PEEL: Police efficiency (including leadership) 2017

An inspection of West Mercia Police

Contents

Introduction

As part of our annual inspections of police effectiveness, efficiency and legitimacy (PEEL), HM Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS)[1] assesses the efficiency and leadership of forces in England and Wales.

What is police efficiency and why is it important?

As with all public services, the police service must operate in a way that makes the most of its available resources. To do this, police forces must understand what their demand is – by which we mean what work they can reasonably predict they will have on any given day – and ensure that they have the resources they need, in the right place, to meet that demand. To stay efficient they must have good, realistic and evidence-based plans for the future. Our efficiency inspection assessed all of these areas during 2017.

As part of the 2017 inspection, we also integrated aspects of leadership into our assessment of efficiency, as the two areas are closely linked. We assessed how police leaders are driving innovation in policing, within their own forces and further afield. We also inspected how well forces are planning for the future with regards to their leadership.

Between 2010/11 and 2015/16, central government funding for the police service in England and Wales fell by 19 percent, or £1.7 billion in cash terms. Police forces met the required budget reductions until November 2015, when the government announced that overall police spending would be protected from further cuts, to enable the police to continue to adapt to emerging crime threats while taking further steps to improve efficiency. While that was a more favourable funding settlement for policing than was expected, reductions in spending by other public services will still create additional pressure for police forces.

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[1] This inspection was carried out before 19 July 2017, when HMIC also took on responsibility for fire & rescue service inspections and was renamed HM Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services. The methodology underpinning our inspection findings is unaffected by this change. References to HMICFRS in this report may relate to an event that happened before 19 July 2017 when HMICFRS was HMIC. Citations of documents which HMIC published before 19 July 2017 will still cite HMIC as the publisher.

Our report on West Mercia Police's legitimacy inspection will be available on our website (www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmicfrs/peel-assessments/peel-2017/west-mercia/) at the end of 2017. HMICFRS reports on police effectiveness will be published in early 2018. Previous PEEL reports are also available on our website: www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmicfrs/peel-assessments/peel-2016/west-mercia/.

More information on how we inspect and grade forces as part of this wide-ranging inspection is available on our website (www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmicfrs/peel-assessments/how-we-inspect/).

Force in numbers

£ Financial position

Forecast change in total gross revenue expenditure

2017/18	2020/21	Percentage change
£212m	£206m	-3%

🔔 Workforce

Planned change in officer numbers

2016/17	2020/21	Percentage change
2,055	1,885	-8%

Planned change in total workforce

2016/17	2020/21	Percentage change
3,803	3,411	-10%

📞 Calls for assistance

999 calls per 1,000 population 12 months to 31 March 2017

West Mercia Police	England and Wales force average
96	135

123 Recorded crime

Changes in recorded crime (excluding fraud) per 1,000 population 12 months to 31 March 2017

2015/16	2016/17
58	65
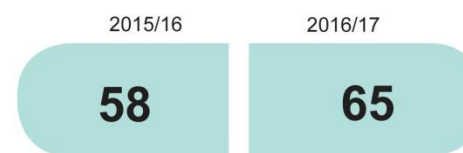
Percentage change in recorded crime (excluding fraud) per 1,000 population 12 months to 31 March 2017

West Mercia Police	England and Wales force average
+11%	+11%

For further information about the data in this graphic please see annex A

Overview – How efficient is the force at keeping people safe and reducing crime?

Overall judgment[2]

● ● ● ○ **Good**

West Mercia Police is judged to be good in the efficiency with which it keeps people safe and reduces crime. Our overall judgment this year is the same as last year. The force is judged to be good in its understanding of demand; its use of resources to manage demand is assessed to be good; and its planning for future demand is also judged to be good.

Overall summary

How well does the force understand demand?

● ● ● ○
Good

How well does the force use its resources?

● ● ● ○
Good

How well is the force planning for the future?

● ● ● ○
Good

West Mercia Police has a good understanding of current and likely future demand and continually assesses its ability to respond effectively. Its strategic alliance with Warwickshire Police is a strength that has enabled both forces to make considerable savings. Forthcoming developments include the introduction of new control rooms, supported by advances in technology that include new command and control, intelligence and mobile data systems. These developments are timely, because the force is experiencing operational pressures within its control rooms, leading to inefficient processes for call-handling and crime management. The force is refining its new investigative model to improve how it manages crimes and transfer of investigations to officers with the right skills.

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[2] HMICFRS judgments are outstanding, good, requires improvement and inadequate.

The force's change programme is subject to firm governance, increasing the likelihood of benefits being realised and avoiding unintended consequences. The force exposes itself to external scrutiny to provide further validation and it engages with its workforce well, allowing officers and staff to influence future changes. There is a strong commitment to leadership development and the force's new approach to talent management offers a good opportunity to identify and develop the most talented members of its workforce. Across the strategic alliance, there are mature arrangements in place supporting partnership work, and its change programme is ambitious and innovative.

Areas for improvement

- The force should ensure that it has effective systems and processes in place that enable it to understand how efficiently its investigative model supports the transfer of investigations.

- The force should conduct a leadership skills audit that will allow it to understand leadership capacity and capability.

How well does the force understand demand?

To be efficient, it is essential that police forces have a good understanding of the demand for their services. This means that they should not only understand what sort of incidents are likely to be reported on a normal day, but also what they need to do in advance to prevent crime. They should also understand the crimes and other activity in their area that are often hidden and are less likely to be reported, such as modern slavery or child sexual exploitation, and take action to uncover them.

Forces should be able to identify and reduce work that is unnecessarily created internally through inefficient processes. Similarly, forces should be looking for ways to identify processes and ways of working that are more efficient. Forces also have to make decisions about how they prioritise and respond to the demand for their services and should be able to demonstrate that their approach to prioritisation does not cause them to overlook some of their demand.

How well does the force understand current demand?

HMICFRS inspected how well West Mercia Police understands the demand for its services. These demands can range from answering and responding to 999 calls to protecting victims and uncovering crimes that would not otherwise be reported. It is important that police forces understand the work that they need to do so that they can ensure that they have resources in place.

Forces deal with much more than responding to emergencies and investigating reports of crime. However, the number of calls for service (999 calls and 101 calls) and the levels of recorded crime can nonetheless be used to make simple comparisons. In particular, they can give an indication of whether demand has changed or is particularly high or low. Figure 1 shows how the number of 999 calls has changed since 2010/11, while figure 2 illustrates how crime has changed since 2010/11.

Figure 1: Rate of 999 calls recorded per 1,000 people in the local population in West Mercia Police compared with England and Wales as a whole, from 2010/11 to 2016/17
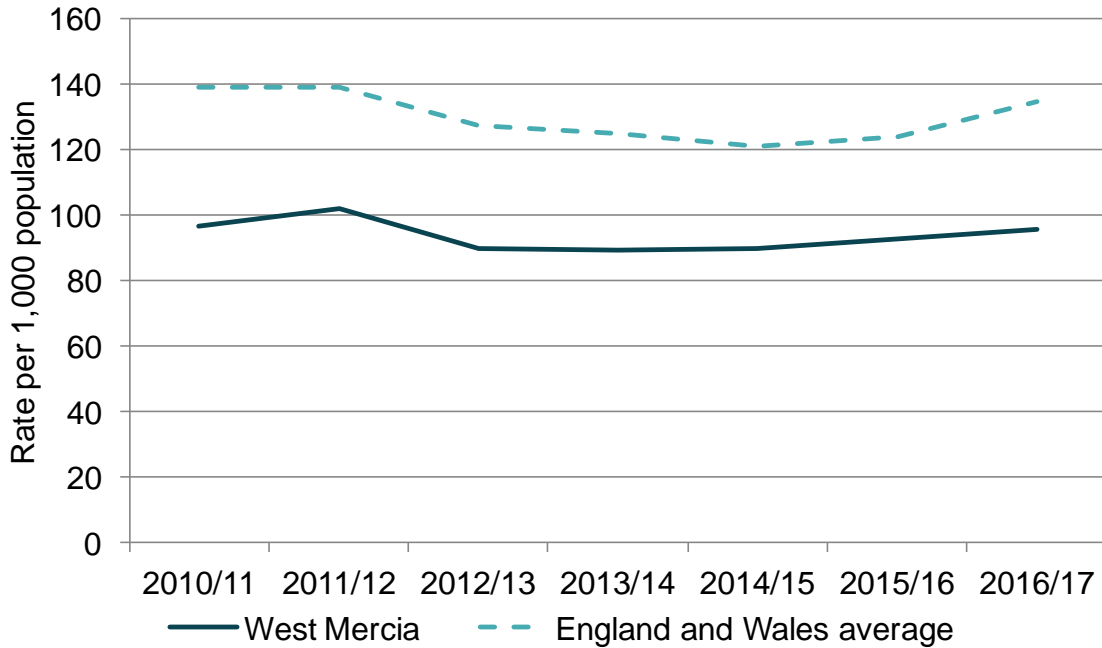

Source: Home Office Annual Data Requirement
Note: Due to potential data issues for the force the values for 2015/16 have been excluded

West Mercia Police recorded 96 999 calls per 1,000 population in 2016/17. This was lower than the England and Wales force average of 135. The rate has remained stable from the 97 calls per 1,000 population recorded in 2010/11.

Figure 2: Police-recorded crimes per 1,000 population in West Mercia Police compared with England and Wales from 2010/11 to 2016/17
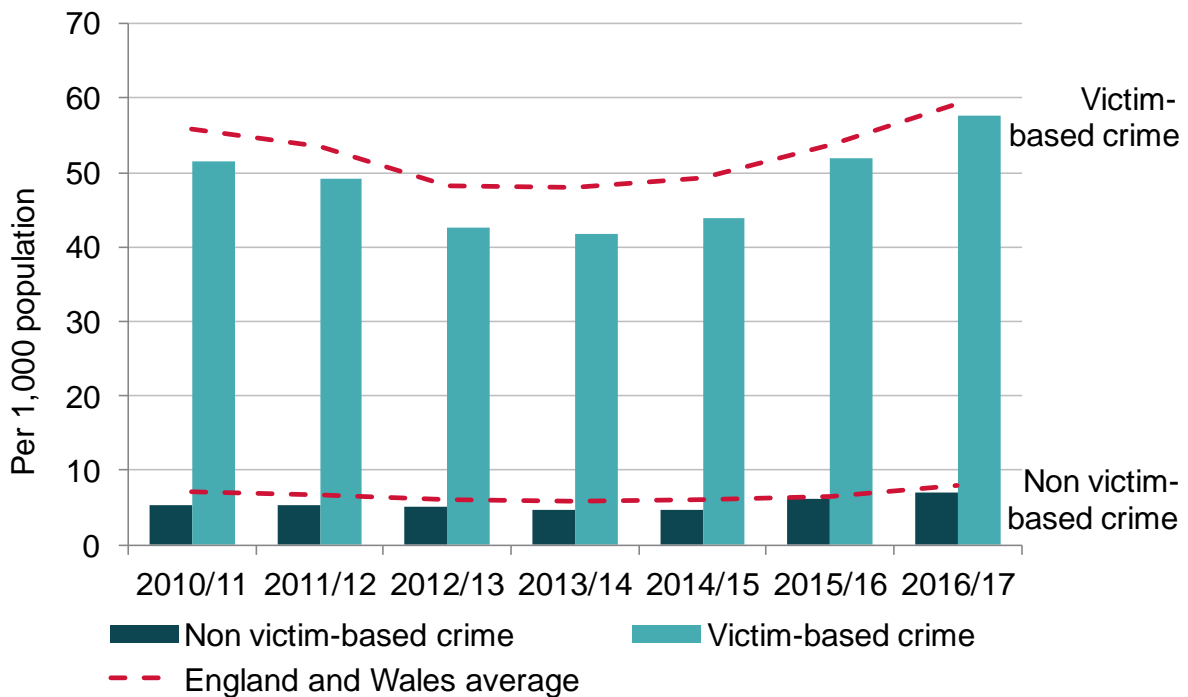
Source: Home Office Police-recorded crime data

Victim-based crimes (those where there is likely to be a specific victim) include violence against the person, sexual offences, robbery and other theft, criminal damage and arson. All other crime is considered non victim-based.

The rate of victim-based crime per 1,000 population in West Mercia in 2016/17 was 57.7 crimes. This is higher than the rate in 2010/11 of 51.4 crimes. The rate of victim-based crime decreased between 2010/11 and 2013/14 to 41.7 crimes per 1,000 population before increasing to the 2016/17 rate. The rate of victim-based crime per 1,000 population in England and Wales decreased from 55.8 to 48.1 crimes between 2010/11 and 2013/14 before increasing to 59.3 in 2016/17.

In the local population of West Mercia Police the rate of non victim-based crime per 1,000 population in 2016/17 (7.1 crimes) was higher than in 2010/11 (5.3 crimes). The rate of non victim-based crime per 1,000 population decreased to 4.7 crimes in 2014/15 before rising again to the 2016/17 rate. The rate of non victim-based crime per 1,000 population in England and Wales in 2016/17 was 7.9 crimes. This decreased from 7.1 in 2010/11 to 5.9 crimes in 2012/13 before increasing to the 2016/17 rate.

Understanding demand

West Mercia Police has entered into a strategic alliance with Warwickshire Police (in this report, we will refer to this strategic alliance simply as the alliance). Both forces share a single vision and set of values, and work to a harmonised set of policies. In this inspection, HMICFRS found that practice and procedures in both forces are the same, or at least similar. Therefore, apart from specific localised examples, all references to the force can be read as applying equally to the alliance.

West Mercia Police has a good understanding of demand for its services, including the work it needs to do to prevent demand from occurring. Its understanding is supported by adequate data. Analysis of demand provides the basis for how the alliance currently conducts day-to-day business; this is known as its 'operating model'. The force has developed a comprehensive assessment framework enabling it to track the level of service it provides to the public, seasonal trends in offending and changing patterns of crime and anti-social behaviour, and to make adjustments to shift patterns.

The alliance has categorised the demand placed on its service, this includes: public demand (contact from members of the public in need of police services), protective demand (the time and resources dedicated to investigating crime and other incidents as well as supporting victims) and internal demand (demand generated by its own internal processes and activity). The alliance has made most progress in terms of its understanding of public demand. This is because contact with the police, via 999 or 101, is easier to quantify and is more susceptible to trend analysis than other forms of demand.

Improving understanding of protective demand is a bigger challenge for the force. Progress is being made, notably a deepening appreciation of the different levels of resources required for investigations, but the force is still developing its understanding of all demand. Its understanding is being supported through work with academic institutions, including the University of Worcester, University College London and the Jill Dando Institute. This is important because different types of demand require different responses and different levels of resources

For example, investigations in to some of the most frequently reported crimes, such as shoplifting, can generally be concluded quickly in terms of the level of investigation required, but others (for example sexual assaults or child abuse) need far more time and resources. This is particularly true if the victim is vulnerable and investigators request expertise from other organisations to ensure that victims receive the required levels of support. In most areas of the alliance, an investigative model has been implemented that takes these differences into account. The model is based on the idea that higher levels of general competency are preferable to developing specialist expertise, in terms of managing overall demand.

The effects of this new way of working have been reviewed and the investigative model will be refined further. This is reassuring, because officers and staff indicated to HMICFRS that the scale and complexity of crime is not being considered sufficiently well when workloads are assessed. This means that the transfer of investigations under the force's new investigation model is inconsistent and some response officers are being allocated complex cases that they do not possess the skills to carry out. This creates further internal demand as these officers require more support. Because the force cannot yet be certain it has a comprehensive understanding of internal demand, it is important that its investigative models are refined, particularly in the context of ongoing financial constraint.

More complex demand

Some of the more complex aspects of demand for police resources are difficult to quantify but are nonetheless vital to protect communities. For example, the need to collect intelligence about organised crime groups (OCGs), because of the high level of harm they can cause communities.

The alliance has a good understanding of the types of hidden harm that affect its communities and this understanding has been developed through an in-depth process of gathering and sharing information with other public sector organisations. Among others, the process has identified modern day slavery, human trafficking and radicalisation as types of hidden harm that could affect local people. The force has operational procedures in place to combat the threat of hidden harm. A good example is the creation of a dedicated team to tackle sexual predators who pursue vulnerable young people online. This team has access to sophisticated digital techniques to identify perpetrators and fast-track the sign-posting of potential victims into the care of other organisations, to provide care and support.

How well does the force understand things that affect demand?

HMICFRS inspected how well West Mercia Police reduces the demand that inefficiency can create internally. Forces can do this by identifying and eliminating inefficient processes, by ensuring they monitor work to get the best outcomes and by encouraging officers and staff to suggest new and better ways of doing their jobs.

Managing, prioritising and filtering demand

West Mercia Police has effective governance processes in place to ensure it is efficient as its change programme continues. However, HMICFRS is concerned that demand caused by inefficient call-handling processes could expose the public to increased harm. The force gathers performance data to analyse the demand it experiences and to assess the level of service it provides. These performance data include 999 call answering times, the number of callers who received an urgent attendance within target response times and trends in demand patterns. In particular, the analysis enables the force to redistribute its resources to address short-term fluctuations in demand, and adjust its operating procedures to provide a better service. For example, in the past 999 responders have worked within defined geographical areas of the force, whereas now control room supervisors have the authority to deploy them more widely which helps to address peaks in calls for service.

The allocation of resources to meet identified demand is supported by the alliance's daily management meeting (DMM), which considers threat, harm and risk. In general, the force uses information well, moves resources to where they are most needed and assesses the most appropriate response required. However, HMICFRS is concerned that the force's own monitoring data from the control room show that a sizeable number of calls to the police are being missed; 13 percent of 101 callers abandon calls before they are answered. This appears to be a particular problem at weekends, when staffing levels in the control room reduce. Although the 101 number is intended as the non-emergency contact, the force cannot be certain that some of these callers are not in need of immediate support from the police. The fact that calls are going unanswered means that some demands for service from the public remain unmet and some victims may not be receiving the protection they need from the police.

In contrast to 101 calls, 999 calls are generally handled well. Control room staff assess callers' needs and send officers to victims immediately if the victims need help or there is a possibility of apprehending an offender. However, in cases where investigative opportunities are limited and the victim is not exposed to particular harm, it is the alliance's policy to delay the allocation of the case to an investigator. This makes good sense in terms of prioritising the use of police resources, but we

are not convinced that the staff who are responsible for the allocation of these crimes have the capacity to manage the daily throughput. The backlog of crimes awaiting review normally extends to three days.

The alliance recognises there are weaknesses in its current arrangements for handling calls and allocating investigations, and has plans in place to improve. It intends to open two advanced control rooms, complemented by a new ICT platform that is expected to improve crime investigation practices and overcome many of the difficulties currently being experienced. For example, 'interactive voice response' (an automated voice recognition system) will place far less emphasis on person-to-person contact with callers; calls will be routed to the right parts of the organisation when the software recognises specific words. Voice recognition also offers the alliance the ability to make quicker decisions about the nature of an individual's enquiry and the level of harm they face, meaning their call will be prioritised and answered in accordance with their needs.

However, while the new control rooms are being developed, the force is managing the operational pressures presented by its current systems and processes. A governance structure is in place across the alliance and steps have been taken to ensure call-handling performance does not deteriorate. For example, officers who are not fit for operational duties are trained as call handlers to boost capacity in the control rooms. The imminent introduction of new control rooms, call-handling and crime management systems is badly needed.

We also examined whether benefits from the alliance's change programmes are realised and unintended consequences are avoided. We found that the alliance's change programme is subject to firm governance procedures. A transformational delivery board provides strategic oversight and a weekly change forum brings together chief superintendents and heads of service, to monitor developments and provide feedback. These are effective mechanisms for holding individuals to account. However, we found that the benefits of the new investigative model have been difficult for the force to quantify. The model is intended to assign resources according to changes in demand, reflecting the alliance's control strategy. Internal reviews have examined particular issues: for example, the extent of changes in capability and capacity among teams. The alliance takes pragmatic steps to ensure that learning from other change programmes in the country are understood and that its plans are exposed to external scrutiny. This has included the use of commercial change consultants and visits to another police force which has been the subject of a significant merger programme.

The alliance has a comprehensive programme in place that supports widespread engagement with its workforce. A series of structured briefings has brought together the chief officer team with senior managers and interactive forums have been held with officers and staff. The programme is supported by an innovative 'app' that

enables the workforce to put forward questions or offer feedback on proposed change initiatives in complete confidence. This empowers the workforce and helps to ensure that their views are at the forefront of chief officers' thinking.

Leaders promoting innovative thinking

The force is good at seeking and responding to ideas from the workforce. Ideas from the workforce are welcomed and are used to help shape the way the alliance will operate in the future; its strap-line is 'Your Say in Our Future'. This was most apparent at events held across the alliance for different parts of the workforce, and through the efforts of local managers who are keen to ensure that that the voices of their officers and staff are heard. At workforce engagement exercises, frontline officers and staff are invited to challenge the chief officer team, and to exchange views with people leading change programmes. These exercises include setting out a row of stands in the form of market stalls where questions and suggestions can be put forward. Another example of good practice involves call handlers participating in the design of the new control rooms. Their input ranged from designing user-friendly screens to allow easy access to the information they need most frequently, to designing break out rest rooms and even choosing their preferred type of carpet and internal décor.

Summary of findings

Good

The force has a good understanding of demand overall, and its appreciation of the different levels of resources that different types of investigations require is increasing. This is reassuring because the alliance cannot be certain it has a comprehensive understanding of internal demand. The force has a good understanding of hidden demand, including modern day slavery, human trafficking and radicalisation, and it adapts its operational procedures to respond to changes in demand. The alliance has advanced plans to introduce new control rooms and related technologies. These developments are timely because the force is experiencing difficulties with its current call-handling performance, especially 101 calls, meaning that some callers may be exposed to harm, of which the alliance may never become aware. Crime management processes are also protracted, which could adversely affect the quality of service experienced by victims. The transfer of investigations under the force's new investigation model is inconsistent and some response officers are being allocated complex cases that they do not possess the skills to carry out. However, the alliance's change programme is subject to strong governance; there are effective and comprehensive arrangements in place that allow leaders and the wider workforce to influence developments and for individuals to be held to account for outcomes.

Area for improvement

- The force should ensure that it has effective systems and processes in place that enable it to understand how efficiently its investigative model supports the transfer of investigations.

How well does the force use its resources?

Police forces have finite resources with which to do an increasingly complicated job, so must ensure that they deploy and use their resources in the best way possible. The biggest resource that policing has is its workforce and it is important that forces make sure that they have access to the skills needed to police effectively now and in the future.

It is also important that forces make sophisticated decisions about how to spend and invest their resources in order to get the best value for the public. This means forces need to have a good understanding of what they can achieve within a particular budget.

Forces cannot provide services efficiently in isolation, and must work with other police forces and local organisations to ensure they provide the best service to the public at the most appropriate cost.

How well does the force understand the capability of its workforce?

HMICFRS inspected how well West Mercia Police understands the skills it needs, the skills it actually has in the workforce and what steps it is taking to ensure that they match. Police forces spend around 80 percent of their budget on staffing, so it is vital that the workforce is as productive as possible.

Figure 3 illustrates the workforce profile (the number of officers, staff and police community support officers (PCSOs)) since 2010 and projections to 2021. Between March 2017 and March 2021, it is projected that the number of officers will decrease by 170.9 FTE (8 percent) from 2,055 to 1,885. The number of officers across England and Wales as a whole is projected to decrease by 2 percent.

Figure 3: West Mercia Police's planned full-time equivalent workforce (FTE) as on 31 March from 2010 to 2021
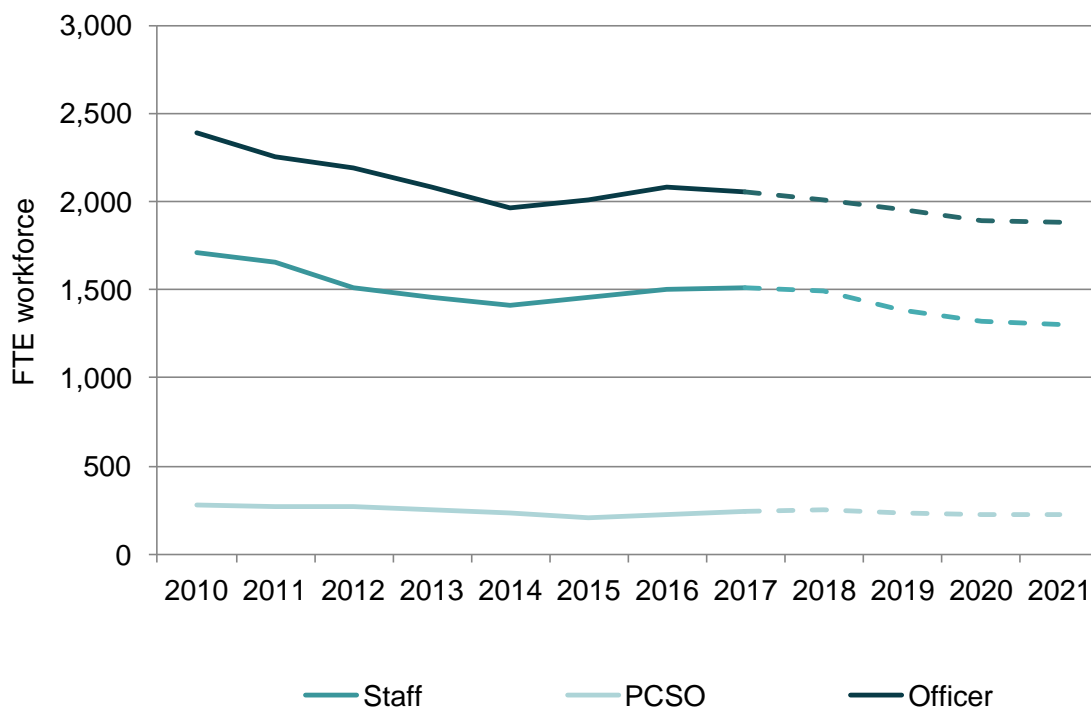
The number of staff working in West Mercia Police is projected to decrease by 202.1 FTE (13 percent) from 1,509 to 1,307 between March 2017 and March 2021. Staff numbers across England and Wales are projected to decrease by 2 percent. The number of PCSOs in West Mercia is projected to decrease by 19.5 FTE (8 percent) from 239 to 220 over the same period, whereas, for England and Wales as a whole, PCSOs are projected to increase by 0.2 percent.

The force is improving its understanding of the skills and capabilities it needs now and for the future. The alliance's workforce management group (WMG) is an effective forum which receives quarterly reports concerning workforce demographics. These include the age profile of officers and staff, ethnicity and gender data and the current skills and accreditation levels of each individual. As well as enabling the alliance to future-proof the capability of its workforce, this information supports access to officers and members of staff with specialist skills whenever they are needed throughout the alliance.

These records are currently held on a number of databases, meaning that data retrieval is labour intensive. Plans are in place to connect these systems to major ICT platforms that are being introduced as part of the alliance's digital transformation programme, which will bring more active management of workforce skills through automation. Nevertheless, the current arrangements are sufficient for the force to

plan recruitment campaigns and organise training schedules. This ensures that skill levels in the workforce can be maintained, vacancies are minimised and that gender and ethnicity can be monitored, which is a priority for the alliance.

We found some particularly good examples of workforce management, such as enhanced training for call handlers in preparation for the new hi-tech control rooms and plans to increase the number of detectives with specialist skills to investigate high-risk offences, such as sexual assaults and child abuse. However, we also found some anomalies in the distribution of skills across the two force areas: CID positions in Kidderminster had a disproportionately high number of trainee detectives. The alliance has plans to address this.

How well does the force understand the capability of its leaders?

HMICFRS inspected how well West Mercia Police understands the skills it needs and the skills its leaders have, and what steps it is taking to ensure that they match.

There is a strong commitment to leadership development in the force and several practical measures have been put in place to ensure that the talents of aspiring leaders are identified and developed. The chief officer team has set out its preferences and priorities for the development of the alliance's future leaders. These include competency in the command of critical incidents,[3] building relationships within the force and working with partner organisations.

These competencies are now tested in promotion processes and form part of the alliance's new initiative to identify and nurture talent in the organisation. The force recognises the need to introduce a structured approach to continuous professional development (CPD); it has trialled the use of a '9-box talent grid'[4] in several areas. The force's development tool guides managers through a series of structured conversations with their officers and staff, to help gauge their levels of professional development. We saw examples of this new approach to talent management being used to good effect. This included an officer with a particular aptitude for working with victims of sexual assaults being provided with access to professional development at an early stage of her career.

HMICFRS also found that officers and members of staff have access to the support of mentors if this is of interest to them. This was originally developed for black, Asian and minority ethnic members of the workforce seeking career progression but it is

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[3] Incidents that have significant effect on individuals, families or communities and present risks to the reputation of a force.

[4] The 9-box talent grid is an assessment tool that evaluates both an individual's current performance and their potential. It is most commonly used to support continuous professional development and as a method of evaluating an organisation's talent pool and identifying potential leaders.

now available to the whole organisation. The force makes use of national programmes run by the College of Policing, which allow the most talented police officers to benefit from fast-track promotion schemes and for external applicants to join the police with the expectation that they will progress from the rank of constable to inspector within two years. The force also supports the national graduate leadership development programme known as 'Police Now', providing access to graduates who are interested in police careers.

The alliance has made good progress towards establishing leadership development as a core area in both forces. However, until CPD is introduced across the alliance, access to development opportunities will be more reliant on the extent to which individuals become aware of them and seek them out, rather than assessments of need, including the extent to which the force and the individual are likely to benefit. The force should ensure that, as it expands its use of CPD, it conducts a leadership skills audit to increase its understanding of leadership capacity and capability.

How well does the force allocate resources?

HMICFRS inspected how well West Mercia Police uses its understanding of demand to prioritise its activities in order to provide the best service to the public. To assess this, we considered the extent to which the force understands what it can provide within a particular budget.

The level of spending on different police functions varies between forces, depending on the particular demands that each force must meet. Higher expenditure does not necessarily mean better services, but it can demonstrate how a force prioritises its resources.

Figure 4 shows how expenditure is distributed across the most common police functions. Local policing covers functions such as incident response, neighbourhood policing and local investigations. Investigation covers areas of specific proactive investigative functions, such as major crime, while dealing with the public includes front counter and control room activities. Intelligence covers the gathering and assessment of intelligence.

Figure 4: Estimated percentage of net revenue expenditure allocated across policing functions in West Mercia Police from 2011/12 to 2016/17
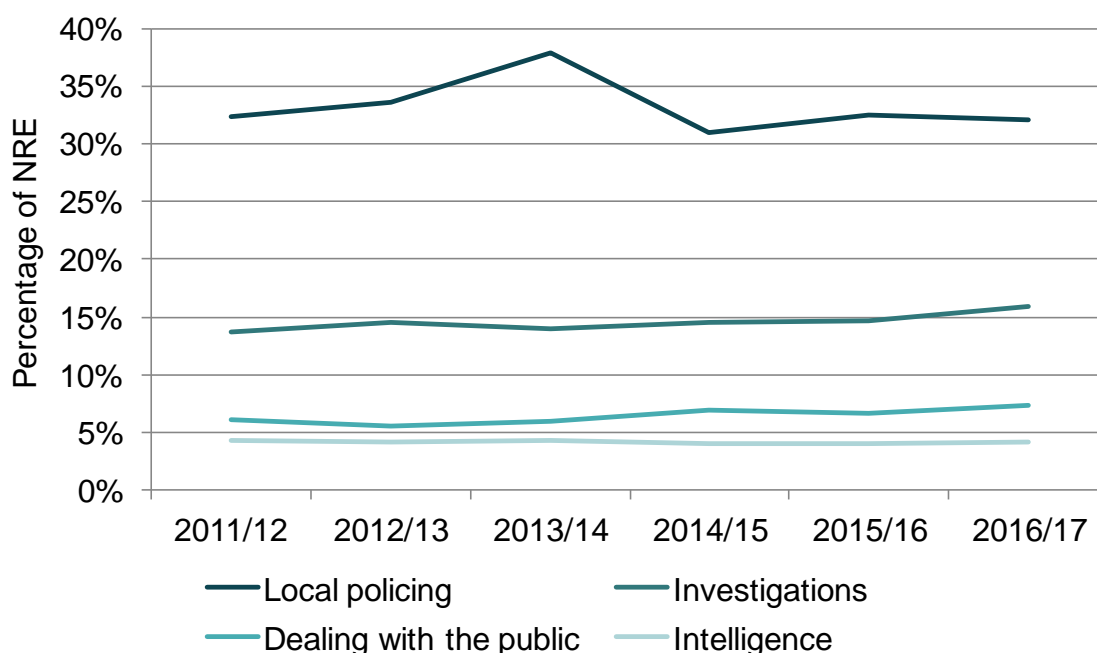
In West Mercia, the percentage of estimated expenditure on local policing in 2016/17 is in line with 2011/12 at 32 percent. Estimated expenditure on investigation has increased from 14 percent to 16 percent, expenditure on dealing with the public is similar to 2011/12 and expenditure on intelligence is similar to 2011/12 at around 4 percent.

Prioritisation and cost

West Mercia Police prioritises activity well, using its understanding of current and future demand, local and national priorities, and public expectations. Policing priorities are very clear across the alliance. The alliance makes good use of a law enforcement analysis and prioritisation tool known as the national intelligence model (NIM). The alliance recently refreshed its analysis, which examines and seeks to predict likely demand and developing crime patterns. This includes the priorities set by the West Mercia and Warwickshire police and crime commissioners in their respective police and crime plans for 2016-21. These plans reflect priorities identified through public consultation and are complemented by the engagement each force has with its communities. This engagement is led by neighbourhood policing teams and includes the perspectives offered by independent groups, often through the alliance's independent advisory group (IAG) network. The alliance's policing priorities are set out in its strategic assessment and reflect the extent of threats and risks in its area, striking a balance between national threats such as cyber-crime, and issues that are important to local people.

The force is good at using its resources in a responsive way and this has helped it when dividing resources between concerns identified by local communities and criminal activity that has wider implications in the region. To ensure an effective response to a broad range of issues, particularly in the context of financial constraint, West Mercia Police and Warwickshire Police have mature joint-working arrangements in place which date back to 2012. These arrangements have been successful, with financial savings of £60m being achieved across the alliance since 2010. Central to these arrangements is the principle that all services, other than those that are tied to a geographic location, are provided seamlessly across both force areas. This brings a broad range of operational services into joint working arrangements, including major crime investigations, support services and training, and the deployment and command of armed officers. HMICFRS recognises the progress that both forces have made through working in collaboration; they have set a best-practice benchmark for other forces implementing similar organisational change.

In addition to these achievements, the alliance also has a good appreciation of how its resourcing levels can be adjusted and the effect this will have on its services. The new investigative model trials in Worcestershire, Herefordshire and Warwickshire have been evaluated to assess the impact of merging mainstream CID investigations with public protection cases. Plans are being drawn up to assess the impact of merging certain functions involved in tackling local crime and reducing some services that tackle major crime. This is as a consequence of a requirement from the newly elected PCCs for the forces to make additional savings.

Investment

The force is clear on its principal areas of investment over the forthcoming years. These will focus on its digitalisation programme, modernising its estate and finding more efficient ways of providing support services. Benefits analysis is now a prominent theme in the force's change management programme; strong governance procedures have served the alliance well in ensuring that project managers are held to account for achieving savings and service improvements. The savings achieved through their alliance arrangements are in line with both forces' long-term track record.

This year, the alliance's investments in new control rooms, systems, mobile data and other technology should realise considerable benefits. In addition to the financial benefits the alliance anticipates, our future inspections will evaluate the extent to which non-financial benefits have been realised and how effectively the force has used them.

How well does the force work with others?

HMICFRS inspected how well West Mercia Police has explored all opportunities to work in collaboration with others to increase efficiency and provide better, more resilient services. This can include working jointly with other police forces, local public sector organisations, the private sector and the voluntary sector. We looked at whether the force has a clear rationale for the decisions it has taken about how it works with other organisations and other forces, and whether it has a good understanding of how successful its joint working is.

How the force works with other organisations and other forces

The force demonstrates a strong commitment to joint working and has good working arrangements to ensure demand is managed across various organisations. As well as exploiting the efficiency and financial benefits of sharing services, both West Mercia Police and Warwickshire Police work productively with a range of external organisations. These arrangements bring a range of benefits, including the improved management of demand, financial savings and opportunities to provide a better service. Partnership is a consistent theme of the alliance's approach, at a strategic level and within local communities. For example, fire service commanders share premises with local policing commanders and Herefordshire and Worcestershire Fire and Rescue Service will share premises with the police in a new control room. In advance of that, joint protocols are already in place, meaning certain categories of calls for service to the police will be dealt with by the fire service, including calls from people expressing concern about the safety or wellbeing of people in their own home.

Additional arrangements exist for the fire service to assist with searches for missing people. There are common areas of activity in the fire service's urban search and rescue units and police search teams; joint arrangements now exist for the utilisation of firefighters and police officers when vulnerable people are reported as missing. Searches for missing people can be extremely resource-intensive, costly, and present serious challenges to a police force. This additional search capacity is an important development in the protection of communities in the area.

Working with the NHS, the alliance has recently completed a trial to evaluate the effects of joint working to support individuals who suffer from poor mental health. A considerable amount of police time can be spent with vulnerable people suffering from mental illness while they are waiting for medical assessments. A psychiatric nurse has been deployed in the control room, providing a number of benefits. Immediate access to patient records in some cases revealed that individuals were at no great risk of harm, meaning that officers could be released for other duties. In other cases, the nurse could secure immediate access to placement in psychiatric

facilities and bring a rapid resolution to the incidents. The thorough evaluation of the trial has put the alliance in a strong position to take forward negotiations with the NHS to progress these arrangements.

The benefits of joint working

The alliance has a sound appreciation of the benefit of working with partners and is investing in additional joint ventures to bring about operational improvements. This includes the recently established integrated victim management (IVM) team which brings together a number of service providers to support the needs of individuals who are repeatedly victimised by criminals. The alliance is also sympathetic to the position of other organisations it works with when they have to introduce financial cutbacks. A good example is the support being provided to a county council with a poor rating for social care provision. Recognising that effective social care provision is an essential element of victim support, officers are at the heart of the council's improvement programmes to ensure that effective joint working arrangements can be restored quickly.

Leadership driving innovation

HMICFRS also considered the extent to which the senior leadership in the force is driving innovation and their willingness to experiment with new ways of working. We found persuasive evidence that the force is committed to seeking out best practice solutions within UK policing, academia and the commercial sector to meet future organisational requirements. The alliance is working with the University of Worcester, University College London, and the Jill Dando Institute to develop its response to vulnerability, including child sexual exploitation, missing people and domestic abuse. It includes predictions of demand linked to the priorities in its control strategy, analysis of why people become missing, the deployment of negotiators, and the development of software to improve its management of domestic abuse and stalking offences. The alliance's change programme is ambitious, innovative and pushes the boundaries of conventional policing. In recognition of its potential, the alliance is supported by over £8m of Home Office funding through the police transformation programme. The alliance aims to ensure that from the moment contact is made, to the resolution of incidents, the investigation of crime, and the prosecution of offenders, all police activity will be supported by systems that mimic best practice in the commercial sector.

Summary of findings

Good

West Mercia Police uses its resources well, helping it to provide an effective response to a broad range of local and regional issues. It is improving its understanding of the current and future skills and capabilities it needs and has made good progress through defining leadership competencies and focussing on leadership development. The force prioritises its activities based on its understanding of demand, priorities and public expectations. Partnerships are a consistent theme of the force's approach and its alliance arrangements are serving it well. The force is clear about the areas it will invest in during future years and it has a sound appreciation of the benefits of collaboration. The force's change programme is ambitious and innovative.

Area for improvement

- The force should conduct a leadership skills audit that will allow it to understand leadership capacity and capability.

How well is the force planning for the future?

To be efficient, a police force needs not only to understand the present, but also to be able to make reasonable predictions about the future in terms of how its demand will change, how its workforce will change and how its partners will be affected. It needs to have adequate, realistic and innovative plans to meet the operational and financial challenges of the future.

How well does the force predict likely future demand?

HMICFRS inspected how well West Mercia Police analyses trends in its current demand in order to predict likely future demand. We also assessed the extent to which it has taken account of changing public expectations and technology. In addition, we expect forces to be considering how they will work with other organisations and other forces in the future.

Predicting future demand

The force is good at analysing and identifying trends in demand. The force uses commonly recognised techniques, such as statistical projection and seasonal trends, to identify future demands. These inform the force's strategic assessment which sets out areas of increasing demand and operational pressures over future years. The force's approach to understanding future demand takes account of police and crime plans to develop a vision and strategic framework for the alliance and incorporates its review of demand. The programme has been subject to scrutiny and validation by an external consultancy.

The force does not yet have a complete understanding of all of its future demands. It recently appointed an external consultancy which works with many different police forces to deepen its understanding of future demand. A series of capacity and capability workshops allow frontline staff and heads of departments to add their professional judgments to the statistical analysis that informs decisions about future resourcing. This indicates the alliance is seeking to broaden its understanding by consulting with subject experts to increase the accuracy of its predictions of future demand and associated system, resource and process requirements.

Future considerations

The force has considered changing public expectations in developing its future plans; public consultation has played an important role in helping the alliance to develop future services. Both PCCs have strong outreach programmes to understand public expectations in relation to future police services. This complements the understanding that local policing teams have developed with their communities over many years. We found a commitment to including the public's perspective when developing new ways of working, including the use of social media

to provide updates on criminal investigations, access to services through the internet and voice-activated services. This engagement with the public has identified broad approval for the alliance's future way of working but there is also a recognition that in some areas, for example isolated rural communities, the physical presence of the police on the beat remains an important priority.

The force has an advanced understanding of how technology can shape the future of policing. The main focus of this work centres on the convergence of its core ICT platforms which means that important areas of activity, for example public contact, the investigation of crime and the prosecution of offenders, will be the same across the alliance. It also means that manually entering data and searching databases will be radically reduced as services become automated and record systems are integrated. ICT convergence is set to realise considerable benefits in terms of contractual savings, the harmonisation of service delivery between the two forces and the unification of police practice and procedures.

We checked progress on the force's use of mobile data devices and body-worn video cameras during the course of the inspection. These are important pieces of technology to ensure frontline staff can access and input data efficiently and secure high quality evidence to support prosecutions. Both are being trialled in certain areas of the alliance and have been benchmarked against national best practice. The feedback we received from frontline officers and staff was very positive, with most recognising that at least one hour per shift was being saved by avoiding unnecessary trips to police buildings to enter or retrieve data. The alliance continues to conduct formal evaluations of the benefits of this technology by surveying its workforce about their use of tablets, smart phones and body-worn video cameras.

How well is the force planning for the future, in terms of workforce?

HMICFRS inspected how well West Mercia Police has plans in place to recruit, develop and nurture the leaders of tomorrow to ensure it has the right skills and talent in the right roles.

Succession planning

West Mercia Police shows a good understanding of the skills its future leaders must possess. The chief officer team has set out its preferences and priorities for the competencies of the alliance's future leaders, but the alliance has not yet completed a comprehensive audit of its future leadership requirements. Nevertheless, the clear articulation of future leadership priorities, and the emerging use of improved approaches to talent identification and professional development, bode well for the future. This is an area where the alliance has made progress since last year and will remain the focus of future inspections.

The alliance currently makes limited use of career pathways and continuous professional development, although the introduction of the 9-box grid and a more structured approach to CPD is a positive step in terms of talent management and succession planning. A series of promotions for police officers recently took place, meaning that the alliance has reduced the number of officers in temporary positions. Temporary promotions are reviewed at the alliance's workforce management group (WMG) meeting, chaired by a chief officer. HMICFRS observed the alliance's good use of succession planning during a WMG meeting.

Recruitment

The alliance is good at taking advantage of new talent selection and development opportunities, such as Direct Entry and Police Now, to help it plan for the future. Three fast-track inspectors have been recruited, with a further six individuals set to join before the end of the year, although the alliance is not participating in a scheme to recruit superintendents directly. The alliance has recruited externally for detectives and for senior police officers. It also recently recruited a transformation director on a temporary basis to assist with its change programme.

How well does the force plan for likely future demand?

HMICFRS inspected how adequate, realistic and innovative West Mercia Police's plans for the future are, and to what extent it is planning to make savings in the future, including saving to invest in new systems and approaches.

Plans

The force's plans are sufficient to achieve its vision for the future. The force's change management programme, Vision 2020, is well-resourced and includes people with experience of project management and those with operational experience. The force's financial plans are based on its experience of collaboration as part of its alliance arrangements, providing it with a firm base for its transformational programmes. Major ICT platforms are due to be introduced later this year.

The force's plans are ambitious and are supported by clear evidence. The benefits of the changes it has made to its operating model will be realised through new ways of working, including the introduction of a service delivery model that reflects the alliance's investments in technology. Its transformation programme includes important projects to modernise the workforce, such as providing support services in a different way. Research is being undertaken with other forces that use managed as opposed to in-house services, and future saving plans are partly predicated on these projects being successful.

The force has innovative plans to manage demand through the use of ICT, which will change the way it operates. More services will become automated and changes will be made to maximise the outputs of officers and staff. The distribution of the

workforce across the West Mercia Police and Warwickshire Police areas will reflect the new ways of working, through changes such as the rationalisation of underused buildings and more sharing with other public sector organisations, alongside other changes such as frontline staff becoming more skilled and undertaking a broader range of tasks.

Savings

The alliance has already saved £60m over recent years and is facing further financial constraints. These constraints are partly attributable to increased pay and price inflation, the flat rate central government settlement and increased national requirements, such as the implementation of a new 4G emergency services communications network. Additional savings requirements have been placed on the alliance by the two PCCs and plans are being implemented to reduce the alliance's total revenue budget by £16m by April 2018. The alliance has made an accurate assessment of future savings requirements until 2020/21. This is based on sound assumptions, which have been validated by external auditors. Annual budgets are calculated to balance year on year. Savings plans include the removal of certain posts within the alliance; salary budgets for officers, police staff and PCSOs are all subject to financial review. The future will undoubtedly be challenging, however the firm basis of joint working arrangements between the forces, significant improvements in ICT and practices to make better use of police time provide a solid foundation to operate within future financial requirements.

Summary of findings

Good

West Mercia Police is planning for the future well. The force uses commonly recognised techniques to identify demands, although its analysis of future demand is still developing. The introduction of new ICT means the force should be able to realise further savings and is based on a thorough understanding of what the public expects, and how technology will improve policing. The force's assessment of future savings requirements is based on sound assumptions. The force would benefit from completing a comprehensive audit of its future leadership requirements, to complement its introduction of continuous professional development (CPD) and its use of national schemes. The force's change management programme is notable, blending technical and operational skills to good effect.

Next steps

HMICFRS will assess progress on any recommendations and areas for improvement identified within our reports in several ways. We either revisit those forces where we have identified a serious cause of concern, go back to assess them as part of our annual PEEL inspection programme or receive updates on their progress through regular conversations with forces.

HMICFRS highlights recurring themes emerging from our PEEL inspections of police forces within our national thematic reports on police effectiveness, efficiency, legitimacy and leadership (see: www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmicfrs/peel-assessments/national-peel-reports/). These reports identify those problems that are reflected across England and Wales. They may contain additional recommendations directed at national policing organisations, including the Home Office, where we believe improvements need to be made nationally.

Annex A – About the data

The source of the data is presented with each figure in the report, and is set out in more detail in this annex. The source of Force in numbers data is also set out below.

Methodology

Please note the following for the methodology applied to the data.

Comparisons with England and Wales average figures

For some data sets, the report states whether the force's value is 'lower', 'higher' or 'broadly in line with' the England and Wales average. This is calculated by using the difference from the mean average, as a proportion, for all forces. After standardising this distribution, forces that are more than 0.675 standard deviations from the mean average are determined to be above or below the average, with all other forces being broadly in line.

In practice this means that approximately a quarter of forces are lower, a quarter are higher, and the remaining half are in line with the England and Wales average for each measure. For this reason, the distance from the average required to make a force's value above or below the average is different for each measure so may not appear to be consistent.

The England and Wales averages will differ slightly from the Value for Money Profiles because we have included City of London Police and the Metropolitan Police Service within the average in this publication.

Statistical significance

When commenting on statistical differences, a significance level of 5 percent is used.

For some forces, numbers described in the text may be identical to the England and Wales average due to decimal place rounding, but the bars in the chart will appear different as they use the full unrounded value.

Population

For all uses of population as a denominator, unless otherwise noted, we use the Office for National Statistics (ONS) mid-2015 population estimates.

Force in numbers

Forecast change in gross revenue expenditure

These data show estimated gross revenue expenditure (GRE) for the force in 2017/18 and 2020/21. This was gathered from forces by HMIC staff prior to fieldwork (April 2017). Some of the data provided will have been subject to revisions after this time but figures should represent the picture as at the time of inspection. Future forecasts of expenditure are estimates for which forces use different methodologies. As these are estimates care should be taken in interpreting changes.

Workforce figures (FTE) for 2016/17 and 2020/21

These data were obtained from the Home Office annual data return 502. The data are available from the Home Office's published police workforce England and Wales statistics (available from www.gov.uk/government/collections/police-workforce-england-and-wales), or the Home Office police workforce open data tables (available from www.gov.uk/government/statistics/police-workforce-open-data-tables). Figures may have been updated since the publication. Workforce includes section 38-designated investigation, detention or escort officers, but does not include section 39-designated detention or escort staff.[5] The data are the actual full-time equivalent figures (or FTE), and figures for 2016/17 are the figures as at 31 March 2017.

For FTE, these data include officers on career breaks and other types of long-term absence, and excludes those seconded to other forces. Projections for 2020/21 are budget-based and therefore likely to take into account a vacancy rate depending on a force's planning strategy, but may not include a projection for absences. In some instances, therefore, an increase in budgeted posts may not actually indicate the force is planning to increase its workforce. In other cases, forces may be planning to reduce their workforce but have a high vacancy rate which masks this change.

Calls for assistance

These data are obtained from the Home Office annual data return 441.

Recorded crime

These data are obtained from Home Office police-recorded crime and outcomes data tables (available from www.gov.uk/government/statistics/police-recorded-crimeopen-data-tables).

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[5] See sections 38 and 39 of the Police Reform Act 2002. Available at: www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2002/30/section/38

Figures throughout the report

Figure 1: Rate of 999 calls recorded per 1,000 people in the local population in the force area compared with England and Wales as a whole, from 2010/11 to 2016/17

These data are obtained from the Home Office annual data return 441. City of London Police does not submit 999 calls data to the Home Office as these are included in figures provided by the Metropolitan Police Service.

Figure 2: Police-recorded crimes per 1,000 population compared with England and Wales from 2010/11 to 2016/17

These data are obtained from Home Office police-recorded crime and outcomes data tables (available from www.gov.uk/government/statistics/police-recorded-crime-open-data-tables). Total police-recorded crime includes all crime (excluding fraud offences) recorded by police forces in England and Wales. Home Office publications on the overall volumes and rates of recorded crime include British Transport Police, which is outside the scope of this HMICFRS inspection. The England and Wales rate given in this figure is a simple average of all forces' rates to reduce the effect of large forces on the average.

Figure 3: Planned full-time equivalent (FTE) workforce as on 31 March from 2010 to 2021

Data from 2010 to 2017 are obtained from the Home Office annual data return (as set out in the Force in numbers section) which is an 'actual' FTE figure. The percentages used in figure 3 are derived from the total FTEs within forces and therefore may differ slightly from the exact figures quoted within the report. Data from 2018 onwards are budget-based projections, therefore depending on a force's planning strategy may not include a projection for absences.

Due to the complex and continually evolving picture of workforce collaboration between forces, not all changes in workforce figures reflect the workforce that is available to forces. Involvement in strategic alliances and/or regional organised crime units would be an example of where changes over time are likely to be skewed. Therefore, sharp increases or decreases need to be considered with caution as they may simply represent accounting changes related to how staff are allocated to forces and not real changes in staffing levels.

At the time of the inspection, the future financial climate was uncertain. Several forces did not have confirmed plans for workforce projections. It is important to note that figures are in many instances unconfirmed estimates provided to assist HMICFRS in our inspection programme and should not be seen as a concrete plan for the future workforce available for policing.

Figure 4: Estimated percentage of net revenue expenditure allocated across policing functions from 2011/12 to 2016/17

These data were obtained from data collected by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) for use in the HMICFRS Value for Money profiles (available from www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmicfrs/our-work/value-for-money-inspections/value-for-money-profiles/#2016). The data define policing functions using the Police Objective Analysis categories.

We have made some adjustments to the original POA data in order to provide valid historical comparisons. For instance, in 2011/12 the POA category "Local policing" included the sub-category "local investigation and prisoner processing", however, from 2012/13 onwards this moved to the "Investigations" category. We have therefore removed "local investigation and prisoner processing from the 2011/12 figure to provide a historical comparison and not create misleading percentage changes.

For the same reason above, for the 2011/12 "Investigations" figure we have included "local investigations and prisoner processing" for historical comparison.

Furthermore, in 2016/17 "Public Protection" became its own level two category, whereas in previous years it had been included as a sub-category under "Investigations". Therefore for historical comparisons, we have included public protection in "Investigations" for 2016/17.