

PEEL: Police effectiveness 2015

An inspection of Thames Valley Police



February 2016

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ISBN: 978-1-78655-009-5

www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmic

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

Overall judgment¹



Good

Thames Valley Police is good at keeping people safe and reducing crime. The force has low crime levels and continues to reduce crime and anti-social behaviour. The force investigates crime well and takes consistent action against organised crime groups, although more work is needed to prevent serious organised crime. It is good at identifying and supporting those who are most vulnerable,² but HMIC found that to address increased demand the force needs to invest more resource into child abuse investigation. 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

Thames Valley Police is good at keeping people safe and reducing crime. The force's approach to prevention is clear and well understood by officers and staff who work well with other organisations to solve problems in neighbourhoods, including intervening early to stop them from escalating.

The force works well with partners to identify and address anti-social behaviour. It is increasing its capacity to use academic research and evidence-based practice to become more effective.

When a crime has occurred, the force acts quickly and carries out high quality investigations, including making sure victims are safe and keeping them informed about how their cases are progressing. It works well to identify, investigate and bring to justice repeat and dangerous offenders and to stop them re-offending.

Increasingly the force is focusing on so-called hidden crimes such as domestic abuse and child sexual exploitation with a view to protecting the most vulnerable members of the community. HMIC found a commitment from the force to identify and protect victims who are vulnerable in some way. However the levels of resourcing dedicated to investigating reports of child abuse, have not kept pace with increased demand.

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

² A vulnerable person is someone who is in need of special care, support, or protection because of age, disability, or risk of abuse or neglect.

The force has a satisfactory understanding of the threat posed by serious and organised crime³ and has demonstrated consistent enforcement action against organised crime groups. Its work in this area can be enhanced by developing its approach to the prevention of serious and organised crime.

The leadership has strong oversight of the force's 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?



Good

Thames Valley Police is good at preventing crime, anti-social behaviour and keeping people safe. This is consistent with HMIC's assessment in 2014 when the force was also judged to be good in this area.

It has continued to reduce both crime and anti-social behaviour, and is increasingly using evidence-based practice in its planning processes.

Preventing crime and anti-social behaviour is clearly important for Thames Valley Police. It features as a priority in the police and crime plan and senior police leaders work with other organisations, to develop a joint

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



Good

Thames Valley Police's approach to investigating crime and managing offenders is good. This is consistent with HMIC's 2014 crime inspection, in which the force was judged as good at investigating offending.

Processes for the initial investigation and allocation of complex and non-complex crime are well-understood and generally work well. The quality of subsequent investigations is good; there are clear standards in place, appropriate supervision and compliance with the code of practice for victims of crime.⁴

The force has a wide range of accredited specialists to support more complex

³ Serious and organised crime includes human trafficking, drug trafficking, organised illegal immigration, high value fraud and other serious financial crimes, counterfeiting, organised theft, burglary or robbery and cyber-crime. It is perpetrated by groups of people operating collaboratively on a continuing basis, typically in order to realise substantial financial gain and sometimes involving serious violence. These are known as organised crime groups (OCGs).

⁴ *Code of Practice for Victims of Crime*, Ministry of Justice, 2015. Available from: www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/254459/code-of-practice-victims-of-crime.pdf

approach to tackle crime, anti-social behaviour and community concerns. HMIC is encouraged to see that Thames Valley Police is prioritising further reductions, making the link between reduction in crime and overall demand reduction.

The force has allocated dedicated staff to local police areas whose primary responsibilities include preventing crime and anti-social behaviour. HMIC found good evidence of staff using a wide range of tactics to effectively prevent crime and reduce anti-social behaviour. The force is improving how it evaluates what works, and shares learning and good practice.

However there is still more it can do to ensure that operational activity is consistently based on an evidence-based approach and systematically reviewed.

investigations and processes in place to learn from organisational performance.

Forensic and digital specialists are used effectively to support investigations, and the force is working to improve the timeliness of computer examinations.

The force has some provision in place to identify and divert vulnerable offenders. Its 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?



Good

Thames Valley Police provides a good service in identifying vulnerable people and generally responds well to them. The force has made good progress since last year and has improved how it tackles domestic abuse. It is working hard to set up multi-agency safeguarding hubs covering the whole force area to provide

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



Good

Thames Valley Police is good at identifying and tackling serious and organised crime groups (OCGs) in its area. This is the first year HMIC has graded forces on their effectiveness at tackling serious and organised crime, including a force's arrangements for ensuring it can fulfil its national policing

more effective joined-up services with partner organisations to better safeguard children and vulnerable adults.

We found a strong commitment in Thames Valley to improving its services to protect vulnerable people and police officers and staff understand and share this commitment. The force has invested extra resource in its specialist services that identify and support those who are vulnerable and keep them safe. However we found some lack of capacity in the child abuse investigation team which means that the force may not be able to continue to provide the quality of service it aspires to for this very vulnerable group of victims.

The force has made a good start in ensuring that it is well-prepared to tackle child sexual exploitation and is building on this initial approach with its partners.

responsibilities, so no year-on-year comparison is possible.

The force has a clear process for the identification and mapping OCGs which has been enhanced by the creation of a dedicated OCG manager post. It can demonstrate consistent activity in the disruption of OCGs and of work with partners. There is clear ownership of OCGs along with appropriate chief officer oversight.

Thames Valley Police has sufficient resource within the force to pursue OCGs, but less activity is dedicated to preventative measures, results analysis and to raising public awareness of the threat from serious and organised crime. It needs to address these in order to be more effective and efficient in how it tackles serious and organised crime.

The force has robust arrangements and chief officer oversight to provide its national policing responsibilities, and satisfactory arrangements to test its response are in place.

Force in numbers



Calls for assistance

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

Thames Valley Police

England and Wales

475

350



Crime

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

Thames Valley Police

England and Wales

52.9

63.0

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

Thames Valley Police

England and Wales

53.3

60.3

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

Thames Valley Police

England and Wales

-0.7%

+4.5%

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

Thames Valley Police

England and Wales

-30.8%

-12.6%



Charge rate

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

Thames Valley Police

England and Wales

15.0%

16.0%



Anti-social behaviour

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

Thames Valley Police England and Wales

15.5

32.9

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

Thames Valley Police England and Wales

15.8

36.2



Domestic abuse

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

Thames Valley Police England and Wales

9.0%

10.0%

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

Thames Valley Police England and Wales

8.1%

8.5%



Organised crime groups

Organised crime groups per million population as at 30 June 2015

Thames Valley Police England and Wales

25.6

74.7



Victim satisfaction rate

Victim satisfaction rate 12 months to 31 March 2015

Thames Valley Police England and Wales

88.4%

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 Thames Valley Police are available from the HMIC website (www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmic/).

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

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

To answer this question we looked at four in-depth questions, three of which are discussed in more detail within this report:⁵

- How effective is the force at preventing crime and anti-social behaviour, and keeping people safe?
- How effective is the force at investigating crime and managing offenders?
- How effective is the force at protecting those who are vulnerable from harm and supporting victims?
- 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 Thames Valley Police.

⁵ 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-thames-valley/ 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 Thames Valley?

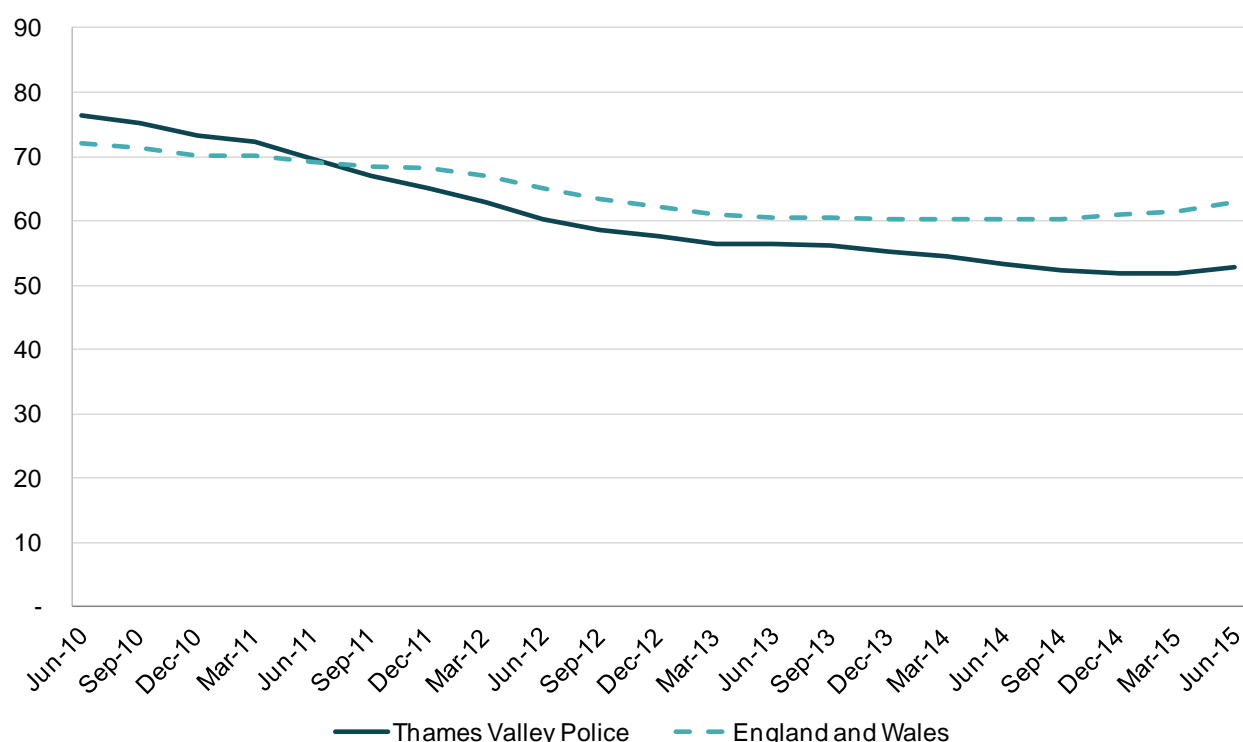
Although police recorded crime is by no means a complete measure of the totality of demand for calls on its service that a force faces, it does provide a comparable indication of performance across all forces. Crime rates are reported as a number of crimes per 1,000 population in each force area to enable 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 recorded crime in the year ending 31 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 carried out a national inspection of crime data integrity 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 31 percent in Thames Valley compared with a reduction of 13 percent across all forces in England and Wales.

Over this same period, victim-based crime (i.e. crimes where there is a direct victim such as an individual, a group, or an organisation) decreased by 31 percent in Thames Valley, compared with a reduction of 12 percent across England and Wales.

When compared with the previous year, police recorded crime (excluding fraud) in Thames Valley decreased by 1 percent for the 12 months to 30 June 2015. This is compared with an increase of 4 percent across England and Wales over the same period.

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



Source: Home Office data

We discussed the reasons behind these crime reductions with senior officers from the force. They were unable to point to any single or significant factor that would explain why crime has reduced further in their area than others. It was their view however that this had been achieved by a combination of good practice across many areas of policing activity.

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 Thames Valley (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	Thames Valley Police	England and Wales
Recorded crime (excluding fraud)	52.9	63.0
Victim-based crime	47.5	56.0
Sexual offences	1.7	1.6
Assault with injury	4.0	6.3
Burglary in a dwelling*	4.8	8.4
Anti-social behaviour incidents*	15.5	32.9

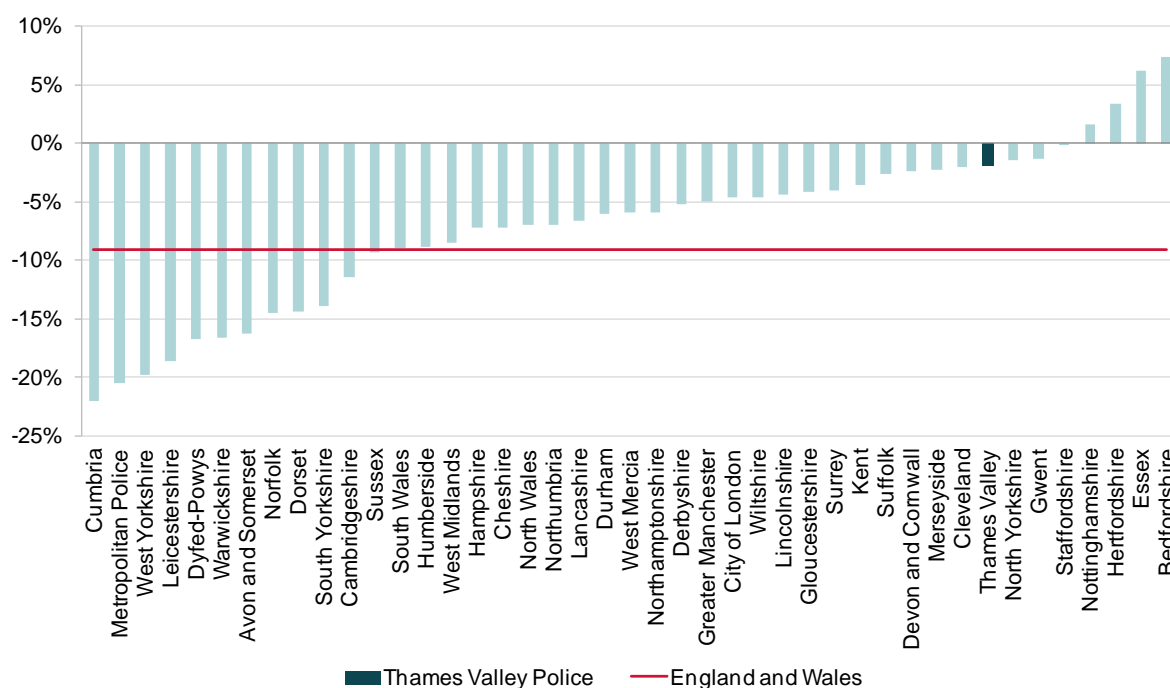
Source: Home Office data, HMIC data return

*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, Thames Valley Police recorded 36,337 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 is clearly important for Thames Valley Police and it has reduced both in the past year. Preventing crime and anti-social behaviour features as a priority within both the police and crime plan and the force delivery plan. HMIC is encouraged to see that it is prioritising further reductions, making the link between reduction in crime and overall demand reduction.

Senior police leaders sit on a variety of high-level groups with other organisations to develop a joint strategic approach to tackle crime, anti-social behaviour and community concerns.

HMIC found staff are very much aware of the need to focus on prevention, and able to describe tactics to achieve this. Dedicated neighbourhood officers have a clear focus to prevent crime and anti-social behaviour and are supported in this by other teams. HMIC found examples of close working relationships with response officers and other units such as neighbourhood officers allowing joint briefings, effective tasking and sharing of intelligence.

Thames Valley Police continues to develop its approach to the reduction of crime and anti-social behaviour. As part of its 2014/15 delivery plan, it prioritised the completion of a neighbourhood policing review. The force is implementing the review findings and intends that its recommendations, along with the findings from its ongoing priority based budgeting process (PBB),⁶ will shape how in the future it prioritises the prevention of crime, anti-social behaviour and keeping people safe.

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

The force has allocated dedicated staff into local police areas (LPAs) whose primary responsibilities include preventing crime and anti-social behaviour. Each LPA is headed by a senior commander at either chief inspector or superintendent rank. There are neighbourhood teams, comprising police officers, police community support officers (PCSOs) and police staff, who work closely alongside response and local CID officers.

HMIC found dedicated anti-social behaviour officers working closely, and in many areas sharing offices, with partner agencies. HMIC found good use of volunteers

⁶ The essence of the priority based budgeting (PBB) approach is to examine all areas of police spending, and analyse how much value each area adds to the force's ability to deliver its priorities.

working in support of the force, such as members of the Special Constabulary who are closely aligned to LPAs to support crime prevention and anti-social behaviour initiatives.

Most of the neighbourhood policing staff HMIC spoke to felt valued by the force and suitably trained and equipped for their role. However some officers expressed frustration about the number of occasions they were taken away from their neighbourhoods to supplement response officer numbers. This means that, on occasions, the necessity to perform other duties prevents neighbourhood officers fully engaging with problem solving and partnership work. The force is aware of this and intends to address it through its implementation of the neighbourhood policing review.

An annual review of resource allocation takes into account emerging crime risks as well as the volume of crimes and incidents reported. Through its neighbourhood policing review, the force is refining this approach and working to develop a deeper understanding of the risk to each community to inform resourcing decisions.

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

HMIC found good evidence of staff using a wide range of tactics to prevent crime and reduce anti-social behaviour, such as

- Intelligence-led preventative patrolling
- Targeted and proactive crime prevention advice
- Use of anti-social behaviour officers and prevention powers
- CCTV
- Licensing bans
- Cocooning⁷
- VOLT analysis⁸

Officers and staff have access to toolkits on the force intranet which assist them in dealing with particular crime and anti-social behaviour problems. These provide a guide to good practice and are easy to access.

The force recognises the benefits of greater use of evidence-based policing and is working with the College of Policing to develop this approach. It has trained staff, such as analysts within its central problem solving team to establish a better understanding of 'what works' well to prevent crime.

⁷ Cocooning is a crime prevention technique where addresses in the locality of a recent crime are visited to provide reassurance and crime prevention advice.

⁸ When investigating a crime the police will take a structured approach to considering the Victim, Offender, Location, and Time (VOLT) when the offence occurred to ensure that the investigation covers this and identifies any other connected crimes.

It has also set objectives for each LPA commander to build an evidence-based approach at a local level, and has developed a preventative problem solving plan. The force is improving how it evaluates what works, and how it shares learning and good practice, for example, each local police commander is required to demonstrate how they are using evidence-based policing in their area.

As part of fieldwork, HMIC reviewed a number of problem solving plans created by local officers. We found effective tactics are used, including partnership working, traditional enforcement, anti-social behaviour orders, targeted patrol and community engagement.

Although these problem solving plans considered a range of tactics, they could have been enhanced by the use of a structured problem solving model and better results analysis. This suggests that there is still more the force can do to ensure that operational activity is consistently based on an understanding of what works, and systematically reviewed to ensure that all best practice is identified.

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?

Thames Valley Police engages consistently and proactively with a complex arrangement of partner agencies and local authorities within the force area and is exploiting opportunities to work together to achieve shared objectives. The force has established strong working relationships with partners including those from local authorities, housing associations and mental health teams across the force area.

The chief constable holds regular meetings with chief executives from each of the local authorities. Staff from the LPA commanders to PCSOs are encouraged and expected to work alongside partner agencies, and to consider themselves as part of a much larger extended and cohesive team.

Many local policing areas have officers and local authority staff jointly tackling anti-social behaviour, and working as co-located teams from police stations or local authority premises.

Anti-social behaviour meetings with other organisations provide opportunities for all involved to develop joint action plans; monitor how effective their actions are in preventing and reducing anti-social behaviour, and minimise the impact on victims.

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

The force is effective at sharing and using information with partners at a range of levels. At a strategic level and there are formal meetings such as multi-agency risk

assessment conferences (MARACs),⁹ multi agency safeguarding hubs (MASHs)¹⁰ and community safety partnerships (CSPs) where information is shared to prevent crime and anti-social behaviour. At a tactical level, the police and partners come together at partnership meetings within each LPA to share information and plan how to work together to prevent crime and anti-social behaviour. HMIC saw good evidence of highly effective information exchange being used in an LPA partnership meeting to reduce anti-social behaviour.

Community safety partnership staff are co-located in police stations, working closely with safer neighbourhood teams. Some of these staff are funded jointly between the police and partners. Partnership staff based within police stations have access to force data, which is used to support the activities of partners to prevent crime and anti-social behaviour.

Partners advised HMIC that formal information sharing arrangements with the force are good. However there are indications that when the sharing of information is of a more spontaneous or ad hoc nature that it works less well. The force has provided some information to partners about how it uses intelligence and has created a mechanism for partners to provide intelligence to it. However this was not felt by all partners to be entirely suitable and while these steps have increased partners intelligence contribution, there is more that partners feel could be done in this area.

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

Thames Valley Police works well with partners to ensure a cohesive response to escalating anti-social behaviour which requires a partnership approach. These include referring cases to the troubled families programme,¹¹ youth offending teams, community safety partnerships, drug action teams and integrated offender management.

HMIC found good examples of these partnership arrangements resolving anti-social behaviour, including the use of a community trigger to address anti-social behaviour caused by drug dealing in a neighbourhood. HMIC also noted the proactive use of partnership arrangements in the provision of public CCTV, the proactive use of anti-social behaviour legislation and licensing enforcement.

The force has strengthened how it identifies repeat and vulnerable victims of anti-social behaviour when a report is first received in the police control room. It makes

⁹ This is a monthly meeting of professionals from agencies such as police, social services, health, education, probation, Women's Aid and independent domestic violence advisors who meet to share information and agree actions in order to manage risk in the most dangerous of cases.

¹⁰ A multi-agency safeguarding hub co-locates safeguarding agencies and their data to facilitate more effective joint working in respect of vulnerable people.

¹¹ Troubled Families is a Government-led partnership programme which aims to bring local agencies together to work with a small number of the most troubled families, offering targeted and focussed packages of support, in order to help them to become more independent.

good use of an anti-social behaviour risk assessment matrix to identify the most vulnerable people or hotspot locations which can then be provided with an enhanced service.

For example, any anti-social behaviour incident assessed as medium or high risk will be taken to a local anti-social behaviour partnership meeting. This allows the police and other organisations to visit victims more regularly, provide reassurance and ensure they receive support and assistance from the most appropriate agency. Where a high risk case is identified the incident must be managed by an anti-social behaviour co-ordinator, and supervised by a neighbourhood inspector. This ensures senior level monitoring of the response and investigation.

Summary of findings



Good

Thames Valley Police is good at preventing crime, anti-social behaviour and keeping people safe. This is consistent with HMIC's assessment in 2014 when the force was also judged to be good in this area.

It has continued to reduce both crime and anti-social behaviour, and is increasingly using evidence-based practice in its planning processes.

Preventing crime and anti-social behaviour is clearly important for Thames Valley Police. It features as a priority in the police and crime plan and senior police leaders work with other organisations, to develop a joint approach to tackle crime, anti-social behaviour and community concerns. HMIC is encouraged to see that Thames Valley Police is prioritising further reductions, making the link between reduction in crime and overall demand reduction.

The force has allocated dedicated staff to local police areas whose primary responsibilities include preventing crime and anti-social behaviour. HMIC found good evidence of staff using a wide range of tactics to effectively prevent crime and reduce anti-social behaviour. The force is improving how it evaluates what works, and shares learning and good practice.

However there is still more it can do to ensure that operational activity is consistently based on an evidence-based approach and systematically reviewed.

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. Thames Valley 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)^{12 13 14}

Outcome type/group	Thames Valley Police Number of outcomes	Rate	England and Wales Number of outcomes	Rate
Charged/Summoned	18,584	15.0	577,678	16.0
Taken into consideration	1,188	1.0	21,318	0.6
Out-of-court (formal)	6,574	5.3	165,384	4.6
Caution - youths	668	0.5	19,703	0.5
Caution - adults	4,428	3.6	115,000	3.2
Penalty Notices for Disorder	1,478	1.2	30,681	0.8
Out-of-court (informal)	4,346	3.5	159,915	4.4
Cannabis/Khat warning	1,099	0.9	41,964	1.2
Community resolution	3,247	2.6	117,951	3.3

Source: Home Office crime outcomes data

Outcomes are likely to differ from force to force for a number of reasons. Certain offences are more likely to be concluded without offenders being prosecuted; typically including types of crime such as cannabis misuse. If this type of crime is particularly prevalent in a force then it is likely that the level of 'cannabis/khat'¹⁵ 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 Thames Valley Police are broadly in line with most other forces in England and Wales.

¹² 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.

¹³ 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

¹⁴ 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.

¹⁵ 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. Thames Valley Police has well established processes in place to initially investigate and allocate cases.

Effective investigation requires that suspects, once identified, should be managed through the investigation and criminal justice processes. The force has a clear crime recording, investigation and management policy setting out standards required during the entirety of the investigation. This includes what actions a supervisor should take. Where necessary, supervisors ensure that outstanding matters are passed to the in-coming team to make sure attendance is not unnecessarily delayed. HMIC had previously found this to be an area for improvement during our crime inspection in 2014.

The force ensures that there is a detective constable on duty at all times to provide specialist advice and guidance during the initial stages of an investigation, with call-out arrangements in place for more senior investigators should they be required.

The force has a clear policy that sets out which part of the organisation should undertake any investigations that might be required after it has been initially recorded. This policy allows some room for flexibility with certain crimes seen as suitable for allocation to a number of departments, this allows for work to be spread more evenly alleviating pressure for instance on frontline officers when required.

However, HMIC found some frustrations caused by delays in reallocating crimes from response to CID and low level cyber-crime such as sexting. However in general, this policy works well, with decisions made at daily management meetings, or through supervisor discussion on how to allocate crime types appropriately.

How well does the force investigate different types of crime?

As part of fieldwork, HMIC reviewed a sample of files and ongoing investigations, and found the non-complex crime investigations carried out by officers from neighbourhoods, response and local CID are of good quality.

Case files contained clear investigation plans set by supervisors, and consistent evidence that all investigative opportunities were followed up in a timely fashion with appropriate supervisor reviews.

Officers were aware of the requirements of the code of practice for victims of crime¹⁶ and HMIC found evidence of victim and witness updates being provided.

The force has provided officers with training in respect of both victim care and file quality. Its own monitoring shows that the proportion of prosecution files judged satisfactory by the CPS on first submission has risen from 65 to 72 percent during the period between 1 April 2015 and 30 September 2015 when compared to the same period in 2014.

The force deploys some officers and police staff in custody suites, to interview individuals arrested in connection with non complex crimes. HMIC found that some of these staff were unclear as to who their supervisors are. As a consequence work is not directly allocated by any supervisor to these staff, resulting in a lack of direction over prioritisation of work and some uncertainty when seeking advice in relation to direction of investigation and charging advice.

Thames Valley Police has a good range of resources to support investigations into more complex cases, such as sexual assault and robbery. We found no evidence of difficulties in obtaining specialist advice or forensic staff with well-established call out procedures in place.

HMIC reviewed a sample of files and investigations in respect of investigations into more complex cases. The cases reviewed showed consistent evidence of the use of specialist officers with appropriate skills and training. In most cases they had a clear investigation plan and evidence of effective supervision, and good compliance with the code of practice for victims of crime.

The force has good arrangements in place to monitor the quality of investigations and identify where it could do better. It uses senior investigating officers to provide supervisory oversight for the most complex cases and a force-wide structure of performance meetings that monitor the quality of investigations. These meetings look in detail at a sample of crimes identifying where officers complied with the force's investigative standard and where the force can improve.

How well does the force gather digital evidence?

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

Thames Valley Police has a range of digital evidence recovery methods to support investigations. These include mobile phone and other device download technology. Officers are able to access these services during and outside office hours as the force has 527 officers trained in the use of the mobile phone download technology.

¹⁶ *Code of Practice for Victims of Crime*, Ministry of Justice, 2015. Available from: www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/254459/code-of-practice-victims-of-crime.pdf

HMIC found the force is moving toward crime scene investigators (CSIs) undertaking mobile phone data retrieval in order to ensure proportionate investigations.

Technical specialists in digital forensic investigation are able to attend incidents to examine items on site, thereby preventing unnecessary seizure of items which potentially disadvantages innocent parties.

The force has had problems retrieving data from laptops and computers in a timely fashion. It is aware of this and has invested time and resources into improving the situation. It has increased staffing in the high tech crime unit (HTCU) and uses a structured process to prioritise the most urgent cases.

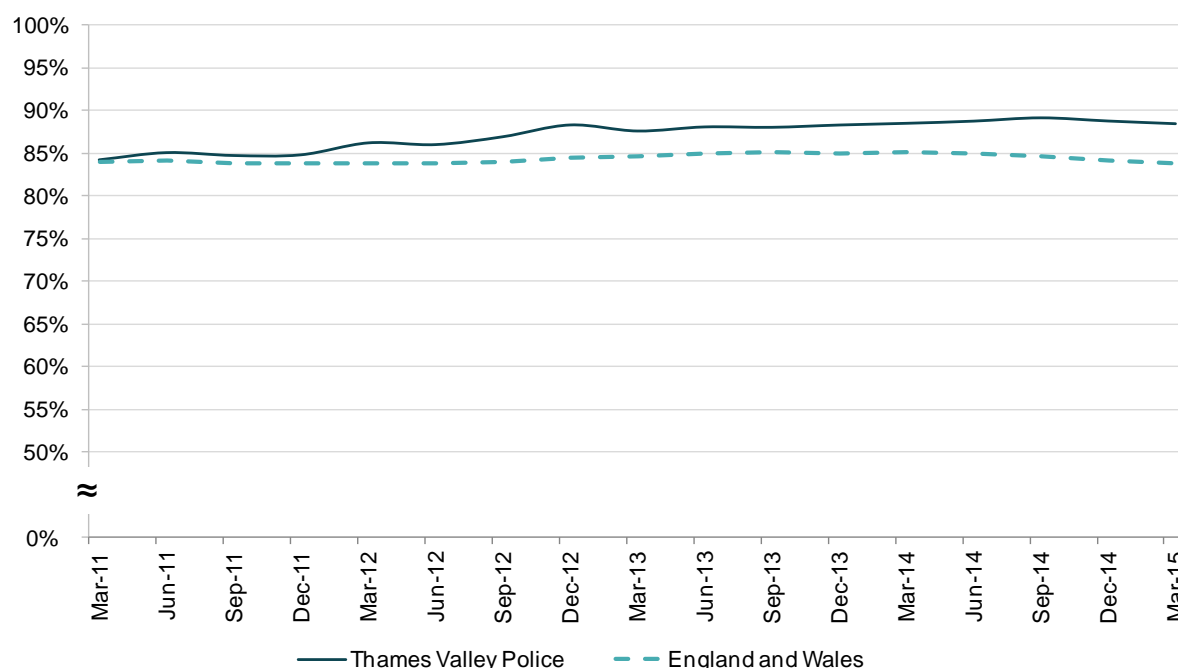
HMIC found that for most cases, there is a delay in the data retrieval from laptops and computers of around six to seven months. This delay previously reduced from nine to two months in 2014, but has since increased again. The force is aware of the problem and attributes the increased delays to the loss of specialist staff and recruitment problems and is already addressing these issues so that delays are beginning to reduce.

It is not possible for officers to view images recovered by the HTCU over the force computer network. This means that they have to travel to the forensics section to view evidential material building a further delay into the process.

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

Of those who have been the victim of a crime in Thames Valley in the 12 months to 31 March 2015, 88.4 percent were satisfied with their whole experience with the police. This is higher than the national victim satisfaction rate of 83.8 percent over the same time period. The victim satisfaction rate in Thames Valley for the 12 months to 31 March 2015 is broadly in line with both 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 them re-offending?

How well does the force divert offenders away from crime?

At an operational level, the force takes a proactive approach to dealing with suspected offenders quickly in order to prevent further offending. Details of wanted persons are passed from team to team as shifts change and repeat offenders highlighted in daily briefings. Those who are outstanding for arrest for longer periods are placed on the Police National Computer (PNC) and progress towards arresting them is reviewed every three months.

Officers apply victim, offender, location, time (VOLT) principles in trying to identify other offences for which the offender may be a suspect to prevent re-offending as part of their arrest enquiries. HMIC found this to be a positive proactive approach.

The force is working to provide an appropriate service to those who may be in danger of becoming offenders as a result of mental health issues. It has introduced a system in which, police officers and mental health nurses jointly respond to incidents involving people who are in need of support or assistance as a result of mental health. In the pilot areas this resulted in a 60 percent reduction in the number of people taken into police custody for a mental health assessment.

Thames Valley Police is part of the local criminal justice board (LCJB) and has a joint reducing re-offending strategy. This includes plans to offer offenders intensive and bespoke support to address their varying needs to stop them from re-offending.

The force has provided training for custody sergeants to identify vulnerable offenders, and it has healthcare providers as well as staff responsible for liaison and diversion of offenders working in some of its custody suites to provide support.

As part of its efforts to prevent reoffending the force has been trialling the use of voluntary tagging for suitable individuals on its integrated offender management (IOM)¹⁷ scheme. This removes the need for some physical checks on IOM scheme members and acts as an incentive to reduce offending. During a recent evaluation the force found that offenders being managed through the IOM scheme who were wearing these tags, were 32 percent less likely to be arrested. The force is exploring how it can sustain this voluntary tagging pilot in the longer term.

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. The integrated offender management scheme is operated under the governance of the LCJB, chaired by the assistant chief constable and attended by the head of the Thames Valley Police criminal justice department.

The force has allocated significant resource to dealing with repeat offending, with 19 dedicated IOM managers working with colleagues from probation to manage around 350 individuals. Not all IOM teams are co-located but this does not appear to hinder their work even though where teams are co-located they experience improved access to information and joint working.

Following the introduction of the new national arrangements which create the tri-partite structure for offender management comprising of community rehabilitation companies, alongside the force and the national probation service, information security issues have disrupted the previously straightforward process for data access and electronic case management.

HMIC found that where all IOM partners are not co-located, case updates are shared by email because direct input on to the host IT system is no longer permitted. Although information can be requested between agencies, the lack of a single IT system means that it is more difficult for IOM managers to access information outside of these arrangements.

Cases can be referred online to the team from officers or individuals can be tracked whilst they remain in the prison system. A scoring matrix is applied which takes into account previous offending behaviour and background. Scores within the matrix are highest where the individual has been convicted of serious acquisitive offences, and such individuals are seen as a priority due to the impact of their offending. All of the current individuals on the scheme are serious acquisitive crime offenders. The focus on these crime types limits the forces ability to deal with other types of offenders who also pose a risk to the community and may cause greater harm.

¹⁷ Integrated offender management brings a cross-agency response to the re-offending of persistent and problematic offenders.

Repeat offenders receive prolific and priority offender (PPO)¹⁸ status which is flagged within the police national computer (PNC). PPOs are also detailed within daily management meeting briefings and information is shared across the local policing area.

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

Thames Valley Police has effective processes for identifying and monitoring sexual and other dangerous offenders at all levels. Senior managers are appropriately represented on management boards giving strategic oversight in this area of work, along with partners from other relevant agencies.

The force manages its sexual and dangerous offenders through the multi-agency public protection arrangements (MAPPA)¹⁹ process, and it has a network of MAPPA meetings that take place across the entire force area. MAPPA are used by the force and partner organisations including prisons and probation to monitor those offenders assessed as presenting a high risk to the public, and to stop them re-offending.

Through this process, offenders assessed as presenting the highest level of risk receive co-ordinated action with partner organisations to reduce these risks.

In addition, Thames Valley Police has a dedicated violent and sex offender unit comprising six sergeants/supervisors and 27 offender managers. These staff are properly trained and accredited for their role. During the inspection we received positive feedback from partner agencies about the skills and competence of these staff. They work closely with other agencies, undertaking risk reviews with staff from the probation service locally and working closely with the national probation service (NPS) in how offenders are managed.

The force has a lifetime offender manager within the force intelligence bureau who is responsible for identifying opportunities to apply for Sexual Offences Prevention Orders (SOPOs)²⁰ and Serious Crime Prevention Orders (SCPOs)²¹ at point of conviction. The force has made good use of these orders.

During fieldwork, HMIC found that intelligence concerning dangerous and sexual offenders was brought to the attention of frontline officers when specific action was required. Although not all neighbourhood officers were aware of offenders being

¹⁸ A prolific or priority offender (PPO) is any person aged 18 or over who is responsible for committing large numbers of crimes, or their offending or behaviour is having an adverse and significant on local community life.

¹⁹ Multi-agency public protection arrangements (MAPPA) are in place to ensure the successful management of violent and sexual offenders. Agencies involved include as responsible bodies 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.

²⁰ A Sexual Offences Prevention Order is a type of civil order to protect the public from serious sexual harm.

²¹ A Serious Crime Prevention Order can be made by application to the crown court in respect of a person convicted of a serious offence in order to prevent or disrupt involvement in serious crime.

managed through MAPPA or IOM offenders in their area, HMIC found evidence in briefings and from officers that they are made aware of them when required.

Summary of findings



Good

Thames Valley Police's approach to investigating crime and managing offenders is good. This is consistent with HMIC's 2014 crime inspection, in which the force was judged as good at investigating offending.

Processes for the initial investigation and allocation of complex and non-complex crime are well-understood and generally work well. The quality of subsequent investigations is good; there are clear standards in place, appropriate supervision and compliance with the code of practice for victims of crime.

The force has a wide range of accredited specialists to support more complex investigations and processes in place to learn from organisational performance.

Forensic and digital specialists are used effectively to support investigations, and the force is working to improve the timeliness of computer examinations.

The force has some provision in place to identify and divert vulnerable offenders. Its 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 2015.²² The following is a summary of the findings.

Summary of findings



Good

Protecting vulnerable people is a high priority for Thames Valley Police. It has invested in training, investigative resources and new partnership structures to improve the service it provides. The force provides a good service identifying vulnerable people and generally responds well to them. For these reasons the force is judged to be good at protecting vulnerable people from harm and supporting victims.

Thames Valley Police has worked hard to improve services to some of the most vulnerable members of its community. Officers and staff throughout the force share this commitment and have a good awareness of risk and vulnerability and an understanding of the importance of their role in managing the risks faced by vulnerable victims.

The force is good at identifying those who are vulnerable, making good use of intelligence to assess their risk at the first point of contact so that the most appropriate police response can be deployed. The force generally responds well to vulnerable victims. Frontline officers have a good understanding of their responsibility to provide enhanced levels of service for vulnerable victims to ensure they are supported and protected. The force needs to ensure that all officers comply consistently with the code of practice for victims of crime, so that it always provides victims with the quality of service they have a right to expect.

The force works well with partner organisations to share information and provide a joint response to victims to better protect and support them. HMIC is encouraged that the force is committed to improving the effectiveness of joint working through the roll-out of multi-agency safeguarding hubs across the whole force area.

The force has invested well in specialist resources in its protecting vulnerable people units and takes steps to identify and support vulnerable people. The capacity in the child abuse investigation unit has not kept pace with the increasing workload it has

²² *PEEL: Police effectiveness 2015 (Vulnerability)* – Thames Valley Police, HMIC, December 2015. Available from: www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmic/publications/police-effectiveness-vulnerability-2015-thames-valley/

faced. This means that the force may not be able to continue to provide the quality of service it aspires to for this very vulnerable group of victims.

The force has made a good start in ensuring it is well prepared to tackle child sexual exploitation and must now build on this initial approach and have confidence that this ambition translates into consistent operational practice. This inspection only considered how well-prepared the force is to tackle child sexual exploitation. The force was also subject to a post-inspection visit of its child protection services. The more detailed findings from that review published in October 2015 should be read in conjunction with this inspection report.²³

²³ HMIC's National Child Protection Inspections. Available from:
www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmic/our-work/child-abuse-and-child-protection-issues/national-child-protection-inspection/

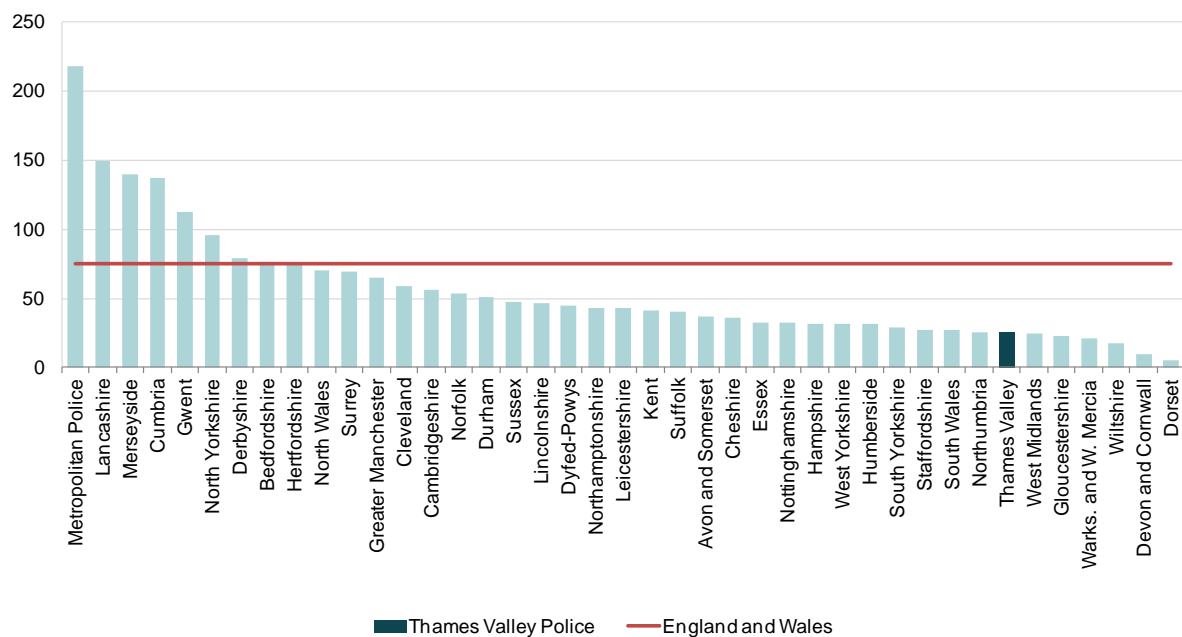
How effective is the force at tackling serious and organised crime, including its arrangements for fulfilling its national policing responsibilities?

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, Thames Valley Police was actively disrupting, investigating or monitoring 60 organised crime groups (OCGs). This represents 26 OCGs per one million of the population, which is low compared with other forces in England and Wales.

Figure 6: Organised crime groups per one million population, by force, as at 30 June 2015^{24 25}



Source: HMIC data collection

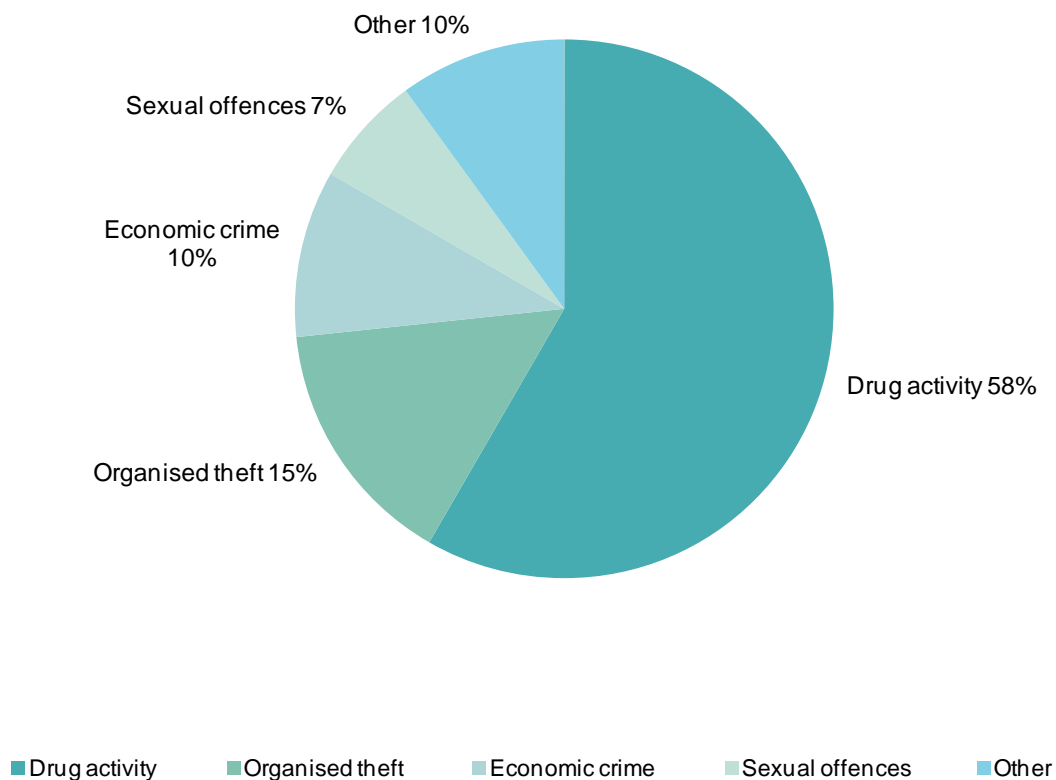
Forces categorise OCGs by the predominant form of criminal activity in which the group is involved. Although OCGs are likely to be involved in multiple forms of criminality, this indicates their most common characteristic. 'Drug activity' was the predominant crime type (58 percent) of the OCGs managed by Thames Valley Police as at 30 June 2015. 'Drug activity' was also the most common predominant crime type recorded by all forces in England and Wales²⁶, with 64 percent of all OCGs classified in this way.

²⁴ 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.

²⁵ 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.

²⁶ 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 2015²⁷



Source: HMIC data collection

Serious and organised crime is one of six national threats specified within *The Strategic Policing Requirement*.²⁸ 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.

²⁷ Figures may not sum to 100 percent, due to rounding.

²⁸ *The Strategic Policing Requirement*, Home Office, March 2015. Available from: www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/417116/The_Strategic_Policing_Requirement.pdf

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?

Thames Valley Police has produced local serious and organised crime profiles detailing the threat from serious organised crime in each of the three counties that make up Thames Valley. As a number of other local authorities sit below this level, HMIC was encouraged that the force has further refined these profiles down to more local levels, providing personal briefings on them to relevant local authority chief executives. The force also publishes its comprehensive strategic threat assessment which summarises the nature, risks and harm arising from organised crime, along with an outline of activity to tackle it. The strategic threat assessment informs a force intelligence requirement which is incorporated into the annual delivery plan. The intelligence requirement identifies to all staff the need to consider organised criminal involvement across a range of crime types and safeguarding issues.

Thames Valley Police has established processes to access government agency information network (GAIN)²⁹ intelligence and it is an active participant in the regional tasking meeting sharing intelligence on serious and organised crime. It assimilates material from the National Crime Agency (NCA) and internationally from EUROPOL, as well as regional and force resources to complete its intelligence picture.

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 organised crime group (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.

²⁹ Government intelligence agency network (GAIN) is a large network of partners, including all police forces in England and Wales, which shares information about organised criminals.

For these reasons, HMIC has recommended that ROCUs assume responsibility for OCG mapping on behalf of their constituent forces.³⁰

The force has in place a dedicated organised crime manager who assesses the intelligence around each OCG every three months and scores them in line with the organised crime group mapping bands. Although this member of staff has only been in place for around six months, HMIC noted a positive impact on the force's processes around fully mapping each OCG. This will help the force to prioritise its resources efficiently and effectively against the threat from serious and organised crime.

The force mechanisms to receive, develop, and assess intelligence about serious and organised crime are generally effective. These mechanisms inform the force's strategic threat and risk assessment,³¹ its control strategy and local profiles.

The force uses intelligence to develop its understanding of the organised crime threat and HMIC found that a range of collection methods are being utilised. In one case reviewed in detail during the inspection, a range of intelligence collection methods were used, but not all the possible sources of intelligence were considered. The case did demonstrate local and international intelligence exchange, along with co-operative working with other agencies.

During the inspection fieldwork HMIC found that some staff displayed a good knowledge of serious and organised crime, including those in their area who were members of OCGs, as well as what to look for to indicate that a person might be involved in serious and organised crime.

HMIC's previous crime inspection in Thames Valley Police identified a lack of knowledge amongst neighbourhood staff about their role disrupting and dismantling organised crime groups. HMIC found evidence that the force has made some progress in this respect, although inconsistent levels of knowledge remain and further work is required.

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

Force activity to respond to OCGs is led and prioritised well. Meetings at force level, and in local areas, are used effectively to assign tasks and monitor progress. OCG management plans are reviewed every three months at the force OCG management

³⁰ *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

³¹ Strategic threat and risk assessment: a process by which police forces analyse information about threats and risks against which they are required to commit resources.

meeting chaired by the assistant chief constable. This ensures appropriate oversight and supervision.

All active OCG investigations have a management plan, an identified senior investigating officer (SIO) and deputy, and a local responsible officer (LRO). The LRO is usually the local policing commander for the area that the criminality is centred upon. These officers have recently received training about the LRO role for overt investigations.

The force can access a wide range of specialist capability via the South East Regional Organised Crime Unit (SEROCU), such as surveillance, covert policing and asset recovery in order to disrupt OCGs. Thames Valley Police also has its own serious and organised crime unit (SOCU) providing a wide range of specialist capabilities to tackle serious and organised crime.

The force can demonstrate consistent activity against serious and organised crime in the twelve months to September 2015, with the force recording 59 disruptions having occurred, 24 of which involved partner agencies.

After disruption activity has taken place, the relevant OCG is subject to a review which provides an assessment of the success of that activity. However this is not conducted from a community impact perspective and it is not possible to identify to what extent force activity is achieving significant, lasting impact.

The 4Ps approach (prevent, pursue, protect, and prepare)³² was described as the basis on which the force tackles serious and organised crime. HMIC found that there is good capacity and capability at force level for traditional pursue activity, but we observed less activity focused on the prevent strand which may limit how it tackles the organised crime threat in a sustainable manner.

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

Thames Valley Police works well with partners at a tactical level to prevent and disrupt serious and organised crime.

There is an expectation for the LROs to demonstrate in the OCG management plan how they have considered the role of relevant partner agencies and, where appropriate, a rationale as to their involvement.

Partner agencies will usually be included in the overt, or 'strike' phases. This approach has seen a range of partners engaged. For example, when financial circumstances of OCG members have indicated dishonesty within credit agreements

³² "4Ps Structure" is the framework cited to tackle serious and organised crime, namely Pursue, Prevent, Protect and Prepare, see HM Government Serious Organised Crime Strategy (October 2013). Available from:

www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/248645/Serious_and_Organised_Crime_Strategy.pdf

for vehicles, this information has been shared with the car finance companies and has directly led to repossessions.

Thames Valley Police has a lifetime offender management team, who identify opportunities to apply for Serious Crime Prevention Orders (SCPOs). The force has used SCPOs to good effect. However this team is not resourced in line with the scale of the identified threat. The force will have to work with partners to manage those individuals who might most readily be diverted from lifetime involvement in organised crime.

HMIC found examples of good work designed to target those vulnerable to becoming involved in serious and organised crime. For instance there are fortnightly child sexual exploitation multi-agency meetings in some LPAs, and a programme of scanning local schools for indicators of gang activity. The force could do more to identify people most likely to be victimised or drawn in to this level of criminality in order to thwart criminal approaches towards them.

The force communicates with the public about serious and organised crime after disruption activity has taken place. Traditional means of contact are supplemented by newer methods such as social media. HMIC noted the use of; pre-prepared press releases, media interviews and leaflet drops in the proximity of disruption activity, such as execution of warrants and arrest operations. By doing so the force raises awareness of the impact and nature of serious and organised crime in that locality and the force should consider developing this in to a more regular approach.

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. HMIC found that Thames Valley Police has clear arrangements in place that provide strategic oversight of its national policing responsibilities and test its preparedness to deal with national threats.

Each of the elements of the strategic policing requirement (SPR) has a nominated chief officer lead. The force has conducted a review of the SPR areas and has a strategic threat risk assessment for firearms and public order which is subject to six monthly reviews. It is proposed to bring SPR updates to the collaboration governance board (which includes the Hampshire and Thames Valley chief constables and police and crime commissioners as members) to deliver that update as a one stop process, rather than at different stages through the year.

Thames Valley Police is the lead force in the South East Counter Terrorism Unit. The force's ability to respond to terrorism and other elements of the SPR is enhanced by improved levels of resilience achieved through close collaboration with Hampshire

Constabulary. The force also has assurance procedures in place to test how prepared it is for threats related to civil contingencies, public order and cyber-crime.

The force has robust arrangements in place to test its response to large-scale or significant events. The event and exercise programme in place for 2015-2018 is based on the government strategic risk assessment. The programme includes table-top and live-play multi-agency exercises, along with testing the spontaneous and pre-planned response plans to; mass casualty, pandemic, environmental and significant infrastructure disruption incidents. The force has carried out table-top and live time exercises with partners at critical national infrastructure³³ and COMAH³⁴ sites. The exercises have used live-time resource information to add realism and highlight particular problems such as officers holding multiple specialists skills, testing the force's capacity and capability to respond.

The force is equally considered in its approach to its own business continuity, and at the time of inspection was developing detailed contingencies in the event of total loss of power for up to ten days.

Summary of findings



Good

Thames Valley Police is good at identifying and tackling serious and organised crime groups (OCGs) in its area. This is the first year HMIC has graded forces on their effectiveness at tackling serious and organised crime, including a force's arrangements for ensuring it can fulfil its national policing responsibilities, so no year-on-year comparison is possible.

The force has a clear process for the identification and mapping OCGs which has been enhanced by the creation of a dedicated OCG manager post. It can demonstrate consistent activity in the disruption of OCGs and of work with partners. There is clear ownership of OCGs along with appropriate chief officer oversight.

Thames Valley Police has sufficient resource within the force to pursue OCGs, but less activity is dedicated to preventative measures, results analysis and to raising public awareness of the threat from serious and organised crime. It needs to address these in order to be more effective and efficient in how it tackles serious and organised crime.

³³ National critical infrastructure: those facilities, systems, sites and networks necessary for the functioning of the country and the delivery of the essential services upon which daily life in the UK depends.

³⁴ COMAH: Control of Major Accident Hazards legislation sets out the obligation on businesses to prevent major accidents involving dangerous substances.

The force has robust arrangements and chief officer oversight to provide its national policing responsibilities, and satisfactory arrangements to test its response are in place.

Areas for improvement

- The force should ensure that it is exploiting the full range of intelligence sources and preventative tactics to provide the best possible response to serious and organised crime.
- The force should improve the awareness of organised crime groups among neighbourhood teams to ensure that they can identify these groups, collect intelligence and disrupt their 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.