



Inspecting policing
in the public interest

West Mercia Police's response to the funding challenge

July 2013

Contents

West Mercia Police: Executive summary	3
The challenge	5
Progress in making savings: Years 1–2	5
Plans for Year 3–4	5
Looking beyond the current spending review	5
The scale of the challenge in West Mercia	6
Demand	6
How difficult is the challenge?	7
Response to the challenge	8
Changes to workforce numbers	8
Changes to the proportion of workforce on the front line	8
Collaboration	10
Managing change	11
How is the force engaging police officers, PCSOs and staff in the change programme?	11
How effective has the response been?	12
Impact of the changes on the public	13
Visibility	13
Calls for service	14
Crime	14
Victim satisfaction surveys	15
Changes to how the public can access services	15
Conclusion	16

West Mercia Police: Executive summary

West Mercia Police faces a similar cut to its spending as other forces but already spends less than average on policing and so may find it more difficult to cut spending further.

It has responded well and made good progress in an ambitious and ground-breaking alliance with neighbouring Warwickshire Police. The force has plans to find all but £2.5m of the savings it needs. It has money in reserves¹ to bridge this gap, if needed, and the alliance places it in a better position to face future challenges.

Financial challenge

West Mercia Police has identified that it needs to save £36.6m over the four years of the spending review (i.e. between March 2011 and March 2015).

While as a proportion of its overall budget (17%) this savings requirement is broadly in line with most other forces, HMIC considers that West Mercia Police faces a difficult challenge. This is because the amount of money it receives² is comparatively low, given the size of the population in West Mercia, and it has fewer officers and staff than most other forces, and so a comparatively low pay bill. The amount it spends on each officer and staff member is also lower than most other forces.

Progress in making savings

West Mercia Police has planned how it will save £34.2m of the £36.6m required by March 2015. It therefore still has £2.5m³ to find. Most other forces have already worked out how they will make all the required savings. The force intends to use some of its reserves in 2014/15, which have been set aside to deal with such contingencies and will deliver the savings in 2015/16.

Changes to the workforce

All forces spend most of their money on staff costs (such as wages and overtime), and so have focused on reducing this expenditure in order to cut costs.⁴ West Mercia Police is no exception.

They are reducing police officer numbers by limiting recruitment and holding vacancies; as a result, by the end of the spending review period, it is planned that there will be 343 fewer police officers in West Mercia. This means the number of police officers in the area is planned to reduce by 14% between March 2010⁵ and March 2015; this is a greater

1 Reserves are funds often used to pay for unforeseen events and balance liabilities.

2 From the central police funding grant, and from other sources such as council tax.

3 The amounts to save may not add up to the total due to rounding.

4 See *Adapting to Austerity*, HMIC, London, July 2011, p.13. Available from www.hmic.gov.uk.

5 We use 2010 as our baseline as many forces started to make staff reductions in anticipation of the

reduction than in most other forces. However, the alliance with Warwickshire Police and the combining of the resources of the two forces means that West Mercia Police will have access to greater overall capacity.

There is evidence that West Mercia Police is successfully protecting frontline posts as it makes these cuts: between March 2010 and March 2015, the proportion of police officers in frontline crime-fighting roles is planned to increase from 92% to 94%. This compares to an overall increase across England and Wales from 89% to 93%.

The force has also made some police staff redundant and not replaced others as they have left (e.g. through retirements and resignations); as a result, by the end of the spending review period, it is planned that there will be 203 fewer police staff in West Mercia Police. This means the number of police staff is planned to reduce by 12% between March 2010 and March 2015; this is a smaller reduction than in most other forces. Again the alliance with Warwickshire Police has enabled the two forces to combine support functions and make better use of less resources. West Mercia Police plans to decrease the number of police community support officers (PCSOs) by 33%; which is a greater reduction than most other forces.

Impact on the public

HMIC expects forces to make savings without damaging the service provided to the public. We monitor whether they are achieving this by examining crime rates and the results of the user satisfaction surveys which all forces conduct.

Over the first two years of the spending review, recorded crime⁶ (excluding fraud) fell in West Mercia by 16%, which is greater than the figure for England and Wales (13%). Victim satisfaction remains high at 85.1%⁷ which is broadly in line with other forces.

This strong performance indicates that West Mercia Police has been able to make savings without having a detrimental effect on the service it provides to the public.

Future challenges

West Mercia Police's funding reduction is at a similar level to other forces in England and Wales but it already spends comparatively less on policing than the average. It has formed an alliance with the neighbouring Warwickshire Police force. This is one of the most extensive and ground-breaking collaborations⁸ in the country and presents significant opportunities to make savings and improve capacity, resilience and service quality. It also presents the challenge of delivering a major transformation for the workforce and management structures while maintaining the performance of local policing.

spending review.

6 Crime excluding fraud as per the new classifications released in July 2013 in ONS publication.

7 $\pm 1.1\%$.

8 HMIC defines collaboration as "all activity where two or more parties work together to achieve a common goal, which includes inter force activity and collaboration with the public and private sectors, including outsourcing and business partnering".

The challenge

Over the four years of the spending review (March 2011 to March 2015), West Mercia Police identified that it needed to find savings of £36.6m, which equates to 17% of its total expenditure⁹ (which in 2012/13 was £215.8m). Across England and Wales a 17% reduction in total expenditure is required.

Progress in making savings: Years 1–2

The force successfully made 45% (£16.6m) of the total savings required by March 2015 in the first two years of the spending review period. It exceeded its savings target of £12.3m and made more savings than planned over these two years. It achieved this by: not recruiting any new police officers; and reducing the number of police staff it employs. In addition the alliance with Warwickshire Police has provided opportunity for greater cost savings by combining senior management posts and support services.

Plans for Year 3–4

The force plans to achieve further savings of £11.3m in 2013/14, and another £6.3m in 2014/15. This leaves a funding gap of £2.5m at the end of the spending review period. The force has a good track record in over-achieving savings and intends to use some of its reserves in 2014/15, which have been set aside to deal with such contingencies and will deliver the savings in 2015/16.

Looking beyond the current spending review

The force has started to consider what savings it might need to make after March 2015. The force's medium-term financial plan looks further forward, to 2016/17.

Looking beyond this period the force has made assumptions about spending and income, some of which appear optimistic, for example; they are predicting smaller grant reductions than other forces – HMIC considers it may be prudent to reconsider these assumptions. West Mercia is also heavily reliant on “damping”,¹⁰ which is an adjustment to government funding. In 2013/14 they gain £11 million from this, so any change to the funding formula is likely to have a negative impact on their budget.

As a result of the strategic alliance, West Mercia Police is well placed to plan for the future and manage the risks. There are a set of strategies that sit behind the alliance change programme which provide assurance that the change can be effectively managed. There

⁹ Based on a gross expenditure baseline in 2010/11.

¹⁰ When the funding formula is allocated, each police force is assured a minimum percentage increase in grant each year. This is known as the floor. Those forces that get less than the minimum percentage based purely on the formula are topped up to the minimum percentage. In order to pay for this, any force receiving an increase based purely on the formula that is greater the minimum percentage has its grant scaled back by a standard proportion. This process is commonly referred to as floor damping or damping.

are five-year strategies for the combined estates and ICT and the remodelling of the fleet of West Mercia and Warwickshire forces over a four year period.

There is an expectation that once the new combined operating structure is in place, income is expected to match the expenditure by the end of 2015/16 and there will be no requirement to draw further from reserves. The challenge for West Mercia Police in preparing for future funding pressures will be greater if the savings gap in 2014/15 is not closed.

The scale of the challenge in West Mercia

West Mercia Police faces a moderately difficult challenge because its savings requirement represents a similar proportion of its spending to most other forces in England and Wales, but:

- it spends less per head of population than most other forces in England and Wales;
- it has a below average number of police officers per head of population; and
- the cost of police officers and police staff per head is lower than most other forces in England and Wales.

This means that it will find it more difficult to find areas of savings without impacting on workforce numbers.

Demand

Forces face different levels of demand for the service they provide to the public. This section looks at three of the key indicators of demand to provide an overall impression of the challenges each force faces:

- the number of calls the force receives from the public;
- the number of crimes the force deals with; and
- the number of prosecutions (suspects charged with offences) the force brings.

12 months to March 2013	West Mercia	England and Wales
Emergency and priority calls per 1,000 population	122	134
Victim-based crime per 1,000 population	42.8	54.5
Prosecutions (charges) per 1,000 population	7.7	10.2

This table shows that, in 2012/13, West Mercia Police received slightly fewer emergency and priority calls from the public, had slightly fewer crimes, and supported fewer prosecutions than other forces.

How difficult is the challenge?

Although West Mercia faces a similar challenge to other forces, they start off from a position of already spending less per head on policing than most other forces. To find further savings will prove more difficult.

Response to the challenge

Forces deliver their response to the savings requirement through a change programme. Because over 80% of a police budget (on average) is spent on staff costs,¹¹ it is not surprising that the change programmes of forces across England and Wales, plan to achieve most of their savings by reducing the number of police officers, police community support officers (PCSOs) and police staff employed.

West Mercia Police is no exception. It made an early start on this in 2010, when it slowed its recruitment of new police officers and police staff, and reduced the number of police staff. The force plans to make 92% of its spending review savings requirement from its pay budget. This is a higher proportion than in most other forces.

Changes to workforce numbers

The following table shows the force's planned changes to workforce numbers over the spending review period, and compares these to the change for England and Wales.¹²

	31 March 2010 (baseline)	31 March 2015	Change	West Mercia change %	Change for England and Wales %
Police Officers	2,391	2,048	-343	-14%	-11%
Police Staff	1,715	1,512	-203	-12%	-16%
PCSOs	279	187	-92	-33%	-17%
Total	4,386	3,748	-638	-15%	-13%
Specials	233	321	+88	+38%	+60%

Overall, the table shows that West Mercia Police plans to lose more officers than other forces. Staff numbers are projected to reduce, but by a smaller amount than other forces and there is projected to be a larger reduction in PCSO numbers than in most other forces.

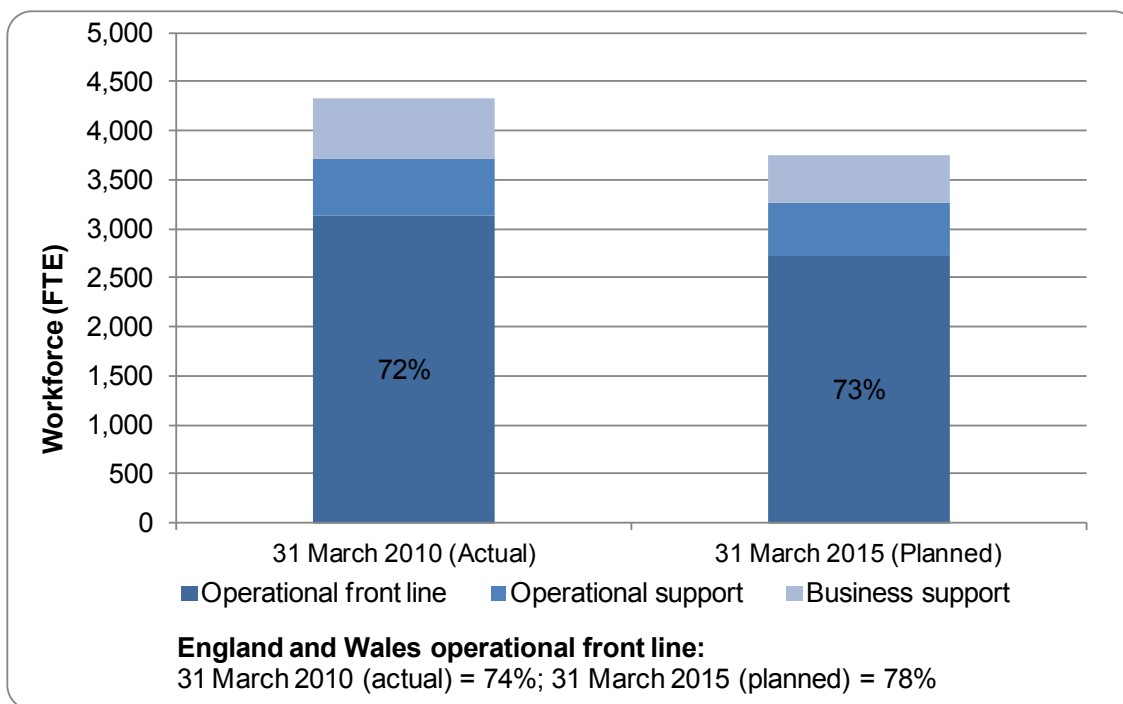
Changes to the proportion of workforce on the front line

HMIC defines the people who work on the police front line as: *“those who are in everyday contact with the public and who directly intervene to keep people safe and enforce the law”*. It is important that as forces reconfigure their structures and reduce workforce **numbers**, they focus on maintaining (or if possible increasing) the **proportion** of people in these crime-fighting roles.

¹¹ See *Adapting to Austerity*, HMIC, London, July 2011, p.13. Available from www.hmic.gov.uk.

¹² Workforce figures for March 2010 show the actual number of people working for the force in permanent posts on the 31 March in that year. People on long-term absences (such as maternity leave) are included in these 'actual' figures, but vacant posts are not. Workforce projections for March 2015 are for budgeted posts, so the actual number of people who will be working for the force at that point in reality may be different, because some posts will be vacant or filled by temporary staff. Forces' projections may also exclude people who will be on long-term absences. The difference between actual workforce numbers and projected numbers should therefore be taken as an approximate expected change.

The following chart shows the change in the workforce frontline profile in West Mercia.¹³

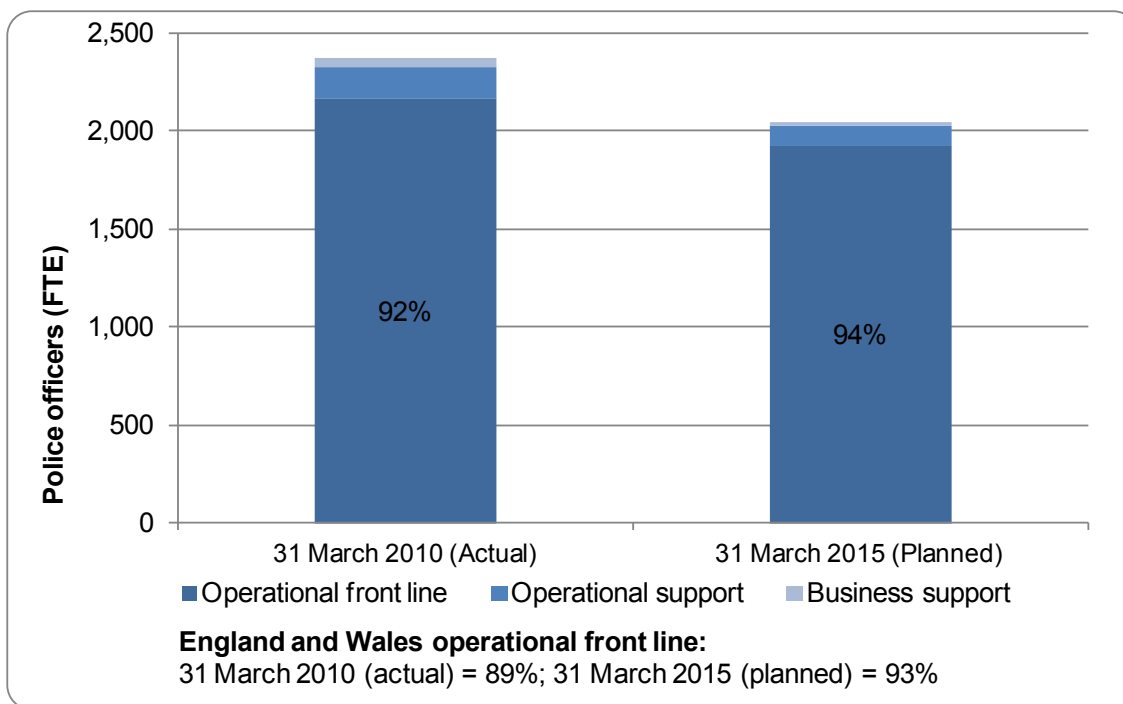


The **number** of officers, PCSOs and staff (i.e. of the force’s total workforce) working on West Mercia’s front line is planned to reduce by 13% between March 2010 and March 2015 (from 3,142 to 2,733).

Over the same period, the **proportion** of West Mercia’s total workforce allocated to frontline roles is planned to increase from 72% to 73%. This compares with an overall increase across England and Wales from 74% to 78%.

The **number** of West Mercia’s police officers in frontline roles is planned to reduce by 11% from 2,169 in March 2010 to 1,925 by March 2015, as the chart on the next page shows. The **proportion** of these remaining on the front line is projected to increase from 92% to 94%. This compares to an overall increase across England and Wales from 89% to 93%.

13 From 2010 Gwent, the Metropolitan Police Service, Wiltshire and North Wales police forces chose to code those officers and staff who are on long-term absence from duty due to maternity/paternity leave, career break, full-time education or suspension, and those on long-term leave, to their normal working role. This has the effect of inflating their workforce and frontline figures by up to 1% compared to other forces.



Collaboration

HMIC monitors force's progress on collaboration because it offers the opportunity to deliver efficient, effective policing and help achieve savings.

HMIC found that West Mercia Police has embarked on one of the most ambitious and extensive collaborations in the country with its strategic alliance with Warwickshire Police. In 2011 the Chief Constables and Police Authorities of West Mercia and Warwickshire formally agreed to form a strategic alliance. They had identified that they could achieve significant efficiency savings and resilience by jointly delivering their service. The programme of work to achieve full collaboration is set out in a framework called 'The Blueprint'. The principle of the alliance is that under the direction of the two respective Police and Crime Commissioners all the resources of both forces (with some minor exceptions) are combined within the alliance; all staff below the rank of Deputy Chief Constable are shared and the associated budgets are pooled and jointly managed. The alliance costs and resources are apportioned back to the two forces on the basis of a 69/31(West Mercia/Warwickshire) split.

The alliance does not exclude other collaborative opportunities. Within the region, engagement in regional intelligence and asset recovery teams provide the capacity to deal with the threats from serious and organised crime.

The force also contributes to the Central Motorway Police Group which provides a regionalised policing service for the motorways of the West Midlands, West Mercia and Staffordshire force areas.

The Protective Services Assistant Chief Constable is negotiating with partner agencies to work collaboratively to provide more protection for vulnerable people. There is a commitment to start a multi agency safeguarding hub (MASH) in Hereford. This will provide integrated teams, dynamically sharing information and assessing risk more effectively.

The PCC and force want to work with other partners, creating a joint taskforce for community safety issues. The PCC intends to commission incentive grants to improve local performance. Work is also being scoped to develop closer working arrangements with the probation service and other local crime prevention projects recruiting local volunteers and voluntary groups.

Largely as a result of the alliance with Warwickshire, in 2014/15 the force expects to spend 78% of its total expenditure on collaboration, which is considerably higher than the 11% figure for England and Wales. Overall, collaboration is expected to contribute 94% of the force's savings requirement, which again is considerably higher than the 7% figure for England and Wales.

Managing change

Reductions in police budgets have inevitably led to a shrinking workforce. HMIC expects forces also to have an eye within their change programmes on the longer term transformation which can help maintain or improve the service they offer to the public and prepare for future funding reductions.

The alliance with Warwickshire and the 'Blueprint' framework to achieve collaboration are at the core of the force's change programme. At the heart of the alliance is a commitment from both forces to deliver the best possible policing service in their areas and make the best use of resources available now and in the future. The implementation of the alliance has given both forces an exceptional opportunity to review the roles and responsibilities of all the staff and design an operating model that will realise savings, support local priorities and provide capacity and resilience.

The Blueprint provides the detailed framework to direct and manage the change programme across both forces. The People Movement Plan guides the implementation of pooled staffing budgets. All senior manager posts below Deputy Chief Constable are now operating as alliance posts. The bulk of the workforce changes will start in 2013/14 and finish in 2015/16. The force has already rationalised the pay and conditions of those police staff who work under the governance of the alliance. West Mercia officers will still retain their individual force insignia and identity.

How is the force engaging police officers, PCSOs and staff in the change programme?

HMIC found West Mercia Police has made strenuous efforts to develop the necessary cultural change within the workforce, to support the alliance and to enable a smooth transition.

In order to properly manage the cultural differences of bringing two organisations together effective communication is essential to minimise uncertainty, allay concerns and provide clear and accurate information to minimise any adverse impact of low morale on the performance of the force. The force developed an engagement strategy that is both internally and externally focused. It conducted stakeholder mapping and identified risks, which have been mapped out. Work continues to mitigate them.

The senior managers of the force were involved in the design of the workforce model and the chief officer team has continually communicated the progress to the staff. The chief officer team held open sessions for all staff and used the force intranet to circulate information about the model.

The staff associations have been fully engaged in every aspect of the change programme. HMIC found that they were content with their involvement but had some concerns about the impact of the changes in working locations for their staff. Officers and staff told us that they did not feel engaged in the process and would have liked more detailed information that was relevant to them; they did not feel involved in the consultation. The officers and staff we spoke to did not feel fully engaged in the process and would have liked more detailed information that was relevant to them; they did not feel involved in the consultation. There were also concerns that changes were being made to fit in with the Warwickshire way of working, using the same equipment as Warwickshire officers – equipment in which they saw no benefits. This did not detract from the staff wanting to deliver the best service they could to the public and a clear understanding that cost savings had to be made.

The concerns of the workforce and the potential loss of skilled police staff due to some of the changes in the estates strategy are a risk to the force. Many police staff roles are being relocated to the east of the force boundary and because of the large geographical area covered by the force, it limits opportunities for those currently based in the north. Low morale could affect service delivery and some staff will not be retained as the relocation of their workplace will result in longer journey-to-work time and higher travel costs. Concerns about the changes are already having an impact with a considerable increase in sickness absences due to work related stress. The force does have a strategy in place to support and manage the absences.

How effective has the response been?

In HMIC's assessment, West Mercia Police have responded well to the challenge it faces. It has taken bold decisions to pool resources with Warwickshire Police. The force has put the needs of the community it serves at the heart of the change programme. At chief officer level, the force has shown strong and mature leadership and they have sacrificed some of their autonomy to ensure an effective policing service to their communities and minimise any reduction in service due to the funding cuts. The force is planning for the period beyond this spending review and by working as an alliance will be better placed to make further efficiencies.

■ Impact of the changes on the public

The challenge for forces is not just to save money and reduce their workforce numbers, but to ensure the choices they make in deciding how to achieve this do not have a negative impact on the service they provide to their communities. HMIC therefore looked for evidence that the force had kept a consideration of the effect on the public at the heart of their choices.

Visibility

The work done by police officers and staff in visible roles (such as officers who respond to 999 calls, deal with serious road traffic collisions or patrol in neighbourhoods) represents only a part of the policing picture. Chief constables need to allocate resources to many other functions in order to protect the public, such as counter terrorism, serious and organised crime, and child protection (to name just three).

That being said, research shows that the public value seeing visible police officers on patrol in the streets, and that those who see police in uniform at least once a week are more likely to have confidence in their local force.¹⁴ HMIC therefore examined how far the changes being implemented by the force had affected the visibility of the police on the streets of West Mercia.

In March 2013, West Mercia Police allocated 64% of its police officers to visible roles. This is one percentage point less than it allocated in 2010, and higher than the figure for most other forces (which was 54% across England and Wales).

Police visibility is further enhanced by PCSOs who principally support community policing. Looking at the proportion of police officers and PCSOs, West Mercia Police allocated 68% to visible roles. This again is one percentage point less than it allocated in 2010 and greater than the 59% figure for England and Wales.

HMIC conducted a survey¹⁵ of the public across England and Wales to assess whether the public had noticed any difference in the way their area is being policed. Of those people surveyed in West Mercia, 7%¹⁶ said that they have seen a police officer more often than they had 12 months ago, this is considerably lower than the 13% average across all survey respondents in England and Wales.

Of those people surveyed, 76%¹⁷ said they felt either as safe or safer in the areas where they live compared with two years ago. This is broadly in line with the figure for most other forces which is 75%.

¹⁴ See *Demanding Times*, HMIC, London, 2011. Available from www.hmic.gov.uk.

¹⁵ A YouGov survey was carried out during a four-week period during March 2013. Satisfaction and confidence surveys are also carried out at a national level by the Crime Survey of England and Wales. These use larger sample sizes and are carried out quarterly over a rolling-year period. Some forces also carry out their own surveys of the general public. More information can be found at www.crimesurvey.co.uk, www.hmic.gov.uk or from force websites.

¹⁶ $\pm 5\%$.

¹⁷ $\pm 5\%$.

Calls for service

HMIC examined whether West Mercia Police was taking longer to respond to calls for help, as a result of its workforce reductions and other changes designed to save money. Forces are not required to set response times or targets and are free to determine their own arrangements for monitoring attendance to calls so information between forces is not comparable.

We found that over the three years from 2010¹⁸ to present, West Mercia Police had maintained the same target response time of within 20 minutes for calls classed as 'emergency' and within 60 minutes for calls classed as 'priority'.

Over that period, the force met its target response time for 'emergency' calls 96% of the time in 2010/11, 97% of the time in 2011/12 and 95% of the time in 2012/13.

In respect of 'priority' calls, the force met its target 75% of the time in 2010/11, 77% of the time in 2011/12 and 74% of the time in 2012/13.

Crime

In 2010 the Home Secretary, Theresa May, set a clear priority for the police service to reduce crime.

Between 2010/11 and 2012/13 (the first two years of the spending review) West Mercia Police reduced recorded crime (excluding fraud) by 16% compared to 13% in England and Wales. Over this period, victim-based crime (that, is crimes where there is a direct victim – an individual, a group, or an organisation) reduced by 17% compared with 12% in England and Wales.

This strong performance suggests that West Mercia Police is managing to make savings without having a negative impact on local policing.

By looking at how many crimes occur per head of population we can see how safe it is for the public in that police area. The table below shows crime and anti-social behaviour rates in West Mercia (per head of population) compared with the rest of England and Wales.

12 months to March 2013	Rate per 1,000 population in West Mercia	England and Wales rate per 1,000 population
Crimes (excluding fraud)	48.0	61.4
Victim-based crime	42.8	54.5
Burglary	6.4	8.2
Violence against the person	9.4	10.6
Anti-social behaviour incidents	44.6	40.7

It is important that crimes are effectively investigated and the perpetrator identified and brought to justice. When sufficient evidence is available to say who has committed a crime, it can be described as detected.

¹⁸ We use 2010/11 as a baseline to show response times prior to the Spending Review period.

West Mercia's sanction detection¹⁹ rate (for crimes excluding fraud) for the 12 months to March 2013 is 25.7%. This is broadly in line with the England and Wales detection rate of 27.0%.

We have chosen these types of crime to give an indication of offending levels in West Mercia. For information on the frequency of other kinds of crimes in your area, go to www.hmic.gov.uk/crime-and-policing-comparator/

Victim satisfaction surveys

An important measure of the impact of changes to service delivery for the public is how satisfied victims are with the overall service they receive when they seek police assistance.

In the 12 months to March 2013, 85.1%²⁰ of victims were satisfied with the overall service provided by West Mercia Police. This is broadly in line with the England and Wales figure of 84.6%²¹.

Changes to how the public can access services

Forces are exploring different ways in which the public can access policing services.

West Mercia has conducted a review of its estate and identified that some of the current police buildings and bases are not fit for purpose. The plan is to establish a network of community policing posts where safer neighbourhood teams can work alongside other public sector agencies. West Mercia currently has 17 police stations and 31 front counter²² access points for the public. The intention is to close some police stations but only when alternative premises have been identified.

19 A sanction detection is a 'solved crime' where a suspect has been identified and notified as being responsible for committing that crime and what the full implications of this are, and has received an official sanction. Official sanctions include charges, cautions, penalty notices, offences taken into consideration (TICs) and cannabis warnings.

20 $\pm 1.1\%$.

21 $\pm 0.2\%$.

22 A police building open to the general public to obtain face-to-face access to police services.

Conclusion

HMIC considers that West Mercia Police has responded well. It faces a difficult financial challenge, because it has an average savings requirement, but already spends less on policing than other forces in England and Wales.

We found that the force had made good early progress to make savings but it is the alliance with Warwickshire and the 'Blueprint' framework to achieve collaboration which is at the core of the force's change programme and which should enable the force to meet its savings target by 2015. The alliance is one of the most extensive and far-reaching police collaborations in England and Wales. The two forces have agreed to pool all of their budgets, (with only minor exceptions) and to jointly manage the combined resources.

There is strong and unambiguous support from the PCCs and the chief officer groups for the alliance. The chief officer group and the PCCs of both forces have demonstrated strong leadership, as they have sought consensus and compromise to improve public service. At the heart of the alliance is a commitment from both forces to deliver the best possible policing service to their communities and make the best use of resources available now and in the future.

In spite of undergoing a period of unprecedented transformation, making significant savings and working with a reduced number of police officers and staff, crime has continued to fall in West Mercia. The force demonstrates a strong commitment to local policing and is planning to increase the proportion that work on the front line to 93% by 2015.

HMIC does have a concern that there are still significant uncertainties over the sustainability of future funding to West Mercia Police. There is a relatively small shortfall in the savings required at the end of this period which may need to be met from reserves. Going forward beyond 2015, some of the force's current assumptions about future funding may be optimistic, the force is also heavily reliant on the additional £11 million adjusted grant it receives from the government and there is no certainty that this will continue at its current level.

In October 2010, the Government announced that central funding to the Police Service in England and Wales would reduce by 20% in the four years between March 2011 and March 2015.

HMIC's Valuing the Police Programme has tracked how forces are planning to make savings to meet this budget demand each year since summer 2011. This report identifies what we found in this third year.

Our inspection focused on three questions:

1. How is the force responding to the budget reduction?
2. What is the impact for the workforce and the public?
3. How is the force managing current and future risks?

To answer these questions, we collected data and plans from forces, surveyed the public to see if they had noticed any changes in the service they receive from the police as a result of the cuts, and conducted in-force inspections. We also interviewed the Chief Constable, Police and Crime Commissioner and the chief officer leads for finance, change, human resources and performance in each force, and held focus groups with staff and other officers.

National findings and patterns across all 43 forces are given in our thematic report, *Policing in Austerity: Rising to the Challenge*, which is available from www.hmic.gov.uk.

This report provides the findings for West Mercia Police.