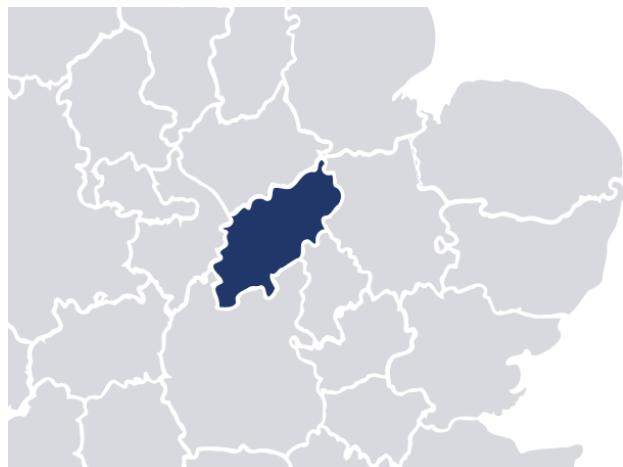


PEEL: Police effectiveness 2015

An inspection of Northamptonshire Police



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

Overall judgment¹



Requires improvement

Northamptonshire Police requires improvement in the way it keeps people safe and reduces crime. Although the force has a clear commitment to reducing crime and keeping people safe, there is room for improvement in the way it prevents crime and anti-social behaviour; levels of violent crime in the county remain too high.

Weaknesses in the assessment and allocation of crime for investigation are causing unacceptable delays; this needs to improve, and more needs to be done to improve how the force identifies and responds to vulnerable people.² The force also needs to work better with partner organisations in its fight against serious and organised crime. This is the first year HMIC has graded forces on their overall effectiveness so comparison of their year-on-year effectiveness is not possible.

Summary

Overall Northamptonshire Police requires improvement at keeping people safe and reducing crime. The force is committed to preventing crime and anti-social behaviour, and has an aspiration for Northamptonshire to become the safest place in England. It is trying to improve the service it provides in identifying vulnerable people and responding to them, but more needs to be done. While most officers understand the need to focus on protecting people from harm, poor direction and assigning of tasks means they are often not aligning their activities with force priorities.

HMIC is concerned that the way in which crime is allocated for investigation is causing unacceptable delays, which puts at risk the force's ability to properly investigate, gather the best evidence and ensure timely support for victims. We found that many crime investigations lack effective initial supervision and some cases are being investigated by officers without the appropriate skills or experience. There are also backlogs in the force's forensic examination of digital evidence from mobile phones and computers, which is causing delays in the investigation of high-tech crimes.

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

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

The force is working well with the fire and rescue service in a range of areas including the management of repeat and dangerous offenders and there are effective programmes in place to reduce some re-offending.

It has a partial understanding of the threat posed by serious and organised crime. In this area the force has highly-skilled staff and an excellent working relationship with the East Midlands Special Operations Unit, which provides additional capacity to fight organised crime; but the force could do more to involve local partner agencies in understanding and tackling organised crime groups.

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

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



Requires Improvement

Northamptonshire Police's effectiveness in preventing crime and anti-social behaviour and keeping people safe requires improvement. Poor direction to officers and assigning of tasks means the force may not be making the best use of its available resources for preventing crime and anti-social behaviour and activities may not be fully aligned with the priorities of the force.

The overall level of police recorded crime (excluding fraud) in Northamptonshire increased by 13 percent in comparison with the previous year, compared with an increase of 4 percent across England and Wales. The force recognises that it needs to tackle high levels of violent crime.

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



Requires Improvement

Northamptonshire Police requires improvement in the way it investigates crime. HMIC is concerned that the way in which crime is allocated for investigation is causing unacceptable delays, which puts at risk the force's ability to properly investigate, gather the best evidence and ensure timely support for victims.

We found that many crime investigations lacked effective initial supervision and some cases were being investigated by officers without the appropriate skills or experience.

We found examples of delays in the recording of crimes. There are also backlogs in the force's forensic examination of digital evidence from mobile phones and computers, which is causing delays in the investigation of high-tech crimes.

It is putting plans in place to address the matter in collaboration with specific partners.

Partnership arrangements at senior level are strong; however, operationally (at middle management level) joint problem-solving needs to be connected and agreed better. Some use, but inconsistently, is made of an evidence-based approach to tackling crime, but the force needs to do more to systematically learn from what works. A significant number of initiatives are in place across the county to combat a variety of problems but a lack of co-ordination and connectivity makes it difficult for the force to have an understanding of the impact they have.

Victim satisfaction with Northamptonshire Police for the 12 months to 31 March 2015 is significantly lower than in the previous year.

Although the force is working well with other organisations to provide initiatives and schemes to divert offenders away from crime and the force has effective multi-agency arrangements in place to manage dangerous offenders, the integrated offender management programme is managing only those offenders involved in serious acquisitive crime. Given the high levels of violent crime in Northamptonshire and the priority placed on tackling it by the force, it is disappointing that this integrated approach is not being used to manage violent offenders to prevent re-offending.

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



Requires Improvement

Northamptonshire Police is trying to improve the service it provides in identifying vulnerable people and responding to them, so that the public can be confident that the force supports victims well. The force has good systems and processes in place to deal with vulnerability and risk at the initial point of contact. However, an improved awareness of vulnerability and empathy for victims by call-handlers is required to

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



Requires Improvement

The way Northamptonshire Police tackles serious and organised crime requires improvement. This is the first year HMIC has graded forces on their effectiveness at tackling serious and organised crime, including a force's arrangements for ensuring that it can fulfil its national policing requirements, so no year-on-year comparison is possible.

ensure that vulnerable victims feel fully engaged from the outset of their contact with police.

The use of the THRIVE approach to assess threat, risk and harm and the associated training the force has provided to its staff is designed to improve this situation but the benefits have yet to be seen and the force needs to improve its training for domestic abuse.

Investigations of missing and absent people and child sexual exploitation are of a good standard and the force has developed strong MARAC³ and MASH⁴ models with good information-sharing and joint safeguarding activity. However, there are still several areas where more improvement is needed to ensure the service is consistent and vulnerable people are kept safe. While the force has effective processes to support the identification of vulnerable victims through a standardised risk assessment, officers often do not secure vital evidence.

The limited capacity and relative inexperience of investigative staff in the specialist domestic abuse investigation unit mean that the force is not safeguarding some high-risk victims of domestic abuse. Equally, the force's investigations for standard and medium-risk cases are often below standard.

The force needs to improve its understanding of the threat posed by serious and organised crime, and improve its multi-agency response to it, including work to prevent people from becoming involved in criminal groups and protecting communities from the harm they cause. The force recognises it needs to do more to work with partners to prevent serious and organised crime. The force is taking steps to better engage with local partner organisations in its approach to tackling organised crime groups (OCGs).

Although Northamptonshire is well served by the specialist capacity within the East Midlands Special Operations Unit (EMSOU) to tackle higher level serious and organised crime, the force itself has only limited specialist capacity, and it could do more to involve local policing teams and local partner organisations to bolster its response to serious and organised crime.

We found that the force has the necessary arrangements in place to ensure that responsibilities for targeting OCGs sit at the appropriate level, whether that be with the force or EMSOU. This approach has led to the successful dismantling of several OCG networks. However, the force could do more to raise awareness of OCGs with frontline officers and it should review the

³ MARACs (multi-agency risk assessment conferences) are local meetings where information about high-risk domestic abuse victims (those at risk of murder or serious harm) is shared between local agencies.

⁴ A multi-agency safeguarding hub (MASH) brings together into a single location principal safeguarding agencies to better identify risks to children (and in some areas, vulnerable adults), and improve decision-making, interventions, and outcomes. The MASH enables the multi-agency team to share all appropriate information in a secure environment, and ensure that the most appropriate response is provided to effectively safeguard and protect the individual.

The absence of recent or fully developed multi-agency problem profiles hinders the force's ability to respond to and safeguard vulnerable groups that are missing or absent, or subject to domestic abuse. This also affects the force's preparedness to tackle child sexual exploitation.

way in which it highlights the risks of organised crime to communities.

The force has well developed and strong arrangements in place to fulfil its national policing responsibilities, with chief officer oversight and strong links with regional and local partners with arrangements in place to test its plans.

Force in numbers



Calls for assistance

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

Northamptonshire Police

748

England and Wales

350



Crime

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

Northamptonshire Police

65.7

England and Wales

63.0

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

Northamptonshire Police

58.1

England and Wales

60.3

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

Northamptonshire Police

+13.0%

England and Wales

+4.5%

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

Northamptonshire Police

-10.6%

England and Wales

-12.6%



Charge rate

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

Northamptonshire Police

14.9%

England and Wales

16.0%



Anti-social behaviour

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

Northamptonshire Police

44.3

England and Wales

32.9

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

Northamptonshire Police

47.0

England and Wales

36.2



Domestic abuse

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

Northamptonshire Police

11.5%

England and Wales

10.0%

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

Northamptonshire Police

9.0%

England and Wales

8.5%



Organised crime groups

Organised crime groups per million population as at 30 June 2015

Northamptonshire Police

43.4

England and Wales

74.7



Victim satisfaction rate

Victim satisfaction rate 12 months to 31 March 2015

Northamptonshire Police

83.5%

England and Wales

83.8%

Introduction

The public expects their local police force to:

- Prevent crime and anti-social behaviour and, when crime occurs, to investigate it properly and provide support to victims.
- Use appropriately trained officers and staff and approved practice when investigating crime, gathering evidence and building cases to ensure offenders are brought to justice.
- Support victims of crime by responding to calls for service, identifying and putting in place the right help at the first point of contact, keeping them informed and consulting them about the possible outcomes of their case.
- Ensure that vulnerable people who might not have been a victim of crime are identified and given appropriate support, for example people at risk of domestic abuse, children at risk of sexual exploitation and missing or absent children.
- Understand and be prepared to respond to threats beyond their own force boundaries, including national threats such as terrorism, serious and organised crime and cyber-crime.
- Work effectively with local partner organisations and other bodies to prevent all types of crime and re-offending and to protect the public.

HMIC's annual inspections into police effectiveness, efficiency and legitimacy (PEEL) consider whether forces keep people safe and reduce crime (how effective a force is), whether these activities are being carried out at the most appropriate cost (how efficient a force is), and how forces are ensuring they have the confidence of their communities (the public legitimacy of a force).

All forces are subject to significant cost reductions; this is reflected in our efficiency reports published in October 2015. The judgments we are making in this effectiveness report are made understanding the financial challenges forces are facing. Reports on the efficiency and legitimacy of Northamptonshire Police are available from the HMIC website (www.justiceinspectories.gov.uk/hmic/).

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

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

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

1. How effective is the force at preventing crime and anti-social behaviour, and keeping people safe?
2. How effective is the force at investigating crime and managing offenders?
3. How effective is the force at protecting those who are vulnerable from harm and supporting victims?
4. How effective is the force at tackling serious and organised crime, including its arrangements for fulfilling its national policing responsibilities?

During our inspection, we collected data from forces, reviewed case files and surveyed the public to seek their views on the effectiveness of the force. We also surveyed and interviewed representatives from partner organisations to gather evidence about the effectiveness of their working relationships with the force. We interviewed chief constables and chief officers and held focus groups of officers and staff at all grades and ranks. We also made numerous unannounced visits to police stations to talk to frontline officers and staff about their work. This report sets out the findings from this wide-ranging inspection of Northamptonshire Police.

⁵ HMIC inspected forces on questions 1, 2 and 4 between September and November 2015. Question 3 was inspected between June and August 2015, and a separate report was published in December 2015 (available from: www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmic/publications/police-effectiveness-vulnerability-2015-northamptonshire/). 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 Northamptonshire?

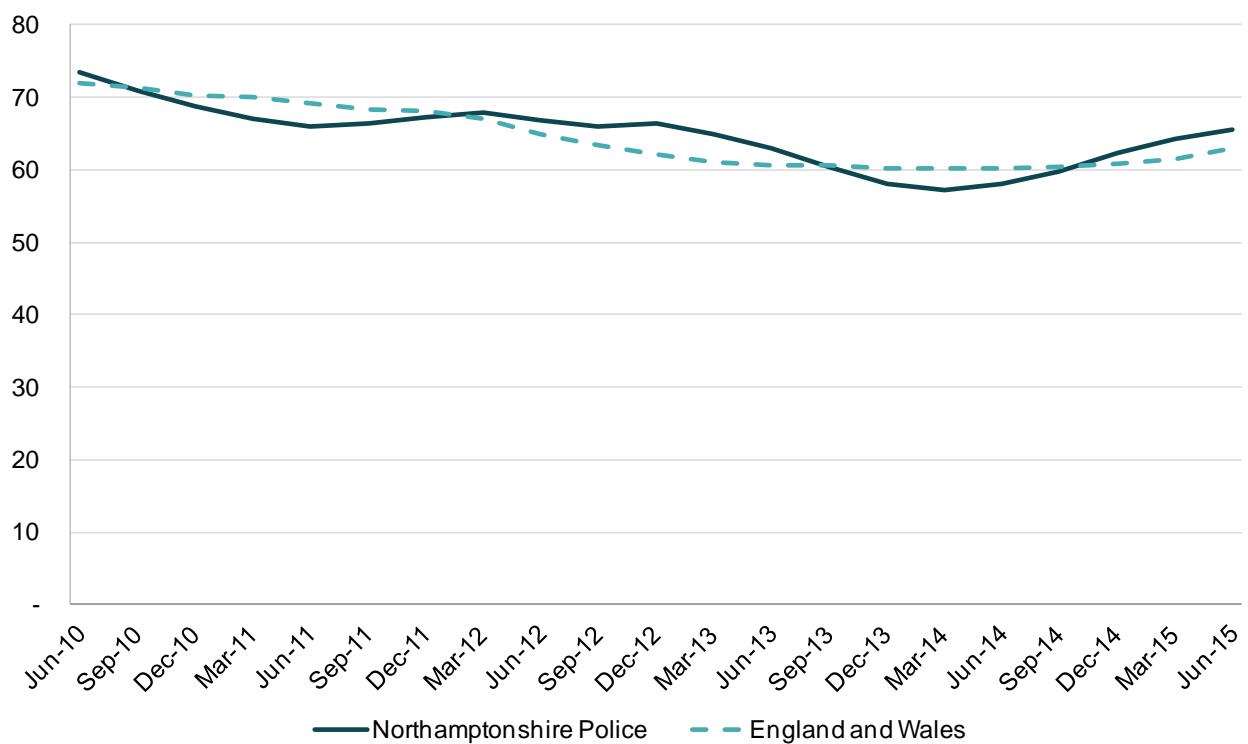
Although police recorded crime is by no means a complete measure of the totality of demand for calls on its service that a force faces, it does provide a comparable indication of performance across all forces. Crime rates are reported as a number of crimes per 1,000 population in each force area to enable 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 11 percent in Northamptonshire 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 12 percent in Northamptonshire, compared with a reduction of 12 percent across England and Wales.

When compared with the previous year, police recorded crime (excluding fraud) in Northamptonshire increased by 13 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 Northamptonshire (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	Northamptonshire Police	England and Wales
Recorded crime (excluding fraud)	65.7	63.0
Victim-based crime	59.8	56.0
Sexual offences	2.1	1.6
Assault with injury	7.5	6.3
Burglary in a dwelling*	8.0	8.4
Anti-social behaviour incidents*	44.3	32.9

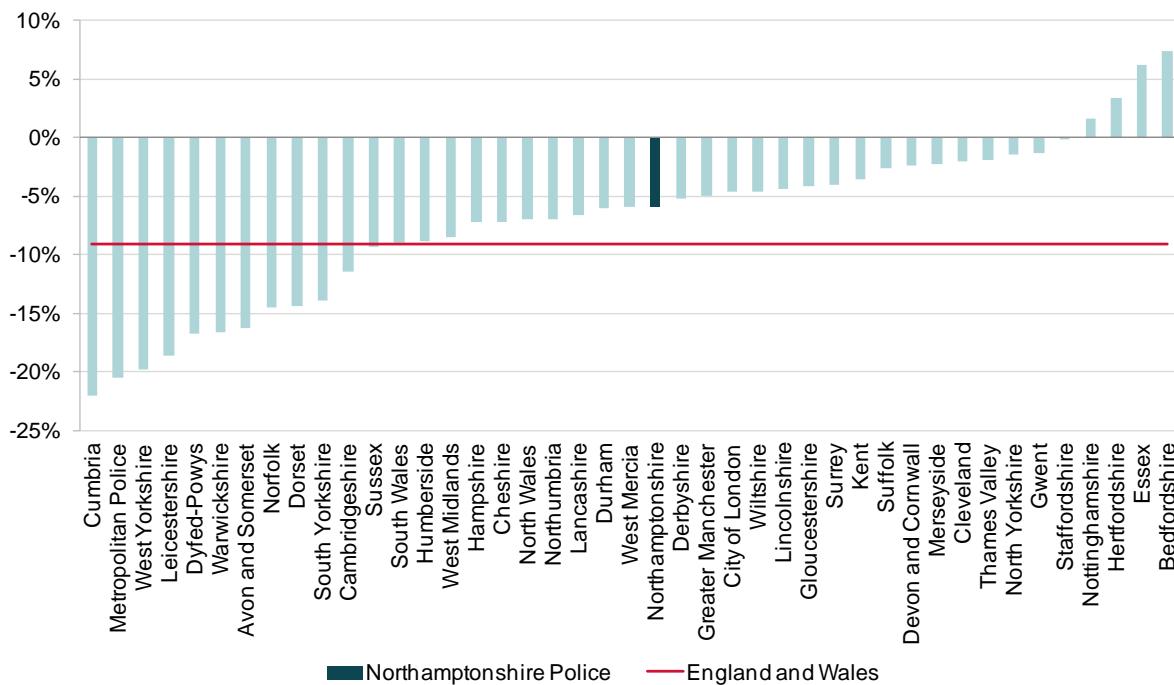
Source: Home Office data, HMIC data return

*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, Northamptonshire Police recorded 31,626 incidents of anti-social behaviour. This is 6 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?

Northamptonshire Police is prioritising the prevention of crime and anti-social behaviour to some extent. The approach of the force is informed by the police and crime commissioner's (PCC's) police and crime plan which outlines an aspiration to make Northamptonshire the safest place in England. The plan makes specific reference to preventing crime, reducing anti-social behaviour and violence and protecting vulnerable people. The new chief constable appointed in July 2015 has made it clear in his messages to the force that the focus and purpose of Northamptonshire Police is 'to protect people from harm'.

The force has identified eight priorities which are outlined in its control strategy: protecting vulnerable people; reducing violence; responding to and managing emerging security threats; reducing the supply and impact of controlled drugs; effectively tackling serious and organised crime; understanding and reducing cyber-

crime; effectively tackling anti-social behaviour; and reducing acquisitive crime. The first six listed are regarded by the force as a high priority, with tackling anti-social behaviour and reducing acquisitive crime as medium priority.

HMIC found that while most officers and staff are aware of the focus on protecting vulnerable people, some believe that the main force priority continues to be its response to serious acquisitive crime.⁶ Overall, officers and staff had only a limited understanding of a process that now assesses the individual's needs rather than the type of crime in determining the priority given to the police response. HMIC found that the focus of the daily management meetings lacked consistency and does not always focus on threat, harm, and risks, with little mention of high-risk incidents such as domestic abuse or other cases involving vulnerable victims. This is due to change and may lead to improved focus and understanding. More needs to be done by the force to ensure that this approach is clearly understood and communicated

We also found a lack of clarity in the way officers and staff understand the priority the force places on responding to anti-social behaviour incidents and some officers we spoke to felt that there can be an inconsistent approach across the force. However, there was a general understanding that responding to anti-social behaviour is given a low priority, unless the incident involves a risk to a vulnerable or repeat victim. There is an emphasis on problem solving initiatives to prevent reoccurrence.

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

The force does not allocate its resources well to prevent crime and anti-social behaviour. There is a lack of clear direction to local policing which means that the force may be missing opportunities to prevent crime and anti-social behaviour in line with its priorities. Local policing in Northamptonshire is geographically split into two operational command units: one for Northampton and the second for the rest of the county, with safer community teams and response teams in each of these two areas. Safer community teams have a problem-solving, crime reduction and engagement role. The role of PCSOs is to provide the force's visible neighbourhood presence. They staff mobile police stations, attend events and local venues such as supermarkets, and posters are used as well as social media such as Facebook and Twitter. The force is expanding its numbers of special constables, with some working as special parish constables, and it makes effective use of volunteers. This aims to provide the force with extra capacity to deal with issues in local communities.

The force assigns its safer community officers a crime investigation workload that is both appropriate to their skills and manageable in terms of their capacity. These officers also support their response colleagues regularly in responding to calls for service. In addition they can be called on to support force-wide operations such as Operation Scorpion, which is designed to tackle violent crime. While taking them away from their normal roles this flexibility ensures that the force's operational needs

⁶ Serious acquisitive crime is defined as domestic burglary, car crime (theft of a vehicle and theft from a vehicle), and robbery.

and some of its priorities can be met. However, it does mean that it reduces the visibility of the safer community team in the community. It also affects their ability to adopt an effective problem-solving approach to longer term issues, such as the prevention of crime. In the main, PCSOs were left to perform their role without being taken away from their specific roles.

At the time of our inspection the force was introducing a new structure for its daily management meetings. The meetings are intended to direct resources, and provide tasks to officers and a stronger focus on vulnerability and safeguarding activity. At a meeting we observed, we saw some evidence of that on the agenda. However, there were very few tasks actually assigned to officers; the meeting was rushed and did not direct daily policing activity effectively. We also found that safer community officers and PCSOs receive few tasks and minimal direction from their supervisors. Generally, they are expected to brief themselves and identify their own priorities each month. As a consequence of this, PCSOs in Northampton spend a significant amount of time dealing with parking and street drinkers. This does not reflect the force's focus on protecting people from harm, or its eight strategic priorities. Few officers we spoke to had a personal development review and have no recorded personal or organisational aims and objectives. Even though they have a designated supervisor, they rarely have one-to-one meetings and have little direction outlining what is expected of them. Staff use their own initiative regarding the work they do but this is not always in support of the priorities of the force. This means the force is missing opportunities to prevent crime and anti-social behaviour.

The force has 500 special constables and has plans to recruit another 400. While this is aimed to improve capability and capacity in the force in the long term, many of the special constables cannot currently perform independent patrol because they have not been trained. This often causes problems for sergeants deploying staff as they do not have sufficient police constables and PCSOs on duty to ensure the special constables are supervised appropriately.

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

The force has a strong focus on crime and anti-social behaviour prevention. A number of crime prevention initiatives and operations are taking place across the county. These include Operation Scorpion, Operation Predict, the Rural Intervention Vehicle, and the Redemption Project. Many involve working with other agencies and Operation Predict includes academic evaluation.

Operation Predict is an evidence-based project intended to prevent crime and anti-social behaviour as well as reassure the public, which aims to improve people's perception of their neighbourhood. The operation began with a controlled trial in June 2015, to target the policing of hotspots in those communities with the greatest potential for harm from crime. This involves police patrols focused within hotspot

locations at identified peak times. It includes dedicated community engagement, reassurance, and intelligence gathering by PCSOs. At the time of our inspection, the results for the first three months of Operation Predict were being analysed.

Operation Guardian is an intelligence-based operation focused on preventing further burglaries within a 300-metre radius of an initial burglary. The force uses a ‘near repeat victim calculator’ and uses tactics such as cocooning and super-cocooning.⁷

The force’s evidence-based policing section on its intranet is in development. We found limited evidence of initiatives being evaluated with many appearing to work in isolation, and the benefits and outcomes were unclear. Without such systems the force finds it difficult to understand ‘what works and why’ and ensure that any good practice is shared across the force.

Police community support officers (PCSOs) are not routinely using a systematic approach to solving problems. While police officers use the nationally-accepted approach known as SARA⁸ to assist their problem-solving, many PCSOs do not. There are no neighbourhood profiles or beat profiles.

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?

Northamptonshire Police engages in a wide range of effective partnership and multi-agency activity at a senior level. Within these arrangements, there is a culture of sharing of information at a senior level. This helps to ensure a coherent response that makes the best use of all resources. At an operational level, the force works well in partnership with other organisations, for example, the anti-social behaviour team which is located in the borough council offices. The team includes police officers, police staff and local authority employees.

The force participates actively in partnership forums (including community safety partnerships, local strategic partnerships, and joint action groups) and also undertakes less formal community engagement to generate new partnerships such as farm watch, business watch, and neighbourhood watch. In addition, specific initiatives reflect the force’s willingness to engage and contribute effectively. For example, Northamptonshire Police partly funds (with the local authority) a neighbourhood watch development officer in Kettering. The force also provides a sergeant to Wellingborough Council to improve partnership working in more

⁷ ‘Super-cocooning’ is a tactic used to protect victims and entails visiting houses surrounding the victim’s address to gather further intelligence, identify witnesses and offer crime reduction advice and reassurance.

⁸ SARA is an acronym for scanning, analysis, response, and assess. The process is aimed at identifying legal and ethical solutions to policing problems such as anti-social behaviour.

challenging parts of the town. The effectiveness of these arrangements is reviewed both formally and informally through a variety of force and partnership forums.

The community safety partnership priorities group in Northampton used analytical resources from the force and the borough council to identify priority areas within the town in order to focus joint partnership activity in the areas of greatest need.

Northampton has been adopted as the county's first community alcohol partnership due to its high levels of anti-social behaviour and violence linked with underage drinking and alcohol abuse. This includes partnership working with local businesses and licensed premises educating other licensees in respect of the effects of alcohol harm. Further activity includes visits and alcohol harm presentations to all schools within the priority area, as well as a community questionnaire to capture the concerns of local residents.

The force can demonstrate many instances of good partnership working with agencies and communities at a local level to tackle anti-social behaviour, however, the co-ordination of activity between the force and other key agencies at a strategic level has proved more challenging. Officers and staff described a disjointed approach, at times working in isolation as opposed to collaborating with other agencies. We found little in the way of joint problem-solving and agencies the force works with described the police assigning tasks to them, as opposed to agreeing a joint plan of action. This is a significant change to our findings from previous inspections and one which the force should look to address at the earliest opportunity

The high level of recorded 'violence against the person' in Northamptonshire has been a concern for the force and HMIC for a long time and tackling it is a force priority. A group of senior leaders, known as a 'gold group', led by a chief officer has been established to improve the force's response to violent crime both strategically and operationally and also to ensure longer term engagement and joint action with partner agencies. Analytical assessments have shown that the force needs to focus its efforts on specific locations, domestic abuse offences and the night-time economy. The force has proposed to the county's Health and Wellbeing Board that together they act as a partnership co-ordinating body in order to reduce violent crime across the county.

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

The force shares and uses information effectively with other agencies to prevent crime and anti-social behaviour. For example, it uses an online case management system that acts as a central repository of information accessible to staff within the force and across different partner organisations. In this way, the force can make police information available and access such information held by partner agencies, allowing a more inclusive approach to anti-social behaviour.

The force also uses this system to record activity relating to integrated offender management (IOM)⁹ and we found several examples where the use of the shared database is allowing a more joined-up approach to tackle anti-social behaviour. Anti-social behaviour is assigned a priority of high, medium and low with plans for each level of grading shared on the system. The impact of this is that a clear documented assessment can be made to understand threat, risk and vulnerability issues.

However, the force is still not realising the full benefits of the system. While a large number of staff have actually been trained to use the system, many do not. HMIC has commented previously on this issue. We found PCSOs are struggling to use it effectively and do not see how it will help them to resolve problems. We were pleased to see that the force and Northampton County Council have secured funding to recruit a dedicated development manager to improve the system.

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

We heard about good working relationships between the police and agencies at an operational level. The force needs to build on this to ensure that staff working within these arrangements receive the appropriate direction and supervision that results in effective problem solving.

Northamptonshire has two anti-social behaviour units which case manage, with other agencies, repeat perpetrators of anti-social behaviour. Across Northamptonshire, a number of multi-agency anti-social behaviour action groups meet to ensure a co-ordinated, effective and consistent approach is taken. We were pleased to see a number of good examples of the outcomes that stem from partnership working, such as the Kettering Community Safety Partnership (CSP) which has fitted gates to close alleyways susceptible to anti-social behaviour, provided CCTV cameras to repeat victims, made vulnerable areas more secure by providing fencing and funded additional police patrols to tackle burglary and violence.

⁹ 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.

Summary of findings



Requires improvement

Northamptonshire Police's effectiveness in preventing crime and anti-social behaviour and keeping people safe requires improvement. Poor direction to officers and assigning of tasks means the force may not be making the best use of its available resources for preventing crime and anti-social behaviour and activities may not be fully aligned with the priorities of the force.

The overall level of recorded crime in Northamptonshire increased by 13 percent in comparison with the previous year, compared with an increase of 4 percent across England and Wales. The force recognises that it needs to tackle high levels of violent crime. It is putting plans in place to address the matter in collaboration with specific agencies.

Partnership arrangements at senior level are strong; however, operationally (at middle management level) joint problem-solving needs to be connected and agreed better. Some use, but inconsistently, is made of an evidence-based approach to tackling crime, but the force needs to do more to systematically learn from what works. A significant number of initiatives are in place across the county to combat a variety of problems but a lack of co-ordination and connectivity makes it difficult for the force to have an understanding of the impact they have.

Areas for improvement

- The force should provide officers and staff with clear direction about how crime prevention activity should be focused in line with local priorities.
- The force should adopt a structured and consistent problem-solving process to enable it to tackle crime and anti-social behaviour more effectively.
- The force should use evidence of 'what works' drawn from other forces, academics and other agencies to continually improve its approach to the prevention of crime and anti-social behaviour. There should be routine evaluation of tactics and sharing of effective practice.

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

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

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

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

How well does the force bring offenders to justice?

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

Given the work involved in amending police force crime-recording systems to accommodate fully the new outcomes framework, two forces have not yet been able to provide a full year of data for all new outcomes types. Northamptonshire 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)^{10 11 12}

Outcome type/group	Northamptonshire Police Number of outcomes	Rate	England and Wales Number of outcomes	Rate
Charged/Summonsed	6,968	14.9	577,678	16.0
Taken into consideration	451	1.0	21,318	0.6
Out-of-court (formal)	2,263	4.8	165,384	4.6
Caution - youths	370	0.8	19,703	0.5
Caution - adults	1,744	3.7	115,000	3.2
Penalty Notices for Disorder	149	0.3	30,681	0.8
Out-of-court (informal)	2,479	5.3	159,915	4.4
Cannabis/Khat warning	417	0.9	41,964	1.2
Community resolution	2,062	4.4	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/khat¹³ warning' outcomes would be greater.

The frequency of outcomes may also reflect the force's policing priorities. For example, some forces work hard with partners to ensure that first time and low-level offenders are channelled away from the criminal justice system. In these areas, locally based community resolutions are likely to be more prevalent than elsewhere.

When considering all crimes recorded (excluding fraud), outcome rates for Northamptonshire Police are broadly in line with most other forces in England and Wales.

¹⁰ 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.

¹¹ 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

¹² 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.

¹³ 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.

Northamptonshire Police applies the THRIVE (threat, risk, harm, investigation, vulnerability, engagement) risk assessment model in the force control room when calls come in to the force.¹⁴ This assessment aims to ensure an appropriate and timely response to victims of crime.

The force attempts to record all crime within 24 hours; however, we found many examples when this did not happen. Following HMIC's crime data integrity inspection in 2014,¹⁵ the force changed its processes to ensure compliance with national standards. However, some delays in recording crime still persist.

We found that initial investigations are conducted inconsistently, with officers not always considering or taking early action to secure evidence or obtain witness details. We also found that investigation plans are not always being recorded and generally there is a lack of supervision in the early stages of an investigation. In the majority of cases examined we found little evidence of supervision within the first ten days of the investigation.

Appropriately trained PCSOs are given certain tasks to assist with investigations. The tasks can include recovery of CCTV evidence or house-to-house enquiries. They will not be allocated crimes as the officer in the case.

After the initial investigation by the response officer, a crime is screened or filtered by the crime management unit taking into consideration factors such as threat, harm, risk and vulnerability. The investigation should then be allocated to the most appropriate officer based on the gravity of the crime, the skills required for the investigation and the needs of the victim. However, the force's crime screening guidance and the crime allocation framework do not provide clear and robust governance. We found that the allocation of crimes to investigating officers is based on crime type rather than the broader assessment of risk.

¹⁴ A decision model known as THRIVE (threat, harm, risk, investigation, vulnerable and engagement), which helps staff to assess threat and risk and decide how best to resolve a call.

¹⁵ *Crime Data Integrity - Inspection of Northamptonshire Police*, HMIC, August 2014. Available from: www.justiceinspectories.gov.uk/hmic/wp-content/uploads/crime-data-integrity-northamptonshire-2014.pdf

This means that some crimes are inappropriately allocated to uniformed constables rather than trained CID investigators.

Because of delays in recording crimes, crimes not being properly screened, and, on occasions, not being allocated to the most appropriate investigator, this presents a risk that victims may not consistently get the service they need from the police.

How well does the force investigate different types of crime?

During HMIC's crime inspection in 2014, we identified weaknesses in the quality of investigations. These included inadequate supervision of investigations and confusion among staff in relation to the responsibility for some crime investigations. These weaknesses still persist, and the force has not made the necessary improvements.

In this inspection, we found examples of crimes that were not allocated to the most appropriate investigators given the circumstances of the crime. For example, we reviewed a complex fraud that was being investigated by response officers, and a sexual assault against two very young girls, again being investigated by a response officer who lacked appropriate interview skills.

We did find that some efforts are being made to ensure crimes are investigated by an appropriate officer either within the CID, the volume crime teams at Northampton or Kettering (who deal with burglary and auto crime) or response officers on local policing teams but these efforts lacked consistency. The prisoner investigation unit (PIU) operates every day, from 7.00am to 10.00pm and accepts the majority of prisoners; in most cases, it retains the investigations as well. The allocation of investigations among the team is at the discretion of the sergeant. Cases include standard risk domestic abuse plus all routine and volume crimes. However, it is planned that CID will be handling medium and high risk domestic abuse from 1 November 2015. This may reduce the range of investigations that can be passed to CID and increase the PIU workload.

The most serious crimes are investigated by the Northamptonshire major crime team, which is part of EMSOU.¹⁶ More complex investigations are generally dealt with by the CID, although we are concerned that this is not always the case. On occasions complex crime falls to investigators without the appropriate level of accreditation.¹⁷ This can include grievous bodily harm and possession of drugs with intent to supply being dealt with by uniformed officers.

¹⁶ The East Midlands Special Operations Unit (EMSOU) is a regional tasking structure which draws expertise and resources from across the East Midlands police forces to investigate many of the most serious crimes which affect the region.

¹⁷ The Professionalising Investigation Programme (PIP) aims to ensure that staff are trained, skilled and accredited to conduct the highest quality investigations:

- PIP level 1 – priority and volume crime investigations
- PIP level 2 – serious and complex investigations
- PIP level 3 – major investigations

HMIC found that the provision of traditional forensic support to investigations is good. Officers are able to track forensic submissions through the laboratory examination process. This gives them a clear understanding of the progress of their investigations. Body-worn video cameras are available extensively throughout the force, enabling officers to obtain best evidence.

Effective investigation requires that suspects, once identified, should be managed through the investigation and criminal justice processes. We found that it is not clear who has responsibility for arresting people who are wanted by the force. Such persons are highlighted in the daily briefing and on notice-boards and we saw different teams assisting in efforts to arrest wanted persons. However, this lacks co-ordination and consistency, which has led to a number of persons wanted for arrest being still outstanding.

How well does the force gather digital evidence?

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

The force manages its own digital forensics examinations and all submissions to the force's HTCUs are triaged or prioritised based on the assessed threat, harm and risk. As with traditional forensics, officers can track the progress of their submissions. The force does not have a capability to download mobile phone data, and as a result phones are submitted to the HTCUs alongside computers. This places a high volume of demand on the HTCUs and means that investigation can be delayed.

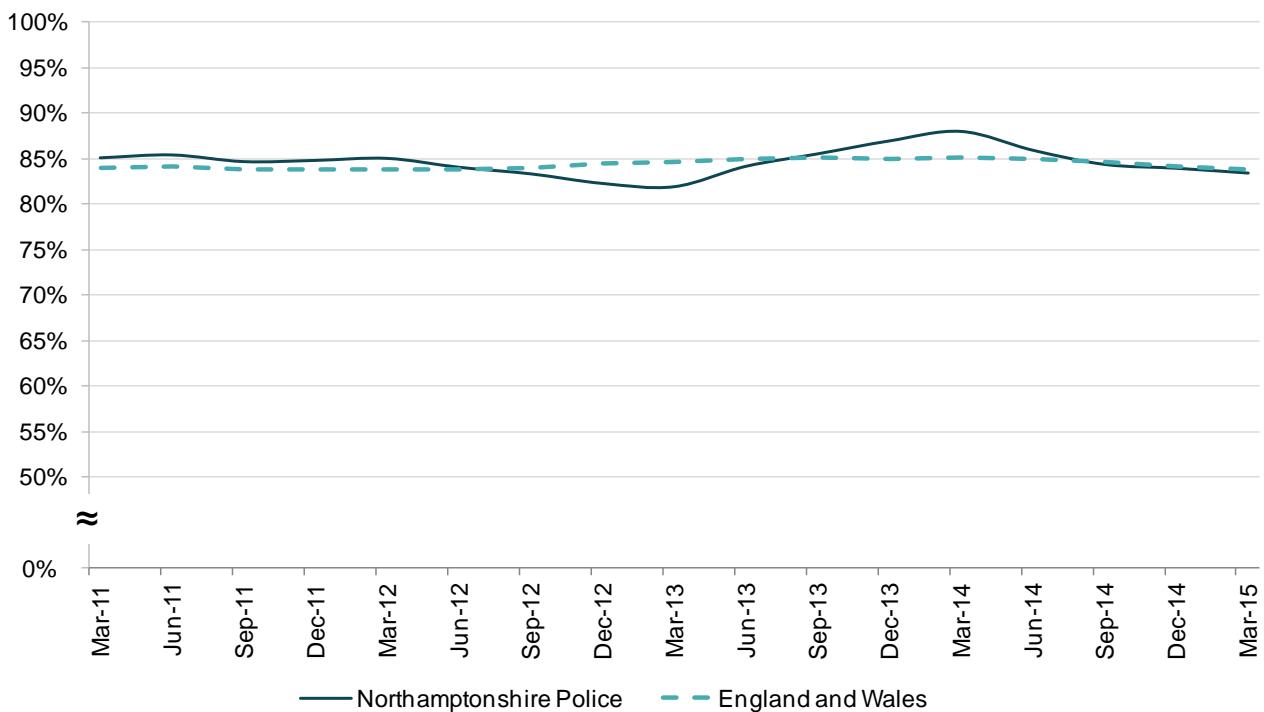
HMIC has concerns with the length of delays and the force should review other options that are available to them in downloading mobile phone data for use in evidence to relieve the pressure on the HTCUs.

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

Of those who have been the victim of a crime in Northamptonshire in the 12 months to 31 March 2015, 83.5 percent were satisfied with their whole experience with the police. This is similar to the national victim satisfaction rate of 83.8 percent over the same time period. The victim satisfaction rate in Northamptonshire for the 12 months to 31 March 2015 is significantly lower than the previous year's rate, while it is broadly in line with the rate for the 12 months to 31 March 2011.

• PIP level 4 – strategic management of highly complex investigations.

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 the force is working closely and effectively with Northamptonshire Fire and Rescue Service as well as other agencies to provide prevention and diversion schemes and initiatives, with a range of services aimed at diverting offenders away from arson and anti-social behaviour. These include a joint 'arson task force', which is trained in restorative justice,¹⁸ and which receives approximately 60 referrals a year regarding high risk young people who are playing with fire or have committed arson.

The PCC has launched a restorative justice programme that is designed to work with other agencies across the whole force area over the next nine months. All operational officers receive a briefing on the force's diversionary and preventative schemes.

The force also works with a community interest company to identify and assist offenders into employment. 'Cyclops' is a bike recycling scheme delivered in conjunction with the Youth Offending Service to address offending in the 16-24 age

¹⁸ Restorative justice brings together people harmed by crime or conflict with those responsible for the harm, to find a positive way forward.

range within the adult integrated offender management (IOM) scheme,¹⁹ and youth offending team (YOT) cohort. This scheme aims to develop employment skills and encourage positive behaviours.

How well does the force deal with repeat offenders?

Integrated offender management teams at Northampton and Kettering are working with partner agencies such as the National Probation Service (NPS) and the joint community rehabilitation company for Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire, Northamptonshire and Hertfordshire, known as BeNCH, to ensure offenders are managed in the most appropriate way for their needs. However, these teams are not located together and we found a lack of supervision, particularly in the Northampton office.

We found that both the police and the probation service identify offenders suitable for management through the IOM programme using a matrix or template that takes into account the person's offending history and personal circumstances. Known intelligence, information, activity and data is shared and managed through the joint problem-solving database, also used for anti-social behaviour. However, HMIC is concerned to find current IOM members are identified solely as a result of committing serious acquisitive crime. Given that tackling violent crime is a priority for the force, it is disappointing that the force has not taken the opportunity to use IOM to prevent this type of re-offending. The force is aware of this and is taking steps to address the issues with plans to introduce a more inclusive approach in early 2016.

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

The force has effective multi-agency public protection arrangements (MAPPAs)²⁰ in place and has established a dangerous person's management unit (DPMU). This is a dedicated, specialist team, working closely with the probation service, dealing with registered sex offenders in the community. It provides continuous monitoring, management and enforcement. The unit has responsibility for conducting home visits on registered sex offenders, leading investigations if they commit offences and preparing Sexual Harm Prevention Orders (SHPOs).²¹

¹⁹ 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.

²⁰ 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.

²¹ SHPOs can be applied to anyone convicted or cautioned for a sexual or violent offence. They can place a range of restrictions on individuals depending on the nature of the case, such as limiting their internet use, preventing them from being alone with a child under 16, or preventing travel abroad.

In May 2015 the force introduced an improved risk management process for dangerous offenders which includes a more structured and active assessment. The risks associated with all offenders were re-assessed and this resulted in a number of high-risk offenders being re-assessed as medium risk. This is an ongoing process that will be further re-assessed. The DPMU works with both the NPS and BeNCH, and police and probation officers jointly visit offenders. This increases the capacity of the force to visit offenders and improves the supervision of sex offenders. The force informed HMIC that it has experienced a year-on-year increase in the numbers of registered sex offenders, with there being an 8 percent increase as at 1 July 2015 when compared with 1 July 2014. The force is already considering how this additional demand will affect the capacity of the DPMU.

Summary of findings



Requires improvement

Northamptonshire Police requires improvement in the way it investigates crime. HMIC is concerned that the way in which crime is allocated for investigation is causing unacceptable delays which puts at risk the force's ability to properly investigate, gather the best evidence and ensure timely support for victims. We found that many crime investigations lacked effective initial supervision and some cases were being investigated by officers without the appropriate skills or experience. We found examples of delays in the recording of crimes. There are also backlogs in the force's forensic examination of digital evidence from mobile phones and computers, which is causing delays in the investigation of high-tech crimes.

Victim satisfaction with Northamptonshire Police for the 12 months to 31 March 2015 is significantly lower than in the previous year.

Although the force is working well with other organisations to provide initiatives and schemes to divert offenders away from crime and the force has effective multi-agency arrangements in place to manage dangerous offenders, the integrated offender management programme is managing only those offenders involved in serious acquisitive crime. Given the high levels of violent crime in Northamptonshire and the priority placed on tackling it by the force, it is disappointing that this integrated approach is not being used to manage violent offenders to prevent re-offending.

Areas for improvement

- The force should ensure that all crimes are allocated promptly to investigators with the appropriate skills, accreditation and support to investigate them to a good standard.
- The force should take steps to ensure that all available evidence is recorded at scenes of crime.
- The force should ensure that there is regular and active supervision of investigations to check quality and progress.
- The force should improve its ability to retrieve digital evidence from mobile phones, computers and other electronic devices quickly enough to ensure that investigations are not delayed.
- The force should introduce a clear process to ensure that those who are circulated as wanted on the police national computer, those who fail to appear on police bail and named suspects identified through forensic evidence are swiftly arrested.

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

This question was inspected between June and August 2015, and the full report was published in December 2015.²² The following is a summary of the findings.

Summary of findings



Requires improvement

Northamptonshire Police is trying to improve the service it provides in identifying vulnerable people and responding to them, so that the public can be confident that victims are well supported. However, there are still several areas where more 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.

The force has good systems and processes in place to deal with the identification of vulnerable people and risk at the initial point of contact. However, the force needs to improve its call-handlers' awareness of the nature of victims' vulnerability and empathy for victims, to ensure that victims feel fully engaged from the outset of their contact with police. The use of the THRIVE²³ approach to assess threat, risk and harm and the associated training the force has provided to its staff is designed to improve this situation but the benefits have yet to be seen.

While the force has effective processes to support the identification of vulnerable victims through a standardised risk assessment, officers often do not secure vital evidence. The force has invested in vulnerability training for frontline officers and staff but needs to improve its training for domestic abuse.

The limited capacity and relative inexperience of investigative staff in the specialist domestic abuse investigation unit mean that the force is not safeguarding some high-risk victims of domestic abuse. Equally, investigations for standard and medium-risk cases are often below standard. Investigations of missing and absent people and child sexual exploitation are of a good standard.

²² PEEL: Police effectiveness 2015 (Vulnerability) – Northamptonshire Police, HMIC, December 2015. Available from: www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmic/publications/police-effectiveness-vulnerability-2015-northamptonshire/.

²³ A decision model known as THRIVE (threat, harm, risk, investigation, vulnerable and engagement), which helps staff to assess threat and risk and decide how best to resolve a call.

The force has developed strong MARAC and MASH models with good information-sharing and joint safeguarding activity.

The absence of recent or fully-developed multi-agency problem profiles²⁴ hinders the force's ability to respond to and safeguard vulnerable groups that are missing or absent, or subject to domestic abuse. This also affects the force's preparedness to tackle child sexual exploitation. This inspection only considered how well prepared the force is to tackle child sexual exploitation.

²⁴ A problem profile is intended to provide the force with greater understanding of established and emerging crime or incident series, priority locations or other identified high-risk issues. It should be based on the research and analysis of a wide range of information sources, including information from partner organisation. It should contain recommendations and options for action.

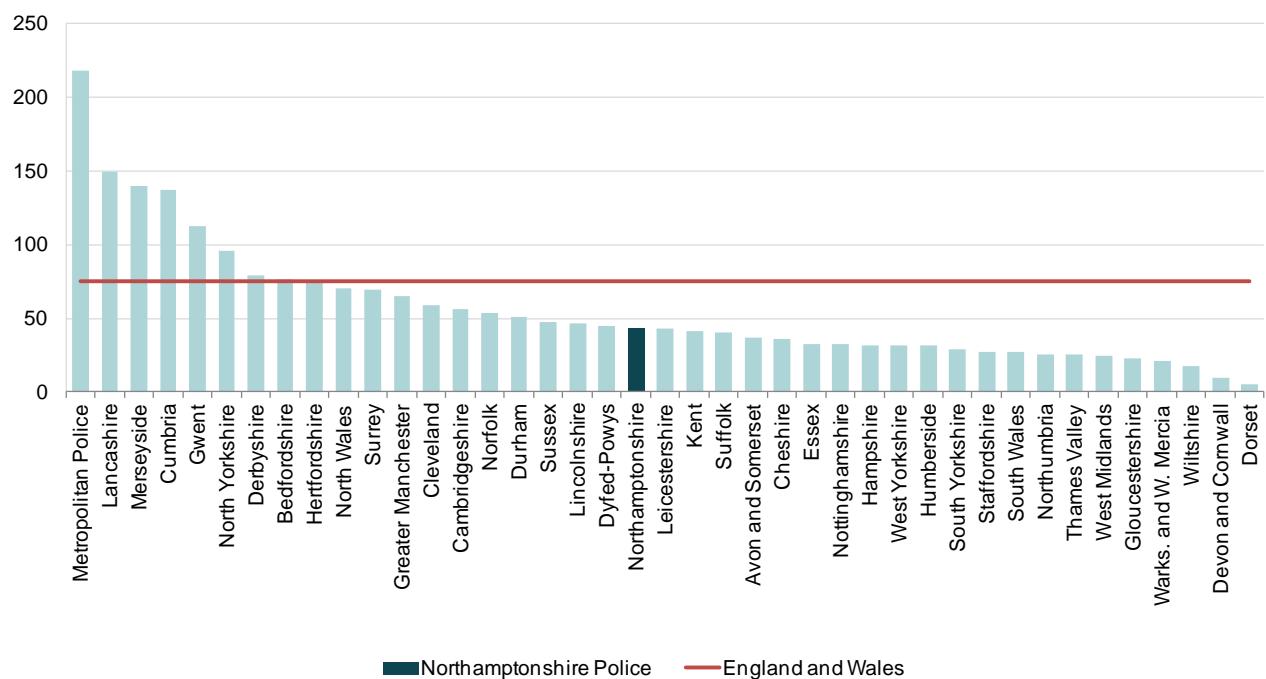
How effective is the force at tackling serious and organised crime, including its arrangements for fulfilling its national policing responsibilities?

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

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

As at 30 June 2015, Northamptonshire Police was actively disrupting, investigating or monitoring 31 organised crime groups (OCGs). This represents 43 OCGs per one million of the population.

Figure 6: Organised crime groups per one million population, by force, as at 30 June 2015^{25 26}



Source: HMIC data collection

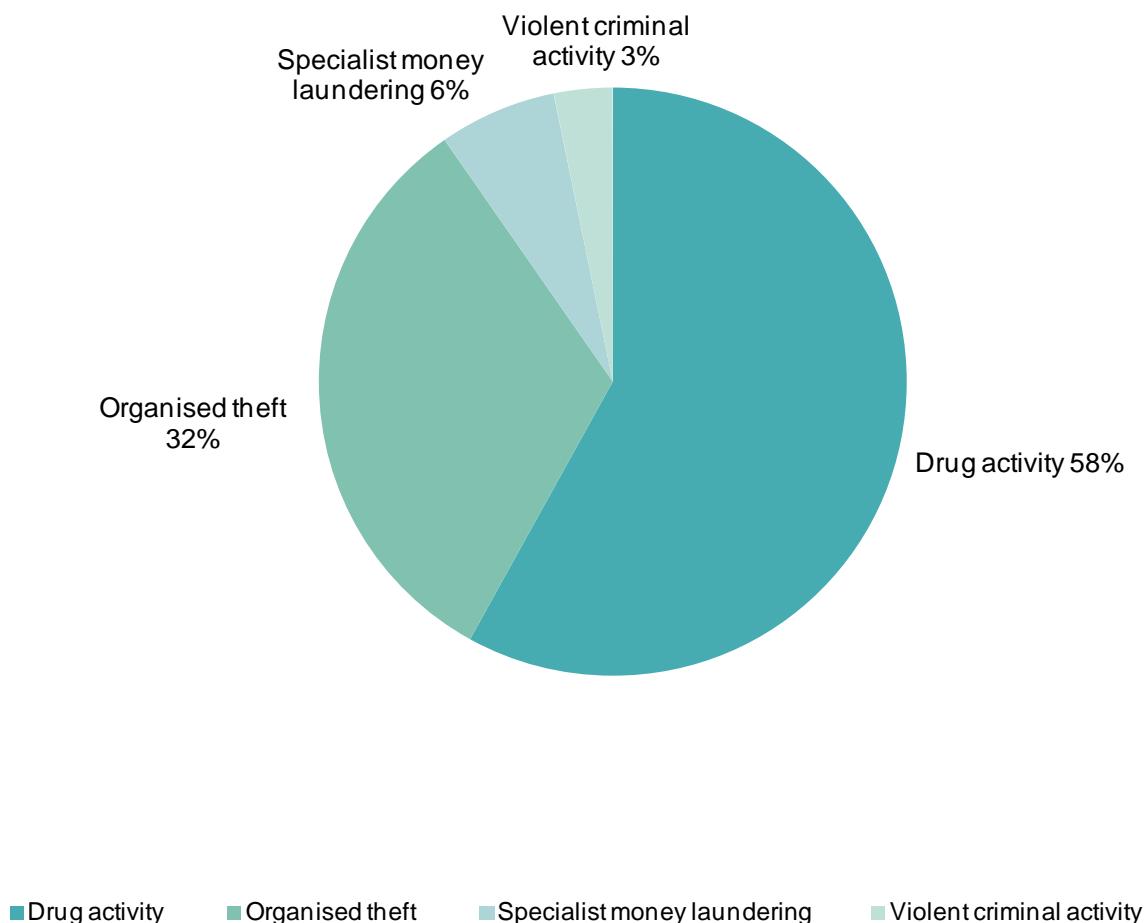
Forces categorise OCGs by the predominant form of criminal activity in which the group is involved. Although OCGs are likely to be involved in multiple forms of criminality, this indicates their most common characteristic. 'Drug activity' was the predominant crime type (58 percent) of the OCGs managed by Northamptonshire Police as at 30 June 2015. 'Drug activity' was also the most common predominant crime type recorded by all forces in England and Wales²⁷, with 64 percent of all OCGs classified in this way.

²⁵ 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.

²⁶ 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.

²⁷ 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 2015²⁸



Source: HMIC data collection

Serious and organised crime is one of six national threats specified within *The Strategic Policing Requirement*.²⁹ 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.

²⁸ Figures may not sum to 100 percent, due to rounding.

²⁹ *The Strategic Policing Requirement*, Home Office, March 2015. Available from: www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/417116/The_Strategic_Policing_Requirement.pdf

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

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.

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

The force has only partially effective mechanisms in place to enable it to properly understand the threat from serious and organised crime. Northamptonshire Police's serious and organised crime local profile³⁰ is an informative piece of analysis in line with national guidance. However, we found that the information collected is mainly police data derived from the intelligence provided through the EMSOU; to be fully comprehensive, the profile requires additional local partner information.

HMIC also found that there is limited local partner involvement in either developing or using the local profile, which means the profile's value will be significantly reduced if it is not used to guide multi-agency strategic activity. There is no multi-agency group in Northamptonshire with responsibility for sharing information and working together to tackle serious and organised crime. The force is aware that it needs to better engage with local partner organisations to support its fight against OCGs. It plans to introduce a local organised crime partnership board, in order to bring Northamptonshire partners together regularly to work in a cohesive manner, but it has made little progress so far. We also note an intention to enter into an information-sharing agreement with the probation service and to be more proactive in making colleagues in the probation service aware of an individual's involvement in organised crime.

When a police force identifies a group of individuals whom it suspects may be involved in organised crime, it goes through a nationally standardised 'mapping' procedure. This involves entering details of the group's known and suspected activity, associates and capability into a computer system, which assigns a numerical score to each OCG. It also places each OCG into one of several 'bands' which reflect the range and severity of crime in which a group is involved as well as its level of capability and sophistication. Police forces, ROCUs, the NCA and a number of non-police organisations such as Border Force, use OCG mapping.

Most forces carry out OCG mapping independently and despite the use of standard software and methods, this has led to inconsistency with significant variation in the number of mapped OCGs per head of population across England and Wales. This inconsistency is partly due to the unavoidably subjective nature of some aspects of the mapping procedure, which relies on human judgment as well as computer

³⁰ SOC local profiles: A local profile is a report that outlines the threat from serious and organised crime within a specific local area.

www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/371602/Serious_and_Organised_Crime_local_profiles.pdf

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.³¹

Encouragingly Northamptonshire is one of five forces within the East Midlands that already gathers and submits intelligence to the East Midlands Special Operations Unit, which assumes responsibility for their OCG mapping. This affords a good degree of consistency, enhanced intelligence sharing, and a better understanding of the threats across the region. However, although the mapping process is carried out thoroughly by the regional team, it is sometimes unnecessarily lengthy. Force-level OCG investigations would be better informed by the mapping process if it were completed more quickly.

The force itself has strengthened its intelligence-gathering capabilities; in addition to the force intelligence bureau (FIB) structure, it is also achieving benefits from a recent emphasis placed upon developing intelligence from people willing to speak with the police, along with a wider use of intelligence-gathering techniques, such as covert activity. This has enabled it to extend its intelligence-gathering coverage across many more local communities, which over time will add to a better understanding.

There is a diverse range of OCGs operating in Northamptonshire. The force recognises the challenges of understanding each group and understanding the vulnerability and risks of crime within each group. The force has been successful in dismantling OCGs formed within specific minority ethnic communities. Although the force's own specialist capacity is limited, the FIB, for example, has involved the force's two community engagement officers, located in local council offices, in gathering information and intelligence opportunities across a range of minority groups. The force has also used the services of EMSOU's two seconded Romanian police officers, particularly at the intervention phase of operations when victims and suspects of Romanian origin are likely to be encountered.

³¹ *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

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

This is an area for improvement. Although Northamptonshire is well-served by the specialist capacity within EMSOU to tackle higher-level serious and organised crime, the force itself has only limited specialist capacity, and it could do more to involve local policing teams and local partner organisations to bolster its response to serious and organised crime.

The force has a close and constructive relationship with EMSOU and a well-established process for potential OCGs to be considered at an early stage by EMSOU. We found a co-operative approach to mapping and managing OCGs and even in those circumstances when the criminality was not at the required level for formal support, offers of support are nevertheless forthcoming from EMSOU. However, there is only limited capacity within the force to deal with tackling those OCGs that are not taken on by EMSOU.

In the files we examined, we found that all OCG investigations have a management plan, an identified senior investigating officer (SIO) and a local responsible officer (LRO). However, we found that the LRO role – which is key to the successful management of OCGs – is not well understood in Northamptonshire. The force is in the process of transferring LRO responsibilities from headquarters-based senior officers to local neighbourhood commanders. While this is an encouraging signal that the force is seeking to encourage greater local policing and partner involvement in tackling OCGs, the newly appointed LROs have yet to receive specific training for the role but are briefed and offered ongoing support from the FIB.

Each mapped OCG is assessed in terms of its suitability for local management. Where covert or specialist tactics are deemed to be necessary, responsibility will not be passed to the local team, instead staying with an appropriate detective. However the specialist capacity held within the force is limited and there is little scope to provide a comprehensive response. Tactics within the specialist team tend to focus on disruption of OCGs, and we found little evidence of activity to prevent people being drawn into organised criminality or to protect communities from the harm caused by OCGs.

HMIC saw evidence of regular disruption activity against the majority of mapped OCGs and the force is working with EMSOU to develop an appropriate framework to measure success. The force has also contributed to the development of, and made use of, a disruption team within EMSOU. The team is available to SIOs to identify opportunities that will make the most of disruptive effects by identifying appropriate enforcement powers held by external agencies and police specialist teams such as the regional asset recovery team and financial investigators.

HMIC found a limited awareness of OCGs among neighbourhood policing teams. The force does allocate tasks and actions to neighbourhood staff in support of

activity against OCGs. However, a conscious decision is made not to overtly describe it as OCG targeting. Briefings do not routinely contain information or updates about OCGs. The lack of knowledge and involvement of local policing teams in the force's response to OCGs limits the ability of the force to intervene at lower levels of OCG activity, and reduces its potential impact to identify, disrupt and deter offenders and to prevent OCGs escalating to more serious levels of criminality.

There is a mixed picture in relation to oversight of activity aimed at tackling OCGs. The force holds monthly OCG management meetings chaired by the director of intelligence who provides senior officer oversight of activity against mapped OCGs, considers progression of potential OCGs to EMSOU, and, confirms that the appropriate resources are associated with each investigation. The force routinely re-evaluates the capacity and capability of mapped OCGs via the standard scoring process after disruption activity, or other significant events.

However, we found a lack of clarity as to who in the force has responsibility for the Prevent, Protect and Prepare strands of tackling serious and organised crime. The force could also scrutinise the impact of its activity in greater depth.

While the force clearly considers information such as scoring history, the nature of the criminality and any recent disruption activity, there is no process to understand fully the impact the force is having in its fight against serious and organised crime.

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

The force recognises it needs to do more to work with partners to prevent serious and organised crime. The force is taking steps to better engage with local partner organisations in its approach to tackling OCGs. A partnership event held in March 2015 explored ways in which agencies can work together to help to deal with organised crime. There are signs that partners are getting more closely involved in activities with the police; for example, the work the force is doing through the community safety partnership (CSP) in Wellingborough is promising and, if successful, will form a basis for similar activity across the force.

Good joint work and information sharing enabled the early identification of gang activity in Wellingborough, where young and vulnerable people were being drawn in to violent activity associated with drug dealing. The force is developing a partnership approach to tackling these concerns, alongside its traditional pursuit of gang members there are two distinct strands of work with partners aimed at protecting communities from harm. The first strand is the development of a long-term partnership strategy between senior police officers and the local authority chief executive who chairs the Wellingborough CSP. The strategy will direct diversion and prevention activities during the investigation and following disruption of the gang. It is the intention of the police operation to avoid a vacuum being left behind for other criminals to fill. The second strand is the introduction of a force level 'gangs

management board' to address criminal gangs which operate at a level of criminality below OCG level, commonly referred to as urban street gangs. The intention here is to prevent the progression of people falling into long-term and more serious criminality and to make the communities of Northamptonshire increasingly hostile to gangs.

The force recognises the benefits of lifetime offender management and overall responsibility is delegated to a detective inspector. We found that at least 15 preventative ancillary orders, such as Serious Crime Prevention Orders (SCPOs),³² are under consideration in cases progressing through the criminal justice system. At present only one person is the subject of an ancillary order and they are in jail, so not the subject of significant activity. The force is alert to the benefits of enforcing ancillary orders and is considering what resources, and protocols with other forces, will be necessary to make the orders fully effective.

The force does not have an external communications strategy to raise awareness of the harm and risks of serious and organised crime. There are many recent examples of the force publishing a media statement following an investigation and convictions, with the intention of demonstrating the force's success in targeting OCGs. However, this is not part of an overarching media strategy, or, for example, branding used across all media which would assist in highlighting the risks to communities, as well as being methods to report serious and organised crime. The force may therefore risk missing intelligence and diversion opportunities among those most vulnerable to being affected by serious and organised crime.

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.

Northamptonshire Police has well developed and strong arrangements in place to fulfil its national policing responsibilities. It is evident that the force working alongside Northamptonshire Fire and Rescue Service has developed an innovative and effective joint services approach to major and critical incidents.

³² SCPOs are court orders that are used to protect the public by preventing, restricting or disrupting a person's involvement in serious crime. An SCPO can prevent involvement in serious crime by imposing various conditions on a person; for example, restricting who he or she can associate with, restricting his or her travel, or placing an obligation to report his or her financial affairs to the police.

Available from:

www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/415969/Fact_sheet_-_SCPOs_-_Act.pdf

The force is also a member of the East Midlands Operational Support Service (EMOpSS), which provides extended capability across the counter terrorism, cyber-crime, public order and civil emergency strands of *The Strategic Policing Requirement* (SPR).

The force is represented at the local resilience forum by the chief constable and oversight of activity within each SPR strand is achieved by regular meetings of strand-leads and chief officers.

To coincide with child sexual exploitation awareness day in March 2015, the force ran a media campaign in conjunction with the office of the police and crime commissioner and the Northamptonshire Safeguarding Children Board. The campaign lasted three months and was based around the slogan “Say something if you see something”. To complement this event, officers were informed via intranet and other messaging that their role was to take positive action in any circumstances which indicated child sexual exploitation or highlighted vulnerability of exploitation. During the public awareness campaign the force recorded over 2.8 million ‘visits’ to its online campaign, which suggests that the campaign increased awareness among the public.

During our inspection we saw many positive examples of joint working with other emergency services that have resulted in the introduction of the joint operations team (JOT). This builds upon the JESIP principles.³³ The JOT is able to deliver a multi-disciplinary approach to the pre-planning, response and wider consequence management for all civil emergency and terrorist incident types. The JOT is progressive and represents genuine ‘blue light’ emergency services integration across Northamptonshire.

The JOT works through the local resilience forum by co-ordinating a multi-agency response to civil emergencies and contributing to the strategic and tactical co-ordination groups. Building upon the work of the JOT, a ‘situational cell’ has been established and equipped to support representatives from any agency during major or complex incidents. The situational cell provides assurance that a shared awareness of a situation is achieved and communicated to commanders in the most effective way possible.

There are two further examples of the force’s innovative joint working with the fire and rescue service; the major incident assessment team includes specialist officers from the police and fire and rescue service who work together to provide immediate expertise at incidents involving hazardous material and chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear incidents in order to develop a well-informed early technical assessment.

³³ Joint Emergency Services Interoperability Programme (JESIP) aims to improve the way the police, fire and rescue and ambulance services work together when responding to major multi-agency incidents. Additional information is available on the JESIP website: www.jesip.org.uk

Both the force and the fire and rescue service have also jointly invested in two rural intervention vehicles, each containing a fire fighter and a police officer who respond to incidents as well as carry out both crime and fire prevention work across the force area.

In February 2015, Exercise Dolphin tested the force response to a major incident and tested all category 1 responders in Northamptonshire at both strategic and tactical levels.³⁴ The exercise tested the ability of health, communication teams, the strategic co-ordinating group and the tactical co-ordinating group to work together. The exercise involved almost 270 people as role-players, actors and participants and was de-briefed for organisational learning points identified.

The force has comprehensive business continuity plans in place, which are tested regularly. These are in addition to plans for managing the operating implications of significant events, such as widespread animal disease outbreaks, disaster victim identification incidents, mass evacuation and shelter, mass casualties, mass fatalities and pandemic flu.

Summary of findings



Requires improvement

The way Northamptonshire Police tackles serious and organised crime requires improvement. This is the first year HMIC has graded forces on their effectiveness at tackling serious and organised crime, including a force's arrangements for ensuring that it can fulfil its national policing requirements, so no year-on-year comparison is possible.

The force needs to improve its understanding of the threat posed by serious and organised crime, and improve its multi-agency response to it, including work to prevent people from becoming involved in criminal groups and protecting communities from the harm they cause. The force recognises it needs to do more to work with partners to prevent serious and organised crime. The force is taking steps to better engage with local partner organisations in its approach to tackling organised crime groups (OCGs).

Although Northamptonshire is well served by the specialist capacity within the East Midlands Special Operations Unit (EMSOU) to tackle higher level serious and organised crime, the force itself has only limited specialist capacity, and it could do more to involve local policing teams and local partner organisations to bolster its response to serious and organised crime.

³⁴ The Civil Contingencies Act 2004 places a legal obligation upon emergency services and local authorities (defined as "Category 1 responders" under the Act) to assess the risk of, plan, and exercise for emergencies, as well as undertaking Business continuity Management. Category 1 Responders are also responsible for warning and informing the public in relation to emergencies.

We found that the force has the necessary arrangements in place to ensure that responsibilities for targeting OCGs sit at the appropriate level, whether that be with the force or EMSOU. This approach has led to the successful dismantling of several OCG networks. However, the force could do more to raise awareness of OCGs with frontline officers and it should review the way in which it highlights the risks of organised crime to communities.

The force has well developed and strong arrangements in place to fulfil its national policing responsibilities, with chief officer oversight and strong links with regional and local partners with arrangements in place to test its plans.

Areas for improvement

- The force should supplement its serious and organised crime profile by establishing a local partnership structure with responsibility for tackling serious and organised crime.
- The force should engage routinely with partner organisations in order to increase its ability to disrupt and investigate 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, collect intelligence and disrupt their activity.
- The force should develop a better understanding of the impact of its activity on serious and organised crime, and ensure that it learns from experience to maximise its disruptive effect.
- The force should ensure that it takes opportunities to communicate with the public about serious and organised crime, in particular to publicise successful operations, offer reassurance and provide advice to help people to protect themselves from serious and organised crime.

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.