

# PEEL: Police effectiveness 2015

An inspection of Merseyside Police



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

## Overall judgment<sup>1</sup>



**Good**

Merseyside Police is good at keeping people safe and reducing crime. It works well with other organisations to keep people safe, including the most vulnerable, by preventing crime and anti-social behaviour. The quality of crime investigation is good and the force works well to stop re-offending. It is outstanding in its tackling of organised crime groups, and has the necessary arrangements to enable it to fulfil its national policing responsibilities. 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

Overall, Merseyside Police is good at keeping people safe and reducing crime. The force is committed to preventing crime and anti-social behaviour. Its approach to prevention is well understood by officers and staff. The force has an effective neighbourhood policing model and a strong working relationship with partners to solve problems in local areas.

The force responds well to vulnerable victims and treats them as a priority. It provides a high level of support to the most vulnerable victims, with missing children a particular priority. The force uses its specialist functions effectively to safeguard and protect victims and works well with partners.

The quality of investigation is good and investigators ensure that victims are safe and kept informed. The force is effective in identifying, investigating and bringing to justice repeat and dangerous offenders, and stopping them from re-offending.

Merseyside Police is outstanding in the way it identifies and tackles serious and organised crime. It has a well-developed understanding of the threat posed from serious and organised crime. It has a strong 'whole force' approach to tackling and disrupting serious and organised crime in collaboration with partner organisations. This has resulted in a number of successful operations and projects that have improved the lives of those living in communities affected by organised crime.

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<sup>1</sup> Outstanding, Good, Requires improvement or Inadequate – see Annex A for definitions.

The force has the necessary arrangements in place to ensure that it can fulfil its national policing responsibilities.

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



**Good**

Merseyside Police is good at preventing crime and anti-social behaviour, and keeping people safe. In HMIC's crime inspection in 2014 we judged the force to be good at reducing crime and preventing offending.

The force has an effective neighbourhood policing model which allows officers to focus on their neighbourhood role; they are rarely taken away from their roles to perform other duties. Neighbourhood teams know their areas and have good links to their communities. HMIC was impressed to find that preventing crime and anti-social behaviour and keeping people safe are seen as everyone's business within the force and with partners. The force recognises that any future budget reductions may mean a loss of resources within neighbourhood teams. Despite this, the force remains committed to maintaining a neighbourhood policing presence in the future.

The importance of crime prevention activity is well understood across the force, and it values the excellent relationship it has with partner organisations. The force works well with partners and has the right ways of working in place to work collaboratively,

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



**Good**

Merseyside Police's approach to investigating crime and managing offenders is good. In HMIC's crime inspection in 2014 we graded the force as good at investigating offending.

The initial investigation process works well with evidence being captured in most cases. The process for allocating crime is generally good, although HMIC found some local variation in the way in which crimes are allocated. The quality of subsequent investigations is good. Investigative staff are well trained, the majority are fully accredited with a career pathway ensuring they gain a broad range of experience and continuous professional development. However, the force could do more to ensure the consistency of supervisory oversight of investigations.

Victims are generally kept well informed as investigations progress and the force uses victim contact contracts to establish how and when the victim would like to be contacted.

Forensic and digital specialists are used effectively to support investigations, although backlogs do exist for mobile phone and computer investigations.

The force identifies the most prolific

share information and tackle the root causes of local problems.

offenders and makes efforts to divert them from further offending. It has an effective integrated offender management model and works well with partner organisations to identify, monitor and work with repeat and dangerous offenders to prevent further offending and keep people safe.

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



#### **Good**

Protecting vulnerable people and supporting victims is a clear priority for Merseyside Police within the force strategy and the police and crime plan. Appropriate governance is in place, both within the force and with partners. The force is developing its understanding of crime trends and patterns of all vulnerable and repeat victims, and known perpetrators. It has a good understanding of vulnerability from incidents and information reported to the force. The force is working with partners to expand and develop the sharing of information effectively.

Merseyside Police responds well to vulnerable victims, responding to them as a priority and giving good support to those victims who are the most vulnerable, particularly missing children. The force uses its specialist functions effectively to safeguard and protect

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



#### **Outstanding**

Merseyside Police is outstanding in the way it identifies and tackles serious and organised crime.

The force has a well-developed understanding of the threat posed by serious and organised crime. It has a strong approach to tackling this type of crime involving all parts of the force and working closely with partners.

HMIC found that the force has effective ways of working to deter people from committing serious and organised crime. These include working with young people and females involved in gangs. The force communicates well with its communities, publicising successes and promoting the consequences of being involved in serious and organised crime.

The force's approach to tackling and disrupting serious and organised crime in collaboration with partner organisations

victims and it works well with partners.

HMIC found that the force responds well to the safeguarding of missing and absent children in the majority of cases but it is not receiving all the information that is available that could assist the force in its understanding and work to inform future investigations. The force has made good progress with its activity around child sexual exploitation and is developing a comprehensive response. It responds effectively to victims of domestic abuse, and has progressed well with implementing recommendations since HMIC's domestic abuse inspection in 2014.

has resulted in a number of successful operations that have improved the lives of those living in communities affected by organised crime.

Merseyside Police has a good working relationship with the regional organised crime unit and with other forces across the region.

The force has the necessary arrangements in place to ensure that it can fulfil its national policing responsibilities. It regularly tests its ability to respond to national threats, including public order events and counter-terrorist incidents, by conducting unannounced tests of its mobilisation. It has also conducted extensive exercises to test inter-operability with fire and ambulance services.

This is the first year HMIC has graded forces on their effectiveness at tackling serious and organised crime, including its arrangements for ensuring that it can fulfil its national policing responsibilities, so no year-on-year comparison is possible.

## Force in numbers



### Calls for assistance

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

Merseyside Police

**380**

England and Wales

**350**



### Crime

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

Merseyside Police

**71.8**

England and Wales

**63.0**

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

Merseyside Police

**67.7**

England and Wales

**60.3**

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

Merseyside Police

**+6.0%**

England and Wales

**+4.5%**

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

Merseyside Police

**-4.0%**

England and Wales

**-12.6%**



### Charge rate

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

Merseyside Police

**16.9%**

England and Wales

**16.0%**





## Anti-social behaviour

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

Merseyside Police

England and Wales

**41.1**

**32.9**

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

Merseyside Police

England and Wales

**42.1**

**36.2**



## Domestic abuse

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

Merseyside Police

England and Wales

**7.5%**

**10.0%**

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

Merseyside Police

England and Wales

**5.5%**

**8.5%**



## Organised crime groups

Organised crime groups per million population as at 30 June 2015

Merseyside Police

England and Wales

**139.5**

**74.7**



## Victim satisfaction rate

Victim satisfaction rate 12 months to 31 March 2015

Merseyside Police

England and Wales

**83.2%**

**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 Merseyside Police are available from the HMIC website ([www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmic/](http://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:<sup>2</sup>

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 from harm those who are vulnerable, 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 Merseyside Police.

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<sup>2</sup> 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-merseyside/](http://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmic/publications/police-effectiveness-vulnerability-2015-merseyside/)). 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/](http://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 Merseyside?**

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.

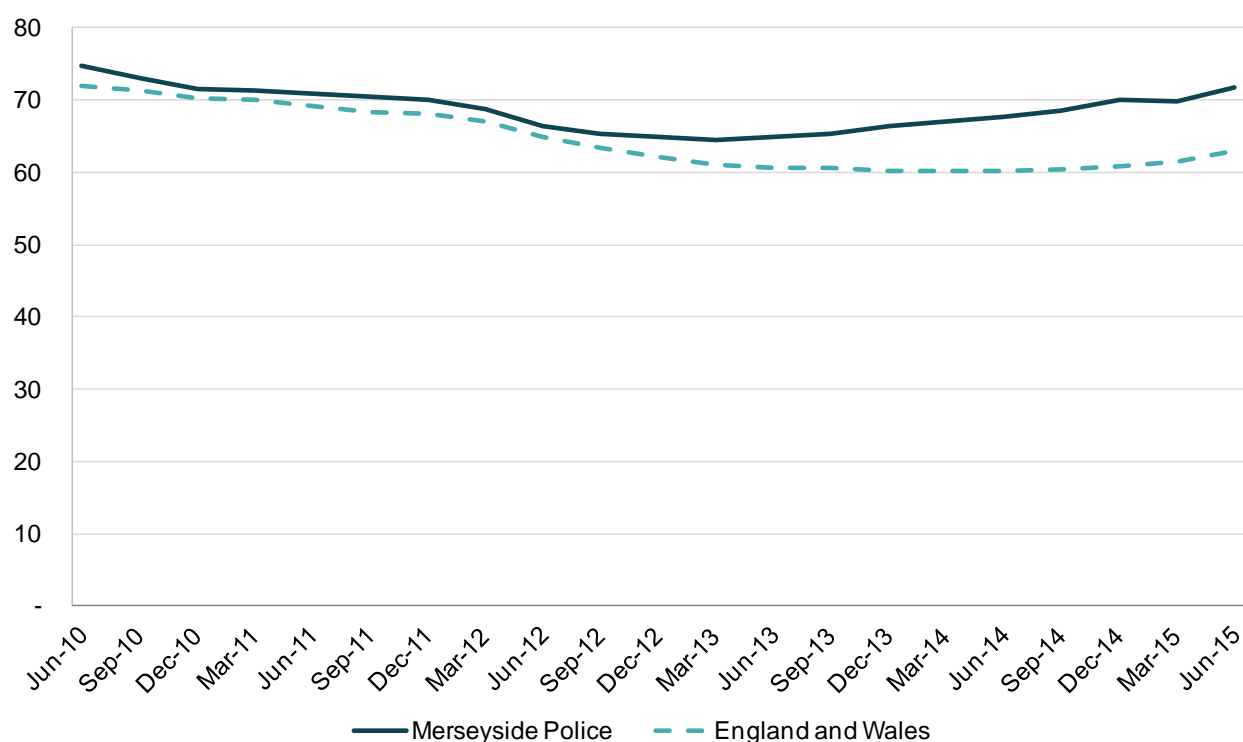
In 2010 the Home Secretary set a clear priority for the police service to cut crime. When compared with the 12 months to 30 June 2010, police recorded crime (excluding fraud) for the 12 months to 30 June 2015 fell by 4 percent in Merseyside compared with a reduction of 13 percent across all forces in 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) increased by 6 percent in Merseyside, compared with a reduction of 12 percent across England and Wales.

When compared with the previous year, police recorded crime (excluding fraud) in Merseyside increased by 6 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.

The force recognises the 6 percent increase it has seen in the rate of victim-based crime rate. A proportion of this increase is comprised of violent crime offences. The force attributes some, but not all, of the increase in violent crime to a greater focus on more accurate crime recording. It is also seeking to address the issue by prioritising its use of resources to support the most vulnerable victims.

**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 Merseyside (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	Merseyside Police	England and Wales
Recorded crime (excluding fraud)	71.8	63.0
Victim-based crime	61.6	56.0
Sexual offences	1.5	1.6
Assault with injury	6.8	6.3
Burglary in a dwelling*	10.6	8.4
Anti-social behaviour incidents*	41.1	32.9

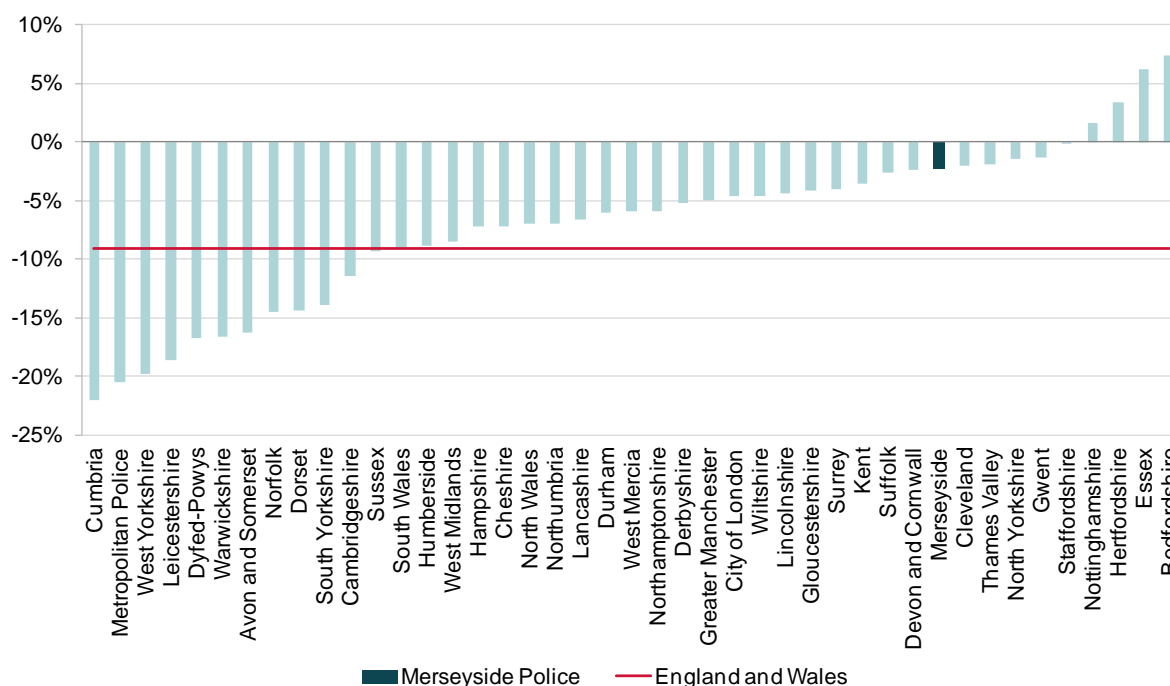
**Source: Home Office data, HMIC data return**

**\*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 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, Merseyside Police recorded 57,191 incidents of anti-social behaviour. This is 2 percent fewer 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?

Preventing crime and anti-social behaviour and providing a visible and accessible policing presence are priorities for Merseyside Police. They feature as strategic priorities within the police and crime plan, and as organisational priorities for the force. These priorities each have a responsible senior officer who provides direction and has responsibility for activity to ensure a co-ordinated response with partners. Activity for the prevention of crime and anti-social behaviour is focused on what are referred to as the four Ps – pursue, prevent, protect and prepare.

There is a strong commitment from the chief constable and police and crime commissioner (PCC) to maintain a neighbourhood policing presence in the future. However, the force and the PCC have said that any future budget reductions are likely to have a significant impact on the level of resources available. The force predicts that this would include a reduction in the number of police community support officers (PCSOs), often referred to in Merseyside as community support officers (CSOs), who work within neighbourhood teams.

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

Force resources are allocated appropriately to neighbourhoods to prevent crime and anti-social behaviour. The force has an effective neighbourhood policing model

where the neighbourhood teams focus on engagement, intelligence gathering, prevention, and support to high-risk victims. Neighbourhood support teams focus on local priorities and on disrupting known offenders, gangs, and organised crime groups (OCGs).

HMIC found that neighbourhood officers are rarely taken away from their roles to perform other duties. They are able to hand over responsibility for crime investigation to other teams and concentrate on providing a service to victims, developing long-term solutions to local problems and being visible and accessible to their communities.

Each basic command unit (BCU) has an anti-social behaviour champion at inspector level who provides knowledge and assistance in the use of new legislation and best practice. The force benefits from two anti-social behaviour officers being co-located with the force solicitor to progress civil actions against criminals.

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

The force uses a broad range of effective tactics to prevent crime and anti-social behaviour across each element of the 4 Ps, namely pursue, prevent, protect and prepare.

Merseyside Police's approach to preventing crime and anti-social behaviour involves all areas of the force such as neighbourhood teams, response officers, roads policing, automated number plate recognition teams, and crime investigations. The force uses its resources well to gather intelligence and has a proactive capability within neighbourhood support teams to pursue wanted and suspect persons and identify and disrupt organised crime groups to prevent further crime occurring.

Providing crime prevention advice is primarily the role of CSOs. Their activity is based on awareness of local problems to prevent crime and anti-social behaviour. The CSOs visit victims of crime and complete a risk assessment of their needs. High-risk victims remain the responsibility of the police who implement action plans to address their needs. Those victims assessed as medium risk are referred to a third-party agency, which supplies ways to improve safety and provide reassurance for the victim.

HMIC found evidence of officers and staff applying problem solving approaches successfully. These included a CSO dealing with an issue where youths were causing fear among local residents by loitering in a dark alleyway. This was resolved through effective liaison with local authority partners to alter street lighting and street furniture, disruptive patrol activity and dialogue with the young people involved. We found other examples where officers have successfully used legislation to prevent anti-social behaviour. These included the use of anti-social behaviour contracts, criminal behaviour orders, dispersal orders, orders prohibiting the use of off-road motorcycles and warning letters to young people.



The force has a good understanding of how anti-social behaviour can develop into more organised crime, and works with young people to deter them from becoming involved. It has access to diversionary activity, which is helping prevent them from engaging in anti-social behaviour and more serious crime. Examples include the 'Stay Safe' bus on what is known locally as mischief night, which takes place between Halloween and Bonfire Night. The scheme involves the police working with partners to safeguard vulnerable children and prevent them from getting involved in anti-social behaviour or crime. Others include mentoring schemes and campaigns with schools delivered by a third sector provider or partner agencies. One such campaign is designed to raise awareness of issues such as the effects of 'legal highs'. Another campaign entitled GANGS ('get away 'n' get safe') seeks to prevent young people becoming involved in criminal gangs.

Merseyside Police makes good use of a range of communication methods to prevent crime. It uses Twitter and newsletters to send out messages to local communities about issues such as crime trends, crime prevention advice, and details of dispersal zones that have been implemented as a result of community concerns. The force also makes good use of creative communication campaigns aimed at preventing crime. These have focused on issues such as guns and gangs, and domestic abuse offenders. The force has plans to put on a catwalk show in Liverpool city centre, designed to reach out to women and steer them away from gangs, emphasising the consequences of becoming involved in illegal gang activity. The show seeks to illustrate that, while the flamboyant lifestyle from illegal earnings – where status and money are motivators – may lead to them being dressed in designer clothes, the consequences may instead be that they end up wearing handcuffs or a monitoring tag.

In HMIC's crime inspection in 2014, we made a recommendation to ensure that the force has methods in place to capture and share learning and good practice. The force's 'what works' tool is used to share good practice and includes a tactical menu of options under each of the force priorities. However, HMIC found that there is an inconsistent level of awareness of this tool among staff. The force has developed interactive plans, called 'i-plans', which will allow for a more co-ordinated approach of activity. These i-plans enable tasks to be allocated against force priorities, and facilitate the evaluation of what works. The project is due to be piloted from November 2015. The force has made a commitment to understanding what works in greater depth through evidenced-based policing. Three officers are due to undertake a programme of research in relation to crime prevention, hate crime, and child sexual

exploitation with Liverpool John Moores University leading to an academic qualification. This is aimed at being of direct use to the force in its understanding what works.

## **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?**

Merseyside Police works well with a range of partner organisations to tackle crime and anti-social behaviour effectively through the four Ps approach – pursue, prevent, protect and prepare. Despite a reduction in some police and partner resources, the force remains committed to maintaining good and effective relationships, which was evident at all levels. Representatives of a number of partner organisations seen during the inspection stated that they “couldn’t have a better relationship” with those responsible for partnership working in the force.

The force values the importance of collaborative working and has the necessary mechanisms in place to facilitate this. Force representatives attend regular meetings with partner organisations and actively involve them in planning and carrying out operations. Effective partnership working continues to deliver excellent results in tackling urban street gangs (USGs) and OCGs that pose significant risks to the communities of Merseyside.

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

Structured partnership meetings are held where problem solving and information sharing takes place. For example, at a local level, community safety meetings, neighbourhood action groups and ward meetings focus on activity to address local problems. Due to the nature of crime in Merseyside, dedicated meetings are held to deal with gun and gang crime. Appropriately skilled and experienced police officers attend these meetings.

While partners have no direct access to force systems, information is shared effectively through joint meetings, and directly with specific contacts within partner organisations. An automated intelligence reporting system allows partners to report information and intelligence 24 hours a day, which is then processed in a timely way.

Partner organisations, including local youth clubs and charities, are working together with the force to divert people from becoming involved in gangs and to protect vulnerable and exploited young people. Examples include a range of crime prevention programmes in subjects such as gang culture, gun crime, knife crime, and bullying.

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

Working with partners, the force considers short, medium and longer-term approaches depending on the type and size of the problem identified from an initial assessment. HMIC found good examples of effective problem solving with partner organisations to prevent crime and anti-social behaviour and keep people safe. One such example, Operation Cobweb, started from a CSO submitting an intelligence report about a car parked outside a criminal's house. The investigation that resulted identified an OCG with millions of pounds of assets. The vehicle was later stopped after activating an automatic number plate recognition camera and the driver arrested. The fraud that was discovered involved an OCG that was arranging for disabled people, who are exempt from paying VAT at 20 percent, to buy expensive cars in excess of £150,000. The cars were immediately resold, making a profit of thousands of pounds and defrauding the Treasury. Assets were recovered along with firearms and the subsequent investigation established that members of the same OCG had been involved in committing robberies.

Operation Bryant focused on fast food outlets that were being used by members of OCGs congregating outside these shops causing anti-social behaviour, storing drugs nearby, selling stolen goods and intimidating members of the public. The operation resulted in four fast food outlets being closed down. This was achieved through a combination of high visibility police presence in the area, working alongside Scottish Power and Immigration Enforcement staff to check the immigration status and work permits of employees, and working with trading standards to identify unhygienic and unsafe work environments.

The force works well with partner organisations and has a positive approach to using powers under the Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014, and has applied for a number of orders.

## **Summary of findings**



**Good**

Merseyside Police is good at preventing crime and anti-social behaviour, and keeping people safe. In HMIC's crime inspection in 2014, we judged the force to be good at reducing crime and preventing offending.

The force has an effective neighbourhood policing model, which allows officers to focus on their neighbourhood role; they are rarely taken away from their roles to perform other duties. Neighbourhood teams know their areas and have good links to their communities. HMIC was impressed to find that preventing crime and anti-social behaviour and keeping people safe are seen as everyone's business within the force and with partners. The force recognises that any future budget reductions may mean

a loss of resources within neighbourhood teams. Despite this, the force remains committed to maintaining a neighbourhood policing presence in the future.

The importance of crime prevention activity is well understood across the force, and it values the excellent relationship it has with partner organisations. The force works well with partners and has the right ways of working in place to work collaboratively, share information and tackle the root causes of local problems.

## 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. Merseyside Police, 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)<sup>3 4 5</sup>**

Outcome type/group	Merseyside Police Number of outcomes	Rate	England and Wales Number of outcomes	Rate
<b>Charged/Summoned</b>	<b>16,881</b>	<b>16.9</b>	<b>577,678</b>	<b>16.0</b>
<b>Taken into consideration</b>	<b>172</b>	<b>0.2</b>	<b>21,318</b>	<b>0.6</b>
<b>Out-of-court (formal)</b>	<b>4,420</b>	<b>4.4</b>	<b>165,384</b>	<b>4.6</b>
Caution - youths	297	0.3	19,703	0.5
Caution - adults	2,187	2.2	115,000	3.2
Penalty Notices for Disorder	1,936	1.9	30,681	0.8
<b>Out-of-court (informal)</b>	<b>5,000</b>	<b>5.0</b>	<b>159,915</b>	<b>4.4</b>
Cannabis/Khat warning	1,927	1.9	41,964	1.2
Community resolution	3,073	3.1	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/khat<sup>6</sup> 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. Merseyside Police has one of the highest rates for 'penalty notices for disorder', of all forces in England and Wales. Merseyside Police also has one of the lowest 'taken into consideration' rates, of all forces in England and Wales.

<sup>3</sup> 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.

<sup>4</sup> 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](http://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/445753/hosb0115.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> 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.

<sup>6</sup> 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.

Merseyside Police has a clear crime allocation policy and good processes for initial investigation. However, HMIC found that the subsequent allocation of crime for further investigation varies across the force.

The force records a crime at the earliest opportunity. It emphasises to all staff, including call takers and the crime demand team, the importance of ensuring that crimes are accurately recorded, correctly categorised, and that any immediate investigative opportunities are taken.

In most cases, when officers first attend reports of crime, they take the steps they need to in order to secure evidence relating to the crime. When a serious crime, such as rape or serious assault, is reported to the force, the quality of the initial response is very high. Critical incident managers direct the initial stages of the investigation and ensure that the crime scene is managed properly in order to preserve vital evidence.

All crimes requiring further investigation are allocated to a crime investigation supervisor within the relevant BCU who then determines the most appropriate level of investigator to whom to allocate the crime. There are no clear guidelines in place to determine the type of crime requiring specialist investigation. This could potentially result in more serious crimes not being investigated by a specialist investigator. The force has plans to review the allocation of crime as part of a wider structural review of the force.

The force has an appropriate number of staff with the right skills to undertake desk-based investigations and is generally ensuring that all crimes are recorded in a timely manner. Effective review mechanisms are in place to assess risk and vulnerability as part of the crime allocation process. Officers involved in the initial assessment, recording and allocation of crime take decisions about initial and further investigation based on their professional judgment. Officers are trusted to make appropriate decisions to either take no further action or to allocate the crime for further investigation.



HMIC found that response officers do not routinely investigate crimes. This means that all crimes are allocated to trained investigators, and response officers are not taken away from their primary role of responding to incidents.

### **How well does the force investigate different types of crime?**

Merseyside Police carries out effective crime investigations. Lower level and less complex crime is investigated by the planned demand teams (PDTs), and more serious crime is investigated by the crime investigations department within each BCU.

Prior to the inspection, HMIC conducted a dip-sample of a small number (42) of crime investigation files involving offences including rape, wounding, assault and burglary of a dwelling.<sup>7</sup> The review concluded that there was strong evidence of the early and appropriate use of specialist officers to conduct complex investigations. It was evident that the majority of investigative opportunities were undertaken in a timely way and investigation plans were clearly documented. Effective supervision was evident in most of the case files we reviewed. However, HMIC found that this was less consistent in the case of major crime and complex investigations. In some of these cases there was clear evidence of highly effective supervisory involvement, but in others this was not recorded.

For more complex crime, such as serious sexual offences or child abuse, cases are generally allocated to a specialist unit. Merseyside Police has appropriately trained staff to investigate more serious crime, and specialist investigations are conducted well. Although not evident from our dip-sample of case files, when we visited the force HMIC found that more specialist investigations, such as rape cases, are occasionally dealt with by non-specialist detectives. This means that the investigation may not always receive the level of specialism required.

The force does not routinely use specialist investigators to investigate online offences against children. While all such offences (such as possessing or distributing indecent images and grooming) are assessed by the supervisors in the high tech crime unit (HTCU), investigations are completed by local investigators within the BCU. While this appears to work well and the force has no concerns about the quality of investigation, there is a risk that opportunities to identify evidence or potential victims could be missed.

Victims are kept up-to-date about the progress of investigations in line with their wishes, which are recorded in the form of victim contact contracts. The importance of victim contact and a victim needs assessment is understood by staff throughout the force. Any decision to take no further action is explained to the victim and the force

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<sup>7</sup> HMIC reviewed a sample of rape, burglary, offences of serious violence and actual bodily harm cases. In most forces the review consisted of 10 cases from each crime category but in some larger forces the sample was increased to 15. The file review was designed to provide a broad overview of the identification of vulnerability and the effectiveness of the investigation.

briefing system is used to remind staff that victim contact is due as a result of scheduled updates or custody events.

The force has a thorough internal audit process to examine investigative standards. This involves 20 crimes each month being examined in detail and feedback provided to officers and supervisors. File quality is overseen by the criminal justice unit to ensure that files are of an appropriate standard prior to being submitted to the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS).

The majority of officers in investigation roles are trained to the appropriate level. Where officers in specialist roles are not yet accredited, they are overseen by those who are. The force has a structured approach to building and maintaining the number and skills of specialist investigators through an investigator career-planning pathway. The force is also carrying out a comprehensive review of its investigative functions which will involve assessing the number of investigators the force needs and the skills they require.

HMIC found that there is sufficient capacity within the force's forensic department to make progress with investigations effectively and efficiently. Crime scene managers are experienced and accredited staff who are available twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week. The force has an effective procedure for disseminating forensic evidence and intelligence to staff. It is planning how it might manage future demand for forensic services through collaboration with other forces.

In HMIC's crime inspection in 2014, Merseyside Police's approach to the investigation of crime was assessed as good. However, the report made a recommendation that the force should ensure that non-detectives and police staff have the professional skills and knowledge to fulfil their investigative duties. In this inspection, HMIC found that all officers across the force have received basic investigative skills training, including issues such as crime scene preservation, which are critical for officers initially attending reports of crime. Non-detectives work alongside skilled investigators within the force and there is a mentoring scheme for those who are not trained. The force's current structure and ways of working mean that crimes are always allocated to a trained investigator for follow-up investigation.

### **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.

The force's ability to manage digital evidence effectively is limited due to a significant increase in demand. It has established ways of prioritising the examination of digital forensic submissions through a risk-based triage system, designed to ensure that there is sufficient capacity to carry out urgent examinations quickly. Delays in examination are, however, delaying the progress of some investigations. Analysis of telephones can take up to 12 weeks. This is having an impact on possible conspiracy charges with only core individuals being charged as a result.

The HTCUs aim to analyse computers within six months although this sometimes takes up to nine months. The force has invested to support the recovery of digital evidence by training officers located in BCUs to download digital evidence from computers. This has led to initial examinations being completed the same day. More detailed examinations are being outsourced to assist with urgent cases and to address the backlog.

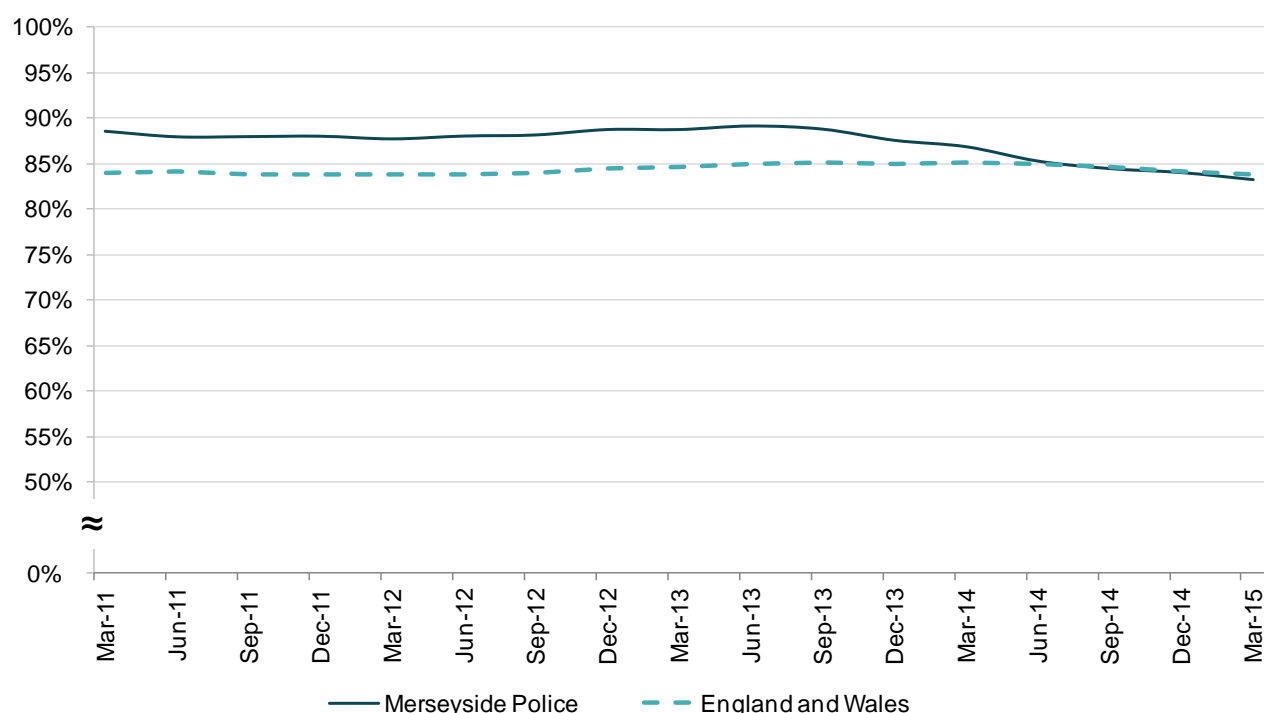
To prevent any delays in getting cases to court, the force has explored if the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) would accept a smaller initial evidential package with further development as the case proceeds to court. Merseyside Police found that this has worked well for other forces but has yet to secure the agreement of the CPS to move to this approach. The force is due to take part in a better case management pilot led by the Office of the Lord Chief Justice, which may assist in improving this process.

The force makes good use of volunteers within HTCUs to carry out examinations, working to investigative requirements. It has plans to develop this further by sponsoring computer science students to routinely assist with this function.

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

Of those who have been the victim of a crime in Merseyside in the 12 months to 31 March 2015, 83.2 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 Merseyside 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.

**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**

The force recognises its position with victim satisfaction rates, which feature within its quarterly strategic performance meeting. It has analysed the findings from victim satisfaction surveys to understand the service provided to local communities and has used this to inform changes to internal ways of working. Through this work, the force identified, for example, a reduction in satisfaction levels among victims of vehicle crime. Analysis by the force of this reduction has resulted in changes to the process for vehicle owners to retrieve their vehicles.

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

### How well does the force divert offenders away from crime?

Merseyside Police effectively identifies and, where appropriate, diverts offenders out of the criminal justice system to prevent further offending. The force uses a range of programmes provided by partner organisations and volunteers within the community to divert offenders away from crime. These include activities for young people, sessions on life skills, and a personal mentoring scheme.

The force could, however, make more use of restorative justice<sup>8</sup> practices. It has good processes ways of working within its custody suites for referring offenders with drug and alcohol issues to specialist support services.

### **How well does the force deal with repeat offenders?**

The force effectively identifies repeat offenders. Like most forces, Merseyside Police has several groups of offenders including those involved in organised crime, offenders involved in gangs, youths at risk of becoming involved in gangs, serious violent offenders, and prolific offenders involved in committing crimes such as burglary. Merseyside Police works well with partners to prevent offenders from re-offending. Some offenders are managed through an integrated offender management (IOM) scheme.<sup>9</sup> The IOM scheme in Merseyside has police officers located alongside the probation service, the community rehabilitation company, housing and mental health workers. Each of the five local authority areas within Merseyside has its own scheme, with slight variations in partner involvement dependent upon the area. The decision to include offenders on this scheme is based on a scoring matrix that has been developed in line with community safety partnership priorities, and ratified through a joint agency meeting.

As of 1 July 2015, 367 offenders were being managed under the IOM approach. This allows for the sharing of information in a timely way to intervene and actively manage offenders to help prevent them from re-offending.

Neighbourhood teams are aware of prolific offenders in their areas, and work with the IOM team to manage their offending. Neighbourhood staff are given regular briefings on those who are part of the IOM programme, with a focus on those individuals presenting the highest risk.

Integrated offender management teams make good use of prison intelligence. A plan is developed for offenders who are imprisoned. This is intended to ensure that people whom offenders are banned from meeting outside of prison, due to licence restrictions, cannot establish contact with the offender once they have entered the prison system. These actions are mirrored at the end of their sentence when the IOM team receives prison intelligence with regard to the offender's prison life and behaviour. Staff from the IOM team go into prisons and assess offenders prior to their release so that a plan can be put in place to address housing, education and work experience needs.

The force has an effective programme (Compass) in place to divert those offenders that do not meet the criteria for IOM but are committing less serious offences. Through this scheme, offenders are provided assistance with accommodation,

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<sup>8</sup> Restorative justice brings together people harmed by crime or conflict with those responsible for the harm, to find a positive way forward.

<sup>9</sup> Integrated offender management (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.

employment, training, health services, drug and alcohol problems, finance including benefits and debt, children and families. This support is aimed at helping them change their attitudes and behaviour in order to stop them from re-offending.

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

Merseyside Police has effective ways of identifying and monitoring sexual and other types of dangerous offenders.

The number of registered sex offenders (RSOs) in Merseyside continues to rise in line with the national trend. Using an appropriate, structured and active risk management system, the force has assessed the majority of its registered offenders. The exceptions are those cases in which the offender has not engaged with the process. The force is seeking to impose the risk assessment as a licence condition through the National Probation Service. The force's use of this active risk management approach has reduced the number of very high risk offenders from 144 as at 1 July 2014 to 69 as at 1 July 2015. The force complies with national guidance on the frequency of visits required to these offenders, although it is only able to do so through planned visits due to the chaotic lifestyles of those they visit. The force has dedicated officers managing these offenders. Neighbourhood and response officers are also aware of RSOs in their area and contribute to their management. HMIC found that the volume of registered sex offenders being managed is high relative to the number of dedicated officers. The force has recognised this and is reviewing it as part of its new policing model.

Merseyside Police has also completed a piece of analytical work to identify named suspects for serious sexual offences, where the evidence failed to meet the threshold for prosecution, and as a result they avoided being brought before the courts. This further analysis enabled the force to establish a pattern of behaviour that led it to believe that the involvement of these individuals in such offences has been sustained over a period of time. As a result, the force has identified opportunities to make greater use of sexual offence prevention orders<sup>10</sup> against these suspects which, if breached, can lead to subsequent arrest.

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<sup>10</sup> Sexual Harm Prevention Orders can be applied to anyone convicted or cautioned for a sexual or violent offence. They can place a range of restrictions on individuals depending on the nature of the case, such as limiting their internet use, preventing them from being alone with a child under 16, or preventing travel abroad.

The force has recognised the risk from a growing number of dangerous offenders who are suitable for multi-agency public protection arrangements (MAPPA).<sup>11</sup> It has good oversight of these offenders through appropriate governance structures with partner organisations, including the prison and probation services. These arrangements are used to monitor those offenders assessed as presenting a 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, there were five high risk offenders subject to MAPPA arrangements in Merseyside.

## Summary of findings



**Good**

Merseyside Police's approach to investigating crime and managing offenders is good. In HMIC's crime inspection in 2014, we graded the force as good at investigating offending.

The initial investigation process works well with evidential opportunities being captured in most cases. The process for allocating crime is generally good, although HMIC found some local variation in the way in which crimes are allocated. The quality of subsequent investigations is good. Investigative staff are well trained, the majority being fully accredited with a career pathway ensuring they gain a broad range of experience and continuous professional development. However, the force could do more to ensure the consistency of supervisory oversight of investigations.

Victims are generally kept well informed as investigations progress and the force uses victim contact contracts to establish how and when the victim would like to be contacted.

Forensic and digital specialists are used effectively to support investigations, although backlogs do exist for mobile phone and computer investigations.

The force identifies the most prolific offenders and makes efforts to divert them from further offending. It has an effective integrated offender management model and works well with partner organisations to identify, monitor and work with repeat and dangerous offenders to prevent further offending and keep people safe.

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<sup>11</sup> MAPPA's are in place to ensure the successful management of violent and sexual offenders. Agencies involved include responsible bodies such as the police, probation trusts and prison service. Other agencies may become involved, for example, the Youth Justice Board will be responsible for the care of young offenders.



### **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 improve its ability to retrieve digital evidence from mobile phones, computers and other electronic devices quickly enough to ensure that investigations are not delayed.

## 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.<sup>12</sup> The following is a summary of the findings.

### Summary of findings



**Good**

Protecting vulnerable people and supporting victims is a clear priority for Merseyside Police. The force's plans and the police and crime commissioner's police and crime plan both focus on these areas, and we found good leadership and oversight (both internally and from partners) to make sure that this is translated into action. The force is developing further its understanding of crime trends and patterns related to all vulnerable and repeat victims, and known perpetrators. It has a good understanding of vulnerability from the incidents and information that are reported to the force, and is working with partners to expand and develop the sharing of information effectively. On this basis HMIC judges Merseyside Police overall to be good.

Merseyside Police responds well to vulnerable victims. They are treated as a priority, and good support is given to those victims who are the most vulnerable (such as missing children). The force uses its specialist functions effectively to support and protect victims and works well with partners.

HMIC's crime inspection in 2014 recommended that officers should complete risk assessments for vulnerable victims while at the scene. In this inspection, we found that the initial risk assessment is widely recognised by staff, consistently completed by officers, and victims are provided with support contact details.

HMIC found that the force responds well to the safeguarding of missing and absent children in the majority of cases. However, it is not making full use of some of the available information that would assist the force in its enquiries.

The force has expanded its work around child sexual exploitation and is developing a comprehensive response. In terms of child sexual exploitation, this inspection only considered how well prepared the force is.

It responds effectively to victims of domestic abuse, and has progressed well with implementing recommendations since HMIC's domestic abuse inspection in 2014.

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<sup>12</sup> *PEEL: Police effectiveness 2015 (Vulnerability)* – Merseyside Police, HMIC, December 2015.

Available from: [www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmic/publications/police-effectiveness-vulnerability-2015-merseyside/](http://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmic/publications/police-effectiveness-vulnerability-2015-merseyside/).

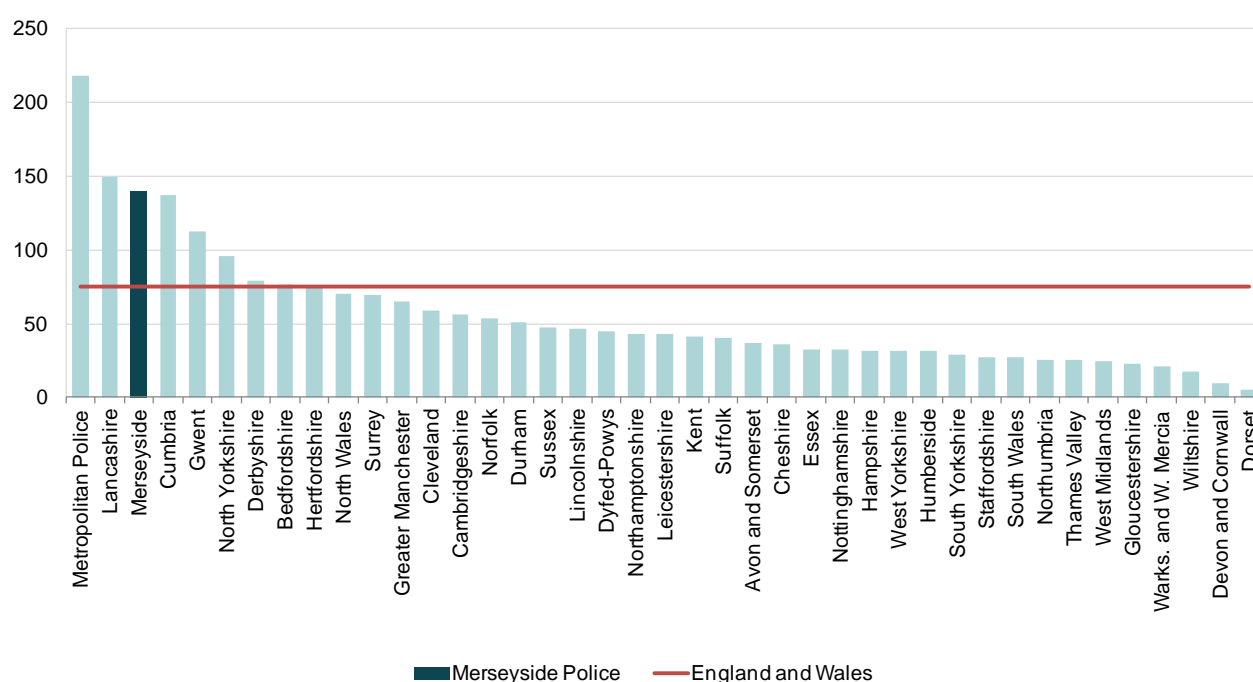
## **How effective is the force at tackling serious and organised crime, including its arrangements for fulfilling its national policing responsibilities?**

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 (ROCUs), 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, Merseyside Police was actively disrupting, investigating or monitoring 194 organised crime groups (OCGs). This represents 139 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<sup>13 14</sup>**



**Source: HMIC data collection**

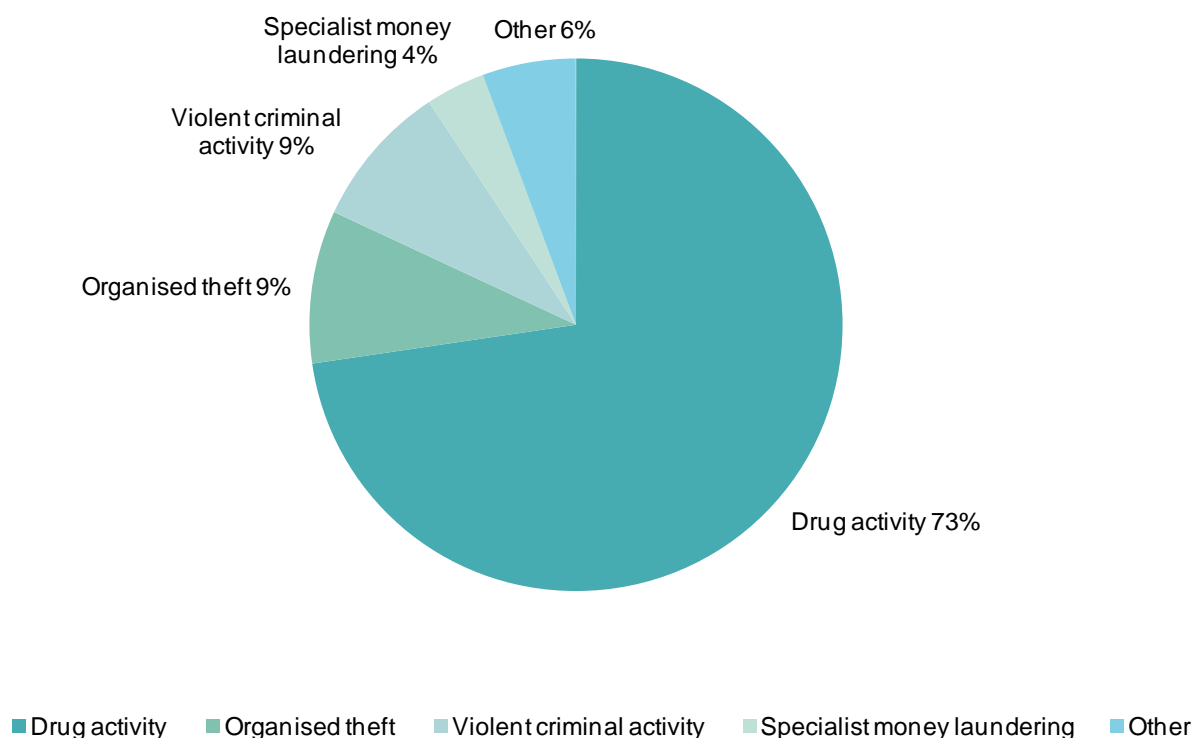
Forces categorise OCGs by the predominant form of criminal activity in which the group is involved. Although OCGs are likely to be involved in multiple forms of criminality, this indicates their most common characteristic. 'Drug activity' was the predominant crime type (73 percent) of the OCGs managed by Merseyside Police as at 30 June 2015. 'Drug activity' was also the most common predominant crime type recorded by all forces in England and Wales,<sup>15</sup> with 64 percent of all OCGs classified in this way.

<sup>13</sup> 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.

<sup>14</sup> 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.

<sup>15</sup> 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 2015<sup>16</sup>**



**Source: HMIC data collection**

Serious and organised crime is one of six national threats specified within *The Strategic Policing Requirement*.<sup>17</sup> 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.

<sup>16</sup> Figures may not sum to 100 percent, due to rounding.

<sup>17</sup> *The Strategic Policing Requirement*, Home Office, March 2015. Available from: [www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/417116/The\\_Strategic\\_Policin\\_g\\_Requirement.pdf](http://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/417116/The_Strategic_Policin_g_Requirement.pdf)

The Home Secretary issues the SPR annually, setting out the latest national threats and the appropriate national policing capabilities required to counter those threats. National threats require a co-ordinated or aggregated response from a number of police forces. Forces often need to work collaboratively, and with other partners, national agencies or national arrangements, to ensure such threats are tackled effectively.

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

Merseyside Police has effective ways of assessing the threat and risk posed by serious and organised crime. This type of crime is a priority for the force and features in the force strategic threat and risk assessment. The force undertakes a formal assessment of threat, risk and harm across all areas, including that associated with organised crime. In line with national guidance, serious and organised crime local profiles have been produced with partner organisations, which provide the force and its partners with a better understanding of serious and organised crime in Merseyside. Partners are closely involved in the oversight and governance of serious and organised crime in their area.

The force and its partners make good use of intelligence to inform their understanding of organised crime threats. Processes are in place to facilitate the submission of intelligence by frontline officers, and this has extended to partners. HMIC found numerous examples of neighbourhood teams playing a part in gathering intelligence about OCGs, something which consistently forms part of their daily responsibilities. The force makes extensive use of other intelligence sources, including the regional confidential unit, the Government Agency Intelligence Network (GAIN)<sup>18</sup> and prison intelligence. Covert intelligence collection methods are considered routinely and used appropriately. The force also has an effective procedure for gathering intelligence from digital devices used by OCGs. The force is considering using these methods to improve its understanding of so-called 'emerging threats' such as child sexual exploitation and human trafficking.

The force identifies OCGs quickly and effectively, and acts promptly to deter urban street gangs (USGs) from developing into OCGs. All officers and staff have a good understanding of where OCGs are concentrated and how they are evolving. Once identified, the force has effective ways of mapping OCGs – a process which assesses each group in relation to its criminality, capability and intent in line with national guidance. Comprehensive profiles are maintained for each identified OCG and HMIC found evidence of regular reviews and re-assessment being undertaken. Organised crime group mapping is used appropriately to support decision-making on resource allocation and the tier<sup>19</sup> of operational response for each OCG.

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

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<sup>18</sup> The Government Agency Intelligence Network (GAIN) is a large network of partners, including all police forces in England and Wales, which shares information about organised criminals.

<sup>19</sup> Activity in response to OCGs is categorised into four tiers – tier 1 is comprehensive operational or investigative intervention; tier 2 is a limited plan or action that prevents or disrupts; tier 3 is proactive intelligence development and tier 4 is developing opportunities for action.

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.<sup>20</sup>

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

Merseyside Police has a strong approach to tackling serious and organised crime involving all parts of the force and working in collaboration with partners.

The force has strong governance arrangements in place to oversee its response to serious and organised crime. Ownership of OCGs is clear at a senior level by both BCUs and specialist officers. The force is building upon existing partnership structures to develop local action plans, using an approach known as the 4Ps—prevent, pursue, protect and prepare. This way of thinking is consistently understood and applied by staff throughout the force who are involved in tackling serious and organised crime. The use of the force's project management computer system supports effective internal communication, governance and review. The force also has ways of reviewing and learning from its activity in this area.

The force has strong relationships with partner agencies including those not directly involved in law enforcement. It works with them effectively to disrupt organised crime. The force uses a range of tactics and powers to tackle OCGs and neighbourhood teams are routinely involved in disruption activity. A force interventions team works with partners such as taxi licensing, trading standards and the GAIN network to disrupt OCGs. At a local level, partners such as housing associations frequently use specific powers available to them against organised criminals. Specialist officers work closely with partner agencies and neighbourhood teams to ensure that power vacuums created by disruptive activity are not filled. This helps ensure that disruption activity is effective in the longer term and also helps

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<sup>20</sup> *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](http://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmic/wp-content/uploads/regional-organised-crime-units.pdf)

prevent violent behaviour and tensions between OCGs. Despite the persistent presence of a significant organised crime threat, the force is able to deploy a highly effective response.

Investigations into serious and organised crime have clear objectives and are closely scrutinised. Those responsible for investigating OCGs are experienced and consider a range of options as part of the investigative process. These include financial investigation when appropriate, for example where an OCG is known to be laundering the proceeds of its illegal activity.

HMIC found a number of examples where the force has responded effectively to manage threats from serious and organised crime and achieved successful outcomes. One such example, Operation Highgate, tackled an OCG which was dealing drugs, causing anti-social behaviour, intimidating communities and using firearms. The force's response was based on the 4Ps of prevent, prepare, protect and pursue, working with partners to determine a co-ordinated response. Residents were initially reluctant to provide evidence, but in the end, 45 witness statements were obtained. Witness care was a primary consideration and the force ensured that witnesses were contacted daily and provided with reassurance and support. The operation resulted in the dismantling of the OCG. Cash, drugs and firearms were seized, and a public house was closed down using closure order powers. By closing the public house, the force was able to prevent other gang members from filling the vacuum. Of the ten suspects arrested, two received ten-year terms of imprisonment. This is an excellent example of how disruption using anti-social behaviour legislation to tackle organised criminality resulted in a positive impact on the community, which has been maintained by the neighbourhood team. The force understands the impact of its activity on organised crime, which is often considerable in relation to the specific OCGs it tackles. HMIC found examples of sophisticated OCGs having been completely dismantled, although it is not evident that organised crime in Merseyside is reducing in the long term.

Merseyside Police has a good relationship with the North West regional organised crime unit (ROCU). The force has senior level representation within the ROCU and the police and crime commissioner (PCC) is the lead PCC for this regional work. The force uses ROCU specialist capabilities, such as specialist surveillance, to good effect. It does not routinely escalate investigations to the ROCU or the National Crime Agency (NCA) as it currently has the capability to manage these at force level. The force maintains its own covert, surveillance and operational capabilities. However, as the force makes changes to its policing model to meet required savings it may need to consider how it can most effectively draw upon regional support.

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

Merseyside Police identifies and works well with those at risk of being drawn into serious and organised crime, for example, members of urban street gangs and the



partners of known organised criminals. It is actively tackling gang and youth violence connected to organised crime, and refers people to the troubled families programme when appropriate. The Terriers programme in schools seeks to have longer-term deterrent and diversionary impact.

For those already involved in organised crime, the force has a number of gang exit schemes in place. However the development of a clear action plan for helping people out of organised crime would further enhance the force's effectiveness in this area. In addition, the force recognises that it could do more to implement a lifetime management approach for OCG members. This would help to minimise the threat posed by those who remain criminally active while in prison and following their release. The force makes some use of serious crime prevention orders, although mainly against principal OCG members. It could make wider use of these orders to maximise opportunities for protecting communities.

Merseyside Police communicates well with the public about organised crime and recognises the importance of community engagement as part of a successful approach to tackling this type of offending. It has used creative communication campaigns as a deterrent for females involved in gangs and those vulnerable to being enticed into serious and organised crime.

The force makes regular and effective use of traditional news media as well as its partnership arrangements to communicate its considerable successes.

## **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.

We found that Merseyside Police has the necessary arrangements in place to satisfy itself that it can respond to national threats specified within *The Strategic Policing Requirement*. Named chief officers are assigned to each of the six national threats and an assistant chief constable takes responsibility for co-ordinating regional responses. Governance and oversight are provided through a protective services board.

The force regularly tests its ability to respond to national threats, including public order events and counter-terrorist incidents, by conducting unannounced tests of its mobilisation. It has also conducted extensive exercises to test interoperability with fire and ambulance services through Operation Joint Endeavour. This exercise was independently evaluated and found that all three levels (strategic, tactical and operational) demonstrated evidence of the police, fire and ambulance services' ability to put the principles of joint interoperability into action within a live incident.

Planning for a wide range of possible emergencies is led by the Merseyside Resilience Forum (MRF) whose community risk register is updated annually and informs decisions on the strategic priorities for civil protection for the forthcoming 12-month period. Each area of risk has a dedicated sub-group which oversees activity that ensures that MRF members are prepared.

## Summary of findings



### Outstanding

Merseyside Police is outstanding in the way it identifies and tackles serious and organised crime.

The force has a well-developed understanding of the threat posed by serious and organised crime. It has a strong approach to tackling this type of crime involving all parts of the force and working closely with partners.

HMIC found that the force has effective ways of working to deter people from committing serious and organised crime. These include working with young people and females involved in gangs. The force communicates well with its communities, publicising successes and promoting the consequences of being involved in serious and organised crime.

The force's approach to tackling and disrupting serious and organised crime in collaboration with partner organisations has resulted in a number of successful operations that have improved the lives of those living in communities affected by organised crime.

Merseyside Police has a good working relationship with the regional organised crime unit and with other forces across the region.

The force has the necessary arrangements in place to ensure that it can fulfil its national policing responsibilities. It regularly tests its ability to respond to national threats, including public order events and counter-terrorist incidents, by conducting unannounced tests of its mobilisation. It has also conducted extensive exercises to test inter-operability with fire and ambulance services.

This is the first year HMIC has graded forces on their effectiveness at tackling serious and organised crime, including its arrangements for ensuring that it can fulfil its national policing responsibilities, so no year-on-year comparison is possible.

## 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.