars, saving around £43,000 a month. Better use of vehicle telematics lets the fleet manager see the daily use of all cars and distribute them according to recorded demand needs.

Attracting, developing and retaining the workforce and creating a diverse and inclusive workplace

Good

Thames Valley Police is good at attracting, developing and retaining its workforce and creating a diverse and inclusive workplace.

Innovative practice

The force is innovative in recruiting from the military, including for specialist roles

Thames Valley Police holds the Ministry of Defence (MOD)'s Gold Award under the Defence Employer Recognition Scheme and works in partnership with several military resettlement organisations. It is the only police force in the UK to offer a resettlement payment of £2,500 for former military personnel joining as [police officers](#) and £1,500 for those joining as [police staff](#). The force has recruited internally a network of volunteers who attend recruitment and other events to promote the force to military personnel. The force also specifically targets MOD police protection officers to fill shortages in important roles. Under policing regulations, MOD police officers can't be treated as transferees. Instead, the force places successful applicants onto the same re-joiner course taken by former civilian police officers returning to policing. In addition, these former MOD officers complete two years' probation. This is so the force can assure itself that recruits are capable police officers.

Main findings

In this section, we set out our main findings that relate to how good the force is at attracting, developing and retaining its workforce and creating a diverse and inclusive workplace.

The force has improved its ability to attract the right candidates for the role of police officer

Three new sections on the force's career website focus on life in foundation training, life once a student officer is on a response team, and opportunities once out of the probationary period. The website contains numerous videos of officers talking about their roles, including a realistic and honest portrayal of the challenges involved. Reassuringly, the force has also reintroduced an in-person interview with a senior police officer to provide a deeper, more accurate assessment of an individual's suitability.

The force is working to improve how it promotes itself as an employer of choice to people from ethnic minority backgrounds

The force uses a process of repeated targeted engagement to foster new and existing links with [under-represented communities](#). Its website showcases the extensive range of internal workforce support networks. It also provides information on mentoring, support through the assessment and interview processes, and other initiatives to encourage applications. It will arrange home visits and runs regular 'meet the family' days. Potential candidates from ethnic minority backgrounds can attend with their families to gain a greater understanding of the lived experience of being a police officer and the challenges they might face. The force has more work to do in this area. For the year ending 31 March 2025, the proportion of police officers from an ethnic minority background was 6.6 percent compared to a national average for England and Wales of 8.5 percent.

The force encourages an inclusive culture, which aims to give its workforce the confidence to challenge inappropriate behaviour

There is mandatory training for staff and officers on sexual [harassment](#) and [abuse of position for a sexual purpose](#) and their responsibilities if they witness inappropriate behaviour. The force also uses listening circles to provide a safe platform for officers and staff to share their first-hand experiences and views on issues such as institutional racism, sexism, misogyny and homophobia, and the impact of disability and neurodivergence. Feedback informs the leadership team and helps to shape actions towards positive culture change and a better sense of belonging for all employees.

The force's internal support groups, known as networks, are designed to foster inclusion, provide peer support, and influence policy. Examples of networks at Thames Valley Police include the Women's Network, the Support Association for Minority Ethnic Groups, and the Christian Police Association.

The networks support members and champion equality, diversity and inclusion. And networks regularly come together to identify issues and challenges that affect more than one group, such as health and well-being.

The force provides officers and staff with the right training to carry out specialist work

The force has a comprehensive investigator resilience action plan, which shows understanding of its current and future investigative demand. As at 31 December 2025, the force had 752 full-time equivalent [professionalising investigations programme \(PIP\) 2](#) investigators in post compared to 939 who should be in post. This means 80.1 percent of PIP 2 investigator posts were filled with accredited investigators. The force is working to address the shortfall, which equated to 187 vacant posts as at 31 December 2025. In addition, the force had an additional 140 staff and officers in post who weren't fully PIP 2 qualified and are at various stages of the training process. The force has since told us that all posts are now filled, albeit a substantial number of them by investigators who aren't fully trained.

The force has a strong set of professional development opportunities for its PIP 2 investigators. It told us it was the first to introduce the [College of Policing](#) specialist sexual assault investigator development programme and is well ahead of the 2029 national accreditation target.

The force has improved the investigative ability of non-detectives. It has established a PIP 1 accreditation pathway. This involves mandatory [continuing professional development](#) training days with module one focusing on improving investigative skills and module two focusing on criminal justice procedures, including [disclosure](#).

The force has introduced the [College of Policing's neighbourhood policing programme](#). The College of Policing dashboard shows that as at 17 March 2026, 758 individuals from the force had completed the first part of the programme. This is higher than the 681 neighbourhood officers and police community support officers mandated to complete the training.

The force offers specialist volunteer roles so individuals can contribute professional skills to policing beyond the well-known special constabulary (volunteer police officers). Examples include trained humane animal dispatchers who support firearms teams in euthanising injured deer to minimise suffering. Another example is volunteer cadet leaders who mentor young people within the cadets, developing their leadership skills and citizenship.

The force has effective well-being support for its workforce, but needs to better understand the operational challenges of its investigators

The force has a comprehensive well-being plan, which is clearly aligned with the five main areas of the '[National Police Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2024–2026](#)'. It communicates with its workforce and acts on information and feedback to improve its well-being.

The force has extended its psychological screening provision to a broader range of units beyond those recommended by the College of Policing. This recognises that exposure to traumatic incidents or burnout is wide ranging and may require additional support. If officers and staff have experienced a traumatic incident, the force uses trauma intervention strategies such as demobilisation and defusing. The force may use the demobilisation strategy to hold a stress-prevention conversation immediately after an incident. It may then use the defusing strategy to follow up with officers and staff a few days later. The force can then assess who may need further help and support.

While well-being support is well established, it often fails to take account of the operational capacity and capability of personnel working within local investigative units. Well-being is one of the strands of the Crime Academy, a dedicated unit that provides leadership and governance for investigative standards. It offers a range of support, including practical tips and help to better manage workloads. However, we found there were issues in some investigative units that were having a detrimental effect on well-being. These included a lack of [first-line supervisors](#), challenging shift patterns and personnel investigating complex crimes for which they weren't properly qualified.

In our workforce survey, 56.5 percent of respondents (1,206 of 2,134) said that the force took their well-being into account when setting their working pattern, and 71.8 percent of respondents (1,533 of 2,134) said that their line manager actively checked that their workload was manageable.

The force has improved its reasonable adjustment process to support those with disabilities

The force has trained reasonable adjustment management process advisers who are proactive in supporting the workforce, especially at times of change. The force told us that as at 7 February 2026, there were 150 cases in progress with 30 new applicants waiting initial review. They are triaged on a weekly basis. Display screen equipment assessments to evaluate workstations to reduce such issues as musculoskeletal conditions are also effective, with quick turnaround times. The force has also improved its approach to workplace needs assessments. New entrants have the option to inform the force of any disabilities so it can implement support from day one. The force now has a greater focus on prioritising those with the most pressing need for workplace adjustments. These groups include exam candidates, new recruits, apprentices and those subject to processes for poor performance.

The force has processes to encourage officers and staff to stay in its workforce

The force checks on the satisfaction of its workforce through surveys and collects workforce data. In our workforce survey, 44.2 percent of respondents (827 of 1,869) said they see their future career continuing in Thames Valley Police beyond the next three years.

The force uses [stay interviews](#) to identify concerns and discuss how it can encourage people to stay in its workforce by mitigating the issues. The force also has an exit interview process. This includes an opportunity to provide anonymous feedback outside the management chain, as well as an exit interview with the line manager. The force told us that between September 2024 and January 2026, it carried out 289 stay interviews. Of those interviewed, it retained 145 staff and officers and 132 of these were still serving six months later.

The force also aims to effectively meet the challenges that those from under-represented groups might face. Its dedicated diversity and inclusion team offers supportive measures and incentives that aim to overcome these issues.

The force is effectively gathering reasons for people leaving the workforce as part of the [National Police Chiefs' Council](#) national leavers framework, which is designed to improve the data collection on reasons for officers leaving police forces in England and Wales.

The force offers development opportunities for the workforce, including those from under-represented groups

The Thames Valley Police Staff Talent Mobility Initiative is a workforce development programme designed to provide non-operational police staff with a clearer career pathway, personal growth, and internal progression opportunities. This recognises their vital role in supporting critical functions from forensics and IT to communications, HR, and finance. This initiative aims to offer opportunities similar to traditional officer pathways and allows police staff to work on projects across different areas of the force. Examples include forensics, custody, behavioural science, the [professional standards department](#), criminal justice, public protection and strategic governance. It also offers operational deployment opportunities, for example working with the operations planning department in support of major events. Staff can shadow senior leaders and attend senior meetings. They can also experience reverse mentoring, where staff aim to assist senior leaders in their strategic decision-making. The force told us it is experiencing good levels of retention and progression of police staff.

For under-represented groups, the professional action learning sets programme aims to provide participants with strategies to overcome barriers to progression, identify career aspirations, and build confidence in their own leadership potential. Equally, the women's development programme is intended for sergeants to chief inspectors who show the potential to take the next step in their careers. It includes psychometric assessment, development events, coaching and mentoring, and networking opportunities. The force told us that its evaluation of the programme shows that participants are more than twice as likely to achieve promotion than those female officers who don't do the programme.

Thames Valley Police also runs a Women in Technology Initiative, recognised in 2025 by the National Police Chiefs' Council's Innovation and Digital Awards. The ICT department established the initiative to empower female representation in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) roles. The force told us that, backed by structured mentoring, coaching, and networking, this initiative had successfully increased female representation in the force's IT departments to 26 percent as of April 2026.

The force has an effective professional development review process, but needs to make sure it fully supports performance measurement and development

The force values the professional development review (PDR) process as a supportive approach to career progression. In the year ending 31 March 2025, 98.9 percent of the overall workforce had a PDR. This is the highest of any force in England and Wales.

The force recognises that regular one-to-one conversations between line managers and their team members within the PDR process are crucial for improving well-being. They also boost retention, and foster a supportive, performance-focused culture. The force mandates that these should occur every ten weeks for continuous career development, goal setting, and real-time feedback. The force told us that it is seeing an upward trend in the number of one-to-one conversations completed, rising continuously from 8,223 in the year ending 31 March 2020, to 17,876 in the year ending 31 March 2025.

The force's professional development review process includes a [competency and values framework](#) aligned to the core behaviours expected of everyone working within policing. During our inspection, we reviewed 20 PDRs and found all 20 contained three core policing values with specific examples to show how each value had been achieved during the reporting year. In all cases, this also formed the basis of discussions about the individual's next steps and career progression. The force reviews PDRs for all police officer job applications, whether promotion or a lateral move.

At the same time, the force would benefit from assuring itself that all objectives and goals are in [SMART](#) format. This would ensure they effectively support performance measurement and development. The force should also quality assure PDRs. Of the 20 PDRs we reviewed, 19 didn't contain specific/SMART goals or objectives.

Our workforce survey also supports these findings. Only 62.2 percent of respondents who had a formal PDR in the past 12 months (893 of 1,436) agreed that PDRs are valuable for their development.

Using powers fairly, appropriately and with justification

Adequate

Thames Valley Police is adequate at using its powers fairly, appropriately and with justification.

Areas for improvement

The force needs to improve its recording, data retrieval and scrutiny of use of force

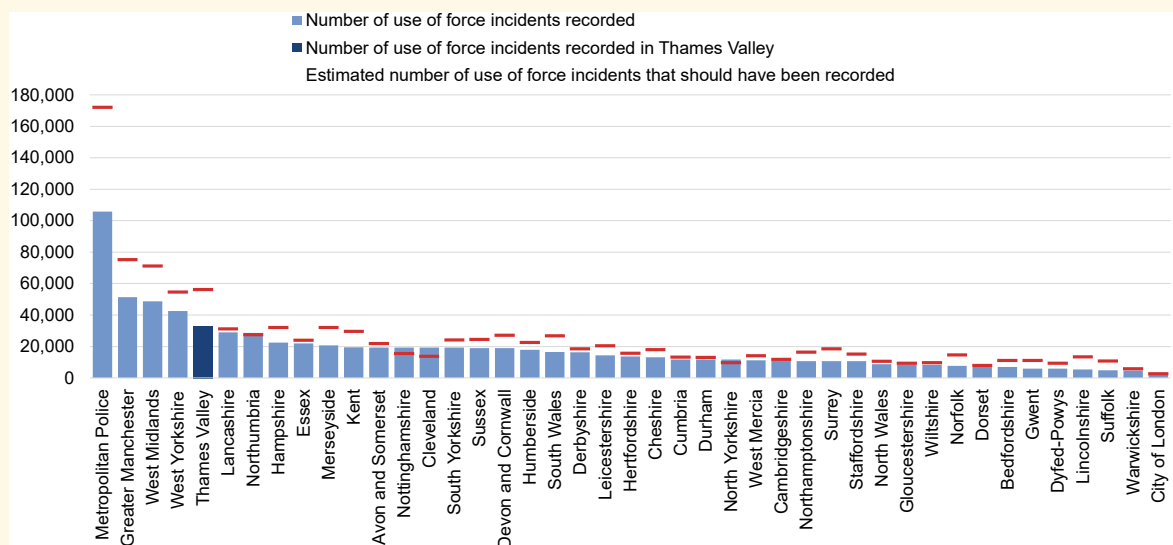
In the year ending 31 March 2025, the force recorded 33,013 use of force incidents. This is an increase of 8.2 percent compared to the previous year.

[Officers](#) are expected to record every use of force to make sure it is transparent and accountable. This includes recording low-level use of force such as handcuffing a compliant person and higher levels of force such as the use of a baton or [conducted energy device \(Taser\)](#). Where more than one officer uses force on an individual, each officer must submit their own use of force report.

To determine if the force was recording use of force appropriately, we reviewed two different measures. We firstly examined the number of arrests and compared this to the number of recorded use of force reports. We expect the number of use of force reports to be at least as high as the number of arrests. Most arrests involve the use of handcuffs and multiple officers may have used force during the arrest. In the year ending 31 March 2025, the force carried out 41,807 arrests and recorded 33,013 use of force reports. This means it under-recorded its use of force by at least 8,794 incidents.

We then reviewed the overall expected number of use of force records compared to the actual recorded number. The expected number is estimated based on the average number of uses of force associated with each recorded arrest. We estimate that, in the year ending 31 March 2025, the force recorded 33,013 incidents but should have recorded 56,157. This means it likely under-recorded its use of force by 23,144 incidents.

Figure 1: Number of use of force incidents that forces in England and Wales recorded and the estimated number that should have been recorded in the year ending 31 March 2025



Source: [Police use of force open data tables](#) and [arrests open data tables](#) from the Home Office

Chart description: A combination chart showing the number of use of force incidents that all forces in England and Wales recorded (represented by columns) and the estimated number of use of force incidents that should have been recorded (represented by red target lines) in the year ending 31 March 2025. Thames Valley Police recorded 33,013 use of force incidents. This was lower than the estimated 56,157 use of force incidents it should have recorded.

[The accessible data table for figure 1 is available on our website.](#)

Note: To understand how well forces record their use of force, we compare the number of incidents they recorded with the estimated number they should have recorded. To estimate the number of use of force incidents forces should have recorded, we use the number of recorded arrests and the number of recorded use of force incidents linked to an arrest.

The force told us it had increased its compliance rate for officers recording use of force, with particular emphasis on compliant handcuffing. It has reinforced the recording requirement during personal and public safety training and through targeted communications. It has also reduced the administrative burden of filling in the recording form by removing several sections.

It is possible that the force has improved compliance. But its process for recording, retrieving and analysing the data makes it difficult for the force to know this for sure. It can't identify individuals who may be under-recording use of force. And its recording process in custody often leads to a situation where the system generates a task for an officer to record a use of force before recording the officer's details. So the officer never receives the task.

At the same time, the force doesn't have an effective supervisory review process to make sure that officers are using force proportionately, lawfully and fairly, as the recording process doesn't require supervisory sign-off. And unlike [stop and search](#), the force doesn't have any [dip sampling](#) process that reviews [body-worn video](#) footage of use of force incidents to identify potential learning or [misconduct](#) issues, or to recognise and share good practice.

Internal scrutiny of the use of force by police is critical for maintaining public trust. Deficiencies in this area often lead to missed opportunities to identify improper, [disproportionate](#), or unlawful actions. The force needs to improve its performance in this area.

The force needs to improve its external scrutiny processes for stop and search and use of force

The force uses independent community scrutiny panels in each of its local command units. The panels provide external oversight of [stop and search](#) by reviewing [body-worn video](#) footage. They give the force independent feedback to guide improvement and to identify and act against [officers](#) who may be using stop and search unreasonably or even unlawfully. These community scrutiny panels are still at an early stage. The force has delayed setting them up because of its recent move to a new operating model.

At the same time, the force has yet to implement a similar process to independently review incidents when officers have used force such as handcuffing, a police baton or [conducted energy device \(Taser\)](#). This means that Thames Valley Police can't be assured that officers are using force fairly, proportionately and legitimately.

Equally, the force provides limited information on its website to give members of the public a greater awareness and understanding of the circumstances when the police need to use force or stop and search powers. Thames Valley Police publishes data packs, but it offers no supporting commentary to guide the reader or highlight areas of significance. Detail about the external scrutiny process for stop and search is also limited and out of date.

A lack of external scrutiny regarding stop and search and use of force can undermine public trust and confidence, threaten legitimacy and allow [disproportionality](#) to go unchecked.

Promising practice

The force is innovative in how it runs annual public and personal safety training to keep officers deployable

The force follows the [College of Policing](#) national curriculum for public and personal safety training (PPST). The training is over two consecutive days. The force makes sure that most [officers](#) can attend by factoring the days into their duties as part of their annual shift pattern. This prevents officers from inadvertently lapsing into untrained non-deployable status.

The force has invested in training equipment that accurately reproduces locations of potential conflict, such as a custody suite, pub or house. This scenario-based training focuses on communication and de-escalation and aims to reduce the use of force and increase officer confidence. The sessions cover what constitutes reasonable grounds, and use of police powers. The training also features aids to improving communication, such as use of the listen, empathise, ask, paraphrase, summarise (LEAPS) active listening model and the [five-step appeal](#) process.

The rigorous PPST accreditation process grades officers on a sliding scale. It offers those graded at the highest level a further development programme for PPST. On this programme, they work with firearms, dogs and public order units to learn some of their specialist skills. Around 20 students a year do the course.

The programme is only in its third year, so it is too early to tell what proportion of these officers will go on to become specialist officers. However, the force told us that over 80 percent of attendees on the programme have already qualified as part-time PPST instructors and support the regular team in leading PPST training. They offer resilience but are also invaluable as local champions of PPST best practice. Their skills are also accessible on the force's resource management platform system. So Thames Valley Police can call them up to oversee more complex uses of force, such as cell relocation.

Main findings

In this section, we set out our main findings that relate to how good the force is at using its powers fairly, appropriately and with justification.

Officers understand how to use stop and search powers fairly and appropriately

During our inspection, we reviewed a sample of 127 stop and search records from 1 November 2024 to 31 October 2025. Based on this sample, we estimate that 86.6 percent (+/- 5.0 percentage points) of stop and searches the force carried out during this period had reasonable grounds recorded.

This suggests some improvement compared to the findings from our previous review of records from 1 January to 31 December 2022. In that review, we found that 78.3 percent (+/- 6.7 percentage points) of stop and searches had reasonable grounds recorded. However, as the estimated results are based on a review of a sample of records and the ranges of possible true values overlap, we can't be sure that there has been a real change.

The percentage that had reasonable grounds recorded suggests that officers are suitably trained and they use stop and search powers in a fair and appropriate way. Officers told us that they felt confident to use their stop and search powers and had enough training.

The force needs to make sure it collects accurate data to allow it to understand how fairly stop and search is being used

Good quality data on self-defined ethnicity (how individuals define their ethnicity) allows the force to understand the rate at which it uses stop and search on people from ethnic minority backgrounds in the local resident population.

As part of our review of stop and search records, we asked the force to provide 12 months of stop and search data from 1 November 2024 to 31 October 2025. We found that self-defined ethnicity information was unknown (not recorded, not stated or refused) for 23.7 percent of these records. In the year ending 31 March 2025, on average for forces in England and Wales, self-defined ethnicity was unknown for 18.0 percent of stop and searches.

Our review of 21 stop and search encounters filmed on body-worn video found that in 16 of these encounters, officers didn't ask for self-defined ethnicity. In 12 of these 16 cases, officers went on to record the self-defined ethnicity on the form. The force's own audit of body-worn video supports this finding by revealing a discrepancy with officers recording that they asked for this data, but body-worn video showing they didn't. The force recognises this as an issue. It is dealing with it via personal feedback, greater emphasis at PPST and through force-wide communications.

When officers ask for this data, the force can better understand the demographics of those it stops and searches. With further analysis, this could help the force more accurately identify any disproportionate use of the power.

The force uses stop and search sufficiently

In the year ending 31 March 2025, the force carried out 17,385 stop and searches of people. This equals 6.6 stop and searches per 1,000 population. This is within the typical range for forces in England and Wales.

The number of stop and searches the force carried out increased by 8.7 percent compared to the year ending 31 March 2024. This isn't in line with the overall picture for forces in England and Wales in which, on average, the number of stop and searches decreased by 1.3 percent. The force told us that this was because it has

adopted a proactive approach to stop and search and was actively encouraging its use. The force's tactical tasking and co-ordination group and daily management meeting processes support activity at local level. They encourage targeted use of stop and search as a tactical option. And the force often works with partners as part of wider prevention and enforcement activity.

In the year ending 31 March 2025, the force had an overall [find rate](#) of 37.9 percent from stop and search encounters. This was made up of 31.9 percent [linked finds](#) and 6.0 percent not linked finds.

Linked finds are when one or more items, which the officer suspected a person had in their possession, are found and were the reason for the search. Not linked finds are when items are found that a person may have been in unlawful possession of but weren't the reason for the search.

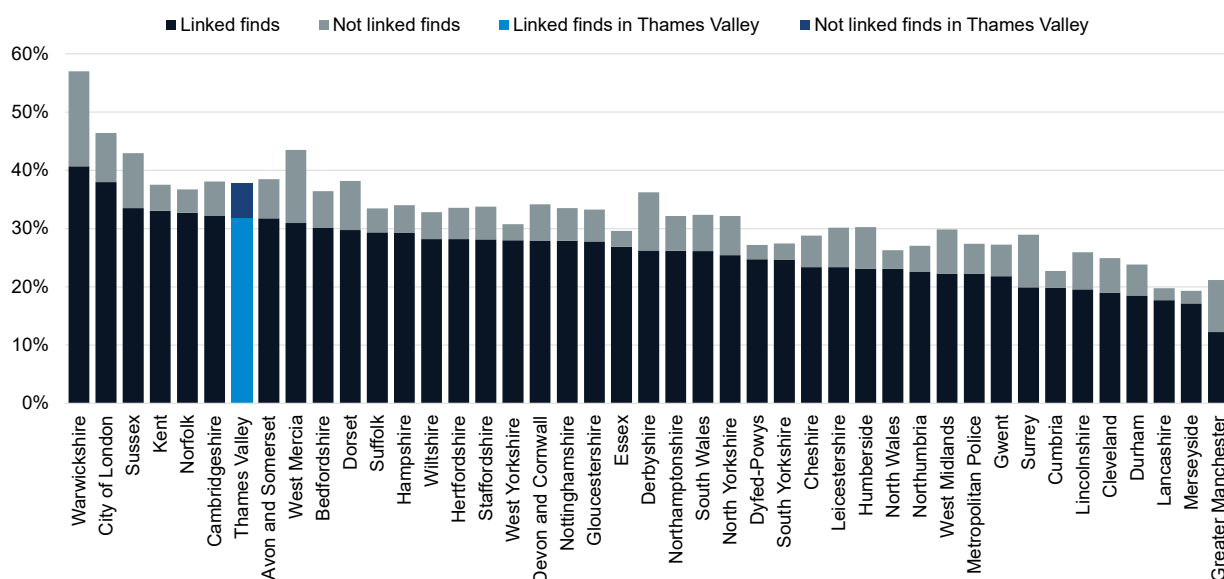
This compares favourably with an average overall find rate for forces within England and Wales of 31.8 percent, made up of 26.2 percent linked finds and 5.6 percent not linked finds. The linked find rate for the force also increased by 3.5 percentage points compared to the year ending 31 March 2024.

We examined:

- the number of searches the force carried out;
- the number of searches that had reasonable grounds; and
- the percentage of linked finds.

The results of this review show that the force is using its stop and search powers well.

Figure 2: Percentage of stop and search encounters resulting in linked and not linked finds for forces in England and Wales in the year ending 31 March 2025



Source: [Stop and search open data tables](#) from the Home Office

Chart description: A stacked column chart showing the percentage of [stop and search](#) encounters where the item found was and wasn't linked to the reason for the search for all forces in England and Wales in the year ending 31 March 2025. In Thames Valley Police, 31.9 percent of stop and search encounters resulted in a [linked find](#) and 6.0 percent in a not linked find.

[The accessible data table for figure 2 is available on our website.](#)

Note: In the calculation, we have excluded records where it isn't known whether the item found was linked to the reason for the search. We have also excluded records where it isn't known whether the [officer](#) found any items. If the percentage of linked or not linked finds isn't included in the chart for some forces, it is because they haven't supplied it.

The force understands how it is using stop and search and use of force powers and is trying to do more to reduce disproportionality

In the year ending 31 March 2025, people from a Black ethnic minority background were 2.6 times more likely than White people to be the subject of a stop and search. This compares to an average of 3.7 times more likely for all police force in England and Wales. In our review of stop and search records of people from an ethnic minority background, we found that 40 of 46 had reasonable grounds.

In the year ending 31 March 2025, people from a Black ethnic minority background were 3.6 times more likely than White people to be the subject to use of force. This compares to an average of 3.0 times more likely for all police forces in England and Wales.

The force carries out analysis of its disproportionate use of stop and search and use of force powers to help it understand why this exists.

The force has an effective internal review process for stop and search

Line managers assess all stop and search records that officers complete. In addition, line managers must also dip sample two stop and search records per month at random, by any officer. This includes viewing the linked body-worn video footage. The focus is on assessing whether the grounds for the stop and search were reasonable. The force is innovatively using an artificial intelligence tool to try to improve the consistency of reasonable grounds assessments.

Thames Valley Police told us that between August 2025 and January 2026, it dip sampled a total of 1,002 stop and searches from a total of 7,423. This equates to 13.5 percent.

The force needs to improve its review processes for those injured while implementing stop and search or use of force

The force has an assaults on staff working group. This collects data on and reviews injuries to officers linked to stop and search or use of force encounters. But the force needs to do more to understand if there are groups of officers with similar features (such as length of service, location or team) who have disproportionate rates of injury. This would help it to better identify any training needs or other issues.

Having said that, the force doesn't have processes to review all occurrences that have led to an injury to the person subject to stop and search or use of force. Nor can it easily identify officers who are disproportionately injuring people to provide the appropriate level of intervention.

Preventing and deterring crime and antisocial behaviour, and reducing vulnerability

Good

Thames Valley Police is good at preventing and deterring crime and [antisocial behaviour](#), and reducing [vulnerability](#).

Promising practice

The force is effective in identifying and preventing violence against women and girls

Operation Vedette is a force-wide process aiming to improve the investigative and preventative response to sexually motivated non-contact offences, such as indecent exposure, where suspects aren't known to [victims](#) prior to the incident. The primary objective is to identify as many suspects as possible for these incidents, and to achieve either [positive criminal justice outcomes](#) or implement disruption tactics such as use of behavioural orders. The force told us that between May 2025 and January 2026, there were a total of 1,257 occurrences, 659 of which were recorded as crimes and 542 as suspicious incidents. From these, it identified 364 individual suspects, 43 of which are linked to more than one offence, with 49 positive outcomes achieved.

Closely aligned to Operation Vedette is the force's work under Project Vigilant. This is a proactive policing initiative designed to prevent sexual violence and target predatory behaviour in the night-time economy. It aims to identify and disrupt people displaying signs that can precede sexual offending, such as loitering, leering, or following others. Specially trained behavioural detection [officers](#) patrol nightlife areas in plain clothes. When a behavioural detection officer identifies a person of concern, they contact uniformed colleagues who then intervene. These officers talk to the person and run background checks. They may issue a dispersal order or make an arrest if necessary. Through visible and immediate intervention, the police aim to make the environment hostile for predators, to demonstrate that they are being watched. The force is also increasingly using technology such as live facial recognition to further improve its response.

The force has also used innovative communications to combat violence against women and girls.

The 'It Does Matter' campaign is an innovative UK public safety initiative developed by Thames Valley Police. It educates the public and empowers victims to report non-contact sexual offences. It specifically targets behaviours such as indecent exposure, voyeurism and upskirting, spiking and [stalking](#). These are frequently minimised, or ignored, but often serve as early warning signs for escalating violence against women and girls. The campaign is built around the simple call-to-action slogan: 'Speak Up, Stand Together, Stay Safe'. The initiative operates as an unbranded product that allows other forces to easily adopt it for their own use.

Consent Conversations is a Thames Valley Police awareness campaign launched in late 2024 to tackle misconceptions about sexual consent. The campaign uses short films and social media to encourage open dialogue among young people aged 18–24. It includes videos with a high-profile presenter tailored specifically for schools, universities and music festivals.

The force is innovative in its use of digital technology in neighbourhood policing

[Neighbourhood police officers](#) build relationships with communities, solve problems and work with local authorities, housing providers and other agencies to prevent crime and [antisocial behaviour](#). Local officers need to be visible and have meaningful communication with those communities.

To improve its neighbourhood policing response, the force developed an innovative digital app for its neighbourhood policing teams. Officers use the app on their mobile devices to record information such as engagement and patrol activities, and [abstractions](#). So neighbourhood policing team officers spend less time recording activities back at the station. This increases their visible presence in communities.

The data is then presented using Microsoft Power BI, in dashboards which the force can use to understand whether it is directing activity to the right locations compared to community feedback and crime data. This also gives the force better understanding of engagement with its communities. And it creates a platform to track, display, and respond to local priorities more efficiently. The force uses data from the app to monitor engagement with [under-represented communities](#), such as those that are newly settled. The aim is to improve their trust and confidence in local policing.

The app also has other uses. It gives officers access to patrol plans and updates on changes in guidance. And it lets them use linked systems such as Thames Valley Alert, a community messaging platform run by the force, giving residents localised crime updates, witness appeals and safety advice. The application launched in March 2024, and as at 18 May 2026, the force told us it has recorded over 115,000 patrol activities and over 82,000 engagements. The force is working with the Home Office to examine the further potential for use of this technology and its national scalability.

Thames Valley Police introduced a second app in June 2025 to meet the requirements of the government's Neighbourhood Policing Guarantee. This requires forces to give a meaningful response to all community and neighbourhood queries from the public within 72 hours. The 72-Hour App automates allocation of queries, and measures the time taken to respond, improving efficiency.

The [National Police Chiefs' Council](#) has identified this innovative work as good practice. It is working with Police Digital and Thames Valley Police to make the app available to all forces in England and Wales. The force told us that it is achieving 100 percent timeliness in its responses and that 21 forces have adopted the 72-Hour App, and a further 11 forces have expressed an interest.

The force is effective in preventing and reducing rural crime

Thames Valley Police has a dedicated rural crime taskforce of 25 officers under the command of an inspector. This taskforce focuses on identifying and arresting criminals targeting farms, agricultural businesses, and isolated communities.

Since it started in March 2022, the force told us the taskforce has recovered more than £8 million worth of stolen property and reduced rural crime by around 50 percent.

The team works closely with other police forces and law enforcement agencies to share [intelligence](#) and combat cross-border criminality focusing on money laundering and [organised crime groups](#). It actively promotes the marking of tools and equipment to deter theft and help recover stolen goods. The team engages with rural residents both face-to-face and via social media to gather intelligence and give crime prevention advice. The team has been recognised both nationally and internationally for its achievements.

Area for improvement

The force needs to improve its approach to problem solving

Previously the force had too many problem-solving plans, which it calls problem-solving occurrences (PSOs), that weren't progressed on its records management system. It has used tactical advisers trained in problem solving on each local command unit to make improvements. But it still runs many of the activities as risk occurrences (RMOs) that fail to comply with the four-stage problem-solving framework, known as [scanning, analysis, response and assessment \(SARA\)](#). This aims to address underlying issues rather than simply reacting to incidents. For example, the force creates very few PSOs for repeat [antisocial behaviour](#) cases (both for [victims](#) and offenders) and instead uses RMOs. Although an RMO considers immediate harm and risk, it doesn't necessarily identify or address the underlying causes. So incidents managed in this way are likely to continue or even escalate.

Where the force uses PSOs, we have seen mixed results. We found good evidence of regular supervision and meaningful updates recorded on PSOs in ten out of the ten plans reviewed. However, PSOs didn't always demonstrate clear outputs, outcomes or data and information within the assessment stage of SARA. Equally, the force doesn't always share good problem-solving examples through a central good practice repository. The force does have a 'what works well' form. This allows [officers](#) and [staff](#) to share any good or bad practice or learning they have identified and submit it to the force's central knowledge bank, but in practice there are very few submissions.

Overall, the force needs to better assess the effectiveness of its problem-solving activity, the total cost of achieving the results and make sure it always shares best practice.

Main findings

In this section, we set out our main findings that relate to how good the force is at preventing and deterring crime and antisocial behaviour, and reducing vulnerability.

The force has invested in the capacity and capability of its neighbourhood policing teams

In the year ending 31 March 2025, 6.6 percent of the force's officers were in dedicated neighbourhood policing roles. This is within the typical range for forces in England and Wales.

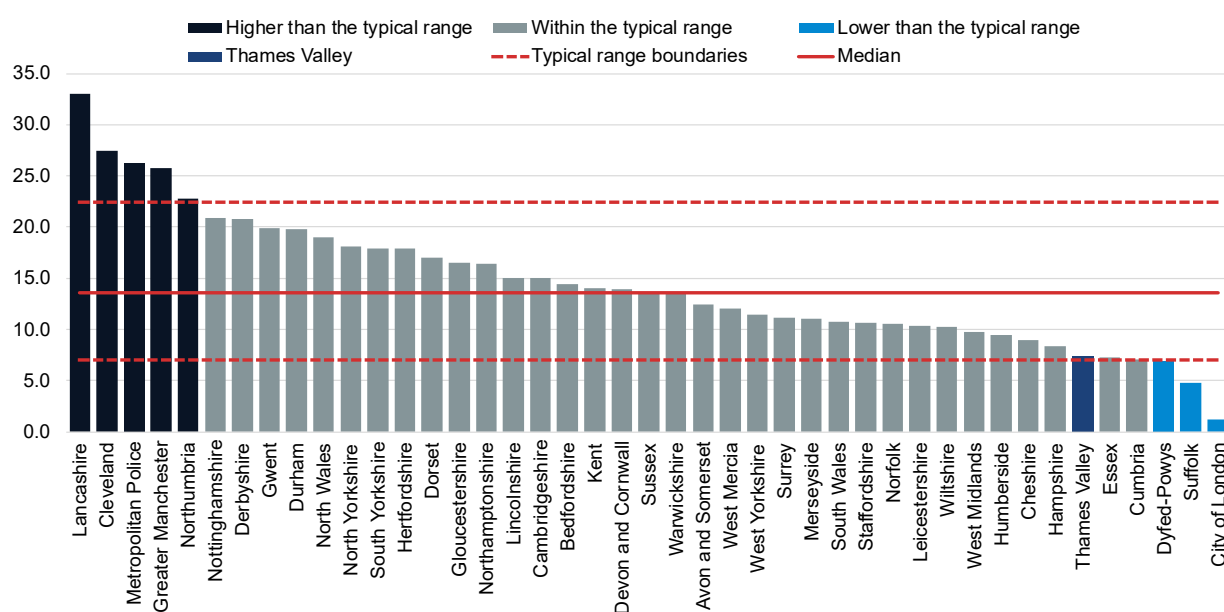
The force's neighbourhood policing teams have the capacity and capability to provide a regular and visible presence in their local communities. During our inspection, we found that neighbourhood policing teams had enough officers and staff and the right skills and training to work effectively in their communities and with other agencies to reduce crime and antisocial behaviour. This makes sure there is time available for preventative work and problem-solving activity that focus on meeting local priorities.

The force understands the causes of antisocial behaviour and vulnerability in its communities

The force has taken steps to understand trends in its antisocial behaviour reporting and the underlying causes. The force is effective at monitoring and managing the potential high harm associated with antisocial behaviour. Every day, neighbourhood policing team supervisors are expected to use the force's antisocial behaviour digital toolkit to review data on repeat victims, offenders and locations. This makes sure officers' activities focus on the right areas and individuals. The force assures itself of consistency and compliance across all areas of the force using regular meetings known as health checks. The local command unit neighbourhood policing team chief inspector chairs these health check meetings and holds supervisors in all districts to account for the activities of their teams.

In the year ending 31 March 2025, the force recorded 7.3 antisocial behaviour incidents per 1,000 population. This is within the typical range for forces in England and Wales.

Figure 3: Number of antisocial behaviour incidents per 1,000 population that forces in England and Wales recorded in the year ending 31 March 2025



Source: [Police-recorded antisocial behaviour incidents data](#) and [population estimates for England and Wales](#) from the Office for National Statistics

Chart description: Column chart showing the number of [antisocial behaviour](#) incidents per 1,000 population that all forces in England and Wales recorded in the year ending 31 March 2025. Thames Valley Police recorded 7.3 antisocial behaviour incidents per 1,000 population, which was within the typical range for forces in England and Wales. The typical range, represented by dashed red lines on the chart, is between 7.0 and 22.4 antisocial behaviour incidents per 1,000 population. The median value of 13.6 per 1,000 population is presented as a solid red line.

[The accessible data table for figure 3 is available on our website.](#)

But the force doesn't always record crimes that have occurred when victims report [antisocial behaviour personal](#). In our [quality service review](#), we found that in the cases we examined, the force had recorded 9 of 16 antisocial behaviour personal crimes correctly. All seven unrecorded crimes were crimes of [harassment](#). This is an area of crime-recording risk. These missing crimes often relate to vulnerable victims experiencing long-term abuse, often at the hands of neighbours or people in the local community.

The force recognises this is an area where it needs to improve. To strengthen its processes, all reports of antisocial behaviour personal incidents where no crime is recorded are passed to a specialist triage team. This team in the assessment and investigation unit consider if crimes should be recorded. They can search the force's records management system for previous incidents to check for patterns of behaviour that would indicate harassment.

The force is using preventative and protective orders effectively to help it tackle antisocial behaviour

During our inspection, we found that neighbourhood policing teams worked closely with local authority antisocial behaviour officers, housing providers and other partners to reduce crime, antisocial behaviour, and violence against women and girls. The force told us that its summer 2025 Safer Streets campaign was successful and led to 1,330 arrests and 413 uses of antisocial behaviour powers. During the campaign, it seized 133 e-scooters and attended 310 community events. Officers also recorded more than 3,000 interactions with the public and 6,314 patrols in its hotspot areas.

We also found that officers were using antisocial behaviour legislation effectively to prevent community problems from escalating. In the year ending 30 September 2025, the force issued 1,514 preventative and protective orders, which equals 0.57 orders per 1,000 population. This is within the typical range for forces in England and Wales.

In our quality service review, we examined 20 antisocial behaviour incidents and any crimes recorded from them. We found that in 8 of 14 appropriate cases, legislation was used where it could help to tackle the underlying causes of antisocial behaviour.

During our inspection, the officers we spoke to told us they were confident in applying for and using tools such as [Criminal Behaviour Orders](#) and civil injunctions, particularly in more complex or persistent antisocial behaviour cases. This indicates that officers understand antisocial behaviour legislation and the range of powers available to them. This could help them to tackle the root causes of antisocial behaviour more effectively. However, the force also told us that capacity issues within the Crown Prosecution Service are a barrier to obtaining Criminal Behaviour Orders.

The force has an effective integrated offender management structure which optimises joint working to reduce offending

The [integrated offender management \(IOM\)](#) unit is a central unit within the public protection command. It supports a cross-agency response to the threat local communities face from persistent and problematic offenders. IOM teams are located either within or next door to probation services. They work with dedicated IOM probation officers. This means that there is daily consultation between police and probation, to make best use of interventions to mitigate risk and prevent reoffending.

Equally, IOM staff and officers work closely with local command units. They attend weekly crime meetings, which allows information sharing and work assignments to better manage IOM offenders at a local level. As a result, there is less reoffending. The force told us that as of September 2025, its IOM cohort offenders numbered 251 with 82 percent not having committed a further offence.

The force has processes to monitor how often its neighbourhood teams are abstracted from their communities, but needs to make sure they are accurate and effective

Sometimes neighbourhood officers are diverted away from their usual work to carry out other duties in the force to meet demand. This is referred to as [abstraction](#). If this happens regularly and isn't managed effectively by the force, it can affect the ability of neighbourhood officers to carry out their main roles in their local communities.

The force has developed an abstraction policy that outlines clear expectations of how much time neighbourhood policing teams should spend in their communities. Through use of its neighbourhood policing digital application, the force feels it is now in a much better position to understand and monitor the impact of abstractions. It makes sure officers are consistently using the application to record informal abstractions. This is supported by duty management system data, which gives a more accurate view of overall abstractions.

In our workforce survey, 53.3 percent of respondents involved in neighbourhood policing (144 of 270) said that they were abstracted from their main neighbourhood policing duties on a quarterly or less frequent basis.

This is positive progress in terms of reducing abstractions. But we did find considerable evidence to suggest that the force frequently uses neighbourhood policing team officers to support response policing on an ad hoc basis. Equally, many officers stated they weren't always accurately recording their abstractions. The force needs to assure itself that the recorded abstraction data is accurate and reliable.

The force also needs to consider a more defined measurement for abstraction rates. The force aims to make sure neighbourhood policing team officers and staff spend the majority of their time on visible patrols or working with their local communities. But in practice, this can equate to only 51 percent of time. This should be seen as an absolute minimum and not an effective benchmark.

The force has an effective programme to recruit and retain special constables

The force runs recruitment events with specialist units, such as roads policing, in attendance to emphasise the opportunities open to special constables. This includes events in universities and colleges. It also holds open days at force locations.

Special constabulary officers told us that the relationship between regulars and specials is supportive and collaborative. Special constabulary sergeants manage performance and well-being but get operational support from regular response and neighbourhood policing team sergeants.

The force continues to struggle to recruit and retain special constables. The force told us that in the year ending 31 March 2025, it had 185 special constables, which is below its planned number of 200 officers. But this number is static and not declining like most forces. There is clear focus on optimising the use of existing [personnel](#), and the force is seeing a year-on-year increase in hours worked.

In addition, the force told us 15 percent of special constables are from ethnic minority groups, which is the same as the 15 percent ethnic minority demographic rate for the area the force covers. It hasn't reached this level of representation for either regular police constables or police community support officers.

Responding to the public

Adequate

Thames Valley Police is adequate at responding to the public.

Area for improvement

The force needs to attend calls for service in line with its published attendance times

The force has a graded response policy with published targets for incident attendance times. These vary by type of incident according to the level of urgency. In our [quality service review](#), we found that in 36 of the 46 cases we examined, the time to respond to the incident was within the required attendance time for that type of incident. This was regardless of whether the incident was downgraded or not. Sometimes the force regrades incidents because of updated information or reassessed risk, which may increase the response time.

A delayed response can lead to the force missing opportunities to [safeguard victims](#) or collect evidence. The force should have the right levels of oversight to improve the way it responds to incidents. It needs to improve how it prioritises its response to incidents and how quickly it responds.

This was an [area for improvement](#) in [our last PEEL report](#). While the improvement is modest, it is reassuring to see that the force's response times to emergency incidents have got better. It aims to attend 70 percent within 20 minutes. The force told us that in the year ending 31 March 2026, it attended 68.3 percent of these calls within the target time.

However, the force is letting down some victims, especially [domestic abuse](#) victims, by failing to attend many grade 2 incidents within the locally agreed target. These are incidents that require police attendance as a matter of urgency but aren't deemed an immediate emergency. The force aims to attend at least 60 percent of grade 2 incidents (regardless of incident type) within 60 minutes of the call. In the year ending 31 March 2026, the force told us it attended 54.7 percent within that target time. But average attendance within the target time for domestic abuse incidents was markedly lower, at 36.0 percent.

The force's response to grade 2 domestic abuse incidents is improving, but those improvements are not fast enough and are also occurring inconsistently across the local command units. The force is aware and has introduced improvement plans in every local command unit. It has also recently introduced the [rapid video response](#) model for response to some domestic abuse incidents. So [officers](#) can, under certain circumstances, rapidly respond to calls by video link, rather than by attending the scene in person.

The force needs to assure itself that these improvements will lead to better response times for victims.

We will continue to monitor the force's progress in this area and its timely attendance at all grades of incident.

Promising practice

The force is piloting an artificial intelligence virtual assistant to answer frequently asked non-emergency questions

Bobbi is a new artificial intelligence-powered virtual assistant. Built jointly by Thames Valley Police and Hampshire and Isle of Wight Constabulary in late 2025, it helps the public with non-emergency enquiries. Bobbi is available on the force's website to provide fast, reliable answers to everyday policing questions. It is designed to handle common queries such as explaining laws (for example e-scooter regulations) and providing guidance on non-urgent issues.

The virtual assistant uses closed-source information – the same knowledge base used by the force's call handlers in its force [control rooms](#) – so that it gives accurate and official advice. If Bobbi can't answer a question or if a user specifically asks to speak to a person, the chat redirects to a human operator.

Bobbi isn't designed for reporting crime or to provide an emergency response. The virtual assistant is built to redirect these types of enquiry.

As an example of its effectiveness, the force told us that in the week commencing 5 January 2026, Bobbi resolved 266 contacts and passed 61 others through to a call handler.

Main findings

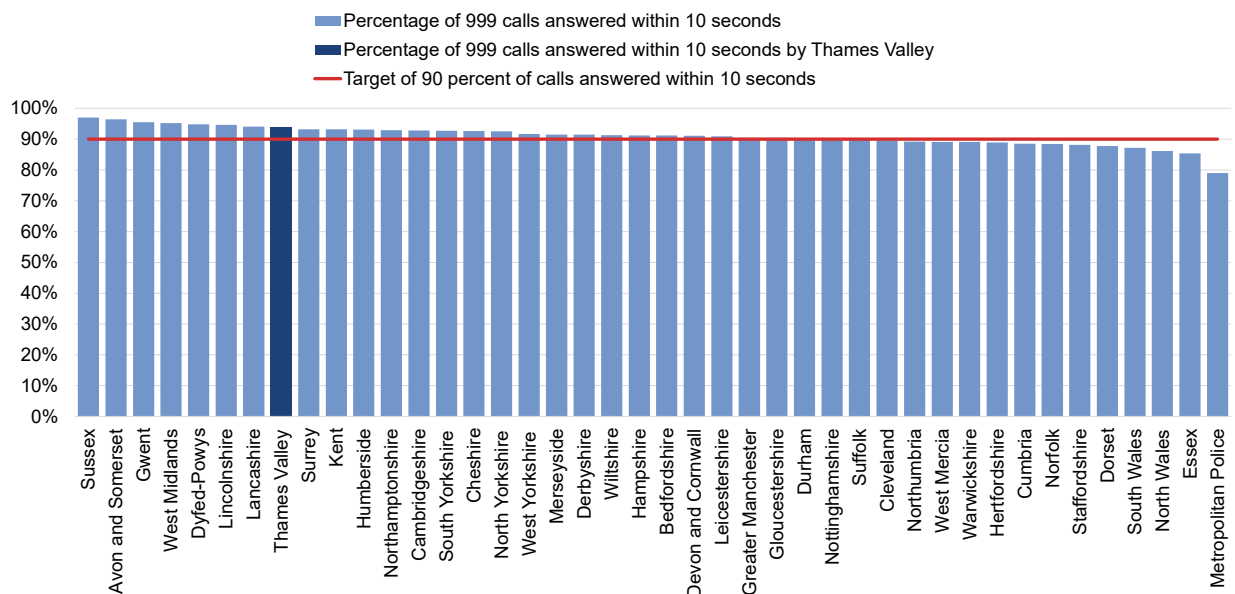
In this section, we set out our main findings that relate to how good the force is at responding to the public.

The force answers emergency calls quickly enough

In the year ending 28 February 2026, the force received 139 emergency 999 calls per 1,000 population. This was within the typical range for forces in England and Wales. It answered 93.9 percent of the 999 calls it received within 10 seconds. This was higher than the standard expected of forces in England and Wales of answering 90.0 percent of 999 calls within 10 seconds.

This suggests that the force prioritises the needs of the victim in decision-making, which provides the foundations for an effective response.

Figure 4: Percentage of 999 calls that forces in England and Wales answered within 10 seconds in the year ending 28 February 2026



Source: [999 call answering times](#) from BT

Chart description: Column chart showing the percentage of 999 calls that all forces in England and Wales answered within 10 seconds in the year ending 28 February 2026. Thames Valley Police answered 93.9 percent of the 999 calls it received within 10 seconds. This is above the expected standard of 90 percent for forces in England and Wales, which is marked with a solid red line on the chart. 14 forces were below the expected standard.

[The accessible data table for figure 4 is available on our website.](#)

Note: Call answering time is the time taken for a call to be transferred from BT to a force and then answered by that force.

The force needs to reduce the number of non-emergency calls that callers abandon because they aren't answered

In the year ending 30 September 2025, the force received 148.9 non-emergency [101](#) calls per 1,000 population. This was within the typical range for forces in England and Wales. The force told us that in the year ending 28 February 2026, 8.97 percent of calls to its non-emergency 101 facility were abandoned.

This was an area for improvement in our last PEEL inspection. Since then, the force has made improvements. The force now has a better understanding of why callers hang up. It checks if they have subsequently used online options, called later or hung up due to long waiting times. The force also has a victim's portal which allows some victims of crime to contact officers directly, further reducing 101 calls. It uses the artificial intelligence virtual assistant and other digital options to reduce the number of 101 calls. At the same time, the force needs to make sure it has the appropriate number of [staff](#) available to answer calls, especially at times of high demand.

The force has processes to make sure the public who contact the force using digital platforms receive a high-quality service

The force has a digital desk that operates 24 hours a day to respond to contact from the public or other forces and agencies. Even with clear published guidance not to use this method for urgent matters, all contacts are still subject to a swift review by [threat, harm, risk, investigation, vulnerability and engagement \(THRIVE\)](#)-trained contact staff to identify if any enquiry requires an urgent response. The force uses digital automation to support processes, reduce bureaucracy and speed up responses. For example, crimes reported online are automatically transferred to the force's crime recording platform.

The force aims to maximise performance in contact management so that the public receives a quality service

The force uses data to understand how and when the public makes contact. Senior leaders keep this under regular review. The force has achieved a sustained number of staff working in its call centres, with numbers at their highest during the summer period when demand for service is greatest. It has also continued to invest in technology to give the public a variety of ways to contact the police. This allows people to use a contact method that suits them, while also allowing the force to prioritise emergency calls.

The force needs to improve how it initially grades calls and to update callers if the response is downgraded

The force needs to improve how it risk assesses calls for service. Sometimes, there is a variation in grading between those answering phone calls and those sending officers to incidents. Speaking to staff working in these different roles, we found differing views about what constituted a priority.

The force needs to improve understanding of risk to avoid calls being wrongly downgraded. When a call gets downgraded, the force should complete a detailed rationale. This is especially the case for calls downgraded from grade 1, where because of the urgency to deploy there is no formal initial [risk assessment](#) completed. The force should update callers on every occasion that a downgrade occurs, so they know when to expect police to attend. In our quality service review, the caller was updated about a downgrade or delay in 6 of 11 cases.

The force effectively identifies vulnerability at the first point of contact

The force prioritises identification of [vulnerability](#) at the first point of contact. This means it can give a rapid, appropriate response and effective safeguarding. It trains control room staff to look for signs of risk, mental health issues, or repeat victim status. This allows the force to tailor its response to the specific needs of the caller. In our quality service review, we found that call handlers used a structured triage approach to assess risk. The process included an accurate and meaningful description of the call in 52 of 55 cases and there was an effective check to identify repeat victims in 32 of 34 cases. The force used information about repeat victims effectively in 13 of 15 cases. It made checks for vulnerable victims and other persons in 45 of 50 cases.

Call handlers provide appropriate advice on safeguarding, evidence preservation, and crime prevention

Giving crime prevention, evidence preservation and safeguarding advice to callers reduces future harm and protects those who may be vulnerable. In our quality service review, we found good evidence that call handlers regularly gave advice on preservation of evidence, crime prevention and safeguarding.

Investigating crime

Requires
improvement

Thames Valley Police requires improvement at investigating crime.

Areas for improvement

The force should allocate high-risk and complex investigations to officers who have the competency and experience to manage them effectively

As at 31 December 2025, the force had 80.1 percent of [professionalising investigations programme \(PIP\)](#) level 2 investigator posts filled with accredited investigators. However, many of these investigators aren't fully qualified. Some haven't yet done the initial skills development course, and others have yet to pass the National Investigators' Examination.

The situation is most challenging in the force's criminal investigation department and [domestic abuse](#) investigation units. In some areas, the force has reported that units can have high levels of investigators who aren't fully qualified. The force doesn't have a dedicated rape investigation unit. So often, [officers](#) assigned to rape and serious sexual offences cases aren't qualified, and, as these cases are complex, may not have enough experience. We found many examples of officers struggling to manage the complexity of their investigative workloads. This places additional pressure on supervisors, some of whom have an investigative workload, to the detriment of their role as a supervisor.

The force needs to assure itself that it only allocates serious and complex crimes to officers who are sufficiently trained and experienced to investigate them effectively. In our workforce survey, we found that 31.3 percent of respondents (183 of 585) reported being allocated investigations outside their level of training on a quarterly or more frequent basis.

The force should carry out high quality, thorough, and timely investigations for all reported crimes

The force has improved its [positive outcome](#) rate for [victim](#)-based crimes, but has more work to do. We found that it pursued appropriate investigative opportunities in only 63 of the 85 cases we examined as part of our [quality service review](#). The quality of [golden hour](#) investigations wasn't consistent, and some response [officers](#) and their supervisors lacked an investigative mindset.

The force has a dedicated assessment and investigation unit. This oversees most reported crimes that don't require the expertise of a [professionalising investigations programme \(PIP\)](#) level 2 qualified investigator. The force told us there were occasions where a crime had been allocated to an investigating officer more than a month after reporting. This can lead to missed opportunities to identify and arrest suspects before they commit further offences or to the potential loss of evidence.

The force is changing the structure of the assessment and investigation unit to achieve a more effective crime investigation process. We will closely monitor progress.

The force needs to improve the quality of supervisory reviews for investigations so that they consistently add value and enhance the service to victims

The force has recognised a need to improve investigation quality and timeliness. It has introduced a crime management framework (CMF) to provide consistency and clarity of priorities to frontline investigators. The CMF focuses on the roles and responsibilities of the [officer](#) in the case and their supervisor. It clearly sets out the timescales for action in making an investigation plan and the initial supervisor's review. The force's performance management system is aligned to the CMF, so senior managers can check information, such as whether reviews have been completed within the required time frames.

However, there is more work to do. We found evidence of effective supervision in only 53 of 71 cases we reviewed. We saw too much focus on reviews being timely rather than meaningful and of high quality. Equally, we found effective and appropriate supervision of crime finalisation in only 49 of 70 cases we examined. In the remaining 21 cases, the force hadn't fully progressed reasonable lines of enquiry and investigative opportunities.

The force has recently scaled back extensively on the number of CMF templates. It aims to take a more efficient and less bureaucratic approach to investigation management. But it needs to assure itself that this doesn't further diminish the quality of supervisory reviews.

The force needs to improve how it manages offenders who have failed to appear in court or should be in custody

The force has an outstanding suspects Microsoft Power BI dashboard that draws together all unactioned suspects shown on crime reports from across the force. This allows it to focus on individuals who present the greatest threat, harm or risk. The dashboard also shows how long a person has been a suspect and how recently the force has completed a supervisor review, allowing further performance focus.

However, suspects who are wanted on warrants for failing to appear in court, or who have escaped or absconded from prison or not returned after temporary leave, are yet to feature on the dashboard. The force has moved management and oversight of failure to appear in court warrants into its dedicated fugitive [intelligence](#) team. This means it can more quickly find out where offenders are staying. But, without a dashboard, it is harder to see if local [officers](#) are making efforts to apprehend offenders quickly, especially those who pose the greatest risk.

Of even greater concern is the force's lack of activity to locate and capture those unlawfully at large. This group is mainly individuals recalled to prison.

During fieldwork, we reviewed several cases and found that all lacked effective [risk assessment](#), scrutiny and action. Many offenders who were wanted on recall had committed serious crimes, often against [victims](#) known to them, and they continued to pose a risk while still at large.

The force now recognises the gaps in its systems and is improving processes so that it can find and apprehend offenders at the earliest opportunity.

Main findings

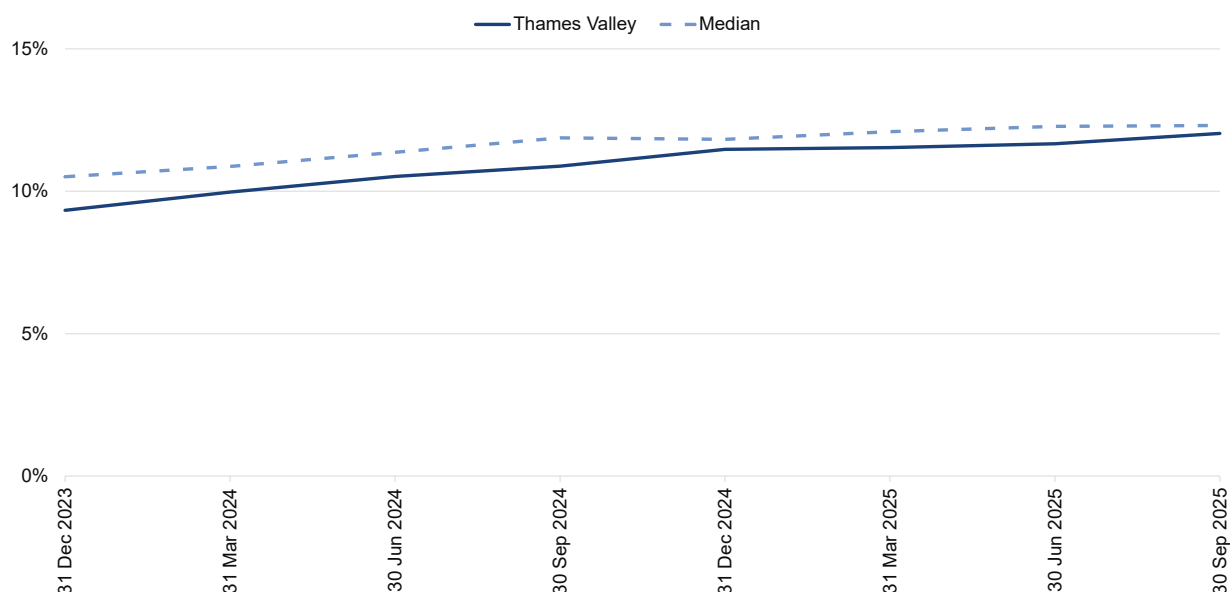
In this section, we set out our main findings that relate to how good the force is at investigating crime.

The force is improving its positive outcome rates for victims but needs to make sure it assigns the right outcome

The force has shown a meaningful and sustained improvement in its positive outcome rates for victims of crime in the last two years.

In the year ending 30 September 2025, 12 percent of all [outcomes](#) that the force assigned to victim-based crimes were positive outcomes. This is within the typical range for forces in England and Wales.

Figure 5: Percentage of positive outcomes that Thames Valley Police force and all forces in England and Wales assigned to victim-based crimes between the year ending 31 December 2023 and the year ending 30 September 2025



Source: [Police recorded crime and outcomes open data tables](#) from the Home Office

Chart description: Line chart showing the percentage of [positive outcomes](#) that Thames Valley Police assigned and the median for forces in England and Wales for each year from the year ending 31 December 2023 to the year ending 30 September 2025. The chart shows that 12 percent of [outcomes](#) that Thames Valley Police assigned to [victim-based crimes](#) were positive in the year ending 30 September 2025, compared to the median of 12.3 percent for forces in England and Wales. It also shows that the percentage of positive outcomes that Thames Valley Police assigned has been slowly increasing since the year ending 31 December 2023. And the median percentage of positive outcomes for forces in England and Wales has been slowly increasing in the same period.

Note: The percentage of positive outcomes that forces assign is calculated from all outcomes they assign in a given period. Victim-based crimes include all police-recorded crimes where there is a direct [victim](#), such as an individual, an organisation or a corporate body. For a detailed description of crime and outcome types, please see the [Home Office statistics](#).

Figure 6: Percentage of unresolved, resolved and positive outcomes that Thames Valley Police and all forces in England and Wales assigned to victim-based crimes in the year ending 30 September 2025

Outcome types	Thames Valley percentage [%]	Median percentage [%] for forces in England and Wales
Unresolved crime outcomes (Outcomes 11–18)	84.0	84.0
Resolved crime outcomes (Outcomes 5, 9, 10, 20–22)	3.9	3.2
Positive crime outcomes (Outcomes 1–4 and 8), of which:	12.0	12.3
1 – Charged/summonsed	8.0	9.1
2 and 3 – Caution – youths and adults	1.0	0.8
4 – Taken into consideration	0.2	0.1
8 – Community resolution	2.8	2.1

Source: [Police recorded crime and outcomes open data tables](#) from the Home Office

Note: The percentage of unresolved, resolved and positive outcomes that forces assign is calculated from all [outcomes](#) they assign in a given period. [Victim-based crimes](#) include all police-recorded crimes where there is a direct [victim](#), such as an individual, an organisation or a corporate body. For a detailed description of crime and outcome types, please see the [Home Office statistics](#).

While the force routinely audits and scrutinises use of outcome types, it needs to improve its understanding of what determines use of specific outcomes. And it needs to determine whether the outcomes are appropriate and what improvements would give victims better justice. We found that the force assigned a correct outcome in only 57 of the 75 cases we examined and provided a clear rationale for the outcome in only 62 of 73 cases.

In 57 of 61 relevant cases we reviewed, we found that the force had recorded victim needs assessments. This means that investigators had assessed whether those victims needed support and if so, what type of support they needed and whether they were [vulnerable](#) or intimidated. We also found that in 51 of 67 relevant cases we reviewed, the force had updated victims on the progress of investigations in line with the victim contract. Assessment for needs and updates are two of the rights in [the Code of Practice for Victims of Crime \('the Victims' Code'\)](#). It is essential for the force to comply with the Victims' Code to give victims a high-quality service.

The force monitors file quality against national file standards to identify common issues. It uses this information to identify good practice and areas for learning and to provide feedback to investigators.

The force aims to reduce the number of cases lost owing to expiry of the statutory time limit

The force has introduced an automated process which informs officers if their crime has a statutory time limit. It provides regular prompts of the time remaining as the investigation progresses. In this way, the force aims to make sure that victims aren't denied justice because officers have failed to carry out all lines of enquiry within the legal deadline. In the year ending 30 September 2025, 0.6 percent of outcomes assigned to victim-based crimes were 'prosecution time limit expired'. This is within the typical range for forces.

The force is increasing its use of out-of-court-disposals for domestic abuse offences

Project PIPA (preventing intimate partner abuse) is an early intervention domestic abuse programme. It is designed for perpetrators of domestic abuse offences deemed lower risk. A private charity provides it, and the aim is to divert perpetrators away from reoffending. The force uses the programme as part of a conditional caution. The force told us that as of 1 February 2026, it has seen a 32 percent increase in referrals to the project.

The force is reducing backlogs of digital devices awaiting examination by its specialist central digital forensic unit

The force is using satellite digital forensic hubs on each local command unit. These hubs can process less technical mobile device downloads and provide triage services. The force also uses cyber kiosks, which are desktop computers equipped with specialist mobile phone forensic software. Trained local officers can use cyber kiosks to quickly view and triage data on mobile devices such as phones and tablets. The force is outsourcing more devices to external examiners to keep digital forensic unit backlogs manageable.

A shortage of digital forensic staff has made further improvement difficult. They are also waiting to move to a new purpose-built location with more space. The force has been proactive in recruiting new members of staff ahead of the move. It has found temporary accommodation so it can deploy them early.

The force is effective in arresting outstanding suspects responsible for repeat and/or high harm offences, but it needs to deal promptly with all outstanding suspects

The top five offenders for each local command unit in terms of identified threat, harm and risk are prioritised for action at the fortnightly tactical tasking and co-ordinating group meetings. Progress on their apprehension is discussed at the daily management meetings. The presence of probation services at tactical tasking and co-ordinating group meetings is effective in supporting the process. Probation officers can often say where suspects are. The force also has regular days of action where it makes arrest enquires targeting offenders linked to [serious and organised crime](#). The force told us it is seeing a month-on-month reduction in the number of outstanding suspects. The number stood at 5,620 as at 31 December 2025, compared to 6,435 outstanding suspects as at 30 September 2025.

But the force doesn't always deal promptly with all outstanding suspects. This would allow investigations to progress, reducing the risk of reoffending or further harm to victims. We found a suspect was arrested or interviewed where appropriate to do so in 23 of 34 cases we examined. And we found there was appropriate rationale documented for not arresting the suspect in 7 of 12 cases. We also found during fieldwork that the force hadn't adequately progressed cases over three months old of rape and serious sexual offences and domestic abuse crimes with outstanding suspects.

The force needs to improve its management of suspects who are bailed or released under investigation

The force's [bail](#) management team is experienced and committed, but the lack of an effective digital process means its work is unnecessarily labour intensive. This increases the potential for bail to lapse into [released under investigation \(RUI\)](#) status. Once a suspect is RUI, it is no longer possible to impose conditions on them.

The team checks all new bail occurrences and emails the officer in the case and their supervisor confirming the bail to return date. However, the team can't send follow-up reminders. These are needed before the three-month point, when an inspector's authority is required to extend bail, and before the six-month point, which requires a superintendent's authority. Regular reminders of upcoming bail lapses would keep investigators and their supervisors aware of the need to move the investigation forward. This would in turn reduce the number of suspects moving unnecessarily to RUI status. The force told us that in February 2025, there were 3,125 subjects who were RUI for 90 days or over, but that in February 2026 it had increased to 3,787.

The force needs to do more to gather the views of domestic abuse victim survivors and independent domestic violence advocates to understand service failures and improve investigations

During our inspection, we spoke to a group of experienced independent domestic violence advocates from across the force area. The group outlined failings in keeping victims updated, ineffective investigations and an unwillingness to record and respond to breaches of protective orders or conditional bail. They also told us they had no forum to engage with the force and share their experiences and those of the victim [survivors](#) they support.

The force needs to improve its relationship with independent domestic violence advocate services. It could then better assess risk, create better safety plans, and provide an improved voice for victims throughout the criminal justice process. The force also needs to learn from victims' experiences and improve the quality of service for victims of domestic abuse.

Safeguarding children and adults at risk of harm

Requires improvement

Thames Valley Police requires improvement at [safeguarding children](#) and [adults at risk of harm](#).

Areas for improvement

The force needs to improve its processes for identifying and safeguarding high-risk victims of domestic abuse

The force defines [high-risk domestic abuse](#) cases as those where “there is an extreme level of control of one person by another and/or very frequent and severe physical violence. There is a serious threat of harm posed to the [victim](#) by the perpetrator. The potential event could happen at any time, and the impact would be serious”.

To support the early assessment of risk, the force has adopted the [College of Policing’s Domestic Abuse Risk Assessment](#) tool. This is designed to help [police officers](#) responding to domestic abuse to identify coercive and controlling behaviour, assess danger, and improve safeguarding outcomes.

Even with the high-risk definition and risk assessment tool, the force has been under-assessing high-risk domestic abuse cases. This means a substantial number of cases that should have been graded as high risk have either remained or been downgraded to medium risk. This can lead to victims being denied both the investigative expertise of a qualified detective and a higher level of safeguarding support, including access to the [multi-agency risk assessment conference \(MARAC\)](#) process. Through the timely intervention of other agencies, MARAC picks up some high-risk cases incorrectly assessed as medium risk by the force. However, this isn’t always the case, and referral rates of domestic abuse cases to MARAC by the force remain very low compared to other forces.

The force is encouraging response officers to better reflect on what factors constitute high risk when completing the initial risk assessment. Such factors might include strangulation or suffocation, an allegation of rape, or threat or use of a knife. It is also now preventing these categories of domestic abuse from being downgraded from high to medium risk. However, this is a very recent policy change, and the force has yet to see an increase in identified high-risk cases.

The force needs to make sure that it properly identifies all high-risk victims of domestic abuse and that they get an appropriate investigative and safeguarding response.

The force needs to improve its systems and processes for promptly notifying schools of pupils living with domestic abuse

Poor reporting practices, exacerbated by IT challenges, undermine the effectiveness of [Operation Encompass](#), the process for notifying schools about pupils living with [domestic abuse](#). The force's records management system often doesn't have schools' details, or they aren't in the right place. This makes them difficult to find. An automated process finds and sends the information to schools. But the detail is limited. So the school [safeguarding](#) leads have to ask for more information, slowing down the support process. The process also relies on [officers](#) identifying the right school. Officers often create a new school record to achieve compliance, or send the details to the wrong school, which causes a data breach.

A further automated process is run daily to identify those [children](#) whose schools haven't been correctly identified. [Staff](#) in the [multi-agency safeguarding hub](#) then contact the relevant local authority for the correct information. This often takes longer than the suggested period allowed under Operation Encompass, which states that schools should be notified before the start of the next school day, or as soon as possible.

The force told us that as of September 2025, Operation Encompass compliance across the five local command units is at an average of 67.2 percent. The force believes further and improved automation remains the best prospect for making improvements and is adopting new processes. The force is also exploring technology that will make it easier for response officers to input information.

Thames Valley Police needs to improve its processes for notifying schools when their pupils witness domestic abuse. It recognises this is an issue, and until it is resolved, Operation Encompass will remain on the force's own strategic risk register as an area that requires improvement.

Innovative practice

The force is innovative in proactively identifying risk to tackle high-harm crimes and protect vulnerable people

The harm reduction unit is a specialist department within each local command unit which works closely with the Violence Prevention Partnership, a multi-agency unit, whose aim is to reduce the number of people affected by serious violence. The harm reduction unit focuses on several priorities. These are:

- tackling and preventing incidents of domestic violence;
- identifying and intervening in cases where [children](#) are at risk of [grooming](#) or exploitation; and
- targeting habitual knife carriers and high-harm offenders.

Its activities are prevention led, including the enforcement of ancillary orders linked to high-harm offending such as [Domestic Violence Protection Orders](#) and [Stalking Protection Orders](#) and making [Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme](#) notifications.

It also works closely with [children](#) at risk of [sexual exploitation](#) and [criminal exploitation](#), identifying and acting against those who abuse them. This work is closely aligned to the unit's activities to divert those young people identified as habitual knife carriers as part of Focused Deterrence, a flagship violence reduction strategy implemented by the force in partnership with the Violence Prevention Partnership.

Main findings

In this section we set out our main findings that relate to how good the force is at safeguarding children and adults at risk of harm.

The force doesn't always record crimes committed against vulnerable victims effectively

The force doesn't always record crimes committed against [vulnerable](#) victims. In our [quality service review](#), we examined 50 records involving referrals made to the force about vulnerable adults and child protection cases, 50 incidents involving victims of domestic abuse, 50 reported incidents of rape and 20 decisions to cancel crimes of rape. We found the following:

- Vulnerable adult and child protection cases: 19 crimes should have been recorded and 16 were recorded correctly.
- Domestic abuse incidents: 19 crimes should have been recorded, and 16 crimes were recorded correctly.

- Reported incidents of rape: 1 crime of rape should have been recorded but no crime was recorded.
- Cancelled crimes of rape: 19 out of 20 crimes were cancelled correctly.

It is especially important that the force accurately records crimes involving vulnerable victims. It is equally important to cancel crimes only when it is certain that no crime was committed. Recording and cancelling crimes correctly helps to make sure victims receive the service and support they expect and deserve from the police. If the force doesn't record or cancel crimes correctly, offenders may go on to commit further crimes against their victims or against other vulnerable victims.

The force has an effective governance structure that allows it to understand and address vulnerability

The force has a dedicated detective chief superintendent for public protection and safeguarding, supported by a range of strategic leads at superintendent level, for all the designated College of Policing vulnerability strands. This includes a dedicated strategic lead for domestic abuse and stalking, and for rape and sexual offences.

The force's central rape and serious sexual offences (RASSO) unit (known as RASO to include all sexual offences) consists of a specialist team of subject matter experts. They link in with local investigators to maximise opportunities to support victims and bring perpetrators to justice.

The RASO team is effective in offering early support when offenders are arrested and will advise in complex cases. They also hold regular local clinics which officers can attend to discuss their investigations.

The force safeguards children and adults at risk of harm

As part of our quality service review, we found that in 32 of 34 cases, safeguarding advice was appropriately given to victims. This suggests that officers are aware of their duty to identify and reduce the risk of harm to vulnerable victims. In 8 of 10 cases we reviewed, officers recorded the [voice of the child](#) in referrals, making sure that the child's experiences and needs were considered in safeguarding decisions.

When attending incidents, officers consistently show [professional curiosity](#) and look beyond the obvious to identify signs of hidden harm, exploitation or vulnerability. Officers made relevant referrals to specialist partners in 26 of 30 cases. This shows that they were aware of available support services and the importance of connecting victims with the help they need.

The force's policy on managing [missing persons](#) makes sure it gives a structured and proactive response. During the missing person triage process, the force assesses risk and gathers important information. The force has an appropriate and effective missing person triage process. In 19 of 19 cases we reviewed, the risk grade was appropriate for the information known at the time. In 20 of 20 cases we reviewed, officers attended within the required time frames.

The force carries out thorough investigations to locate missing persons. In eight of eight cases we reviewed, officers followed the investigation plan, made relevant enquiries and recorded updates of their efforts to locate the missing person.

In ten of ten missing children's cases we reviewed, social care was notified of the missing episode. This means that children were assessed for the welfare support they may need.

The force works well with multi-agency partners to safeguard and reduce the risk of harm to vulnerable people, but needs to better manage how it processes referrals

Multi-agency working is an important part of the force's safeguarding strategy. The multi-agency safeguarding hub (MASH) includes a wide range of partners covering both child and adult safeguarding. In 31 of 31 relevant cases we reviewed, the force shared information with appropriate agencies. Sharing information allows for a co-ordinated response to safeguarding.

The force has changed its operational processes that sit within MASHs so it can better manage demand. It trains staff in all areas of MASH work, allowing greater flexibility to meet demand. However, backlogs in processing multi-agency referrals persist. So the force often has to bring in staff from outside the unit and to pay high levels of overtime. The force needs to assure itself it has enough capacity within the MASHs to consistently operate effectively.

The force uses appropriate measures to safeguard vulnerable people and reduce any risk from offenders

The force uses preventative orders and schemes to manage risk and protect vulnerable people. In three of three cases we reviewed, the force considered preventative orders to reduce the risk of further harm to victims. These include [Domestic Violence Protection Notices](#), Domestic Violence Protection Orders, [Domestic Abuse Protection Orders](#) and Stalking Protection Orders. This shows that the force is using all available tools to safeguard victims. Processes for monitoring and enforcing these orders are well established.

The force operates disclosure schemes such as the Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme and the [Child Sex Offender Disclosure Scheme](#) in compliance with national statutory guidance, with timely disclosure to applicants. This empowers individuals to make informed decisions about their relationships and personal safety.

The force is innovative in its work with partners to safeguard children at risk of adverse childhood experiences

Operation Paramount is a joint data-led initiative created by Thames Valley Police and the Thames Valley Violence Prevention Partnership to identify and support children affected by parental imprisonment. Parental imprisonment is a recognised [adverse childhood experience](#) linked to an increase in [antisocial behaviour](#) and higher risks of mental health difficulties. Launched as a pilot in late 2021 in Oxfordshire and now expanded to include the rest of the force, it is the UK's first statutory mechanism designed to automatically [flag](#) and offer early intervention to these vulnerable families.

Operation Paramount uses a secure data-sharing platform, known as Thames Valley Together, to cross-reference custody reception data from HM Prisons and Probation Service against local police and partnership indexes. From this, it maps out familial links. Once the force establishes a parental connection to a child in the Thames Valley area, it reaches out directly to the family or primary caregiver. With the carer's consent, the family is then referred to Children Heard and Seen, a dedicated charity specialising in supporting young people affected by imprisonment of a parent. At this stage, active police involvement ends, so the support is entirely voluntary and care focused.

The force told us about the initiative's measurable outcomes. It has identified 1,306 children between May 2022 and November 2025, with a 55 percent referral acceptance rate among contacted families and more than 260 children given follow-up support.

Managing fraud

Adequate

Thames Valley Police is adequate at managing fraud.

Areas for improvement

The force needs to adequately train those who investigate fraud

In our inspection, we found that not all investigators who are investigating fraud had adequate training to do so. The force has a dedicated specialist team to investigate fraud and this team is well trained and effective. However, the force told us that approximately 30 percent of fraud investigations were carried out outside this team.

The force doesn't have fraud training for investigators outside the specialist department. The [staff](#) survey shows that only 27.2 percent of respondents who said fraud was part of their responsibilities (97 of 357) reported that they had received fraud training.

The force needs to assure itself that all staff and [officers](#) investigating fraud are suitably trained.

The force needs an allocation policy and procedure that meets demand effectively and prevents solvable crimes being closed without investigation

The force uses a matrix to assess all fraud cases. This matrix is evidence based and effective at determining the complexity of the investigation. The force uses this matrix to manage its level of demand rather than to allocate to the appropriate level of investigator. This results in fraud cases under a certain score being closed with no investigation. Our inspection found that some of these cases could have been solved if fully investigated.

The force needs to assure itself that it fully investigates all potentially solvable fraud cases.

Main findings

In this section, we set out our main findings that relate to how good the force is at managing fraud.

The force has effective accountability for fraud, and it understands and manages the threat of fraud in its communities

During our inspection, we found that the force had assessed the threat from fraud and understood how this affects its communities. This assessment shows the local and national threat picture for fraud. The force's fraud policy is clear and consistently gives direction for allocating fraud investigations and [safeguarding victims](#). The force has a named fraud lead and clear governance at both a strategic and an operational level. The force effectively monitors performance in relation to fraud at a force-level performance board.

The force doesn't have enough capacity and capability to manage fraud in its communities and provide support to victims

During our inspection, we found that the force didn't have the right capacity or capability to manage fraud. The force's policy is that its specialist fraud team should investigate all fraud. But in reality, our inspection found that this isn't the case. The specialist fraud investigators don't have the capability to investigate all fraud, so demand is managed by closing investigations and by leaving fraud cases with untrained teams. At the same time, the specialist fraud investigation team does effectively use the [fraud investigation model](#), and the force has a positive judicial outcome rate. Over the two years ending 31 March 2025, 10.8 percent of National Fraud Intelligence Bureau disseminated cases (185 of 1,721) had a judicial outcome, and this value is within the upper half of the typical range for forces in England and Wales.

We found that [vulnerable](#) victims get additional support from the force. It works with its communities to protect them from the risk of fraud. The force uses preventative orders to target offenders and protect the public from re-offending. The force would benefit from greater multi-agency working to increase its effectiveness responding to victims and protecting the public.

July 2026 | © HMICFRS 2026

hmicfrs.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk