

PEEL: Police effectiveness 2015

An inspection of Bedfordshire Police



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

Overall judgment¹



Requires improvement

HMIC judges that Bedfordshire Police requires improvement in its approach to keeping people safe and reducing crime. The force needs to improve how it prevents crime and anti-social behaviour. The force's crime investigation is good and it works well to stop some re-offending. The force has good arrangements in place to ensure that it can fulfil its national policing responsibilities, but needs to improve the way it tackles serious and organised crime which is a significant threat in parts of Bedfordshire. Of concern is the force's inadequate approach to protecting vulnerable victims as detailed in our vulnerability report in December 2015.² 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

Bedfordshire Police requires improvement in its approach to keeping people safe and reducing crime. The force is committed to preventing crime and anti-social behaviour. Generally, police officers understand this but the force has not yet assigned the right number of appropriately skilled staff to local neighbourhoods so that there can be a focus on preventing problems from occurring in the first place, or from escalating. The force needs to do more to learn from what works and share these lessons throughout the force, so that it can use its limited resources to maximum effect.

When a crime has occurred, the force acts quickly and its subsequent investigations are mostly good. The force works well to identify, investigate and bring to justice repeat and dangerous offenders and stop them re-offending. The force has improved its approach to investigating crime since HMIC's last inspection in 2014 which is extremely positive given the extensive challenges the force faces, not least its funding challenge.

The force's approach to tackling domestic abuse has improved since HMIC's last inspection in 2014, although the force still needs to improve its services dedicated to

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

² *PEEL: Police effectiveness 2015 (Vulnerability) – Bedfordshire Police*, HMIC, December 2015. Available from: www.justiceinspectors.gov.uk/hmic/publications/police-effectiveness-vulnerability-2015-bedfordshire/

supporting victims and protecting the most vulnerable people. HMIC has serious concerns about how Bedfordshire Police deals with missing children, particularly looked-after children, who are among the most vulnerable and need to be properly protected. We found gaps in the training and awareness of frontline staff about how they should identify risk and vulnerability and the steps they should take to safeguard vulnerable people, particularly children. Following our inspection the force took immediate steps to address the areas of serious concern. The force has made a good start in preparing to tackle child sexual exploitation.

Bedfordshire Police deals with a range of complex policing challenges and serious criminality on a scale not normally experienced by a force of its size. The force, together with its partners, needs to improve its understanding of the threat posed by serious and organised crime, and improve its multi-agency response to it, including work to prevent people from becoming involved in organised crime.

The leadership of the force has strong oversight of its ability to respond to national threats, such as terrorism, serious cyber-crime incidents and child sexual abuse. Its own arrangements for ensuring it can meet its national obligations in this regard (such as planning, testing and exercising) are good.

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



Requires improvement

Bedfordshire Police requires improvement in its approach to crime and anti-social behaviour prevention, and keeping people safe. This is a deterioration since our last inspection in 2014 when HMIC judged the force to be good at reducing crime and preventing offending. However, HMIC recognises that at the point in time of this inspection the force is implementing a new policing model, designed to increase its capacity and capability to focus on crime and anti-social behaviour prevention. It will take some time for these changes to take effect.

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



Good

Bedfordshire Police's approach to investigating crime and managing offenders is good. This is an improvement on the 2014 crime inspection, in which the force was judged as requiring improvement.

Force processes for the initial investigation and allocation of crime work well. The quality of subsequent investigations is mostly good. We found that staff in the new community teams are not fully trained, but they are being supported by qualified investigators as part of the transition to the new policing model. While this area needs improving,

The force needs to address a number of areas for improvement as it implements the new policing model, and it is working hard to improve.

Force priorities reflect a commitment to prevention, partnership working and keeping people safe. This commitment is generally understood throughout the force. The force recognises that it has not yet assigned the right number of appropriately skilled police officers and staff to local neighbourhoods to focus on preventing problems from occurring or from escalating.

The force is improving its systems and processes at force and neighbourhood level, and uses a range of powers and tactics to work with partner organisations to tackle anti-social behaviour and keep people safe. It needs to do more to learn from what works and share these lessons throughout the force, so that it can use its limited resources to maximum effect.

the force is aware of the risk and provides additional training to community officers and staff. Investigation plans are thorough and well-documented, following approved practice, and we saw evidence of effective support and review by supervisors. Forensic and digital specialists are used effectively to support investigations, with backlogs promptly addressed.

The force generally keeps victims well-informed as investigations progress and contacts them after seven days to ensure that they are happy with the police service and have been updated with the progress of their investigation.

The force identifies vulnerable offenders and makes efforts to divert them from further offending. While we found a few areas for improvement, the force's processes for working with partner organisations to identify, monitor and work with repeat and dangerous offenders to stop them re-offending generally work well.

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



Inadequate

Bedfordshire Police needs to improve the services it provides to vulnerable people in a number of key areas. It has made some good progress since last year and has improved its approach to domestic abuse; but there is still more work to do to ensure that it consistently responds well to victims and manages the risk they face. HMIC has some serious concerns about the way Bedfordshire Police deals with missing children, particularly looked after children, who are among the most vulnerable to begin with and need to be properly protected.

There is a strong commitment to improving the services to protect vulnerable people and police officers and staff understand and share this commitment. The force has invested extra resource to the specialist services that support those who are vulnerable and keep them safe. But there are inconsistencies in the way risks are assessed which means that vulnerable people may not always get the response from the police that is needed to keep them safe.

There are also gaps in the training and awareness of frontline staff about how they should identify risk and

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



Requires improvement

Bedfordshire Police requires improvement in its approach to identifying and tackling serious and organised crime in its area. This is the first year that HMIC has graded forces on their effectiveness at tackling serious and organised crime, including a force's arrangements for ensuring that it can fulfil its national policing responsibilities, so no year-on-year comparison is possible.

The force needs to improve its understanding of the threat posed by serious and organised crime, and improve its multi-agency response to it, including work to prevent people from becoming involved. This includes its approach to identifying, mapping and managing organised crime groups.

It has access to an extensive range of specialist capabilities provided by the Eastern Region Specialist Operations Unit. The force carries out some good early work with schools and universities to identify vulnerable young people who may be at risk of being drawn onto serious and organised crime.

The force has robust arrangements in place to satisfy itself that it is fulfilling its national policing responsibilities.

vulnerability and the steps they should take to protect and safeguard vulnerable people, particularly children. The force has made a good start in preparing to tackle child sexual exploitation more robustly and must now build on this initial approach with partner organisations.

Force in numbers



Calls for assistance

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

Bedfordshire Police

England and Wales

200

350



Crime

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

Bedfordshire Police

England and Wales

61.2

63.0

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

Bedfordshire Police

England and Wales

58.2

60.3

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

Bedfordshire Police

England and Wales

+5.2%

+4.5%

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

Bedfordshire Police

England and Wales

-5.5%

-12.6%



Charge rate

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

Bedfordshire Police

England and Wales

13.4%

16.0%



Anti-social behaviour

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

Bedfordshire Police

England and Wales

33.6

32.9

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

Bedfordshire Police

England and Wales

31.3

36.2



Domestic abuse

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

Bedfordshire Police

England and Wales

10.9%

10.0%

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

Bedfordshire Police

England and Wales

8.6%

8.5%



Organised crime groups

Organised crime groups per million population as at 30 June 2015

Bedfordshire Police

England and Wales

76.1

74.7



Victim satisfaction rate

Victim satisfaction rate 12 months to 31 March 2015

Bedfordshire Police

England and Wales

82.4%

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 the efficiency and legitimacy of Bedfordshire Police are available from the HMIC website (www.justiceinspectors.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:³

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 Bedfordshire Police.

³ 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-bedfordshire/) 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 Bedfordshire?

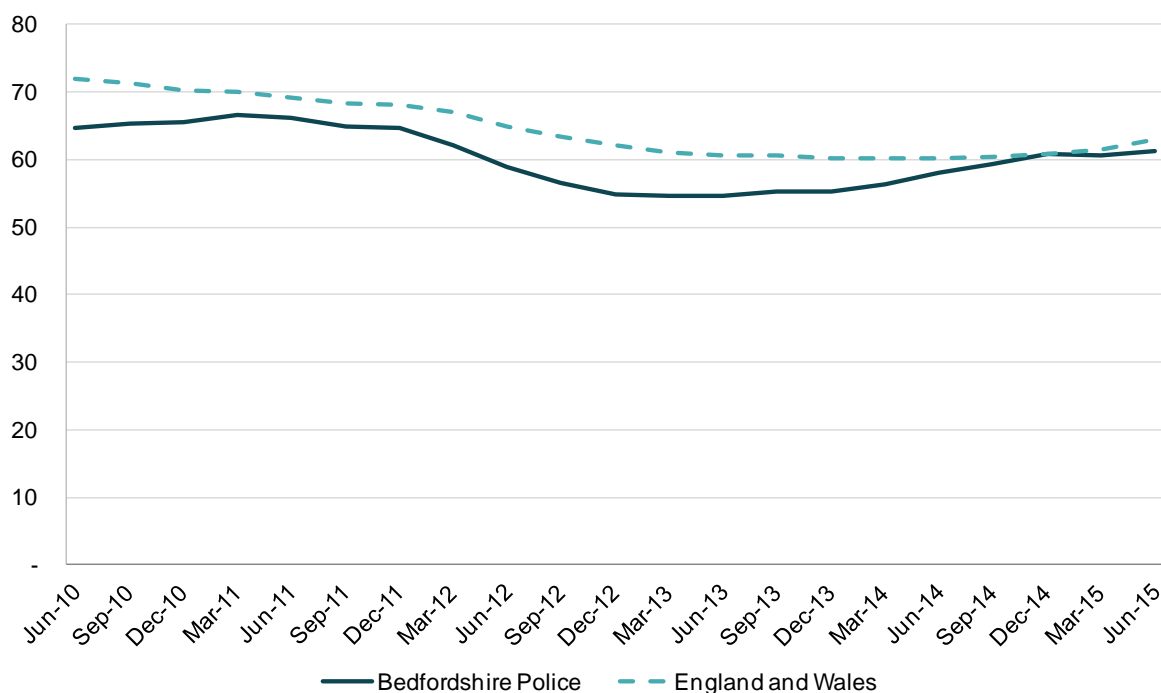
Although police recorded crime is by no means a complete measure of the totality of demand for calls on its service that a force faces, it does provide a comparable indication of performance across all forces. Crime rates are reported as a number of crimes per 1,000 population in each force area to enable 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 5 percent in Bedfordshire compared with a reduction of 13 percent across all forces in England and Wales.

Over this same period, victim-based crime (i.e. crimes involving a direct victim such as an individual, a group, or an organisation) decreased by 6 percent in Bedfordshire, compared with a reduction of 12 percent across England and Wales.

When compared with the previous 12 month period, police recorded crime (excluding fraud) in Bedfordshire increased by 5 percent for the year ending 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 Bedfordshire (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	Bedfordshire Police	England and Wales
Recorded crime (excluding fraud)	61.2	63.0
Victim-based crime	55.3	56.0
Sexual offences	1.4	1.6
Assault with injury	6.5	6.3
Burglary in a dwelling*	12.2	8.4
Anti-social behaviour incidents*	33.6	32.9

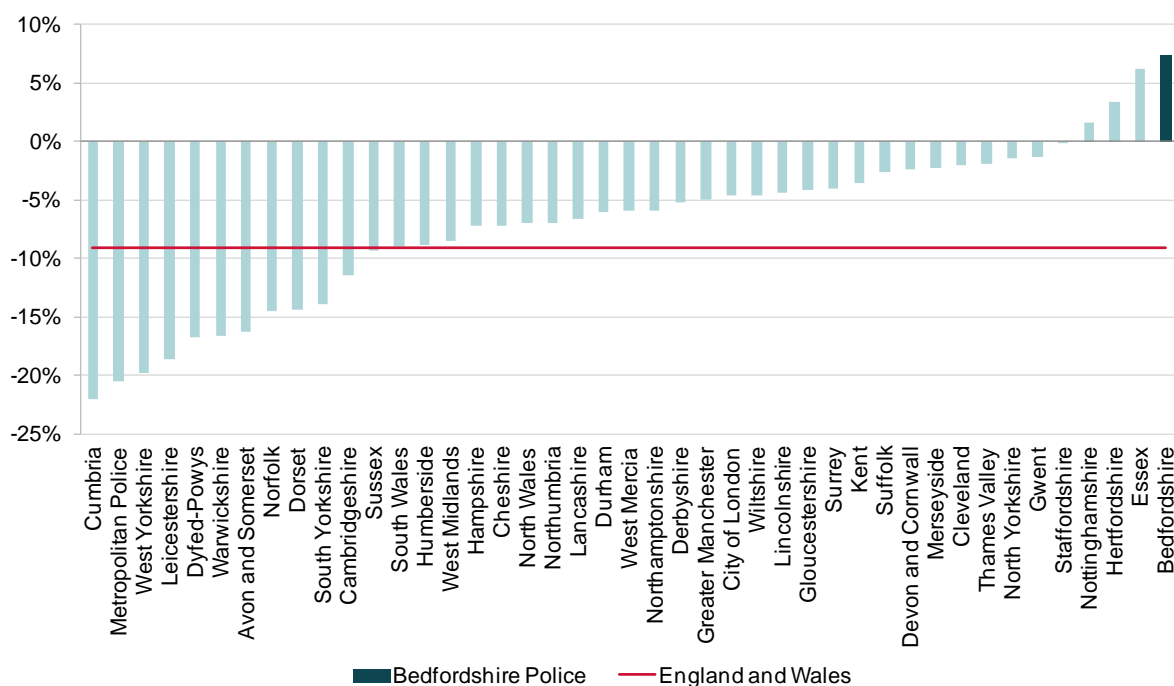
Source: Home Office data, HMIC data return

*Anti-social behaviour data is from the force'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 police force area. We are not judging the effectiveness of the force on police recorded crime rates only.

In the 12 months to 30 June 2015, Bedfordshire Police recorded 21,618 incidents of anti-social behaviour. This is 7 percent more incidents than the force 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?

Bedfordshire Police’s overall plan for reducing crime demonstrates a commitment to crime and anti-social behaviour prevention and keeping people safe. The force collects and analyses a comprehensive range of information, including data from local authorities, private and voluntary sector organisations, together with public consultation results. This helps the force to identify the strategic threats and risks facing Bedfordshire’s communities as part of the annual assessment process. This work informs the chief constable’s annual delivery plan, which reflects the priorities set out in the police and crime commissioner’s police and crime plan. The priorities

reflect clear commitments to supporting victims, working with partners, keeping people safe from crime and anti-social behaviour and building a stronger link between the police and the community.

HMIC is encouraged that the force has recognised that it needs to increase the number of frontline police officers available and to place more emphasis on neighbourhood problem-solving and crime prevention. We also recognise the clear commitment of the force to improving services.

Bedfordshire is implementing a new policing model which aims to tackle current weaknesses. The model has been designed to provide greater opportunities for better crime prevention and problem-solving activities through the new community teams that will be fully-staffed by March 2016. The community teams will consist of locally-based police officers and fewer police community support officers (PCSOs), supported by special constables and volunteers. This is an ambitious plan and HMIC is concerned that the community teams may not have the capacity or capability to carry out the preventive work the force aspires to, even when fully resourced.

The commitment to preventing crime and anti-social behaviour and keeping people safe is not yet fully appreciated throughout the whole force. Bedfordshire Police's leadership team needs to do more work to ensure that all officers and staff understand the importance of their role in prevention activities. Although there is some operational activity to achieve local prevention priorities, this is generally seen as the responsibility of community teams, rather than the whole force. We also found a limited understanding of prevention across the force. Officers and staff view prevention as short-term activity such as patrolling in response to a crime spike, rather than considering longer-term preventative strategies as part of routine police work.

We also found limited evidence that the force identifies and tackles effectively low-level anti-social behaviour, with high-risk anti-social behaviour being given a greater focus by the priority anti-social behaviour teams. This limits the force's opportunities to prevent the escalation of low-level anti-social behaviour into more serious problems for communities. Bedfordshire is one of only a few forces that have seen an increase in anti-social behaviour, but it does not yet fully understand the reasons behind this increase. Bedfordshire Police needs to make clear to its staff and officers that crime prevention is a priority for all. The force must also understand better the nature of anti-social behaviour and ensure that it can intervene earlier with partner organisations to prevent further offending.

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

Bedfordshire Police has allocated insufficient resources to crime prevention in recent years. The force recognises that it has neglected this area of policing as a consequence of previous workforce reductions, which saw all police officers moved out of neighbourhood teams, leaving prevention work solely to PCSOs. The force is implementing a new policing model and is working hard to strengthen its community

policing presence with police officers to improve its approach to the prevention of crime and anti-social behaviour. At the same time it is reducing PCSO numbers and working hard to increase volunteers and special constables. However, we found that the police officers in the new community teams are dealing mainly with crime investigation, rather than crime prevention or problem-solving activities. This means that the force has yet to achieve the increase in capacity it requires to focus on crime prevention and tackling anti-social behaviour.

In our 2014 crime inspection, we recommended that the force should review neighbourhood policing to assess whether it has the appropriate number of staff with the correct skills to provide an effective neighbourhood policing service. The force recognises that it still does not have the skills mix and capacity required to deliver improvements in preventing crime and anti-social behaviour. The force expects to see progress once it has implemented fully the policing model in March 2016. HMIC will continue to monitor progress towards this objective.

Bedfordshire Police targets its neighbourhood activity based on local knowledge of risk and harm with some limited analysis to identify and solve short and long-term problems relating to repeat and vulnerable victims. However, during our fieldwork we found limited evidence of this early intervention to prevent problems from escalating, particularly for low-level anti-social behaviour. The force needs to support its staff to respond effectively to low-level anti-social behaviour. The priority anti-social behaviour teams that consist of police officers, PCSOs and partners deal with high-risk anti-social behaviour and support local community teams.

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

The force uses a range of preventative approaches and tactics but it lacks the processes to systematically evaluate their effectiveness. Community teams use a range of tactics to prevent crime and anti-social behaviour, keep people safe, tackle offending behaviour, reduce opportunities for crime and improve victim satisfaction. These tactics include anti-social behaviour powers, disruptive tactics, advice and equipment (such as CCTV or neighbourhood alert messages advising of crimes in the local area), campaigns and restorative interventions.

In our 2014 crime inspection, we recommended that the force needed to systematically review and evaluate the benefits of current and new tactics and initiatives, to better understand the value of different approaches and to capture learning and good practice. The force has made some progress in this area. A chief superintendent chairs the evidence-based policing board, which seeks to identify good practice and explores more innovative approaches to predict criminal activity. The force is working with the College of Policing and other academic establishments to this end.

The force's intranet page details responses to particular problems so that staff can learn from what was successful in the past. However, we found that community team

has limited understanding of problem-solving despite some additional training being provided for PCSOs.

The force has a dedicated IT system that is used to record and share anti-social behaviour actions with some partners. This could be developed to become a more useful tool, if the force used it more systematically to record and evaluate approaches to problem-solving. The force would benefit from a more consistent and sophisticated problem-solving process, including use of predictive policing techniques and evidence of innovations and 'what works' from other forces, academics and partners. While HMIC recognises that Bedfordshire has not yet fully implemented its new policing model, the force needs to ensure that frontline staff take responsibility for routinely evaluating, sharing and refining effective practice.

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?

The force understands that prevention activity is most effective when undertaken jointly with partner organisations, and while it has invested time and energy, it needs to do more to do to engage with partners at all levels of the organisation. We found some effective professional relationships, but some partners commented on the lack of force-wide engagement in the design of the new model and inconsistent attendance from the force at strategic and tactical meetings with partner organisations. While this may be due to staff changes during the implementation of the interim phase of the new model, a shared understanding with partners and force employees of how the force will continue to engage at every level of partnership working is essential.

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

The force has some good information-sharing with partners at a strategic and local level such as anti-social behaviour priority teams, the multi-agency gangs panel (MAGPAN) and community safety partnerships (CSPs) who can request information from the force as well as provide data which are used to inform the 'know your community' briefing updates for frontline staff.

The force continues to develop the way it shares information with partners, including the establishment of three multi-agency safeguarding hubs (MASHs).⁴

HMIC found that not all partner organisations felt that the police saw the benefit of mutual information-sharing. Partners would value better engagement with the police prior to high-visibility operations such as Operation Vision (police-led) and 'Pride in' (local authority-led), but we received positive feedback from partners on the improvements to sharing of information and joint working to tackle serious and organised crime.

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

HMIC saw some good examples of the force's existing and planned problem-solving with partner organisations to prevent crime and anti-social behaviour and keep people safe, including:

- undertaking regular joint operations alongside licensed premises, volunteers, known as 'street angels' and the local council to keep people safe in the night time economy;
- plans to introduce joint street patrols with mental health professionals in Luton;
- using a range of powers to keep people safe in public places including dispersal orders to tackle potential violent behaviour in town centres, community protection notices to deal with anti-social individuals;
- plans to introduce parish constables in rural areas; and
- working with schools and youth offending teams to teach young people about dangers and consequences of getting involved with gangs and other criminal and anti-social activity.

The force works with partner organisations to promote resolutions that protect communities and victims, once crime and anti-social behaviour has occurred. Community officers use diversionary options to deal with low-level anti-social and criminal behaviour.

⁴ A multi-agency safeguarding hub (MASH) brings together into a single location key safeguarding agencies to share information, better identify risks to children (and in some areas, vulnerable adults), and improve decision-making, interventions, and outcomes.

Summary of findings



Requires improvement

Bedfordshire Police requires improvement in its approach to crime and anti-social behaviour prevention, and keeping people safe. This is a deterioration since our last inspection in 2014 when HMIC judged the force to be good at reducing crime and preventing offending. However, HMIC recognises that at the point in time of this inspection the force is implementing a new policing model, designed to increase its capacity and capability to focus on crime and anti-social behaviour prevention. It will take some time for these changes to take effect. The force needs to address a number of areas for improvement as it implements the new policing model, and it is working hard to improve.

Force priorities reflect a commitment to prevention, partnership working and keeping people safe. This commitment is generally understood throughout the force. The force recognises that it has not yet assigned the right number of appropriately skilled police officers and staff to local neighbourhoods to focus on preventing problems from occurring or from escalating.

The force is improving its systems and processes at force and neighbourhood level, and uses a range of powers and tactics to work with partner organisations to tackle anti-social behaviour and keep people safe. It needs to do more to learn from what works and share these lessons throughout the force, so that it can use its limited resources to maximum effect.

Areas for improvement

- The force should ensure that its community teams are adequately resourced and skilled to provide an effective policing service to their communities.
- The force should use evidence of 'what works' drawn from other forces, academics and partners to continually improve its approach to the prevention of crime and anti-social behaviour. There should be routine evaluation of tactics and sharing of effective practice.

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. Bedfordshire Police, however, has been providing the Home Office with full data since July 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 year to 30 June 2015 for all recorded crime (excluding fraud)^{5 6 7}

Outcome type/group	Bedfordshire Number of outcomes	Rate	England and Wales Number of outcomes	Rate
Charged/Summonsed	5,295	13.4	577,678	16.0
Taken into consideration	234	0.6	21,318	0.6
Out-of-court (formal)	1,528	3.9	165,384	4.6
Caution - youths	129	0.3	19,703	0.5
Caution - adults	1,230	3.1	115,000	3.2
Penalty Notices for Disorder	169	0.4	30,681	0.8
Out-of-court (informal)	2,213	5.6	159,915	4.4
Cannabis/Khat warning	371	0.9	41,964	1.2
Community resolution	1,842	4.7	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 these include 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/khat⁸ 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. When considering all crimes recorded (excluding fraud), outcome rates for Bedfordshire Police are broadly in line with most other forces in England and Wales.

⁵ Rate based on number of outcomes recorded in year to 30 June 2015 divided by number of offences recorded in year to 30 June 2015.

⁶ 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

⁷ '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. Community resolutions are an out-of-court disposal the police can use to deal with anti-social behaviour and low-level crime.

⁸ 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.

Since the last HMIC crime inspection in 2014, the force has improved its approach to investigations and is in the process of improving the skills of the new community team that deals with less complex crime investigations. The force has revised its crime allocation policy and has a good process for initial investigation and subsequent allocation of crimes for further investigation. There is an agreed process for supervisors to reallocate crime if a different investigating officer has more appropriate skills and expertise.

As part of its new policing model, the force has changed the approach to responding to calls for police service. There are now only two types of response when a police attendance is required: 'fast' or 'fixed'. The force decision is made based on the assessed risk of each call. It either sends a response officer immediately as an emergency ('fast') or makes an appointment with the caller for a later police attendance from a member of the community team in that area (fixed), or resolves the call by a telephone investigation without a police attendance. The force has developed this approach to make best use of its resources and prioritise the way police time is spent according to risk. The force investigates approximately 40 percent of low-risk crime over the telephone. HMIC is satisfied that the allocation and investigation of crime using this method is developing and the force is closely monitoring this aspect of the new policing model.

How well does the force investigate different types of crime?

Once allocated, the force effectively undertakes investigations into 'volume' crimes (the most frequent and less complex types of crime like burglary, robbery and assault). Crimes the force assesses as less complex or lower risk (e.g. criminal damage) are investigated by police officers and investigating officers (police staff) in the new crime and community team. The force has co-located this team with the criminal investigation department (CID) that provide support and guidance when needed. The force provides additional investigation and prosecution file preparation training and support to the new teams.

Investigative staff are appropriately trained or working towards accredited status, and the force ensures that investigative opportunities are followed up in a timely fashion. Most of the crime cases that HMIC reviewed had clear investigation plans set by a

supervisor, which detailed the actions the investigator should take to ensure all investigative opportunities are considered and completed. The force crime recording system documents these plans. We saw good evidence of supervised decision-making by sergeants who make enquiries promptly, keep victims up-to-date (including seven-day victim updates), and record results of their enquiries.

The force works collaboratively with Hertfordshire Constabulary and Cambridgeshire Constabulary providing crime scene investigators (CSIs). We found a common approach for attendance, although discretion can be used by CSIs where it is justified. We also saw that the force makes effective, appropriate and consistent use of forensic specialists to support investigations and considers the full range of forensic opportunities.

For more complex crime, such as child abuse or serious sexual offences, the force allocates cases to specialist units containing officers with the specialist skills and training required to conduct complex investigations. Most cases that HMIC reviewed had a clear investigation plan, and there was strong and consistent evidence of effective supervision, including supervisory involvement in decision-making. Occasionally, non-specialist detectives deal with more specialist investigations, such as medium-risk domestic abuse cases.

We found a clear demarcation of regional and force responsibilities in relation to serious and complex crime investigation. All murder or kidnap is investigated by the Major Crime Unit (MCU) shared by Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire and Hertfordshire forces. Specialist teams within each force investigate serious sexual offences, high-risk cases of domestic abuse and other complex crimes. The Eastern Region Special Operations Unit (ERSOU) is a regional unit comprising police officers from each force across the region, which provides additional support for serious and organised crime. This is an effective division of responsibility, ensuring that appropriately trained officers undertake the most complex investigations.

The force introduced 'transforming summary justice' in April 2015,⁹ which has improved the quality of prosecution files, as corroborated by the Crown Prosecution Service. The regional head of serious and organised crime ensures that a single point of contact is assigned the task of disseminating results of domestic homicide reviews, serious case reviews and vulnerable adult reviews to the force. The force reviews homicide investigations every six months and holds seminars for senior managers to share the learning.

The professional standards department regularly publishes learning from cases across the collaborated forces (Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire and Hertfordshire).

⁹ The criminal justice system is working towards reducing delays in the magistrates' courts, holding fewer hearings per case and increasing the number of trials that go ahead the first time that they are listed. This programme is called transforming summary justice.

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 (HTCUs), carry out these examinations.

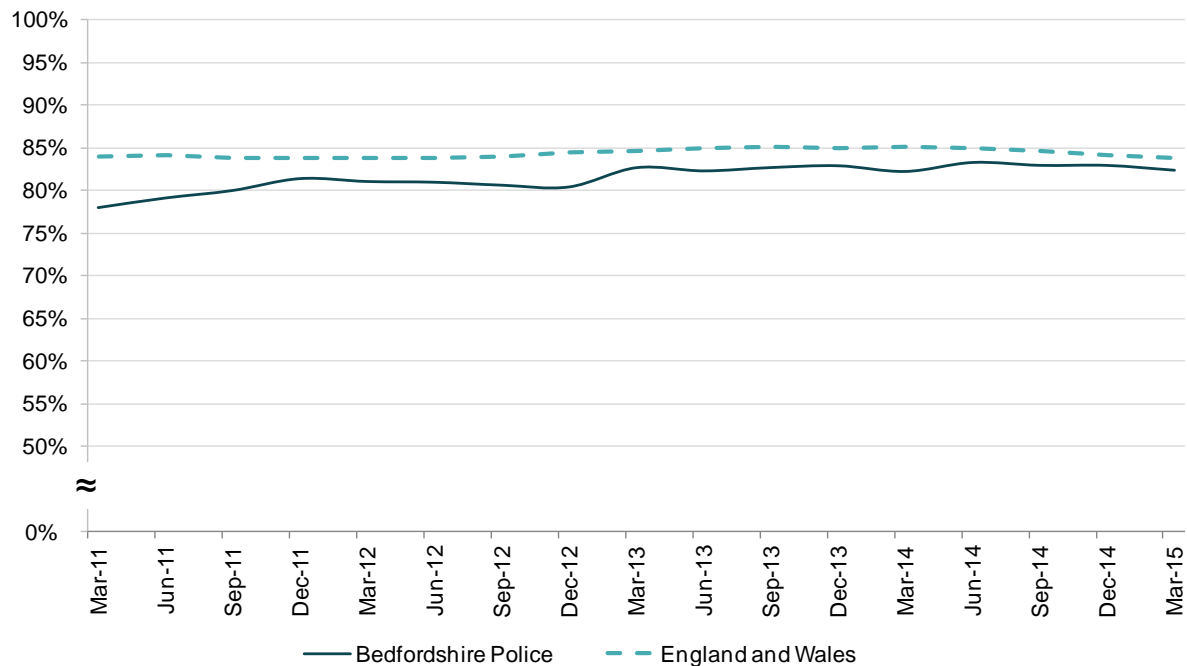
Bedfordshire has a well-managed HTCU which has an effective prioritisation process for dealing with the most serious offences first. For high-risk cases involving vulnerable children and adults, the HTCU examines vital evidence immediately. For lower priority cases Bedfordshire has ensured local staff have been skilled to examine devices themselves to retrieve intelligence and information, without having to submit them to the HTCU.

There is no backlog of mobile phones pending examination and a manageable backlog for computers. This is commendable as many other forces have failed to take the positive steps that Bedfordshire has taken to be able to recover digital evidence in a timely and efficient manner. The force has achieved this through more efficient working including streamlined case reporting, triage of exhibits prior to submission for examination, attendance of its forensic specialists at searches to minimise unnecessary seizure of items, and a clear process by which HTCU assesses whether to accept an exhibit.

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

Of those who have been the victim of a crime in Bedfordshire in the 12 months to 31 March 2015, 82.4 percent were satisfied with their whole experience with the police. This is lower than the national victim satisfaction rate of 83.8 percent over the same time period. The victim satisfaction rate in Bedfordshire for the 12 months to 31 March 2015 is broadly in line with the previous year's rate, while it is significantly higher than the rate for the 12 months to 31 March 2011.

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 force effectively identifies and diverts vulnerable offenders away from the criminal justice system, to prevent further offending. The force works well with partner organisations who provide support, guidance and activities to divert offenders away from crime. We found good custody processes for referring offenders with drugs and alcohol issues to specialist services.

While Bedfordshire Police resolves more low-level crime by out-of-court community resolutions in comparison to most forces, the force could deal with more offenders using restorative justice, as an alternative to court prosecutions. Restorative justice brings together people harmed by crime or conflict with those responsible for the harm, in search of a positive outcome.¹⁰

How well does the force deal with repeat offenders?

The force has effective processes in place to identify repeat offenders and prevent them re-offending. Like most forces, Bedfordshire Police has several groups of offenders ranging from serious sexual and violent offenders to prolific burglars.

¹⁰ Restorative justice gives victims the chance to tell offenders the real impact of their crime, get answers to their questions and get an apology. Restorative justice holds offenders to account for what they have done. It helps them understand the real impact, take responsibility, and make amends.

The integrated offender management (IOM)¹¹ partnership board is attended by a representative from each of the community safety partnerships (CSPs), chaired by a local authority chief executive and meets quarterly. The board monitors operational efficiency, commissioning services and sharing of best practice. This includes 'YouTurn Futures' a charity which local partners set up to provide strategic support to IOM teams which are co-located with the local authority.

The IOM scheme currently manages 119 offenders (as at 1 July 2015), and they are predominantly perpetrators of theft, burglary and robbery. The focus on these crime types limits the force's ability to deal with other types of offenders who also pose a risk to the community and may cause greater harm. While the force is considering widening the IOM remit to high risk domestic abuse offenders, it has not yet done so. The force manages high-risk domestic abuse offenders within its specialist domestic abuse unit, but can improve and co-ordinate this activity using the IOM approach in-line with force priorities to keep people safe.

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

The force has effective processes for identifying and monitoring sexual offenders. Skilled and accredited staff use appropriate plans to reduce the risk from registered sex offenders, with clear supervision and governance arrangements. The force has recognised the risk from a growing number of dangerous offenders who are suitable for the multi-agency public protection arrangements (MAPPA). The force and partner organisations (including prison and probation services) use MAPPA to monitor those offenders assessed as presenting high risk to the public, and to stop them re-offending. Offenders assessed as presenting the highest level of risk require co-ordinated action with partner organisations to reduce these risks. As at 1 July 2015, 45 offenders were being dealt with in this way in Bedfordshire. The force has a clear framework to manage offenders. Violent offenders are managed by the detective inspector in the community team; registered sex offenders are managed by the public protection unit and high risk offenders are managed by the public protection detective chief inspector. In the 12 month to 30 June 2015, Bedfordshire Police issued 52 Sexual Offence Prevention Orders (SOPOs) of which four have been breached.

¹¹ IOM brings a multi-agency response to the crime and reoffending threats faced by local communities. The most persistent and problematic offenders are identified and managed jointly by partner agencies working together.

Summary of findings



Good

Bedfordshire Police's approach to investigating crime and managing offenders is good. This is an improvement on the 2014 crime inspection, in which the force was judged as requiring improvement.

Force processes for the initial investigation and allocation of crime work well. The quality of subsequent investigations is mostly good. We found that staff in the new community teams are not fully trained, but they are being supported by qualified investigators as part of the transition to the new policing model. While this area needs improving, the force is aware of the risk and provides additional training to community officers and staff. Investigation plans are thorough and well-documented, following approved practice, and we saw evidence of effective support and review by supervisors. Forensic and digital specialists are used effectively to support investigations, with backlogs promptly addressed.

The force generally keeps victims well-informed as investigations progress and contacts them after seven days to ensure that they are happy with the police service and have been updated with the progress of their investigation.

The force identifies vulnerable offenders and makes efforts to divert them from further offending. While we found a few areas for improvement, the force's processes for working with partner organisations to identify, monitor and work with repeat and dangerous offenders to stop them re-offending generally work well.

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 2015.¹² The following is a summary of the findings.

Summary of findings



Inadequate

HMIC found that there are weaknesses in the way Bedfordshire Police protects and supports people who are vulnerable. Although we found improvements in these services since last year, particularly for victims of domestic abuse, there remain weaknesses in the way risks are assessed and the way in which the police response is provided. The force needs to make improvements in several areas, most notably in its unreliable and ineffective processes for dealing with missing children and young people. Given the significant risk that the weaknesses pose to some of the most vulnerable people, HMIC judges that overall the force is inadequate.

HMIC acknowledges that Bedfordshire Police has a strong commitment to protecting people. It has reorganised the way it provides policing and invested additional resources to improve services to the public. It has focused particularly on providing extra staff in specialist teams, such as those tackling child sexual exploitation, and domestic abuse, to improve the police response to those who are vulnerable and keep them safe. The force is to be commended for this, especially as the force faces a greater challenge than many other forces in responding to the required budget reductions in this era of austerity.

However, the force needs to go further and improve its approach to identifying risk and the nature of a victim's vulnerability at an early stage so that it can have confidence that it is consistently providing the right response to manage the risk, support and protect people. The force has prioritised THRIVE training for control room staff and most of them have received training. Although still in its infancy, HMIC found the assessment model was not working effectively and the right people were not always sent to deal with the right incidents, or, indeed sent at all. Action is required to ensure the risk to victims is reliably assessed and those deemed vulnerable adequately safeguarded.

¹² *PEEL: Police effectiveness 2015 (Vulnerability – Bedfordshire Police, HMIC, December 2015.* Available from: www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmic/publications/police-effectiveness-vulnerability-2015-bedfordshire/

The force also needs to ensure that the frontline officers in the new community teams have the appropriate skills and are trained to provide the right tailored response to vulnerable people, ensure they are properly safeguarded and that crimes against them are properly investigated.

The force's response to missing and absent children is poor. HMIC found that too many children are recorded as absent instead of missing and therefore considered to be at 'no risk'.¹³ This means that opportunities to protect vulnerable children or, for example, to identify a potential risk of sexual exploitation, may be missed. Even where children are recorded as missing there are weak processes in place including no clear ownership or understanding of who progresses the investigation. The exception to this is that those identified as high risk receive a better service. However, a poor approach to the initial risk assessment means that the force cannot be confident that risks are properly understood and managed. Joint work with partner organisations on high risk missing children is effective.

The force investigates effectively crime which is committed against victims who are assessed as facing the highest risk. In general, the right level of investigative expertise is assigned to cases based on the complexity of investigation. The force has recently introduced a new policing model, which has changed the structure of the force and is intended to better match resources against demand. However, HMIC found that the implementation of the new policing model is problematic with investigative opportunities and immediate safeguarding opportunities being missed and therefore failing to provide tailored support in both missing and absent persons and domestic abuse investigations.

Bedfordshire Police is in the early stages of preparing to tackle child sexual exploitation. It should continue to build upon its approach to ensure consistent operational practice.

Bedfordshire Police is to be commended for having taken immediate action to address the concerns highlighted during this inspection. The force has stopped conducting DASH risk assessments over the phone for domestic abuse victims, and has developed a plan to improve officer and staff understanding of risk to better protect and safeguard vulnerable people, particularly children.

Because of the serious causes of concern arising from this inspection, HMIC expects Bedfordshire Police to provide evidence, of its progress in addressing HMIC's recommendations. HMIC will then review the progress of Bedfordshire Police in advance of its autumn inspection and will publish its findings on whether Bedfordshire Police has improved.

¹³ A person is classified as absent if they are not where they are expected to be but they are not considered at risk. Whereas, if they are classified as missing the police are obliged to take steps to locate them, as the level of perceived risk is higher.

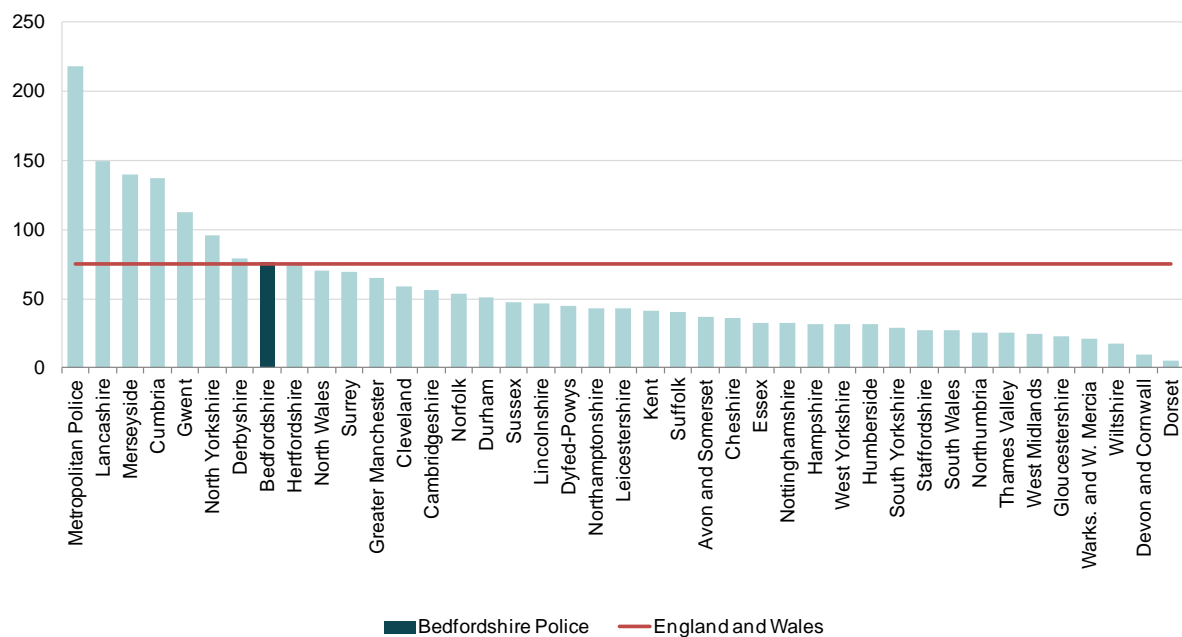
How effective is the force at tackling serious and organised crime, including its arrangements for fulfilling its national policing responsibilities?

Serious and organised crime poses a threat to the public across the whole of the UK and beyond. Individuals, communities and businesses feel its damaging effects. 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. A number of forces within a regional area often share specialist capabilities as this provides better value for money and is a more efficient way of working.

As at 30 June 2015, Bedfordshire Police was actively disrupting, investigating or monitoring 49 organised crime groups (OCGs). This represents 76 OCGs per one million of the population, which is high compared with other forces in England and Wales.

Figure 6: Organised crime groups per one million population, by force, as at 30 June 2015^{14 15}



Source: HMIC data collection

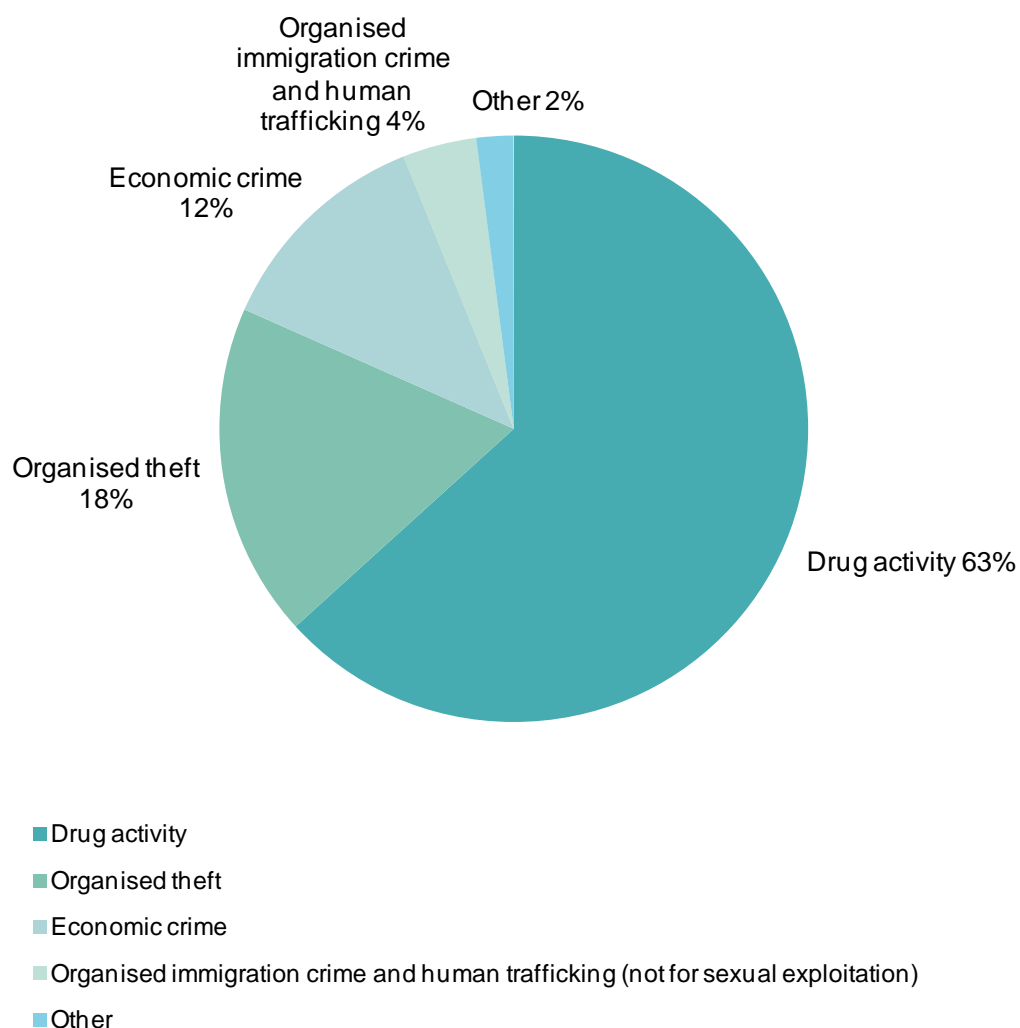
Forces categorise OCGs by the predominant form of criminal activity in which the group is involved. Although OCGs are likely to be involved in multiple forms of criminality, this indicates their most common characteristic. 'Drug activity' was the predominant crime type (63 percent) of the OCGs managed by Bedfordshire Police as at 30 June 2015. 'Drug activity' was also the most common predominant crime type recorded by all forces in England and Wales,¹⁶ with 64 percent of all OCGs classified in this way.

¹⁴ 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.

¹⁵ 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.

¹⁶ The Metropolitan Police Service are not included in the England and Wales figure because they do 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 2015¹⁷



Source: HMIC data collection

Serious and organised crime is one of six national threats specified within *The Strategic Policing Requirement*.¹⁸ These include terrorism, serious cyber-crime incidents 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.

¹⁷ Figures may not sum to 100 percent, due to rounding.

¹⁸ *The Strategic Policing Requirement*, Home Office, March 2015, available at: 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 force needs to improve its approach to assessing the threat posed by serious and organised crime to its communities. Although Bedfordshire is a comparatively small police force, it has to deal with a range of complex policing challenges and serious criminality on a scale not normally experienced by a force of its size. A threat assessment process is in place which draws on some information from partner organisations.¹⁹ The force has created a local profile for serious and organised crime, in line with national guidance. However, we found that the information collected was mainly police data; to be more effective, the profile requires additional partner information. We were disappointed to hear how limited partner involvement is in the local profile, which means the profile's value will be significantly reduced if it is not used to guide multi-agency strategic activity. A comprehensive local profile, when completed, will provide the force and its partners with a better understanding of serious and organised crime in Bedfordshire.

Organised crime group mapping is the process by which an accurate and detailed picture of serious and organised criminality is developed. The force needs to improve its management of OCG mapping. To exploit the benefits of organised crime group mapping, data must be shared locally, regionally and nationally within and between partners.

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.

¹⁹ Police forces work with a variety of partner organisations in order to tackle serious and organised crime, including HM Revenue and Customs, HM Prison, the Department for Work and Pensions and Immigration Enforcement.

For these reasons, HMIC has recommended that ROCUs assume responsibility for OCG mapping on behalf of their constituent forces.²⁰

The force uses intelligence from a range of sources to help it understand serious and organised crime. These include covert methods, and we found numerous examples of surveillance techniques being used to identify drug suppliers. The force's intelligence function is complemented by a regional intelligence team, which is part of the Eastern Region Special Operations Unit (ERSOU). This regional unit can add further intelligence to that held by the force, perhaps from other forces and partner organisations.

The force needs to improve how it identifies OCGs in the community; we found limited awareness among frontline staff about OCGs in their area. The force recognises this as an area for improvement and has recently started to place OCG members on the 'know your community' neighbourhood briefings and onto the briefing and tasking system known as BATS so that crime and community teams know who is operating in their area. However, we found that frontline officers have limited awareness of the OCGs in their communities, despite the information provided to them. The force must ensure that its officers and staff are briefed effectively on the intelligence and information that is available and understand their role in identifying, disrupting and dismantling OCGs.

There are a range of information sources that the force can make better use of to improve its understanding of the threat and risks from serious and organised crime, including through the Government Agency Intelligence Network (GAIN)²¹ and ERSOU sources, and from its own staff through effective local intelligence gathering and sharing.

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

The force uses a range of tactics and multi-agency approaches in response to serious and organised crime. It is positive that membership of the force OCG management board includes a range of partner agencies. Partners clearly value the information that the force provides about mapped OCGs even though CSPs have not yet adopted organised crime as a priority.

However, we found that the force can improve how it measures the impact of its activity on tackling serious and organised crime. The force needs to better understand which approaches work best in which situations, so that this can help

²⁰ *Regional Organised Crime Units: A Review of Capability and Effectiveness*, HMIC, December 2015, www.justiceinspectors.gov.uk/hmic/wp-content/uploads/regional-organised-crime-units.pdf

²¹ The Government Agency Intelligence Network (GAIN) is a group of approximately 20 national bodies which exchange information about organised criminals with the police.

design future strategies and tactics to have most impact. The force has recently started assessing its success in disrupting the activities of local OCGs. The force will benefit especially from a review of the impact of Operation Boson (a long-term multi-agency OCG operation), because the force's assessment suggests that this operation is not as effective as expected.

The force has provided excellent training jointly with local partner organisations with the support of covert policing advisors. The force considers a broad range of police and partner tactics in accordance with a control strategy that is regularly reviewed with partners. However, it is unclear how the recommendations made in the Serious and Organised Crime Local Profile (May 2015)²² have been progressed. We found good evidence of co-operation with local partner agencies and some evidence of involving crime and community teams in identified priorities for tackling serious and organised crime. There is some focus on targeting of criminal assets with scope to develop effective use of suspicious activity reporting (SAR). A SAR is a piece of information which alerts law enforcement that certain client/customer activity is in some way suspicious and might indicate money laundering or terrorist financing.

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

The force has supported a number of joint partnership projects aimed at engaging those at risk of being drawn into serious and organised crime. These include programmes for young people involving diversionary activities including music, sports and motor engineering to provide young people with other interests to avoid them getting involved in criminal gangs.

The force is making some use of Serious Crime Prevention Orders (SCPOs) and is rigorous in its approach to monitoring these. The NCA and ERSOU are increasing the use of SCPOs and the NCA are working alongside the regional unit in the area of lifetime offender management. It is recognised that these are growth areas for both agencies. The force should improve its use of prevention orders and develop a joint approach to lifetime offender management with ERSOU.

Although crime and community teams are not routinely used in the disruption of OCGs they are occasionally tasked to assist on a case by case basis. The local profile is relatively new and still requires the addition of partner agency data and we did not find evidence of the information being used. The force in general has a wide range of communication tools and these have been used to some degree to advise the public about serious and organised crime. This includes information passed on to

²² A local profile is a report that outlines the threat from serious and organised crime within a specific local area. SOC Local profile:
www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/371602/Serious_and_Organised_Crime_local_profiles.pdf

the public through the communications team where a new issue or an emerging trend is identified such as human trafficking and child sexual exploitation.

The multi-agency gang panel (MAGPAN) has developed a number of programmes intended to deter and divert people, especially the young, from involvement in organised crime. The force is developing an approach to identify and respond to women and girls at risk of being drawn into criminality. The force should consider work with other forces and agencies to broaden this approach to deter and divert others from such involvement, for example professionals providing services to committed organised criminals.

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 the six 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.

Bedfordshire Police has clear governance arrangements in place to ensure that it can fulfil its national policing responsibilities. This includes a joint protective services board for the collaborated forces which comprise Bedfordshire, Hertfordshire and Cambridgeshire forces.²³ Chief officers understand their responsibilities under *The Strategic Policing Requirement* (SPR) and take responsibility for handling specific threats. The force has carried out strategic assessments of the threats specified within the SPR. The force monitors progress in implementing previous HMIC recommendations in relation to the SPR, in collaboration with Hertfordshire and Cambridgeshire Constabularies and ERSOU. The force works to improve its resilience to a cyber attack, for instance introducing recently a force cyber hub to focus on this crime type and link in with activity across the region.

ERSOU has a good understanding of regional threats, and is rigorous and inclusive in its approach to assessing these by drawing on intelligence held by partner organisations, other forces and the regional organised crime unit. There is good alignment of activity with national and regional priorities. The force has conducted appropriate assessments of national policing threats and there are good procedures in place which enable Bedfordshire to test its preparedness for responding to national threats specified within the SPR.

The force conducts exercises on a regular basis to satisfy itself that it is sufficiently well-prepared to respond to national threats. In 2014 the force was involved at strategic and operational levels in exercises involving statutory partners and

²³ Joint Protective Services (JPS) are the collaborated policing functions between Bedfordshire, Hertfordshire and Cambridgeshire, which include serious and organised crime.

voluntary organisations in testing their collective response to a potential terrorist attack at a shopping centre and a train crash.

In 2015 the force and partners tested their response and the effectiveness of joint working in relation to an explosion and fire at a large sporting event, and also a fire and hostage scenario at a psychiatric hospital. The force reviews fully these exercises with all partners and organisations present to identify areas of learning.

Summary of findings



Requires improvement

Bedfordshire Police requires improvement in its approach to identifying and tackling serious and organised crime in its area. This is the first year that HMIC has graded forces on their effectiveness at tackling serious and organised crime, including a force's arrangements for ensuring that it can fulfil its national policing responsibilities, so no year-on-year comparison is possible.

The force needs to improve its understanding of the threat posed by serious and organised crime, and improve its multi-agency response to it, including work to prevent people from becoming involved. This includes its approach to identifying, mapping and managing organised crime groups.

It has access to an extensive range of specialist capabilities provided by the Eastern Region Specialist Operations Unit. The force carries out some good early work with schools and universities to identify vulnerable young people who may be at risk of being drawn onto serious and organised crime.

The force has robust arrangements in place to satisfy itself that it is fulfilling its national policing responsibilities.

Areas for improvement

- The force should complete its serious and organised crime local profile including relevant data from partner agencies, and ensure that it has a local partnership structure in place with responsibility for tackling serious and organised crime.
- The force should ensure that it exploits the full range of intelligence sources to provide the best possible understanding of serious and organised crime, including the Government Agency Intelligence Network (GAIN).
- The force should improve its crime and community teams' awareness of organised crime groups to ensure that they can reliably identify these groups, collect intelligence and disrupt their activity.
- The force should improve its understanding of the impact of its activity on serious and organised crime, and ensure that it learns from experience to maximise the force's disruptive effect on this activity.

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.