

PEEL: Police effectiveness 2015

An inspection of Avon and Somerset Constabulary



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

Overall judgment¹



Requires improvement

Overall, Avon and Somerset Constabulary is judged to require improvement at keeping people safe and reducing crime. The constabulary is good at preventing crime and anti-social behaviour but the standards of victim care and the quality of investigations lack consistency. The constabulary is generally good at identifying vulnerability but an accurate assessment of the risks presented to domestic abuse victims and persons reported as missing is not always evident. There are good arrangements in place to tackle serious and organised crime. This is the first year HMIC has graded forces on their overall effectiveness so comparison of their year-on-year effectiveness is not possible.

Summary

HMIC judges overall that Avon and Somerset Constabulary requires improvement in the way that it keeps people safe and reduces crime.

It is good at preventing crime and anti-social behaviour and these priorities are understood by frontline staff that we spoke to. The constabulary places a firm emphasis on problem-solving; it works carefully with partners to put in place early interventions for those who are at risk of slipping into crime or anti-social behaviour.

The constabulary works with five local councils and adapts its services well to different working practices within each of them. This can bring challenges at times and may limit some of the constabulary's ambitions. For example, a multi-agency safeguarding hub which provides support to victims has been established in one council area whereas different arrangements exist elsewhere.

Avon and Somerset Constabulary requires improvement in the way it investigates crime. HMIC found examples of crime being assigned to investigators who lack the requisite skills and experience and standards of investigation are inconsistent. Furthermore, the constabulary's responsibility to update victims about the progress of crime enquiries is not understood and accepted by all as routine practice. This is of particular concern as both of these shortcomings were pointed out to the constabulary in inspections over the last two years.

¹ Outstanding, Good, Requires improvement or Inadequate – see Annex A for definitions.

HMIC acknowledges that these difficulties are exacerbated both by the introduction of an updated crime reporting system and the implementation of a new operating model.

The constabulary's ability to protect the vulnerable also requires improvement. It is generally good at identifying vulnerable people but more needs to be done to accurately assess the risk presented to domestic abuse victims and people who are reported as missing.

More positively, the constabulary responds well to the harm that organised crime groups can cause in communities.

How effective is the force at preventing crime and anti-social behaviour, and keeping people safe?



Good

Avon and Somerset Constabulary prioritises the reduction of crime and anti-social behaviour and is committed to supporting vulnerable people. The constabulary places a firm emphasis on problem-solving; it makes a number of resources available to frontline staff and partners to tackle community problems.

Partnership working is mainstream activity at a constabulary-wide level, in local areas as well as in individual neighbourhoods. The constabulary has had to adjust its service to conform to different working practices in five council areas. This can be challenging and may limit some of the constabulary's ambitions; for example, a multi-agency safeguarding hub which works well in providing full-time support to vulnerable victims operates in one council area only.

The constabulary is a strong supporter of the government's Troubled Families programme; good working arrangements exist with the local service providers where the programme, known locally as Think Family, operates.

Community safety partnerships are the operational platform where the constabulary comes together with other public services to address local problems. Good examples were seen in Filton and in the Bath and North East

How effective is the force at investigating crime and managing offenders?



Requires improvement

Avon and Somerset Constabulary requires improvement in the way it investigates crime. The constabulary has a policy to determine how crime should be allocated to investigators and measures are in place to ensure compliance with it. However, HMIC found examples of crime being assigned to investigators who lack the requisite skills and experience. This was also highlighted as a shortcoming in HMIC's inspection of crime in 2014.

The standards of investigations are inconsistent; of particular concern are offences of child abuse where HMIC found officers reporting excessive workloads, poor supervision and uncertainty about the support plans in place for victims.

HMIC also found deficiencies in the standards of service provided to victims; the constabulary's responsibility to update victims about the progress of enquiries is not well understood. This is disappointing because HMIC highlighted this as an area for improvement in an inspection of vulnerability in 2015.

At the time of inspection, officers and staff were adjusting to a new IT system to report crime. This was proving disruptive; some supervisors were unable to make entries onto crime

Somerset area to address neighbourhoods blighted with anti-social problems.

The constabulary and the police and crime commissioner have also worked hard to bring victim and witness care service providers closer together. They now work in joint hubs as part of the programme known as the Lighthouse; this ensures that a seamless, comprehensive service is provided to individuals who may otherwise feel intimidated by the criminal justice system.

reports and procedures to keep track of wanted offenders had been adversely affected.

The constabulary is well acquainted with the problems mentioned in this section. They come in the wake of significant organisational change and established programmes, led by chief officers, are in place to guide the organisation through this period of transition.

More positively, the constabulary manages offenders effectively. The integrated offender management programme brings the constabulary together with other service providers to curb the offending behaviour of prolific and harmful criminals. Dangerous and sex offenders are subject to robust supervision and risk management plans are informed by national best practice.

How effective is the force at protecting from harm those who are vulnerable, and supporting victims?



Requires Improvement

Avon and Somerset Constabulary is prioritising resources to protect vulnerable people. However, there are several areas where improvement is needed to ensure that the service is consistent and that vulnerable people are kept safe. Given the scale of the challenge in this area and the risk that is posed to some of the most vulnerable people overall, the force requires improvement.

HMIC acknowledges that the constabulary has committed significant effort and resource to offer a high quality service to vulnerable people and to support victims.

The constabulary identifies and responds to vulnerable victims effectively.

However, declining levels of expertise and high workloads are affecting adversely the effectiveness of some specialist staff and some high-risk domestic abuse investigations are being investigated by non-specialist staff.

The constabulary has improved its response to missing and absent children. However, improvements are required, in particular in relation to the classification of children as absent rather than missing.

How effective is the force at tackling serious and organised crime, including its arrangements for fulfilling its national policing responsibilities?



Good

This is the first year HMIC has graded forces on their effectiveness at tackling serious and organised crime, including a force's arrangements for fulfilling its national policing responsibilities, so no year-on-year comparison is possible.

Nevertheless, the constabulary is judged to be good at addressing the threat from serious and organised crime. The constabulary's strategic threat assessment articulates the challenges that Avon and Somerset faces from serious and organised crime. This understanding is strengthened by the development of a serious and organised crime local profile which has been developed in conjunction with partner organisations.

HMIC found that organised crime groups are consistently mapped and scored in line with national guidance. The potential harm that each group poses is frequently assessed through re-scoring exercises; this ensures that the relevant operational response is continually in place to contain their criminal activity.

The constabulary's approach to serious and organised crime is inclusive and predicated on the belief that it is

Strong and developing partnership arrangements are in place to protect vulnerable people either in a multi-agency safeguarding hub or safeguarding coordination units.

The constabulary has improved its response to missing and absent children. However, improvements are required, in particular in relation to the classification of children as absent rather than missing. Strong and developing partnership arrangements are in place to protect vulnerable people either in a multi-agency safeguarding hub or safeguarding coordination units.

The constabulary has invested in resources to tackle child sexual exploitation. A good range of policy and guidance assists staff with the management of domestic abuse but HMIC is concerned at inconsistencies in the recording of information on vulnerable people and risk assessment.

‘everyone’s business’. This is borne out by the fact that neighbourhood officers, and increasingly partners, play an important role in disabling organised crime groups as specialist detectives do.

The constabulary uses its expertise in offender management principles to deter individuals from becoming lifestyle criminals; for example, the constabulary has links with the region’s Think Family programme which provides support for those who may be susceptible to involvement in serious criminality.

Additionally the constabulary is assessed as being in a good state of readiness to counter the threats faced in *The Strategic Policing Requirement*.

Force in numbers



Calls for assistance

Calls for assistance per 1,000 population 12 months to 31 March 2015

Avon and Somerset Constabulary

588

England and Wales

350



Crime

Crimes recorded (excluding fraud) per 1,000 population 12 months to 30 June 2015

Avon and Somerset Constabulary

61.8

England and Wales

63.0

Crimes recorded (excluding fraud) per 1,000 population 12 months to 30 June 2014

Avon and Somerset Constabulary

59.0

England and Wales

60.3

Changes in recorded crime (excluding fraud) 12 months to 30 June 2014 against 12 months to 30 June 2015

Avon and Somerset Constabulary

+4.6%

England and Wales

+4.5%

Changes in recorded crime (excluding fraud) 12 months to 30 June 2010 against 12 months to 30 June 2015

Avon and Somerset Constabulary

-16.8%

England and Wales

-12.6%



Charge rate

Charge rate as a percentage of all crimes recorded (excluding fraud) 12 months to 30 June 2015

Avon and Somerset Constabulary

15.2%

England and Wales

16.0%



Anti-social behaviour

Anti-social behaviour incidents per 1,000 population 12 months to 30 June 2015

Avon and Somerset Constabulary

32.4

England and Wales

32.9

Anti-social behaviour incidents per 1,000 population 12 months to 30 June 2014

Avon and Somerset Constabulary

38.7

England and Wales

36.2



Domestic abuse

Domestic abuse as a percentage of all recorded crime (excluding fraud) 12 months to 31 March 2015

Avon and Somerset Constabulary

10.2%

England and Wales

10.0%

Domestic abuse as a percentage of all recorded crime (excluding fraud) 12 months to 31 March 2014

Avon and Somerset Constabulary

8.7%

England and Wales

8.5%



Organised crime groups

Organised crime groups per million population as at 30 June 2015

Avon and Somerset Constabulary

36.5

England and Wales

74.7



Victim satisfaction rate

Victim satisfaction rate 12 months to 31 March 2015

Avon and Somerset Constabulary

84.1%

England and Wales

83.8%

Introduction

The public expects their local police force to:

- Prevent crime and anti-social behaviour and, when crime occurs, to investigate it properly and provide support to victims.
- Use appropriately-trained officers and staff and approved practice when investigating crime, gathering evidence and building cases to ensure offenders are brought to justice.
- Support victims of crime by responding to calls for service, identifying and putting in place the right help at the first point of contact, keeping them informed and consulting them about the possible outcomes of their case.
- Ensure that vulnerable people who might not have been a victim of crime are identified and given appropriate support, for example people at risk of domestic abuse, children at risk of sexual exploitation and missing or absent children.
- Understand and be prepared to respond to threats beyond their own force boundaries, including national threats such as terrorism, serious and organised crime and cyber-crime.
- Work effectively with local partner organisations and other bodies to prevent all types of crime and re-offending and to protect the public.

HMIC's annual inspections into police effectiveness, efficiency and legitimacy (PEEL) consider whether forces keep people safe and reduce crime (how effective a force is), whether these activities are being carried out at the most appropriate cost (how efficient a force is), and how forces are ensuring they have the confidence of their communities (the public legitimacy of a force).

All forces are subject to significant cost reductions; this is reflected in our efficiency reports published in October 2015. The judgments we are making in this effectiveness report are made understanding the financial challenges forces are facing. Reports on Avon and Somerset Constabulary efficiency and legitimacy inspections are available from the HMIC website (www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmic/)

HMIC's effectiveness inspections make an assessment of how well forces are preventing and investigating crime and anti-social behaviour; tackling serious and organised crime; and protecting victims and those who are vulnerable. These are the most important responsibilities for a police force, and are the principal measures by which the public will judge the performance of their force and policing as a whole.

Our effectiveness inspection focused on the overall question: “How effective is the force at keeping people safe and reducing crime?”

To answer this question we looked at four in-depth questions, three of which are discussed in more detail within this report:²

1. How effective is the force at preventing crime and anti-social behaviour, and keeping people safe?
2. How effective is the force at investigating crime and managing offenders?
3. How effective is the force at protecting those who are vulnerable from harm and supporting victims?
4. How effective is the force at tackling serious and organised crime, including its arrangements for fulfilling its national policing responsibilities?

During our inspection we collected data from forces, reviewed case files and surveyed the public to seek their views on the effectiveness of the force. We also surveyed and interviewed representatives from partner organisations to gather evidence about the effectiveness of their working relationships with the force. We interviewed chief constables and chief officers and held focus groups of officers and staff at all grades and ranks. We also made numerous unannounced visits to police stations to talk to frontline officers and staff about their work. This report sets out the findings from this wide-ranging inspection of Avon and Somerset Constabulary.

² HMIC inspected forces on questions 1, 2 and 4 between September and November 2015. Question 3 was inspected between June and August 2015, and a separate report was published in December 2015 (available from: www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmic/publications/police-effectiveness-vulnerability-2015-avon-and-somerset/) In 2014, in preparation for the PEEL programme, forces were inspected to assess how effective they are at cutting crime (available from: www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmic/publications/crime-inspection-force-reports/).

How effective is the force at preventing crime and anti-social behaviour, and keeping people safe?

The police's ability to prevent crime and anti-social behaviour and to keep people safe is a principal measure of its effectiveness. Crime prevention can be cheaper and more effective than investigating crime, and it makes society a safer place. The police cannot prevent crime on their own; other statutory and non-statutory bodies have a vital role to play. Police effectiveness in this matter is therefore dependent on their ability to work closely with other partner organisations to understand local problems and have access to a wide range of evidence-based interventions to resolve them.

How much crime and anti-social behaviour is there in Avon and Somerset?

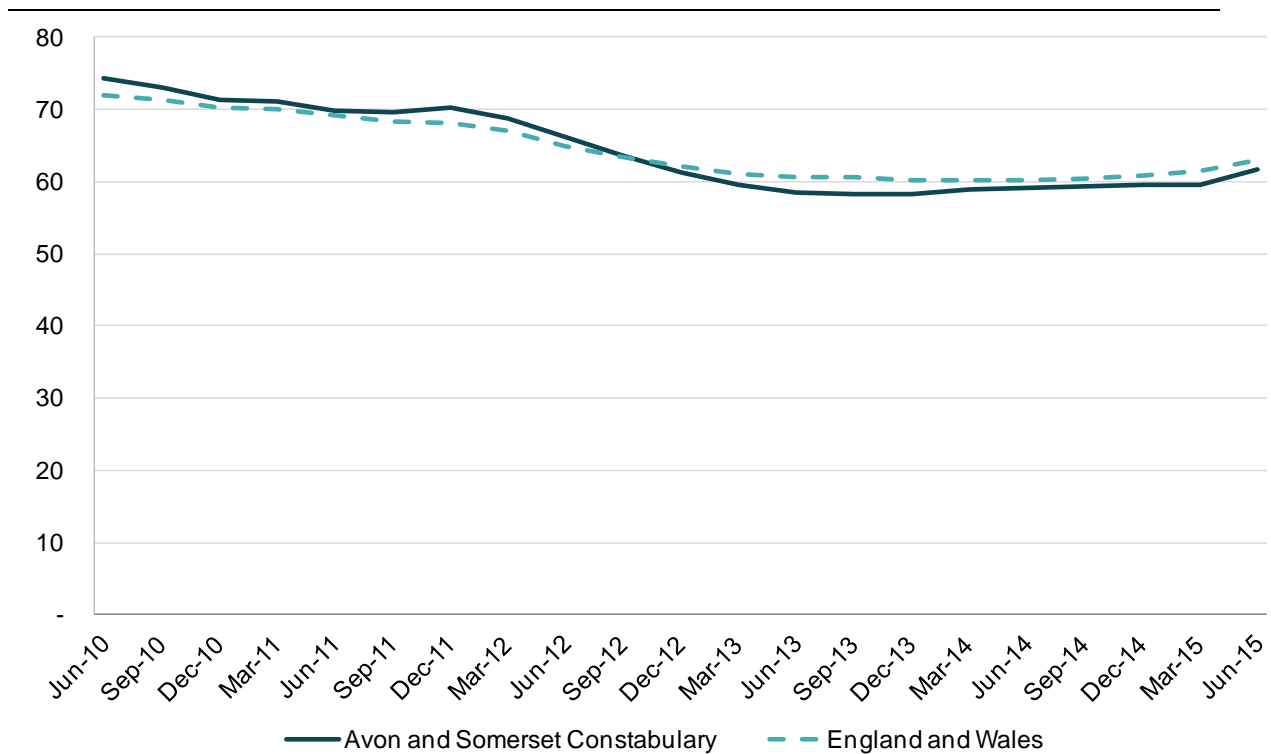
Although police recorded crime is by no means a complete measure of the totality of demand for calls on its service that a force faces, it does provide a comparable indication of performance across all forces. Crime rates are reported as a number of crimes per 1,000 population in each force area to enable comparison between areas. Total recorded crime is made up of victim-based crime (e.g. theft) and non victim-based crime (e.g. possession of drugs). More than two-thirds of forces showed an annual increase in total police recorded crime (excluding fraud) in the 12 months to 30 June 2015. This increase in police recorded crime may have been affected by the renewed focus on the quality and compliance of crime recording since HMIC's national inspection of crime data in 2014.

In 2010 the Home Secretary set a clear priority for the police service to cut crime. When compared with the 12 months to 30 June 2010, police recorded crime (excluding fraud) for the 12 months to 30 June 2015 fell by 17 percent in Avon and Somerset compared with a reduction of 13 percent across all forces in England and Wales.

Over this same period, victim-based crime (i.e. crimes where there is a direct victim such as an individual, a group, or an organisation) decreased by 17 percent in Avon and Somerset, compared with a reduction of 12 percent across England and Wales.

When compared with the previous year, police recorded crime (excluding fraud) in Avon and Somerset increased by 5 percent for the 12 months to 30 June 2015. This is compared with an increase of 4 percent across England and Wales over the same period.

Figure 1: Police recorded crime rates (per 1,000 population) for the five-year period to 30 June 2015



Source: Home Office data

The volume of police recorded crimes and incidents of anti-social behaviour per head of population indicates how safe it is for the public in that police area. Figure 2 shows crime and anti-social behaviour rates in Avon and Somerset (per 1,000 population) compared with England and Wales.

Figure 2: Police recorded crime rates (per 1,000 population) for the 12 months to 30 June 2015

Rates per 1,000 population	Avon and Somerset Constabulary	England and Wales
Recorded crime (excluding fraud)	61.8	63.0
Victim-based crime	54.5	56.0
Sexual offences	1.5	1.6
Assault with injury	5.4	6.3
Burglary in a dwelling*	6.6	8.4
Anti-social behaviour incidents*	32.4	32.9

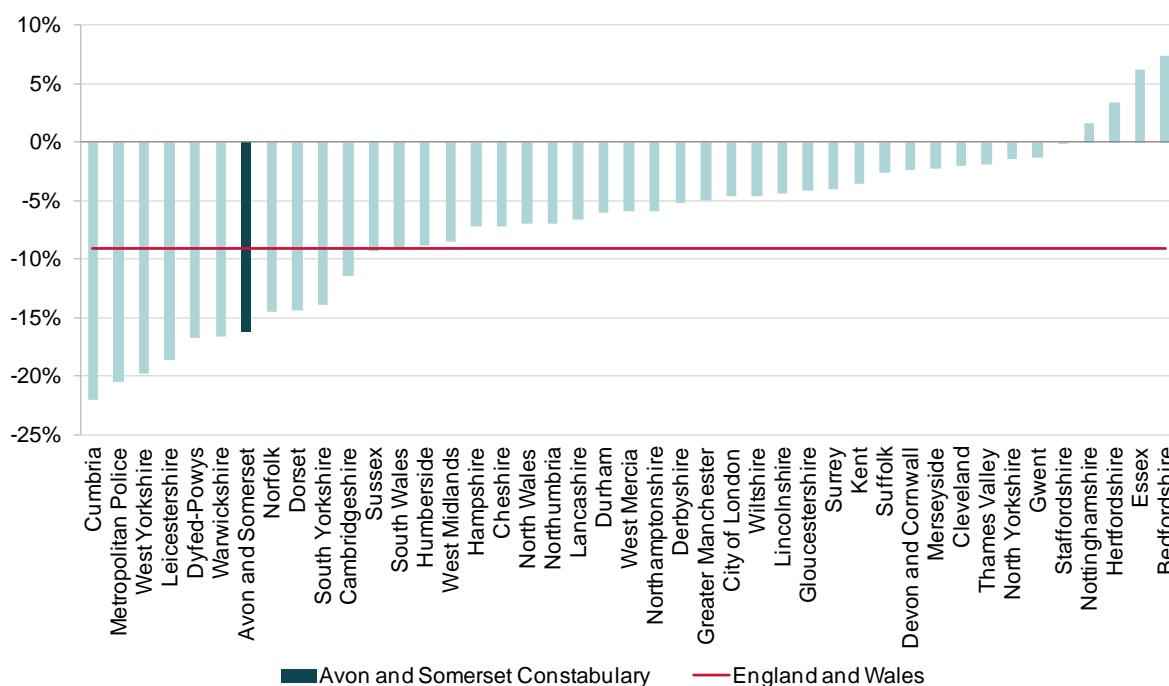
Source: Home Office data, HMIC data return

***Anti-social behaviour data is from the constabulary's data return and the rate for burglary in a dwelling is the rate per 1,000 households, not population.**

HMIC has chosen these types of crime to indicate offending levels in the constabulary area. We are not judging the effectiveness of the constabulary on police recorded crime rates only.

In the 12 months to 30 June 2015, Avon and Somerset Constabulary recorded 53,359 incidents of anti-social behaviour. This is 16 percent fewer incidents than the constabulary recorded during the previous 12 months. When considering all forces across England and Wales, there were 9 percent fewer incidents in the 12 months to 30 June 2015, than recorded during the previous 12 months.

Figure 3: Percentage change in the volume of anti-social behaviour incidents, by force, comparing the 12 months to 30 June 2015 with the 12 months to 30 June 2014



Source: HMIC data collection

How well does the force work to prevent crime and anti-social behaviour and keep people safe?

How well is the force prioritising the prevention of crime and anti-social behaviour?

Neighbourhood policing and anti-social behaviour are clear priorities for both the constabulary and the police and crime commissioner. There is a commitment at a strategic level to develop the capability of the neighbourhood teams and ensure that they have sufficient resources. The need to focus on crime prevention activity is well understood throughout the force; to reinforce this, the force has brought the roles of response and neighbourhood staff closer together to ensure a more joined-up approach to crime prevention activity.

The constabulary has a good understanding of areas where crime, anti-social behaviour and repeated demand on its services are most entrenched. The constabulary has established a bespoke problem-solving consultation unit; this unit maps these areas and proposes a number of problem-solving solutions to frontline staff who are responsible for resolving the matter at hand. The proposed solutions correspond to evidence based policing principles and best practice, and this may include academic validation. The proposed solutions are specifically designed for joint working between different organisations with a strong focus on supporting vulnerable victims.

HMIC examined frontline briefing processes in Avon and Somerset. The system used is known as 'iTask'; up-to-date briefing bulletins are easily accessible in a digital format and are widely used by staff. A good example of their use was officers at Trinity Road Police Station familiarising themselves with criminals who were suspected of committing residential burglaries in the area. Detailed guidance was provided to staff about the footprint impressions that had been forensically linked to the series and the footwear the burglars would be likely to be wearing. The briefing system ensures that the areas where police patrols are most needed are receiving a premium service.

The constabulary has a systematic approach to reducing crime, anti-social behaviour and repeated demands on its services. Officers and staff are knowledgeable of the most deeply rooted problems and are equipped to address them.

How well are resources allocated to prevent crime and anti-social behaviour?

In general, Avon and Somerset Constabulary has effective ways of understanding the threat, risk and harm to which vulnerable victims are likely to be exposed.

A major development in this understanding has been the redesign of working arrangements in the constabulary's communications centre. Previously, the responsibility of receiving 999 and 101 calls was separated from the responsibility to despatch officers and police community support officers (PCSOs) to callers. These arrangements served the force well in relation to the management of demand upon its services; however, a two-stage process sometimes meant that prioritising the needs of victims became less assured.

The combination of these two roles brings greater certainty that vulnerability can be identified at the first point of contact; this is advantageous for the prioritisation of incidents and is more likely to set the correct tone for the early stages of investigations and ensure that they are properly resourced.

The constabulary also has robust procedures in place to ensure that communities are receiving the service they need. The force 'pacesetter' meeting is held daily and chaired by an assistant chief constable; 'vulnerable victims' is a standing agenda item, resources are deployed to where they are most needed and activity is directed towards arresting high-risk offenders who present the most harm to citizens in Avon and Somerset.

More localised daily management meetings (DMMs) are held by local police commanders; DMMs consider crime and victimisation patterns and other emerging threats. In the meetings HMIC visited, valuable contributions were made by officers from the constabulary's integrated offender management unit. This led to clear directions to frontline staff about the recent activity of the most prolific offenders in the locality.

How well is the force using a broad range of effective tactics to prevent crime and anti-social behaviour?

The constabulary assesses and responds to future demand using predictive analytical software. It identifies the top 20 generators of crime on a geographical basis; these then become an integral part of the performance management framework to hold local commanders to account to for the reduction of reported incidents.

There is a frequent comparison and linkage of the top generators of crime and the Think Family initiative in the area. This is part of the national Troubled Families programme which aims to provide integrated support to families who find life challenging; this includes support to siblings who become involved in crime and anti-social behaviour. HMIC found good examples of neighbourhood officers and PCSOs working with local service providers. There is an ongoing programme led by partner organisations to train officers and PCSOs; this will equip them to play their role in containing the behaviour of wayward children. It is envisaged neighbourhood staff will be allocated to over three hundred families as the programme progresses.

HMIC are also encouraged that a number of officers have been trained in restorative justice; restorative justice provides an alternative to an offender appearing before court. Typically this involves individuals making amends to victims or becoming involved in community-based initiatives as part of their rehabilitation. The constabulary is clearly committed to restorative justice solutions, however, HMIC could find little evidence of co-ordinated activity at the time of the inspection. The constabulary is encouraged to examine this further.

More positively, it is encouraging that the constabulary makes use of evidence-based policing in the selection of tactics to reduce crime and disorder. Evidence-based policing means that the effectiveness of the range of tactics available to the constabulary has been objectively validated, frequently by academic bodies.

In Avon and Somerset, the constabulary is developing a knowledge hub of 'what works' which it is developing in conjunction with national best practice. Officers and PCSOs can now find a range of tactical responses to frequent problems, for example, nuisance callers or repeated series of retail thefts. The constabulary is due to showcase the knowledge hub imminently, and these developments are very encouraging.

HMIC also found useful resources are available to frontline staff in the internal constabulary bulletin, 'Know How'. The bulletin highlights best practice for dealing with a range of issues; the current edition guides officers on how to understand more about foreign nationals involved in criminality by accessing the International Criminal Records Exchange.

In addition to the above, the closer alignment of neighbourhood and 999 response staff in the new operating model means that more scope exists for targeted patrols in high crime hotspots. Good examples of this were seen into areas which were being affected by night-time burglaries.

Avon and Somerset Constabulary has a broad range of tactics to reduce crime and disorder. These are dependent on traditional policing methods but also include innovative developments such as the knowledge hub.

How well does the force work with partners to prevent crime and anti-social behaviour and keep people safe?

How committed is the force to working with partner organisations?

At a strategic level, the benefits of joint working are promoted by the police and crime commissioner (PCC) and the chief officer team. The constabulary's commitment to the benefits of working with partner organisations is sometimes tested by the fact that there are five local authorities with differing political persuasions and operational priorities. Notwithstanding these challenges, the constabulary works hard to develop common frameworks that respect localism. For example, the commissioning group for community safety is a forum that serves the whole of the whole constabulary area and the PCC and an assistant chief constable are represented on the executive.

Conversely, in relation to joint working to support vulnerable victims the organisation has had to develop differing operating standards. In particular, the constabulary has been the driving force in persuading statutory and non-statutory partners to co-opt staff into multi agency safeguarding hubs (MASHs).³ Elsewhere in England and Wales bringing services together in this way has improved the provision of safeguarding support to the vulnerable. One MASH has been established in Avon and Somerset but in the other four local authority areas alternative arrangements are in place.

At a local level, the community safety partnerships (CSPs) are the main forum for establishing, maintaining and driving joint working. The CSPs are council led and bring together the services of the constabulary, the PCC, fire services, probation trusts and clinical commissioning groups. Each set out a three-year community safety plan to reduce crime and anti-social behaviour.

³ A MASH brings together into a single location the main safeguarding agencies to better identify risks to individuals and improve decision-making, interventions, and outcomes. The MASH enables the multi-agency team to share all appropriate information in a secure environment, and ensures that the most appropriate response is provided to effectively safeguard and protect the individual.

These CSPs work well and are characterised by a healthy exchange of information, productive relationships built on mutual respect and effective joint working.

Despite the contrasting make-up of each of the five council areas, the constabulary works well to adapt operational procedures and is a keen exponent of joint working.

How well does the force share and use information with partners to prevent crime and anti-social behaviour?

The constabulary shares information with partners effectively at all levels to prevent crime and anti-social behaviour. The legal basis for these arrangements is established through crime and disorder legislation; HMIC found evidence of effective information-sharing standards in place to support partnership working at both regional and local levels.

Information is shared for a number of different reasons; at a strategic level, the constabulary has a number of facilities where premises and databases are shared to provide safeguarding to victims and locally information is shared with CSPs to develop activity in support of their action plans.

Examples of information exchange in shared working environments include the MASH, where different service providers have immediate access to each other's data to develop care plans to support vulnerable victims. In those councils where a MASH has not been developed, safeguarding co-ordination units (SCUs) have been established as a single portal of secure information exchange; typically SCUs manage requests for information to support case conferences relating to child care proceedings.

At a local level, effective joint working to tackle anti-social behaviour was observed in the Bath and North East Somerset (BANES) council area. Information sharing between the constabulary, Avon Fire and Rescue Service, BANES council, Somer Community Housing Trust, NHS (Bath and North East Somerset) and the Avon and Somerset Probation Trust provides a firm platform for the CSP's pledge to support victims of anti-social behaviour.

How well is the force working with partner organisations to keep people safe and tackle anti-social behaviour in local neighbourhoods?

In a challenging environment, Avon and Somerset Constabulary works well with partner organisations to reduce crime and anti-social behaviour. Differing practices in five council areas provide challenges as the constabulary tries to rationalise and streamline its services in the context of the spending review. Nevertheless, the constabulary has a good track record of widening and deepening the impact of its services through constructive collaboration with partner organisations.

The constabulary has established joint working arrangements with the NHS to provide support to individuals suffering from dementia and mental ill health. Historically, responding to these vulnerable individuals has led to poor results as they were frequently confined in police cells awaiting medical assessments. At the same time, protracted deployment of police resources were involved in caring for them. More effective resolutions have been found which can be as straightforward as asking a relative to provide support; this is a good example of effective joint working to provide a better service to some of the most vulnerable people in society.

Another good example is the Lighthouse Victim and Care Service that was established over a year ago. This followed research by the constabulary and the PCC into the experiences of the victim and their thoughts on the support services available to them. This has subsequently led to the co-location of the victim and witness care service with independent sexual violence and domestic abuse advocates. Building this joint service around victims has been a ground-breaking advance in how the constabulary works with partner organisations to provide a comprehensive service to victims.

Community safety partnerships we visited were also working effectively. A good example was a case in Filton, where one household had caused persistent anti-social behaviour to the annoyance of local residents; this ranged from people congregating in the street to incidents of homophobic abuse to passers-by. Joint working led the eviction of the family, which was reported positively in local newspapers.

Summary of findings



Good

Avon and Somerset Constabulary prioritises the reduction of crime and anti-social behaviour and is committed to supporting vulnerable people. The constabulary places a firm emphasis on problem-solving; it makes a number of resources available to frontline staff and partners to tackle community problems.

Partnership working is mainstream activity at a constabulary-wide level, in local areas as well as in individual neighbourhoods. The constabulary has had to adjust its service to conform to different working practices in five council areas. This can be challenging and may limit some of the constabulary's ambitions; for example a multi-agency safeguarding hub which works well in providing full-time support to vulnerable victims operates in one council area only.

The constabulary is a strong supporter of the government's Troubled Families programme; good working arrangements exist with the local service providers where the programme, known locally as Think Family, operates.

Community safety partnerships are the operational platform where the constabulary comes together with other public services to address local problems. Good examples were seen in Filton and in the Bath and North East Somerset area to address neighbourhoods blighted with anti-social problems.

The constabulary and the police and crime commissioner have also worked hard to bring victim and witness care service providers closer together. They now work in joint hubs as part of the programme known as the Lighthouse; this ensures that a seamless, comprehensive service is provided to individuals who may otherwise feel intimidated by the criminal justice system.

How effective is the force at investigating crime and managing offenders?

When a crime occurs, the public must have confidence that the police will investigate it effectively, take their concerns as victims seriously, and bring offenders to justice. To be effective, investigations should be well planned and supervised, based on approved practice, and carried out by appropriately trained staff. The risk posed by those who are identified as being the most prolific or dangerous offenders must also be properly managed (in partnership with other organisations), to minimise the chances of continued harm to individuals and communities.

HMIC referred to national standards and best practice in examining how well the force allocates and investigates both complex and non-complex (e.g. burglary, robbery and assault) crime, including the full range of ways police officers and staff can gather evidence to support investigations (these include the more traditional forensics, such as taking fingerprints, as well as digital sweeps to find evidence of online abuse, for instance).

We also looked at how well the force works with partners to identify vulnerable offenders and prevent them from re-offending, and how well it identifies and manages repeat, and dangerous and sexual offenders.

How well does the force bring offenders to justice?

Since April 2014, police forces in England and Wales have been required to record how investigations are concluded in a new way, known as 'outcomes'. Replacing what was known as 'sanction detections', the new outcomes framework gives a fuller picture of the work the police do to investigate and resolve crime. The new broader framework (now containing twenty different types of outcomes) is designed to support police officers in using their professional judgment to ensure a just and timely resolution. The resolution should reflect the harm caused to the victim, the seriousness of the offending behaviour, the impact on the community and deter future offending.

Given the work involved in amending police force crime-recording systems to accommodate fully the new outcomes framework, two forces have not yet been able to provide a full year of data for all new outcomes types. Avon and Somerset Constabulary, however, has been providing the Home Office with full data since April 2014. The complete range of new outcome types will be used in future HMIC inspections, once all forces have provided a full year of data. Figure 4 shows only those outcome types for which full data is available for all forces in England and Wales.

Figure 4: Outcomes recorded in the 12 months to 30 June 2015 for all police recorded crime (excluding fraud)^{4 5 6}

Outcome type/group	Avon and Somerset Constabulary Number of outcomes	Rate	England and Wales Number of outcomes	Rate
Charged/Summoned	15,466	15.2	577,678	16.0
Taken into consideration	1,252	1.2	21,318	0.6
Out-of-court (formal)	4,604	4.5	165,384	4.6
Caution - youths	957	0.9	19,703	0.5
Caution - adults	3,101	3.1	115,000	3.2
Penalty Notices for Disorder	546	0.5	30,681	0.8
Out-of-court (informal)	3,650	3.6	159,915	4.4
Cannabis/Khat warning	1,015	1.0	41,964	1.2
Community resolution	2,635	2.6	117,951	3.3

Source: Home Office crime outcomes data

Outcomes are likely to differ from force to force for a number of reasons. Certain offences are more likely to be concluded without offenders being prosecuted, typically including types of crime such as cannabis misuse. If this type of crime is particularly prevalent in a force then it is likely that the level of 'cannabis/khat⁷ warning' outcomes would be greater.

The frequency of outcomes may also reflect the force's policing priorities. For example, some forces work hard with partners to ensure that first time and low-level offenders are channelled away from the criminal justice system. In these areas, locally-based community resolutions are likely to be more prevalent than elsewhere. Avon and Somerset Constabulary has one of the highest rates for both 'taken into consideration' and 'caution - youths', of all forces in England and Wales.

⁴ Rate based on number of outcomes recorded in 12 months to 30 June 2015 divided by number of offences recorded in 12 months to 30 June 2015.

⁵ For a full commentary and explanation of outcome types please see *Crime Outcomes in England and Wales 2014/15*, Home Office, London, July 2015. Available from: www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/445753/hosb0115.pdf

⁶ Community resolutions are an out-of-court disposal the police can use to deal with anti-social behaviour and low-level crime. 'Taken into consideration' is when an offender admits the commission of other offences in the course of sentencing proceedings and requests those other offences to be taken into consideration.

⁷ A plant native to Africa and the Arabian Peninsula, the leaves of which are frequently chewed as a stimulant; the possession and supply of khat became a criminal offence in England and Wales in 2014.

How well does the force investigate crime and keep victims safe and informed?

How well does the force initially investigate and allocate cases?

It is important that when the police are called to an incident they respond in a timely manner, with officers or staff who are trained and competent to keep people safe, and who can take steps to apprehend offenders and investigate the circumstances if a crime has occurred. An effective initial response by the police increases the likelihood of a successful outcome for both the victim and the criminal justice system. Subsequent investigation by detectives and other specialist police staff also needs to be well managed and resourced.

The constabulary's workforce is knowledgeable about the vital steps to take when first arriving at the scene of a crime. Priorities include the preservation of a scene, recording details of all witnesses and securing CCTV footage. The police service refers to these priorities as the 'golden hour' principles. The operational application of these important principles is evident from the crime files that we examined.

The constabulary has a policy for allocating complex and non-complex crime to appropriately trained staff; the policy is based on best practice guidance provided by the College of Policing but its application in the workplace is not consistent. Procedures for allocating crime for investigation are subject to frequent scrutiny; a daily assessment is made of each crime reported and a weighting is applied in line with the threat or harm presented to victims. Despite this, HMIC found investigations being allocated to officers that were beyond their level of training and experience.

This is an important finding as HMIC has made similar observations previously; in successive inspections of crime in 2014 and of vulnerability in 2015, HMIC made recommendations about investigations being undertaken by officers who did not have the requisite accreditation and a lack of resilience in the detective workforce. Constabulary policy to allocate crime is clear and operational procedures to ensure day-to-day compliance with the police appear to be sound. However, for reasons that are not immediately clear, not all crime is being investigated by the right person. This has clear implications for the service to victims and is of concern to HMIC.

HMIC also brings to the attention of the constabulary shortcomings in procedures where investigations are handed from arresting officers to other investigators. This is a common practice that frees up the arresting officers to resume emergency response duties. However, for this procedure to work successfully the officer to whom the investigation is allocated must be clear on the progress of the enquiry to date and the lines of enquiry that still have to be followed. HMIC saw examples of these cases, known as 'handovers', where it was not clear which investigative tasks had been completed and which remained outstanding. Some were also devoid of supervision.

The initial stages of an investigation are critical to successful outcomes for victims; the constabulary needs to ensure continuity and maintain standards when investigations are passed from one officer to another for completion.

In a more recent development and in line with a number of other police forces, the constabulary has established an incident assessment unit to help manage the demand on its services. Among other responsibilities the unit will record crime and determine how crime is to be allocated. HMIC will follow the development of this unit with interest.

How well does the force investigate different types of crime?

The standards and quality of investigations are mixed. It is clear that the recent introduction of a new crime reporting system is causing some disruption. While teething problems with a new IT infrastructure are not uncommon, concerns relating to the consequences of restructuring in the constabulary are more troubling.

Prior to restructuring investigations into rape and other serious sexual offences, domestic abuse and child abuse were investigated by separate specialist teams. At the heart of the constabulary's new operating model is an expectation that all accredited investigators should be omni-competent; investigations in any domain of public protection are now allocated to officers in larger, generic investigative teams known as 'Protect' teams. The Protect teams we visited were adjusting to the new working arrangements, however some investigators reported excessive workloads. The consequence of this was that the care plans that should be afforded to victims were not being completed and the problem was compounded by the fact that some supervisory reviews were not taking place, and in some cases supervisors could not access the NICHE computer record to carry out reviews. These cases included child abuse investigations where investigators were unaccustomed to their roles and responsibilities. There is clear risk that the service to victims is falling short of required standards.

Standards of investigations in other investigative teams were variable. Less complex crimes involving individuals who have been arrested at the time of the offence are investigated by detention investigation teams. These teams are generally well supervised by officers with appropriate skills and training who bring valuable support and experience to these investigations. HMIC found evidence of investigation plans being completed, investigative opportunities being pursued and supervisory entries being endorsed on crime reports. Supervisors also pay careful attention to officers' workloads to ensure that they do not become overburdened and standards are maintained.

The most frequently occurring and less complex types of crimes like burglary, robbery and theft are investigated by detectives in investigative teams known as the 'Convict' teams. When inspectors visited these, HMIC were encouraged to find that values of the constabulary were being translated into day-to-day activity. Officers we

spoke to made it clear that the needs of the victim are paramount; for some this contrasted with their previous experiences when the identification and prosecution of the offender were deemed more important.

More complex crime is investigated in specialist teams known as the 'Solve' teams. The constabulary has ensured that all staff who investigate more complex crimes are appropriately trained or working towards accredited detective status. HMIC found that there were good levels of specialist investigative support; forensic specialists are available 24 hours a day and fingerprint and DNA evidence is prepared with minimal delay.

HMIC found that understanding of the requirements of the Code of Practice for Victims of Crime are not well understood. All constabularies have a statutory duty to comply with this code, which sets out the service victims of crime can expect from the police and partner organisations that have a role in the criminal justice system. In Avon and Somerset, the requirement to establish 'contracts' with victims is not assured; contracts set out the frequency with which victims can expect to be updated on progress and the manner in which they wish to be contacted. This was a shortcoming highlighted in HMIC's inspection of vulnerability published in 2014; it is an area where the constabulary should still focus.

A review of investigation files completed prior to fieldwork found that most of the cases had clear investigation plans setting out the lines of enquiry and investigative opportunities identified by an investigator and their supervisor. These plans were subject to documented review. However, additional reviews completed during inspection fieldwork found the quality of case files was less assured. HMIC found supervisors were not completing regular reviews and were not clear how often these should take place. Some supervisors had not yet received training on the new crime recording system and as a consequence were not able to access and view the crimes their staff were currently investigating. An exception to this trend relates to detention investigation teams where standards remain high.

An additional problem caused by the introduction of a new crime reporting system relates to the number of offenders who have yet to be arrested or are wanted in connection with offences. Their prompt arrest is important to stop further offending and to prevent victims being exposed to further harm. At the time of the inspection, data was unavailable on the number of offenders who were awaiting arrest.

Standards of investigation are less assured than they were when HMIC last examined this area in 2014. The recent introduction of the new operating model and an updated crime reporting system are the main factors behind this decline in performance. The constabulary anticipated that the transition would be challenging; action plans directed by chief officers have been in place for some time to manage this transitional period.

Furthermore, a recent review into investigations conducted by the constabulary has produced an investigation improvement plan that covers many of the areas highlighted in this inspection as requiring improvement. The constabulary anticipates that these measures will address these shortcomings in the fullness of time.

How well does the force gather digital evidence?

Increasingly, crime in England and Wales is committed online and through the use of digital devices such as tablets, computers or mobile phones. All forces have to retrieve data from these devices and examine them for evidence; staff, in what may be known as high tech crime units (HTCU), carry out these examinations.

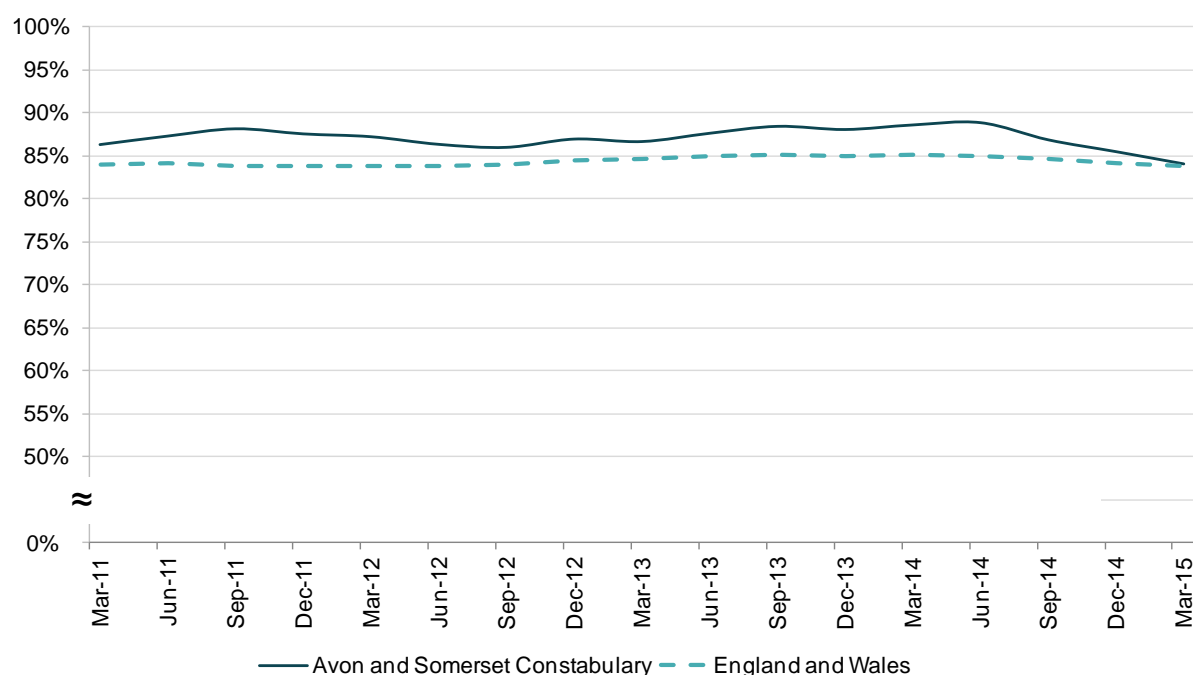
HMIC identified that the constabulary lacked capacity in the recovery of digital evidence. Despite there being a prioritisation process for dealing with the most serious offences first, HMIC found that demand for digital downloading was increasing and an unacceptable backlog had developed. The constabulary is aware of these issues and has put a number of measures in place to address them. New technology means that downloading kiosks are available to speed up the process and an increasing number of officers have been trained to use them. Better triage procedures help with prioritisation and outsourcing some of the caseload to commercial organisations is also reducing delays.

How satisfied are victims of crime with the service provided by the force?

Of those who have been the victim of a crime in Avon and Somerset in the 12 months to 31 March 2015, 84.1 percent were satisfied with their whole experience with the police. This is similar to the national victim satisfaction rate of 83.8 percent over the same time period. The victim satisfaction rate in Avon and Somerset for the 12 months to 31 March 2015 is significantly lower than both the previous year's rate and the rate for the 12 months to 31 March 2011.

In recent times victims have reported higher levels of satisfaction with the service provided to them than elsewhere in England and Wales. A recent decline in this trend comes at a time when the constabulary is experiencing much internal change. HMIC considers that every effort must be made to maintain the standard to victims during this period of transition.

Figure 5: Percentage of victims satisfied with the overall service provided by the police, for the four year period to 31 March 2015



Source: Home Office data provided by forces

How well does the force identify and manage offenders to prevent re-offending?

How well does the force divert offenders away from crime?

The constabulary places a great deal of emphasis on problem-solving and early interventions to interrupt cycles of offending.

The constabulary supports detainees who have complex social needs. Direct access to specialist service providers is available to help them with drugs and alcohol dependency. Detainees in custody centres are frequently among the most vulnerable groups in society. Providing them with the opportunity to turn their lives around reflects well on the constabulary's commitment to work with others in support of the vulnerable.

The constabulary is committed to the principles of restorative justice. This makes provision for cases against certain offenders to be concluded without the need to appear before a court. The organisation has trained a number of officers in the techniques of restorative justice but it is not used comprehensively in the constabulary.

By comparison the constabulary's contribution to the Think Family programme, a national initiative dealing with the country's most troubled families, is well understood and accepted by all as a means to steer young people away from crime.

A comprehensive scheme of restorative justice would complement this programme well; it could give more young people and their victims the opportunity to find reconciliation and a positive way forward.

Other good examples of the constabulary's commitment to divert offenders away from the criminal justice system include its involvement with a charity, Catch 22. Working with Catch 22, the constabulary pairs up individuals who are at risk of offending with mentors who are themselves ex-offenders, in an effort to keep them away from crime.

How well does the force deal with repeat offenders?

The constabulary has effective ways of identifying and managing repeat offenders. The integrated offender management programme (IOM) represents mature partnership working and brings together the police, the probation service, the Community Rehabilitation Company and other service providers; the aim of the programme is to curb the offending behaviour of the most prolific and most harmful criminals. Integrated offender management teams operate from a number of different locations; access to a range of criminal justice data means that case management is up-to-date and that interventions correspond well to individual offender needs. Joint working arrangements are more advanced in Bristol than elsewhere; here, statutory organisations and the charity sector are co-located in a permanent joint team.

Any participating organisation can refer offenders onto the IOM programme and HMIC are encouraged that IOM groups represent the full spectrum of criminality. A particular drive by the constabulary to include violent offenders means that the most harmful offenders are considered in addition to those who offend the most frequently.

The IOM programme in Avon and Somerset is also characterised by innovation and creativity. The constabulary uses a system of voluntary tagging of offenders. The wearing of a tag is normally part of a mandatory requirement of offenders by the courts while they are awaiting trial. Most commonly tags are monitored to prevent individuals leaving their homes at times when they are most likely to offend.

However, the constabulary has found that their use on a voluntary basis has a number of other benefits. This is particularly so for offenders who are motivated to turn away from crime; many find that wearing the tag voluntarily can help them modify their behaviour and resist the temptation to break the law.

Officers working in IOM units provide an important link between the IOM programme and frontline officers. Their regular use of briefing bulletins and attendance at daily tactical review meetings mean that frontline staff are constantly up-to-date with the activities of the most frequent offenders. As a consequence, active criminals can be targeted in the course of daily patrols at times when they are likely to offend.

The effectiveness of the scheme has been evaluated by Portsmouth University and learning has been incorporated into operational practice. To ensure continuous improvement, the constabulary also use a Home Office diagnostic tool to ensure that best practice is being maintained.

How well does the force deal with sexual and other dangerous offenders?

The constabulary has well-established procedures for dealing with dangerous criminals and sexual predators. The multi-agency public protection procedures (MAPPA)⁸ are firmly understood and accepted by all, there is good governance and MAPPA is supported by highly skilled and experienced staff. The MAPPA principles are used by the constabulary, the prison service and the probation service to monitor those offenders assessed as presenting the highest risk to the public.

One of the measures used to supervise dangerous individuals in communities is scheduled home visits by specialist officers to ensure the risk of re-offending is fully considered. To support this, the constabulary has recently acquired a structured risk assessment process that takes account of changes in an offender's life as they happen. Officers spoke highly of this system and believe it has provided more assured case management of dangerous individuals.

Summary of findings



Requires improvement

Avon and Somerset Constabulary requires improvement in the way it investigates crime. The constabulary has a policy to determine how crime should be allocated to investigators and measures are in place to ensure compliance with it. However, HMIC found examples of crime being assigned to investigators who lack the requisite skills and experience. This was also highlighted as a shortcoming in HMIC's inspection of crime in 2014.

The standards of investigations are inconsistent; of particular concern are offences of child abuse where HMIC found officers reporting excessive workloads, poor supervision and uncertainty about the support plans in place for victims.

⁸ Multi-agency public protection arrangements is the name given to arrangements in England and Wales for the 'responsible authorities' given the task of the management of registered sex offenders, violent and other types of sexual offenders and offenders who pose a serious risk of harm to the public.

HMIC also found deficiencies in the standards of service provided to victims; the constabulary's responsibility to update victims about the progress of enquiries is not well understood. This is disappointing because HMIC highlighted this as an area for improvement in an inspection of vulnerability in 2015.

At the time of inspection, officers and staff were adjusting to a new IT system to report crime. This was proving disruptive. Some supervisors were unable to make entries onto crime reports and procedures to keep track of wanted offenders had been adversely affected.

The constabulary is well acquainted with the problems mentioned in this section. They come in the wake of significant organisational change and established programmes, led by chief officers, are in place to guide the organisation through this period of transition.

More positively, the constabulary manages offenders effectively. The integrated offender management programme brings the constabulary together with other service providers to curb the offending behaviour of prolific and harmful criminals. Dangerous and sex offenders are subject to robust supervision and risk management plans are informed by national best practice.

Areas for improvement

- The force should ensure that all crimes are allocated promptly to investigators with the appropriate skills, accreditation and support to investigate them to a good standard.
- The force should ensure that all investigations are completed to a consistently good standard, and in a timely manner.
- The force should ensure that there is regular and active supervision of investigations to check quality and progress.
- The force should improve its ability to retrieve digital evidence from mobile phones, computers and other electronic devices quickly enough to ensure that investigations are not delayed.
- The force should introduce a clear process to ensure that those who are circulated as wanted on the police national computer, those who fail to appear on police bail and named suspects identified through forensic evidence are arrested swiftly.

How effective is the force at protecting from harm those who are vulnerable, and supporting victims?

This question was inspected between June and August 2015, and the full report was published in December 2015.⁹ The following is a summary of the findings.

Summary of findings



Requires improvement

Avon and Somerset Constabulary is clearly striving to prioritise resources towards areas of greatest threat, risk and harm and to provide maximum protection for vulnerable people. However, we found several areas where improvement is needed to ensure that the service is consistent and that vulnerable people are kept safe. Given the scale of the challenge in this area and the risk that is posed to some of the most vulnerable people overall, the force requires improvement.

HMIC acknowledges that the constabulary is committed to offering a high quality service to the people who are vulnerable and to support victims. The police and crime commissioner and the constabulary have made it a clear priority to tackle domestic and sexual abuse and have committed additional funding and resources to vulnerability. The constabulary now needs to build on this to ensure that it always identifies at an early stage the risk of harm to vulnerable people, and that it consistently gives victims a high-quality service.

The constabulary identifies and responds effectively to vulnerable victims and the innovative Lighthouse programme offers a significant opportunity for improvements in the provision of integrated victim care. While appropriately-trained staff investigate child protection and child sexual exploitation cases, high workloads are adversely affecting the regularity of risk assessments and action plan reviews. HMIC found that the constabulary is allocating some domestic abuse investigations, including those assessed as high risk, to non-specialist staff for investigation.

The constabulary has improved its response to missing and absent children. However there are areas where it can still improve, particularly in relation to the classification of children as absent, rather than missing. This could expose children to more risk of grooming for child sexual abuse. Effective partnership working to protect vulnerable people is in place, particularly within the multi-agency safeguarding hub in the Somerset policing area. Other policing areas are served by

⁹ PEEL: Police effectiveness 2015 (Vulnerability) – Avon and Somerset Constabulary, HMIC, December 2015. Available from: www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmic/publications/police-effectiveness-vulnerability-2015-avon-and-somerset/

safeguarding coordination units where structures for partnership working are less well-developed.

The constabulary has made a good start in ensuring that it is well prepared to tackle child sexual exploitation, with a clear investment of resources into operations to investigate such offences. However, HMIC is concerned at the lack of consistent constabulary processes for staff to register child protection concerns.

This inspection only considered how well prepared the constabulary is to tackle child sexual exploitation.

Avon and Somerset Constabulary has a good range of policy and guidance to assist staff with the management of domestic abuse but HMIC is concerned at inconsistencies in a number of force processes for the recording of information on vulnerable people and the assessment of risk.

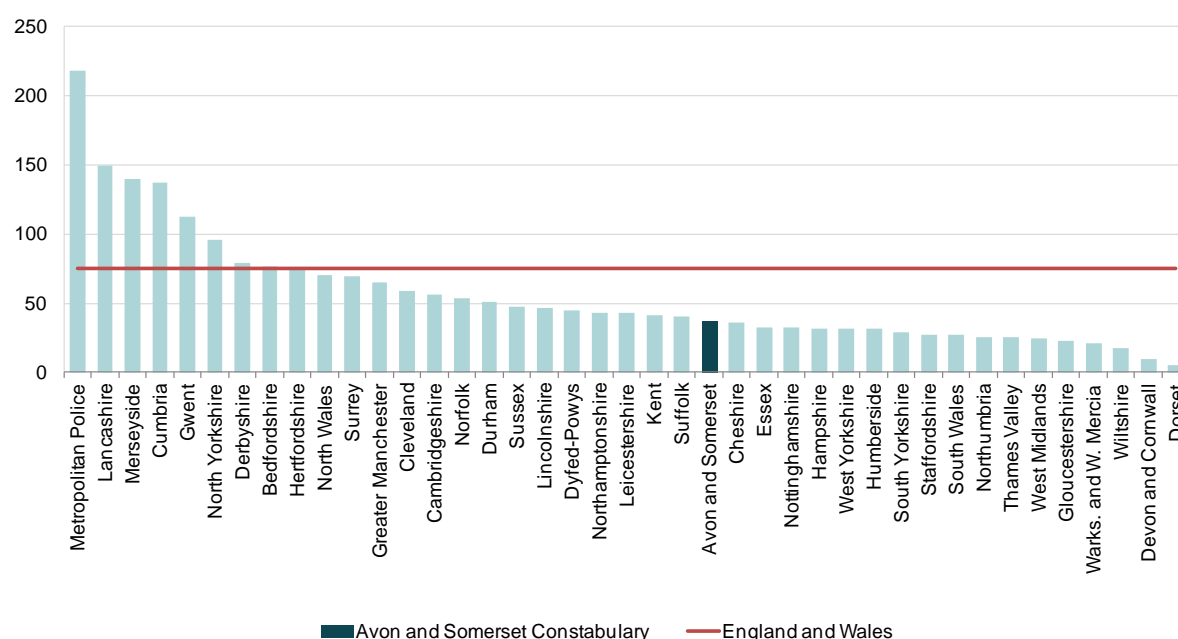
How effective is the force at tackling serious and organised crime, including its arrangements for fulfilling its national policing responsibilities?

Serious and organised crime poses a threat to the public across the whole of the UK and beyond. Its damaging effects are felt by individuals, communities and businesses. Police forces play a critical role in tackling serious and organised crime alongside regional organised crime units (ROCU), the National Crime Agency (NCA) and other partner organisations.

Police forces that are effective tackle serious and organised crime not just by prosecuting offenders, but by disrupting and preventing organised criminality at a local level. They also use specialist capabilities (for example surveillance and undercover policing) where appropriate in order to protect the public from highly sophisticated and rapidly changing organised criminal threats. Specialist capabilities are often shared by a number of forces within a regional area as this provides better value for money and is a more efficient way of working.

As at 30 June 2015, Avon and Somerset Constabulary was actively disrupting, investigating or monitoring 60 organised crime groups (OCGs). This represents 36 OCGs per one million of the population.

Figure 6: Organised crime groups per one million population, by force, as at 30 June 2015^{10 11}



Source: HMIC data collection

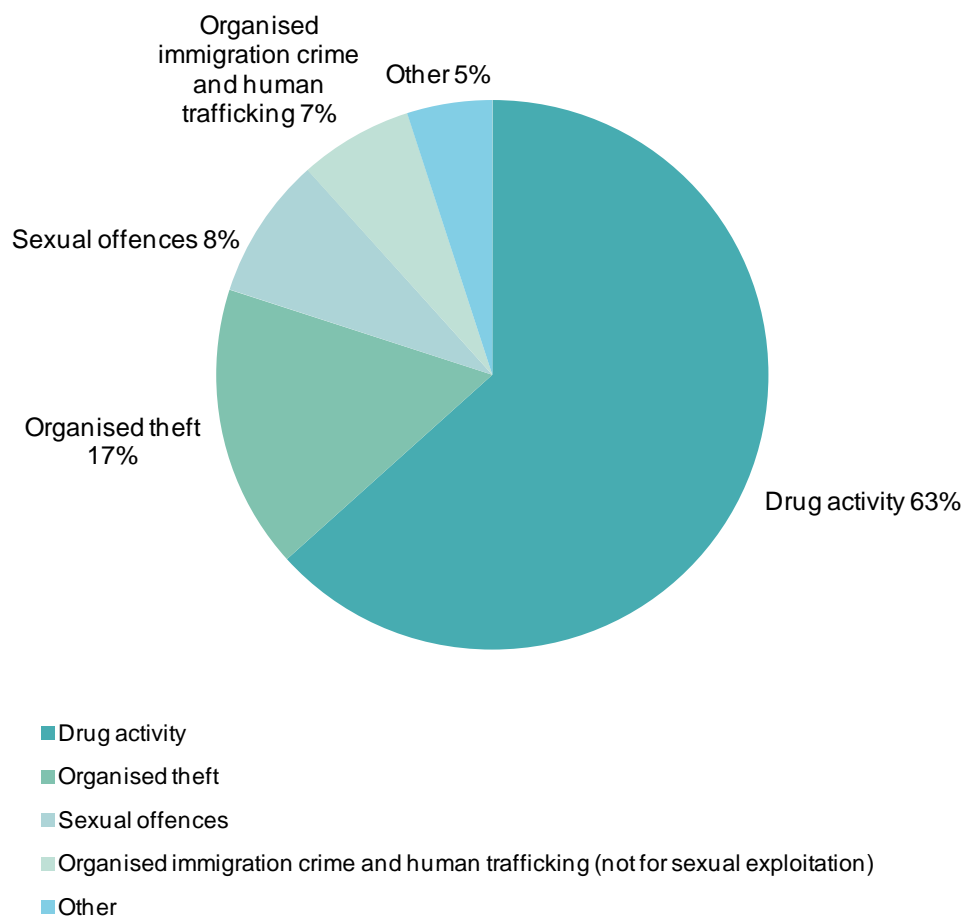
Forces categorise OCGs by the predominant form of criminal activity in which the group is involved. Although OCGs are likely to be involved in multiple forms of criminality, this indicates their most common characteristic. 'Drug activity' was the predominant crime type (63 percent) of the OCGs managed by Avon and Somerset Constabulary as at 30 June 2015. 'Drug activity' was also the most common predominant crime type recorded by all forces in England and Wales,¹² with 64 percent of all OCGs classified in this way.

¹⁰ City of London Police data has been removed from the chart as its OCG data is not comparable with other forces due to size and its wider national remit.

¹¹ The number of OCGs in the Warwickshire Police and West Mercia Police force areas is a combined total of OCGs for the two force areas. The OCGs per one million population rate is based upon their areas' combined population figures.

¹² The Metropolitan Police Service is not included in the England and Wales figure because it does not categorise in the same way as other forces; by the predominant form of criminal activity.

Figure 7: Force organised crime groups by the predominant crime type, as at 30 June 2015¹³



Source: HMIC data collection

Serious and organised crime is one of six national threats specified within *The Strategic Policing Requirement*.¹⁴ These are terrorism, serious and organised crime, national cyber-crime incidents, threats to public order or public safety, civil emergencies, and child sexual abuse. These are complex threats which means that forces must work together to respond to them effectively. It is beyond the scope of this inspection to assess in detail whether forces are capable of responding to these national threats. Instead, HMIC has checked whether forces have the necessary arrangements in place to test their own preparedness for dealing with these threats, should they materialise.

¹³ Figures may not sum to 100 percent, due to rounding.

¹⁴ The Strategic Policing Requirement, Home Office, March 2015, available from: www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/417116/The_Strategic_Policing_Requirement.pdf

How well does the force understand the threat and risk posed by serious and organised crime?

The constabulary effectively assesses the threat from serious and organised crime. The constabulary frequently conducts research and analysis to maintain an up-to-date strategic threat and risk assessment; this highlights crime patterns and emerging threats. This is completed with reference to regional organised crime unit (ROCU) priorities and the national threat picture – in the constabulary's strategic assessment, serious and organised crime is prominent.

In November 2014 central government guidance was issued in relation to the development of serious and organised crime local profiles. The development of these profiles is seen as best practice to understand the full threat picture.

Avon and Somerset Constabulary completed a profile shortly after this guidance was issued which was developed in collaboration with the PCC and partner agencies across the constabulary area. To take this a step further, the constabulary has been forward thinking and formed a serious and organised crime partnership board to ensure the local profile is regularly refreshed. It is also a place to focus on joint problem-solving and a shared approach to the containment of serious and organised crime.

HMIC found that organised crime groups are consistently 'mapped' and scored in line with national guidance. When a police force identifies a group of individuals whom it suspects may be involved in organised crime, it goes through a nationally standardised mapping procedure. This involves entering details of the group's known and suspected activity, associates and capability into a computer system, which assigns a numerical score to each OCG. It also places each OCG into one of several 'bands' which reflect the range and severity of crime in which a group is involved as well as its level of capability and sophistication. Police forces, ROCUs, the NCA and a number of non-police organisations such as Border Force, use OCG mapping.

Despite the use of standard software and methods, forces carry out OCG mapping inconsistently and there is significant variation in the number of mapped OCGs per head of population across England and Wales. This inconsistency is partly due to the unavoidably subjective nature of some aspects of the mapping procedure, which relies on human judgment as well as computer algorithms. Sometimes, groups exhibiting similar characteristics are scored in different ways, and forces do not always use the full range of information available to generate OCG scores, which can compromise their accuracy and usefulness. For these reasons, HMIC has

recommended that ROCUs assume responsibility for OCG mapping on behalf of their constituent forces.¹⁵

Frequent interventions by the constabulary such as intelligence gathering or tactics to disrupt their activity are routinely completed; following such interventions, OCGs are subsequently re-scored in line with the threat they present. In Avon and Somerset there are strong governance procedures to align operational resources to contain the threat presented by OCGs.

The constabulary also has effective means to gather and corroborate information about organised OCGs operating in its area. The constabulary's intelligence unit is complemented by a regional intelligence capability and this provides a more accurate and detailed picture of serious and organised criminality.

How effectively does the force respond to serious and organised crime?

Avon and Somerset Constabulary has adopted a holistic approach to tackling serious and organised crime. It recognises that protracted operations to target OCGs are costly and that a broader range of tactics can also be effective in containing their activity and protecting communities. Avon and Somerset Constabulary therefore takes an inclusive approach; it recognises that contributions from partner organisations are important and understands that police activity at all levels of the organisation can render OCGs ineffective.

Lead responsible officers are appointed to oversee all activity against OCGs and ensure that operational objectives are met. These officers can range from senior detectives if OCGs are being targeted for conviction, to neighbourhood inspectors who direct disruption tactics, to intelligence officers if intelligence gathering is preferable to operational intervention.

The constabulary has strong operational ties with the ROCU; additionally it retains a range of specialist capabilities, for example surveillance teams, so that it has its own stand-alone operational capability. Tried and tested procedures are in place to escalate cases to the ROCU should additional resources be necessary.

HMIC found there is an absence of shared learning and opportunities to understand the 'lifetime management' of the principal offenders in OCGs are being overlooked. It is increasingly important that the management of higher tier criminals extends beyond a successful prosecution to prevent them resuming a criminal lifestyle. This is an area where the constabulary could do more.

¹⁵ *Regional Organised Crime Units: A Review of Capability and Effectiveness*, HMIC, December 2015. Available from: www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmic/wp-content/uploads/regional-organised-crime-units.pdf

To gain a better understanding of its impact on OCGs, the constabulary has adopted national guidance and uses a monthly assessment tool to consider the effect that disruptions tactics have had.

HMIC reviewed investigations of OCGs and found they were supported by all levels of the constabulary as well as partner organisations. They were subject to the governance arrangements explained earlier in this section and some had led to successful prosecutions involving large quantities of illegal drugs.

There is evidence that the constabulary is having an impact on serious and organised crime and the approach it has adopted to make it 'everybody's business' is working well.

How effectively is the force working with partners to prevent serious and organised crime?

A key strand of the government's strategy to tackle serious and organised crime is how agencies can work together to prevent and deter people from becoming involved. The constabulary has utilised the principles of integrated offender management to tackle OCG members and has adopted a number of individuals onto the IRIS (integrated response integrated systems) programme; this provides intensive interventions to steer people away from offending. The constabulary has also made a strategic link with the Think Family programme to ensure that support is available to those who are risk of becoming lifetime criminals.

The use of civil and criminal orders to reduce re-offending as part of a lifetime management approach is an area where the constabulary and its partners could do more. The constabulary has recently organised a seminar to bring better co-ordination to the 'prevent' strand of the government's *Serious and Organised Crime Strategy* and anticipates making progress in this area.

In addition to the benefits from working with partners in serious and organised crime boards, the constabulary has established productive links with the Government Agency Intelligence Network (GAIN). This network facilitates the sharing of information and co-operation on a number of objectives for the public benefit, participating organisations include HM Revenue and Customs and Action Fraud. Among GAIN's operational objectives are included 'frustrating serious and organised crime' and 'making hostile environments for criminals'. Using GAIN enriches the constabulary's understanding of the threat posed by serious and organised crime and is a proven asset in dismantling OCGs.

The constabulary makes good use of opportunities to publicise successful prosecutions and communicates well to prevent individuals and organisations being victimised. Interventions include: a schools programme warning children of the risks of sexual predators; working with budget hotel chains if OCGs are frequenting their

premises; and encouraging the banking sector to report transactions which indicate that elderly account holders may have been subject to scams.

How effective are the arrangements in place to ensure that the force can fulfil its national policing responsibilities?

It is beyond the scope of this inspection to assess in detail whether forces are capable of responding to these national threats. Instead, HMIC has checked whether forces have the necessary arrangements in place to test their own preparedness for dealing with these threats, should they materialise.

Avon and Somerset Constabulary has an effective response to national threats and regularly checks and tests its preparedness to deal with these issues.

An understanding of the six high-level threats in *The Strategic Policing Requirement* and their relevance to Avon and Somerset are articulated in the constabulary's strategic threat and risk assessment.

Good governance arrangements exist to ensure that the appropriate level of operational response is in place for each threat. These are led by a chief officer who has designated a superintendent to be a strand lead for each of the threats. Each strand lead provides six monthly updates on progress and any areas of concern are recorded on the constabulary's risk register.

The constabulary actively contributes to the local resilience forum, a multi-agency committee which is responsible for crisis management and disaster recovery. The constabulary uses the forum to co-ordinate a programme of joint exercises to test the region's readiness for major incidents and catastrophes. Recent exercises have been centred on a simulated terrorist attack, firearms incidents and natural disasters such as flooding.

The constabulary is assessed as being well prepared to counter the national threats in *The Strategic Policing Requirement*.

Summary of findings



Good

This is the first year HMIC has graded forces on their effectiveness at tackling serious and organised crime, including a force's arrangements for fulfilling its national policing responsibilities, so no year-on-year comparison is possible.

Nevertheless, the constabulary is judged to be good at addressing the threat from serious and organised crime. The constabulary's strategic threat assessment articulates the challenges that Avon and Somerset faces from serious and organised

crime. This understanding is strengthened by the development of a serious and organised crime local profile which has been developed in conjunction with partner organisations.

HMIC found that organised crime groups are consistently mapped and scored in line with national guidance. The potential harm that each group poses is frequently assessed through re-scoring exercises; this ensures that the relevant operational response is continually in place to contain their criminal activity.

The constabulary's approach to serious and organised crime is inclusive and predicated on the belief that it is 'everyone's business'. This is borne out by the fact that neighbourhood officers, and increasingly partners, play as an important role in disabling organised crime groups as specialist detectives do.

The constabulary uses its expertise in offender management principles to deter individuals from becoming lifestyle criminals; for example, the constabulary has links with the region's Think Family programme which provides support for those who may be susceptible to involvement in serious criminality.

Additionally, the constabulary is assessed as being in a good state of readiness to counter the threats faced in *The Strategic Policing Requirement*.

Annex A – HMIC judgments

Our judgments

The judgment categories are:

- outstanding;
- good;
- requires improvement; and
- inadequate.

Judgment is made against how effective the force is at keeping people safe and reducing crime; it is not an assessment of the overall effectiveness of policing. In applying the categories HMIC considers whether:

- the effectiveness the force is achieving is good, or exceeds this standard sufficiently to be judged as outstanding;
- the effectiveness of the force requires improvement, and/or there are some weaknesses; or
- the effectiveness of the force is inadequate because it is considerably lower than is expected.