

PEEL: Police effectiveness 2015

An inspection of West Midlands Police



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Overview – How well does the force keep people safe and reduce crime?

Overall judgment¹



Good

Overall West Midlands Police is judged to be good at keeping people safe and reducing crime. In terms of preventing crime the force operates effectively and standards of investigation are generally high. Furthermore the force works well with partners to manage the most harmful offenders. The force is clearly committed to protecting the vulnerable; however improvements are needed in its understanding of the risks faced by vulnerable people, particularly missing children. Good arrangements are in place to tackle serious and organised crime in Birmingham East but elsewhere more consistency is needed. This is the first year HMIC has graded forces on their overall effectiveness so a year-on-year comparison is not possible.

Summary

Although we did find some areas for improvement, HMIC judges West Midlands Police to be good at keeping people safe and reducing crime.

Force priorities demonstrate a strong commitment to reducing crime and anti-social behaviour and keeping people safe, with a shift of emphasis from a reactive style to more preventative policing. This commitment is well understood throughout the force, which works effectively with partner organisations at both force and neighbourhood level.

The force generally conducts effective investigations but officers do not consistently take opportunities to maximise the gathering of evidence during initial investigations. The force works well with partners to manage offenders and divert them from further criminality. Effective arrangements are in place with partners to manage offenders and successful elements of offender management are being increasingly used throughout the force. The force has good processes to identify and manage dangerous and sexual offenders. However issues of capacity within dedicated teams are limiting effectiveness.

¹ Outstanding, Good, Requires improvement or Inadequate – see last page of report for definitions.

West Midlands Police generally provides a good service to vulnerable victims. The force identifies vulnerable people at the earliest opportunity and responds well to them. However, further improvement is needed to ensure the service is consistent, and vulnerable people, particularly children, are kept safe.

HMIC found that the overall response to tackling organised crime groups in the West Midlands is good but there are some areas for improvement. These can be summarised as follows: neighbourhood officers could be more involved in this type of criminality; an assessment of organised crime activity exists for some but not all of the force area; and the force has yet to have a full understanding of the impact of its interventions against organised crime groups.

Investigations are well managed and supervised with a range of overt and covert tactics used. A prevent team has been set up to act on prevention opportunities. The force has mapped its capability against each of the six national policing threats. In addition to exercises the force's involvement in real life operations enables it to test its preparedness to respond.

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



Good

West Midlands Police is good at preventing crime and anti-social behaviour and keeping people safe. This is consistent with HMIC's 2014 crime inspection where the force was judged to be good at reducing crime and preventing offending. This inspection did identify some areas where the force could further improve in order to deliver an outstanding service.

Force priorities demonstrate a strong commitment to reducing crime and anti-social behaviour and keeping people safe, with a shift of emphasis from a reactive style to more preventative policing. This commitment is generally well understood throughout the force, and the force ensures appropriate

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



Good

The force generally conducts effective investigations and works well with partners to manage offenders and divert them from further criminality.

Most frontline staff have a good understanding of initial safeguarding measures but some do not consistently maximise the gathering of evidence during initial investigations.

The force has a clear and effective process for allocating complex and non-complex crime to dedicated teams of investigators, which is widely understood and consistently applied.

Officers consistently use investigation plans setting out the lines of enquiry, with the victim at the centre of policing activity

resources are assigned to local policing teams to focus on preventing problems from occurring or from escalating.

The force works effectively with partner organisations at force and neighbourhood level, and uses a range of powers and tactics to tackle anti-social behaviour and keep people safe.

There are areas for improvement identified, for instance more robust and timely arrangements to ensure officers have access to information about 'what works' and developing an IT solution to assist with information sharing. However, the public can feel confident that the force is working well to prevent crime and anti-social behaviour, and keep people safe.

and reviews within appropriate timeframes.

A 24-hour a day service by forensic scene investigators, supported by a forensic science contact desk, has assisted with marked improvements in the success rate for forensic identifications.

The force has also been successful in reducing delays in the process of interrogating and gathering evidence from mobile phones.

A variety of initiatives underpinned by effective partnership work are being used consistently to divert offenders from committing crime.

Comprehensive integrated offender management arrangements are in place with locally based teams of specialist officers actively engaging with partners to manage offenders. Successful elements of offender management are being increasingly used throughout the force.

The force has good processes to identify and manage dangerous and sexual offenders, although capacity issues within dedicated teams are limiting effectiveness.

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



Requires improvement

West Midlands Police generally provides a good service to vulnerable victims. The force has a clear commitment to protecting vulnerable people and is working to improve its performance in this area. It has increased the number of officers and staff in public protection teams, widening their remit to provide a better service for victims.

Officers and staff believe safeguarding vulnerable people and pursuing those who commit crimes against them is part of everyone's day to day work. However some activity undermines this commitment. Most victims receive a good service, but there are some gaps in the way the force assesses risk. Some officers are not following force policy and it was not always clear to us how the force assesses the risk to the victim. In some domestic abuse cases officers are not locating and dealing with suspects as quickly as they should.

Victims are kept updated throughout the course of their investigation and can choose how they receive these updates. The supervision of investigations and safeguarding is generally to a good standard.

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



Good

The force's overall response to tackling organised crime groups is good; however, there are areas where improvements need to be made. This is the first year HMIC has graded forces on their effectiveness at tackling serious and organised crime, including a force's arrangements for fulfilling its national policing responsibilities, so no year-on-year comparison is possible.

A local organised crime profile for Birmingham East has provided an enriched picture and enabled effective disruption of local organised criminals. However, the force has not yet created similar profiles for other areas. Additionally, the force's understanding of the threats and risks posed by serious and organised crime could be improved and it could make better use of local officers.

The '4P's' approach of pursue, prevent, protect and prepare is not being considered in all areas with some alternative problem-solving plans being used. The force has recently reinvigorated strategic oversight at a force level to provide a more structured governance framework.

Investigations are well managed and supervised with a range of overt and

HMIC found that in some cases the assessment of risk for children who go missing from home was inappropriate. We found some instances where children were classed as absent when they should have been recorded as missing, and risk levels for missing children were sometimes incorrectly assessed at a lower grade. This could expose children to even more risk of grooming for child sexual abuse.

The force has made an impressive start in its preparedness for tackling child sexual exploitation. It now has a force-wide team to investigate complex and organised child sexual exploitation. Local officers help tackle the problem at a local level and the force is good at analysing of the victims, offenders and locations.

covert tactics used. Closing reports allow the force to assess the impact of investigations.

A prevent team has been set up to identify and act on prevention opportunities, and dedicated teams disrupt and dismantle 'urban street gangs' using a range of tactics with partner organisations.

The force has mapped its capability against each of the national policing responsibilities. The force tests its preparedness to respond through exercises and real life operations.

Force in numbers



Calls for assistance

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

West Midlands Police

England and Wales

847

350



Crime

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

West Midlands Police

England and Wales

63.3

63.0

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

West Midlands Police

England and Wales

61.9

60.3

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

West Midlands Police

England and Wales

+2.2%

+4.5%

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

West Midlands Police

England and Wales

-15.1%

-12.6%



Charge rate

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

West Midlands Police

England and Wales

17.0%

16.0%



Anti-social behaviour

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

West Midlands Police England and Wales

23.7

32.9

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

West Midlands Police England and Wales

25.9

36.2



Domestic abuse

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

West Midlands Police England and Wales

10.0%

10.0%

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

West Midlands Police England and Wales

8.6%

8.5%



Organised crime groups

Organised crime groups per million population as at 30 June 2015

West Midlands Police England and Wales

24.2

74.7



Victim satisfaction rate

Victim satisfaction rate 12 months to 31 March 2015

West Midlands Police England and Wales

83.0%

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 West Midlands Police's efficiency and legitimacy inspections are available from the HMIC website (www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmic/)

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

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

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

- 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 West Midlands Police.

² HMIC inspected forces on questions 1, 2 and 4 between September and November 2015. Question 3 was inspected between June and August 2015, and a separate report was published in December 2015 (available from: www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmic/publications/police-effectiveness-vulnerability-2015-west-midlands/). 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 the West Midlands?

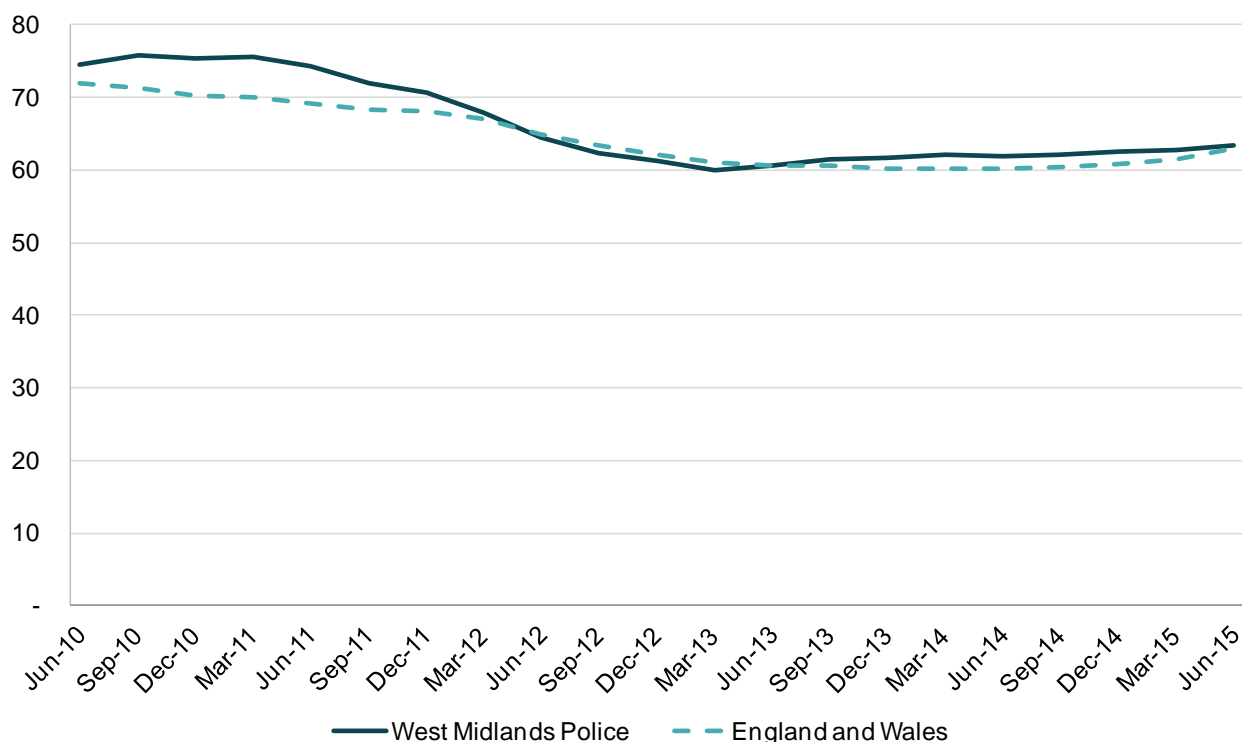
Although police recorded crime is by no means a complete measure of the totality of demand for calls on its service that a force faces, it does provide a comparable indication of performance across all forces. Crime rates are reported as a number of crimes per 1,000 population in each force area to enable 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 15 percent in West Midlands 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 15 percent in West Midlands, compared with a reduction of 12 percent across England and Wales.

When compared with the previous year, police recorded crime (excluding fraud) in West Midlands increased by 2 percent for the 12 months to 30 June 2015. This is compared with an increase of 4 percent across England and Wales over the same period.

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



Source: Home Office data

The volume of police recorded crimes and incidents of anti-social behaviour per head of population indicates how safe it is for the public in that police area. Figure 2 shows crime and anti-social behaviour rates in West Midlands (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	West Midlands Police	England and Wales
Recorded crime (excluding fraud)	63.3	63.0
Victim-based crime	57.5	56.0
Sexual offences	1.4	1.6
Assault with injury	6.9	6.3
Burglary in a dwelling*	10.3	8.4
Anti-social behaviour incidents*	23.7	32.9

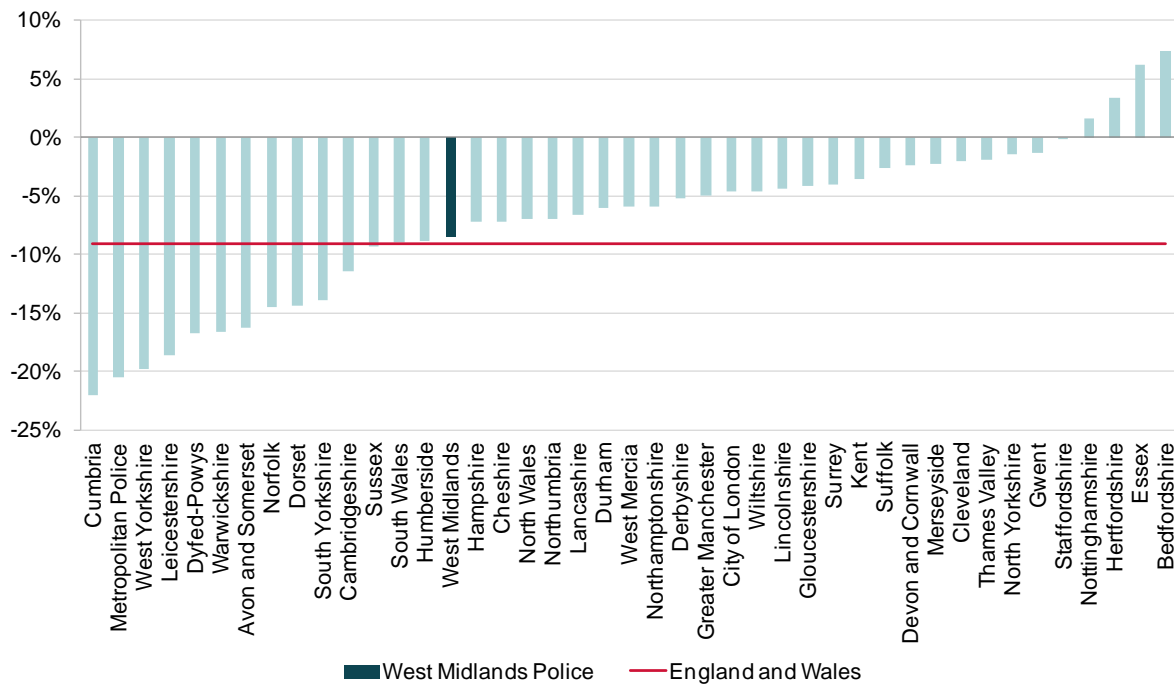
Source: Home Office data, HMIC data return

*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, West Midlands Police recorded 66,629 incidents of anti-social behaviour. This is 8 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?

West Midlands Police demonstrates a strong commitment to reducing crime and anti-social behaviour and keeping people safe, with an emphasis on early intervention. One of the central themes of the force’s change programme, WMP 2020, is the force’s aim to be ‘geared to prevent harm’ by shifting the emphasis from reactive policing to a more preventative style.

The force conducts analysis as part of an annual assessment process to identify and prioritise the strategic threats and risks it faces. This strategic assessment, using community intelligence and supported by data gathered by partner organisations, informs the chief constable’s operational priorities. The priorities reflect a clear commitment to protecting people from harm and building safer, stronger, more prosperous communities.

The importance of preventing crime and anti-social behaviour and keeping people safe and reassured is well understood throughout the whole force. Frontline officers are clear on their role to safeguard the vulnerable and intervene early in cases of anti-social behaviour. HMIC found numerous examples of operational activity being undertaken in collaboration with other organisations to tackle issues of concern to the community.

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

The force allocates officers and staff in neighbourhoods to prevent crime and anti-social behaviour and keep communities safe by ensuring that every local area has a dedicated, visible and accessible local policing team.

The force has effective arrangements in place to ensure that resources are targeted where they can be most effective in reducing crime and anti-social behaviour. It makes use of intelligence, predictive analysis and a technology system which helps the force to monitor daily demand to identify variations in calls for service, crime types and to identify emerging trends. This enables the force to move resources in response to short-term fluctuations in demand. The force recognises the need to 'brigade' its resources when necessary. Through its strategic and tactical tasking meeting structures, it is able to draw officers from different parts of the force to support local neighbourhood crime prevention and anti-social behaviour activity.

West Midlands Police receives a high volume of calls for service and places a high priority on responding effectively to these calls. Although response officers feel that they are occasionally understaffed at times of peak demand, HMIC found that response teams are supplemented by officers from other departments and that calls for service are generally dealt with in a timely manner, meeting the needs of the public.

When neighbourhood officers are used to supplement any shortfalls in response teams, the force acknowledges that this reduces its capability to address longer-term reduction of crime and anti-social behaviour. However the force maintains a strong focus on neighbourhood policing and we found that neighbourhood teams are still providing effective longer-term responses to community need in preventing crime, dealing with anti-social behaviour and identifying and dealing with vulnerability.

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

The force makes use of a broad range of tactics to prevent crime and anti-social behaviour and keep people safe.

As well as traditional enforcement, HMIC found examples of the force making effective use of disruptive activity and community resolutions such as acceptable behaviour contracts, community protection notices, dispersal orders and criminal behaviour orders. West Midlands Police encourages innovation, and we found examples of good practice in reducing crime and dealing with anti-social behaviour throughout the force.

One such example is the close working relationship which the force has with partner agencies in Wolverhampton to reduce city centre crime. City 'tasking' meetings are used to co-ordinate joint activity to deal with street begging, drug abuse and anti-social behaviour problems. Health, drug treatment agencies, homelessness sector, local authority and the local neighbourhood police team are all represented at these meetings. A project being piloted by the city centre neighbourhood team, in conjunction with its partner organisations, is applying the principles of integrated offender management (IOM)³ to prolific shoplifters. This approach has led to a reduction in acquisitive crime.

In Walsall, police research identified that individuals with tenancy arrears and mental health issues had been involved in a large number of cases of anti-social behaviour in a council-owned residential area. Work has been undertaken with the city council, to provide additional support and reduce the concentration of tenants with complex needs in this specific area. This has improved the quality of life for that community.

The force clearly understands the benefits of adopting an evidence-based approach and takes steps to review and evaluate its tactics. The force uses its 'week in the life' initiative to conduct self-inspection of its processes from a victim's perspective. It also commissions universities to conduct academic evaluation of some of its operational activities and holds regular 'what works' seminars for its staff. The force clearly recognises the benefits of sharing good practice. However the ability of West Midlands' police officers and staff to deliver an outstanding service would be enhanced if the learning from this type of activity was captured systemically and shared across the whole force in a more timely fashion.

³ 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.

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?

West Midlands Police recognises the importance of persistent partnership engagement in order to be successful at reducing crime, anti-social behaviour and keeping people safe. Partner agencies spoke very positively of the force's commitment to partnership working in these areas.

The force has strong and committed links at the strategic level with the police and crime commissioner, other blue light services and local authorities. HMIC found evidence of shared governance arrangements and examples of co-location that assist the force to work effectively with other organisations. For example a sergeant working alongside trading standards has enabled their specific powers to be used effectively to disrupt criminality centred on fast food outlets.

Since 2013 the force has seconded a chief inspector to Public Health England to improve the effectiveness of their joint approach to violence. As a result, the West Midlands Violence Prevention Alliance adopts a public health approach to the problem. The alliance has improved data sharing such as the provision of ambulance data. This is helping give the police a more in-depth understanding of the problem. The alliance is also developing both health and justice interventions aimed at reducing violence.

The force works effectively with a range of local organisations including both statutory and non-statutory partners, with a strong culture of joint working. Positive feedback from partner organisations reflects the clear desire at all levels of the force to work together with partners to resolve issues of concern to local communities.

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

In HMIC's 2014 crime inspection, we made a recommendation that the force should review the provision of information to partners regarding anti-social behaviour and whether their approach should be more proactive. In this inspection we found that the force recognises the value of effective sharing of information and has well-established information-sharing protocols with partner agencies. These protocols are underpinned in many cases with officers being seconded to other organisations and partners such as council employees working in police stations. In other examples we found partner organisations having very close working relationships with neighbourhood teams. Localised partnership groups are also in place, such as the agreement with the business improvement district in Wolverhampton, which facilitates open meetings and joint discussions regarding police and partner operations.

All of these arrangements enable information sharing to resolve issues of concern to the community and reflect the force priority of persistent engagement with partners. However the effectiveness of this approach is limited as force IT systems do not

currently integrate with partners' systems. The force is aware of this and hopes to be able to improve the position with the impending force IT strategy, which is under development as part of the WMP 2020 change programme.

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

HMIC found a number of good examples of effective problem solving with partner organisations to prevent crime and anti-social behaviour and keep people safe.

Specialist consultants known as Crime Prevention Design Advisors work closely with planning departments to ensure crime prevention principles are incorporated into local planning arrangements in the West Midlands. The force is using a range of powers to keep people safe in public places including dispersal orders to tackle disorder in town centres, and community protection notices to deal with anti-social behaviour.

The force disseminates information about suspects and offenders to retailers using a computer application, passing good quality information to a large number of partners in a short space of time and alerting them to crime risks in their area.

In conjunction with local authorities the force is tackling families undermining neighbourhoods (TFUN). This partnership is used to manage priority families where rehabilitation has failed and robust enforcement is used to forestall further offending behaviour.

Operation Sentinel seeks to highlight awareness of 'hidden crimes' affecting vulnerable people including child abuse, domestic abuse, rape and serious sexual offences, modern day slavery, and prostitution. This developed from a police operation several years ago and is now an established multi-disciplinary initiative which is widely known to the workforce, partners and the public.

Summary of findings



Good

West Midlands Police is good at preventing crime and anti-social behaviour and keeping people safe. This is consistent with HMIC's 2014 crime inspection where the force was judged to be good at reducing crime and preventing offending. This inspection did identify some areas where the force could further improve in order to deliver an outstanding service.

Force priorities demonstrate a strong commitment to reducing crime and anti-social behaviour and keeping people safe, with a shift of emphasis from a reactive style to more preventative policing. This commitment is generally well understood throughout the force, and the force ensures appropriate resources are assigned to local policing teams to focus on preventing problems from occurring or from escalating.

The force works effectively with partner organisations at force and neighbourhood level, and uses a range of powers and tactics to tackle anti-social behaviour and keep people safe.

There are areas for improvement identified, for instance more robust and timely arrangements to ensure officers have access to information about 'what works' and developing an IT solution to assist with information sharing. However, the public can feel confident that the force is working well to prevent crime and anti-social behaviour, and keep people safe.

Areas for improvement

- The force should use evidence of 'what works' drawn from other forces, academics and partners to continually improve its approach to the prevention of crime and anti-social behaviour. There needs to be routine evaluation of tactics and sharing of effective practice.

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

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

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

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

How well does the force bring offenders to justice?

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

Given the work involved in amending police force crime-recording systems to accommodate fully the new outcomes framework, two forces have not yet been able to provide a full year of data for all new outcomes types. West Midlands 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)^{4 5 6}

Outcome type/group	West Midlands Police Number of outcomes	Rate	England and Wales Number of outcomes	Rate
Charged/Summoned	30,263	17.0	577,678	16.0
Taken into consideration	346	0.2	21,318	0.6
Out-of-court (formal)	6,114	3.4	165,384	4.6
Caution - youths	964	0.5	19,703	0.5
Caution - adults	4,017	2.3	115,000	3.2
Penalty Notices for Disorder	1,133	0.6	30,681	0.8
Out-of-court (informal)	8,880	5.0	159,915	4.4
Cannabis/Khat warning	806	0.5	41,964	1.2
Community resolution	8,074	4.5	117,951	3.3

Source: Home Office crime outcomes data

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

The frequency of outcomes may also reflect the force's policing priorities. For example, some forces work hard with partners to ensure that first time and low-level offenders are channelled away from the criminal justice system. In these areas, locally-based community resolutions are likely to be more prevalent than elsewhere. West Midlands Police has one of the lowest 'cannabis/khat warnings', of all forces in England and Wales.

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

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

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

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

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

How well does the force initially investigate and allocate cases?

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

In the majority of cases in the West Midlands, response officers are the first officers to attend at scenes of crime. Generally, HMIC found that frontline staff have a good understanding of appropriate initial safeguarding measures and are focussed on meeting the immediate needs of the victim. We did, however, find variable levels of understanding among staff of the need to maximise the opportunity to gather evidence in the critical early stages of an investigation. As a result, some initial investigations are not conducted effectively. Officers suggest that they are often required to leave the scene of one crime and attend further emergency calls. This may also be a contributory factor.

West Midlands Police has a clear process to respond to initial calls for assistance from members of the public. Crimes are assessed by a crime service team and decisions about the allocation of police resources are based on the THRIVE (Threat, Risk, Harm, Investigation, Vulnerability, Engagement) model. The force allocates crimes to an appropriate level of investigative resource based upon identified vulnerabilities and the risks associated with the perpetrators rather than solely relying on the type of crime committed.

Specialist officers deal with more serious incidents, attending scenes when required. HMIC found that the force makes early and appropriate use of specialist officers to support victims properly. The force is effective at identifying vulnerability at early stages of investigations and we found staff at all levels regularly placing the victim at the centre of policing activity.

The force has a clear and effective process for allocating complex and non-complex crime to dedicated teams of investigators, which is widely understood and consistently applied. Many investigators are trained to level two within the professionalising investigation programme (PIP), which accredits them to undertake serious and complex investigations, PIP is designed to ensure that staff are trained, skilled and accredited to conduct the highest quality investigations. Other officers have received additional in-house training to ensure they mostly have the appropriate skills and training commensurate with the types of crimes they are asked to investigate. The force has provided victim contact training to almost all of its investigators and is planning additional training to ensure continuous professional

development. Cases involving higher risks, vulnerable or repeat victims are raised at daily management meetings where managers conduct reviews and reallocate crimes if a more appropriate investigating officer or team is identified.

Effective investigation requires that suspects, once identified, should be managed through the investigation and criminal justice processes.

How well does the force investigate different types of crime?

Dedicated teams effectively undertake investigations into 'less complex volume' crimes such as burglary, robbery and assault where the victim is not specifically identified as being vulnerable. For more complex crime, such as serious sexual offences and serious assaults, and for any crimes committed against vulnerable people, cases are generally allocated to specialist units mainly containing officers with the specialist skills and training required to conduct such investigations. The force has analysed demand to ensure these teams are appropriately resourced.

In most cases HMIC found regular use of investigation plans. In most cases these plans set out the lines of enquiry, clearly place the victim at the centre of policing activity and show evidence of reviews by supervisors within appropriate time frames. However this was not entirely consistent. In particular, some non-complex investigations did not show evidence of documented reviews by supervisors. HMIC found that the majority of investigative staff are appropriately trained or working towards formal accreditation.

We found that offenders are generally identified and dealt with in a timely fashion. Officers have a good awareness of the necessity of dealing with offenders promptly. Supervisors are aware of the number of outstanding suspects and review crimes to ensure offenders are tackled at the earliest opportunity. At a strategic level, regular meetings are held where progress in identifying and arresting suspects is closely tracked. When analysis indicates the number of outstanding suspect is too high the force conducts operations to reduce this number.

*The code of practice for victims of crime*⁸ was well understood by officers who consistently establish and follow contracts with victims setting out the frequency and means of updating them on the progress of the investigation. Supervisors oversee the process effectively with useful victim contact records being easily accessible on the force's intranet.

Officers regularly identify when victims may require special measures, such as the use of intermediaries and the facility to give evidence behind screens to make them feel safer in providing evidence.

⁸ *Code of Practice for Victims of Crime*, Ministry of Justice, October 2015. Available from: www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-code-of-practice-for-victims-of-crime

All police forces have a statutory duty to comply with the code, which sets out the service that victims can expect from all organisations, including the police; that have a role in the criminal justice system. The code of practice for victims of crime, among other things, requires that officers provide regular updates to victim of crime on the progress of investigations:

The force has an effective procedure for forensic examination at crime scenes. Forensic scene investigators (FSIs) are available 24 hours a day, including specialist FSIs for major and complex crimes. FSIs do not attend every crime scene, but there is a clear process to assess cases to determine whether they should. Officers in the control room apply guidelines and consult as required with a forensic science contact desk, staffed by FSI practitioners. The force has evaluated the effectiveness of this approach and found that there have been marked improvements in the success rates for forensic identifications such as DNA recovery and fingerprints.

How well does the force gather digital evidence?

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

HMIC found delays in the process to interrogate and gather evidence from mobile phones and computers. This has been recognised by the force and despite increased demand it has actively sought to improve the service it offers and has markedly reduced the number of phones waiting to be examined.

In HMIC's 2014 crime inspection, we made a recommendation that the force should review the resourcing and prioritisation for the examination of telecommunication and computer equipment seized as part of criminal investigations. In this inspection we found that the force has introduced a number of measures to address these issues. These include an effective triage and prioritisation process for dealing with the most serious offences (for example, in child sexual abuse cases). This means that mobile phones potentially containing vital evidence can be examined immediately. For lower priority cases, trained digital media investigators in each local policing unit have the ability to conduct more basic examinations locally, without having to submit devices to the HTCU. A combination of this investment in staff, enhanced IT and greater scrutiny of performance has helped the force achieve this improved picture.

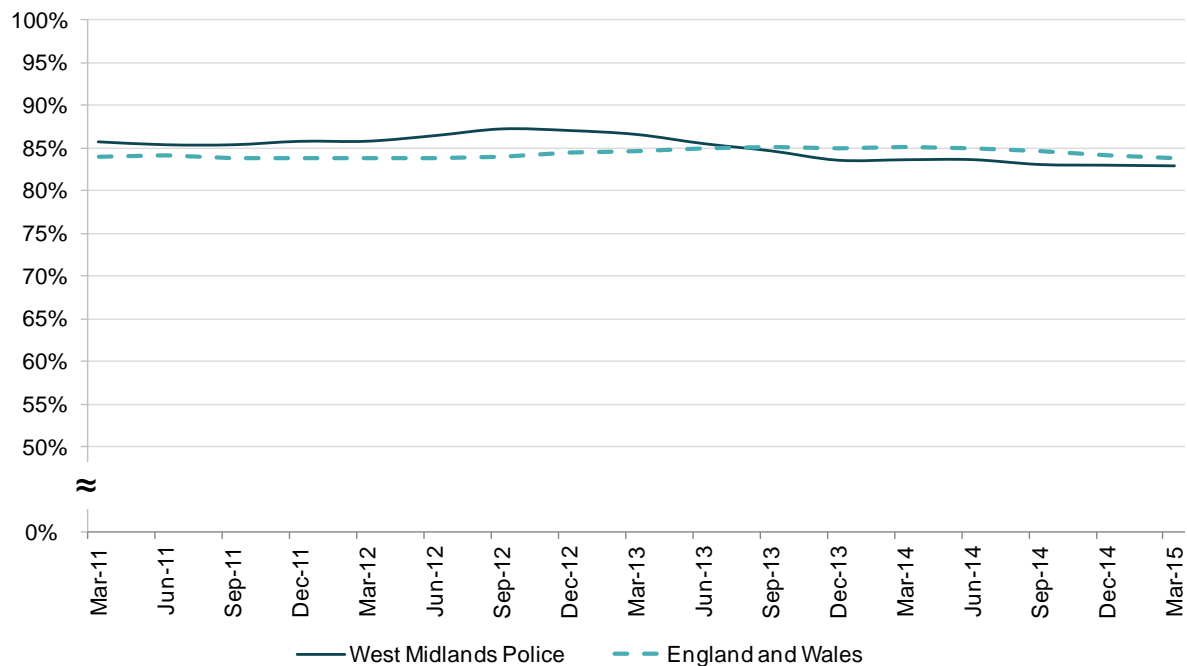
The force has also now introduced a more focused approach to the examination of computers with a view to bringing about similar improvements in the timeliness of these examinations. For example, an initiative has commenced where specialist investigators attend premises which are searched under warrant for serious crimes with a view to conducting triage of digital media to reduce the number of unnecessary seizures and examinations.

HMIC found that some officers, including supervisors, are using their own mobile phones to photograph evidence from scenes and victims, although the extent to which this happens is reducing with improved accessibility of digital cameras across the force. The force works hard to ensure that the risks of gathering evidence in this way are communicated to staff. The planned introduction of body-worn video cameras, following a pilot in Wolverhampton, should help to eradicate this practice.

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

Of those who have been the victim of a crime in West Midlands in the 12 months to 31 March 2015, 83.0 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 West Midlands 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

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

How well does the force divert offenders away from crime?

HMIC found that West Midlands Police uses a broad range of approaches to prevent reoffending and is actively engaged with various partner agencies to divert offenders from committing crimes. Data produced by the force suggests that it experiences lower reoffending rates in comparison with other similar forces.

One of the areas where forces can reduce reoffending is through an effective strategy to deal with those vulnerable offenders with mental health issues. The force has an embedded, collaborative partnership approach to this issue. It works closely with mental health practitioners and the ambulance service to provide a triage service at incidents, giving practical advice to those at the scene. In addition a liaison and diversion scheme operates within custody suites providing support and advice along with appropriate solutions to keep vulnerable offenders out of the criminal justice system. These schemes support officers by providing advice and alternative ways of dealing with offenders with mental health issues, both at the police station and on the street.

The force also recognises the benefits of proactively managing offenders to reduce crime. It is increasingly making use of civil orders to reduce offending, such as restraining orders, non-molestation orders, criminal behaviour orders and gang injunctions.

Other initiatives underpinned by effective partnership work are also being used consistently to divert offenders from the criminal justice system. These include the troubled families' programme which explores ways of intervening with families identified to be at high risk of becoming involved in crime. Joint working to reduce crime in Birmingham city centre draws together the fullest range of partners. The force is proactively working with numerous agencies to identify opportunities to deter offenders, including some who are vulnerable such as the homeless.

The force also works effectively with partners to develop new methods to reduce repeat offending. The force is one of nine forces nationally who for about 12 months have been working with Victim Support to provide 'Victim/Consequence Awareness training'. These courses are usually offered as part of out-of-court disposals such as conditional cautions or community resolutions. They are aimed at offenders involved in committing crimes such as theft, criminal damage, minor assaults and public order. The course aims to enhance perpetrators' understanding of the effects of their offending on victims and society as a whole, as well as on themselves and their own families. To date these courses have been provided in Solihull and Birmingham East and are about to be expanded to other parts of Birmingham.

The force is also planning to extend this approach to deter those at risk of becoming involved in more serious crime. Partners commented favourably on the force's enlightened approach to this type of tactic.

How well does the force deal with repeat offenders?

West Midlands Police has effective processes in place to identify repeat offenders and prevent them re-offending. HMIC found evidence that integrated offender management (IOM) is working successfully across the force.

Effective and comprehensive IOM arrangements are in place with ten locally-based teams of specialist dedicated IOM officers. These local IOM teams give complete coverage across the force area and are co-located with the National Probation Service or Community Rehabilitation Company (depending on the level of risk). In some instances this co-location extends to housing providers. These close working arrangements are supporting frequent information exchange and enabling IOM teams to actively engage with partners to manage offenders.

HMIC also found evidence of good working relationships between local IOM teams and neighbourhood officers, with frequent sharing of information and joint assignment of tasks.

The force's IOM scheme focuses on a range of offending types. It has reduced its focus on acquisitive crime and now selects people on the basis of risk and local need, with an increasing emphasis on domestic abuse, violence, offenders involved in gangs and child sexual exploitation.

The force has well-developed offender management principles and we found that successful elements of offender management are being increasingly used throughout the force. For example a project to tackle shoplifting is being piloted by the Wolverhampton city centre neighbourhood team, in conjunction with the local IOM team. Offenders qualify for inclusion on the scheme if they are currently offending and the professional judgement of the neighbourhood staff is that they would benefit from intervention. The principles of IOM are applied to these offenders by neighbourhood staff with the aim of reducing further offending. Offenders are regularly visited, their reasons for offending determined and attempts made to introduce diversionary activity. The force reported that the scheme was evaluated after six months which showed a reduction in acquisitive crime of 16.8 percent and identified the positive impact on those who have been admitted to this scheme.

HMIC found several other similar examples of the force applying IOM principles outside of the formal IOM scheme. HMIC is encouraged by this widening approach to offender management and would not want to discourage such innovation. However the force must be mindful of need to balance such local innovation with consistency.

The positive effects of this work would be enhanced with a more cohesive and consistent approach, ensuring there is clear oversight of activity across the force, a formalised evaluation of 'what works' and better sharing of good practice.

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

The force has good processes to identify and manage dangerous and sexual offenders. However issues of capacity within dedicated teams are limiting the force's effectiveness.

The force is represented at a senior level on local criminal justice boards and multi-agency public protection panels. Effective governance arrangements are ensuring appropriate support to multi-agency public protection arrangements (MAPPAs).⁹

The management of sexual offenders is carried out by four specialist and dedicated teams with a geographical spread throughout the force. Officers have received appropriate training and the force has adopted risk management software to assist officers in dynamically assessing risk. HMIC found that risk management plans are being completed following routine visits to sexual offenders and these plans are regularly reviewed by supervisors.

Neighbourhood officers and investigators are aware of offenders living in their police areas. They make good use of the force's tools for briefing staff and assigning tasks to appraise themselves of high risk offenders. Effective information sharing takes place with partners, with probation officers being co-located with police officers and partner agencies actively contributing to reports on those under management through these arrangements.

In common with many other forces, West Midlands is seeing large increases in the numbers of sex offenders it has to manage, and this demand is likely to grow as forces become more effective at tackling online sexual offenders. Staff highlighted the effect on capacity and resilience, with officers currently managing approximately 90 offenders each. The force is aware of these risks and recognises that it must implement appropriate measures to ensure the unit remains effective.

⁹ Multi-agency public protection arrangements 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.

Summary of findings



Good

The force generally conducts effective investigations and works well with partners to manage offenders and divert them from further criminality.

Most frontline staff have a good understanding of initial safeguarding measures but some do not consistently maximise the gathering of evidence during initial investigations.

The force has a clear and effective process for allocating complex and non-complex crime to dedicated teams of investigators, which is widely understood and consistently applied.

Officers consistently use investigation plans setting out the lines of enquiry, with the victim at the centre of policing activity and reviews within appropriate timeframes.

A 24-hour a day service by forensic scene investigators, supported by a forensic science contact desk, has assisted with marked improvements in the success rate for forensic identifications.

The force has also been successful in reducing delays in the process of interrogating and gathering evidence from mobile phones.

A variety of initiatives underpinned by effective partnership work are being used consistently to divert offenders from committing crime.

Comprehensive integrated offender management arrangements are in place with locally based teams of specialist officers actively engaging with partners to manage offenders. Successful elements of offender management are being increasingly used throughout the force.

The force has good processes to identify and manage dangerous and sexual offenders, although capacity issues within dedicated teams are limiting effectiveness.

Areas for improvement

- The force should take steps to ensure that all available evidence is recorded at scenes of crime.

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 2015.¹⁰ The following is a summary of the findings.

Summary of findings



Requires improvement

West Midlands Police generally provides a good service to vulnerable victims. The force identifies vulnerable people at the earliest opportunity and responds well to them. However, there are some areas where improvement is needed to ensure the service is consistent and vulnerable people, particularly children, are kept safe. Given the scale of the challenge in this area and risk that is posed to some of the most vulnerable people overall HMIC judges that the force requires improvement.

HMIC acknowledges that the force has shown a clear commitment to protecting vulnerable people. The force has increased considerably the number of officers and staff in the public protection teams and has widened their responsibility to provide a better service for victims.

Officers and staff believe that safeguarding¹¹ vulnerable people and pursuing those who commit crimes against them is part of everyone's day-to-day work in the force. However there are some areas of activity that undermine their good work, which the force needs to address.

West Midlands Police effectively identifies repeat and vulnerable victims and responds to them well. Most victims receive a good service. However the force has some gaps in the way it assesses risk. HMIC found some officers do not follow force policy and the method of assessing risk to the victim was unclear. In some domestic abuse cases officers are not locating and dealing with suspects as quickly as they should. As a result, we are not confident that the force is providing all domestic abuse victims with the appropriate service and support.

HMIC found that having the additional staff working in public protection meant that the force could assign the people with the right skills to make good progress with the cases.

¹⁰ *PEEL: Police effectiveness 2015 (Vulnerability) – West Midlands Police*, HMIC, December 2015. Available from: www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmic/publications/police-effectiveness-vulnerability-2015-west-midlands/

¹¹ The term safeguarding means providing protection and support to ensure the safety of the vulnerable person and prevent further harm.

Victims are kept updated throughout the course of the investigation and are able to choose how they receive these updates. The supervision of investigations and safeguarding is generally to a good standard.

HMIC found that the assessment of risk for children who go missing from home was inappropriate in some cases. We found some instances where children were classed as absent when they should have been recorded as missing, and risk levels for missing children were sometimes incorrectly assessed at a lower grade than they should have been. Errors of this sort could expose children to greater risks of grooming for child sexual abuse.

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

The force has made an impressive start in its preparedness for tackling child sexual exploitation. Staff have been re-deployed into a force-wide team to investigate complex and organised child sexual exploitation. Local officers have been appointed to help tackle the problem at a local level and there is good analysis of the victims, offenders and locations which are linked to child sexual exploitation activity.

The force is working well with partner agencies to support vulnerable children and we found a good level of understanding in the force of child sexual exploitation. This inspection only considered how well prepared the force is to tackle child sexual exploitation. The force was also subject to a re-inspection in respect of its child protection services. The more detailed findings from that re-inspection, published in December 2015, should be read in conjunction with this inspection report.

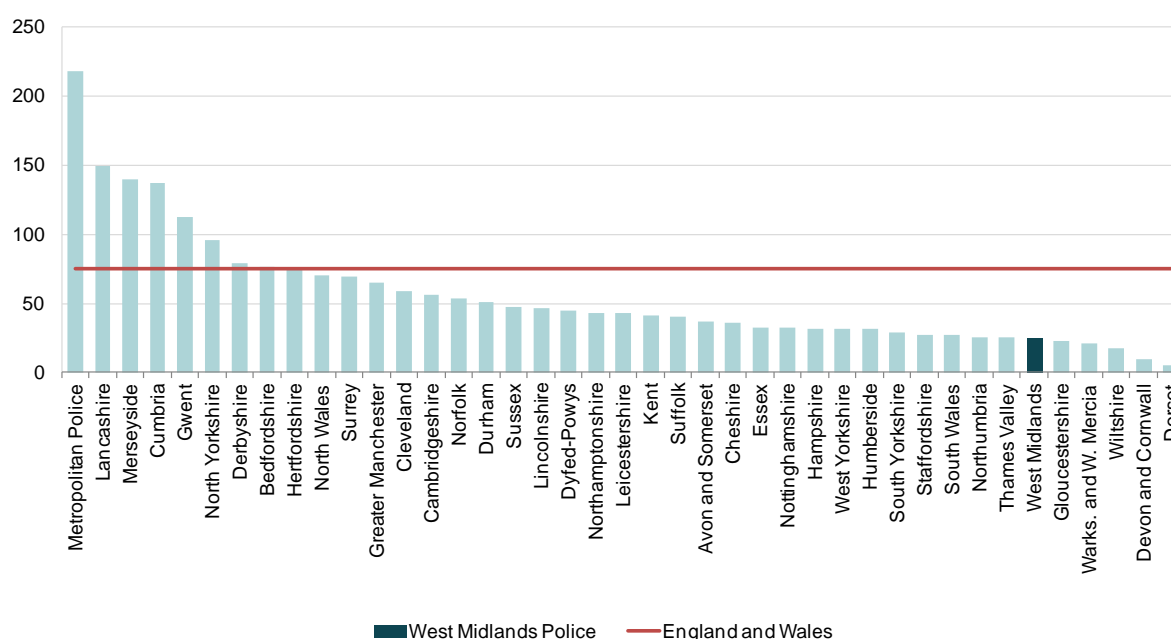
How effective is the force at tackling serious and organised crime, including its arrangements for fulfilling its national policing responsibilities?

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

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

As at 30 June 2015, West Midlands Police was actively disrupting, investigating or monitoring 68 organised crime groups (OCGs). This represents 24 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^{12 13}



Source: HMIC data collection

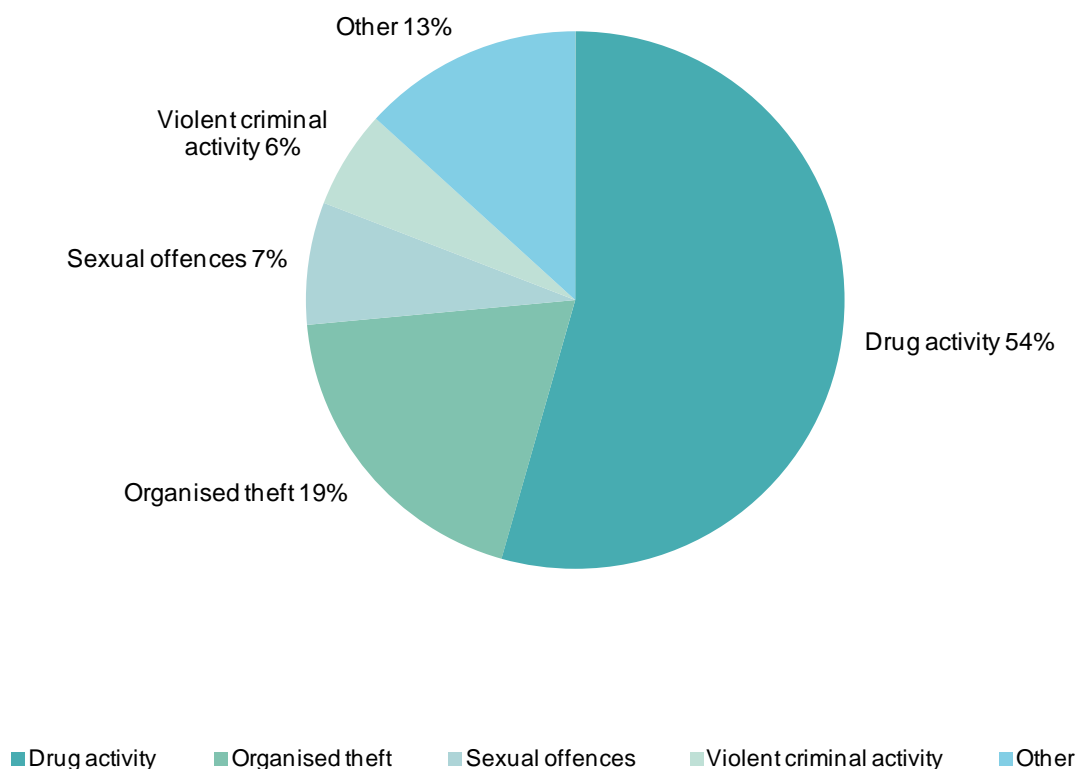
Forces categorise OCGs by the predominant form of criminal activity in which the group is involved. Although OCGs are likely to be involved in multiple forms of criminality, this indicates their most common characteristic. 'Drug activity' was the predominant crime type (54 percent) of the OCGs managed by West Midlands Police as at 30 June 2015. 'Drug activity' was also the most common predominant crime type recorded by all forces in England and Wales¹⁴, with 64 percent of all OCGs classified in this way.

¹² 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.

¹³ 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.

¹⁴ 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 2015¹⁵



Source: HMIC data collection

Serious and organised crime is one of six national threats specified within *The Strategic Policing Requirement*¹⁶. 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.

¹⁵ Figures may not sum to 100 percent, due to rounding

¹⁶ *The Strategic Policing Requirement*, Home Office, March 2015, available at: www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/417116/The_Strategic_Policing_Requirement.pdf

The SPR is issued annually by the Home Secretary, 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?

HMIC found that the overall response to tackling organised crime groups in the West Midlands is good but there are some areas where improvements can be made.

The force would benefit from having a greater understanding of the threats and risks posed by serious and organised crime across the force area. National guidance was introduced in November 2014 promoting serious and organised crime local profiles as best practice for forces to understand more fully the threats they face. Such profiles enable forces to develop bespoke joint problem-solving approaches with partners.

A serious and organised crime strategic assessment has been completed for the West Midlands, which assists the force to understand the wider threat posed to the public. The force also uses organised crime and gang assessments in some areas. However the force has not created serious and organised crime local profiles for all of its policing areas in line with national guidance.

West Midlands Police has already realised the benefits of a partnership approach, having run Project Concord since 2013 in Birmingham East. Police and partners have come together in that area to share intelligence, solve problems and reduce the impact of serious and organised crime. The force recognises that the local organised crime profile for Birmingham East, which has made use of both police and partner information, has provided an enriched picture and enabled more effective disruption of local organised criminals.

As one of the biggest forces in England and Wales, local organised profiles completed for each of its local policing areas, particularly if enhanced with partner information, would assist the force to develop a comprehensive shared understanding of localised threats with its partners and better inform joint activity.

The force has a well-defined process for OCG management including identification, assessment and management. Once identified, there are processes in place for mapping¹⁷ organised crime groups in line with national guidance. The force gathers intelligence and this is assessed by the force confidential unit, which places each OCG in a 'band' according to its criminality, capability and harmfulness.

The confidential unit is to become part of a regional unit in the near future and the force is confident that regional collaboration will further enhance the understanding and assessment of threats from OCGs.

¹⁷ When a police force identifies a group of individuals whom they suspect may be involved in organised crime, an organised crime group or OCG, they go through a nationally standardised 'mapping' procedure. This involves entering details of the group's known and suspected activity, associates and capability on computer software, which assigns a numerical score to each OCG. It also places each OCG into one of several 'bands' which reflect the range and severity of crime in which a group is involved as well as its level of capability and sophistication. This helps the force to make informed decisions about how to prioritise its activity.

To further improve the intelligence picture and the management of the threat posed by OCGs, frequent review and re-assessment (re-scoring) needs to occur, particularly when new intelligence is received or disruptive activity occurs. HMIC found varying degrees of understanding across the force as to who holds responsibility for review and re-scoring of OCGs. This is leading to an inconsistent approach.

Despite the use of standard software and methods, forces carry out OCG mapping inconsistently and there is a notable 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.¹⁸

Although in some instances the force makes good use of local officers, the overall level of local involvement in tackling serious and organised crime is not consistent throughout the force. The force has identified this gap within its own strategic assessment. HMIC found variable understanding by neighbourhood and response officers of the important role they can play in disrupting and preventing organised criminals from flourishing. In some localities, the force draws attention to active OCG members through intelligence briefings. However in other areas there is limited evidence of neighbourhood or response officers being directed to carry out intelligence gathering, disruptive activity or having an understanding of organised crime in their area.

For example, the well-established police and partnership work in Birmingham East results in a range of effective activities, which are often supported by neighbourhood staff. While HMIC found there has been a partial adoption of this model in other areas of the force, such as Coventry and Wolverhampton, this is not widespread. West Midlands Police would benefit from a more consistent and coherent approach to organised crime across the force as a whole.

Completion of local profiles and greater involvement with local policing teams, particularly in developing intelligence, will enhance the force's understanding of local threats posed to the public by those engaged in serious and organised crime.

¹⁸ *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

Beyond this, a more collaborative approach to gathering, analysing and disseminating intelligence through the ROCU and a more consistent approach to reviewing OCG mapping will improve understanding of emerging threats across a wider area.

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

West Midlands Police is currently developing its management of OCGs and has recently reinvigorated strategic oversight at a force level. HMIC found that the national strategy that is based on a '4Ps' approach of pursue, prevent, protect and prepare is not being considered in all areas, with some evidence of alternative problem-solving plans being used.¹⁹ Each OCG has a nominated lead officer, responsible for its management. They come together to share good practice every six weeks at a force meeting chaired by a detective superintendent. The force intends that, as this meeting develops to provide a more structured governance and accountability framework, it will achieve a more consistent response across all four strands of the strategy.

The force has two operational teams within its serious and organised crime unit. HMIC found that investigations are well managed and supervised, with a range of overt and covert tactics being used. Investigations are supported by well-documented policies and detailed management plans resulting in positive outcomes. Comprehensive closing reports are completed allowing the force to assess the impact of its investigations. However the use of an independent disruption panel and adherence to national disruption assessment guidance would enable the force to understand better the extent to which its activity is having a sustained positive impact on serious and organised crime.

HMIC is encouraged by the force's development of a prevent team. This team has been set up to identify and act on serious and organised crime prevention opportunities and is able to work closely with local policing units. This support is available to the serious and organised crime unit although it is apparent that the prevent team is primarily used only after the serious and organised crime unit's operational activity has concluded. A more joined-up approach at the earliest opportunity would build on the aspiration of a whole force approach to tackling serious and organised crime.

¹⁹ The 4P Structure is the framework cited to tackle serious and organised crime, namely Pursue, Prevent, Protect and Prepare, see Serious and Organised Crime Strategy, HM Government, October 2013. CM8715. Available from: www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/248645/Serious_and_Organised_Crime_Strategy.pdf

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

A key strand of the government's strategy to tackle serious and organised crime is how agencies can work together to prevent and deter people from becoming involved. Only a limited number of operations can be undertaken by the serious and organised crime unit which means that there has to be meaningful activity throughout the force to disrupt the activities of other groups.

In some parts of the force there are dedicated teams to disrupt and dismantle 'urban street gangs'. The force has recognised the threat posed by these groups and has identified a range of disruption tactics including use of integrated offender management (IOM) principles with partner organisations. HMIC found good use of gang injunctions to prevent such a group in Wolverhampton from associating with each other and gathering in areas where they were conducting their criminal activity.

The force is proactive in publicising the tangible improvements and preventative steps it is taking with local communities. Where operations aimed at disrupting organised criminals have been successful, the force takes opportunities to communicate these results. The outcomes of a successful operation tackling street-level drug dealers in Wolverhampton were communicated extensively to the public through the press, social media and face-to-face interaction. Community payback – unpaid work aimed at giving something back to local communities – was used for offenders, and partners within housing and health worked closely with the police to divert drug users and dealers away from criminal activity during and after the operation.

Similar community involvement has taken place in Birmingham. Here an OCG was tackled, with members of the public providing evidence to build the case against key offenders. Special measures were used at court to ensure anonymity and protection of the witnesses. At the conclusion of the trial, photographs of those convicted were displayed in prominent areas within the community, together with a description of the action taken by the police and community to successfully prosecute them.

In Wolverhampton a scheme called 'Catch 22' is also used to engage with offenders. People who were previously involved in serious and organised crime are used to dissuade participants from further involvement. The force is involved in an academic study with Cambridge University to evaluate and improve on the effectiveness of this scheme.

The force hopes that adoption of this broad approach, and focusing targeted messages on those most at risk throughout the force area, will mean that businesses and members of the public will not unnecessarily become victims of organised criminals.

The force has recently reviewed its practices to improve its overall approach to serious and organised crime. It has already identified a number of areas for improvement that are currently being addressed.

This approach will enable the force to extend areas of good practice and provide reassurance that organised crime will be tackled effectively across the whole force.

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.

The assistant chief constable (ACC) security is responsible for the governance of the national policing responsibilities within West Midlands Police. Each of these national responsibilities has an appropriate business lead who answers to the ACC security as a part of a regular meeting structure.

The force has mapped its capability against each of the six threats in the Strategic Policing Requirement and the force has well-established arrangements in place to assess its readiness to meet these threats. The force has quarterly meetings with the police and crime commissioner (PCC), where readiness is reviewed. Annually this meeting is linked to the force's financial planning to ensure that any shortfalls in capacity and capability are addressed.

The force has an effective response to national threats and robust assurance procedures to test its own preparedness. A self-assessment and an annual report are submitted to the chief constable and to the PCC. The force's strategic assessment is produced in conjunction with the West Midlands Conurbation Local Resilience Forum. It includes a comprehensive summary of the threats and risks that have been considered by the force in deciding upon its capabilities. Risks faced within the region are recorded on the community risk register.

The force has taken part in multi-discipline exercises with numerous partners including police, military, fire and ambulance to test its preparedness for such risks. Following these exercises, the force carries out structured de-briefing and develops action plans to ensure a process of continuous improvement. The force extended a recent national counter-terrorism exercise 'Centrum Point' to incorporate a strand of consequence management testing with the Local Resilience Forum. As a result, it identified some local areas for improvement with partners.

In the West Midlands, some of the national policing responsibilities are actually daily business for the force. For example the force continues to experience the highest counter-terrorist threat outside of London. In addition to testing its capability through regular exercises, the force's involvement in real life operations such as policing English Defence League marches, enables it to test its preparedness to deal with public order threats. The force has also responded successfully to a cyber-threat to its own IT systems. The force has mutual aid arrangements for public order, but is generally self-sufficient.

Summary of findings



Good

West Midlands Police's overall response to tackling organised crime groups is good; however, there are areas where improvements need to be made. This is the first year HMIC has graded forces on their effectiveness at tackling serious and organised crime, including a force's arrangements for fulfilling its national policing responsibilities, so no year-on-year comparison is possible.

A local organised crime profile for Birmingham East has provided an enriched picture and enabled effective disruption of local organised criminals. However, the force has not yet created similar profiles for other areas. Additionally, the force's understanding of the threats and risks posed by serious and organised crime could be improved and it could make better use of local officers.

The '4Ps' approach of pursue, prevent, protect and prepare is not being considered in all areas with some alternative problem-solving plans being used. The force has recently reinvigorated strategic oversight at a force level to provide a more structured governance framework.

Investigations are well managed and supervised with a range of overt and covert tactics used. Closing reports allow the force to assess the impact of investigations.

A prevent team has been set up to identify and act on prevention opportunities, and dedicated teams disrupt and dismantle 'urban street gangs' using a range of tactics with partner organisations.

The force has mapped its capability against each of the national policing responsibilities. The force tests its preparedness to respond through exercises and real life operations.

Areas for improvement

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

Annex A – HMIC judgments

Our judgments

The judgment categories are:

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

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

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