

PEEL: Police effectiveness 2015

An inspection of West Mercia Police



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

Overall judgment¹



Requires improvement

Overall West Mercia Police is judged to require improvement at keeping people safe and reducing crime. The force is good at preventing crime and anti-social behaviour, most notably by working effectively with partner agencies. The force investigates crime well and standards of supervision are a strength. The way in which the force assesses the risk faced by domestic abuse victims and missing children requires improvement. Improvement is also required in how the force understands and responds to serious and organised crime. This is the first year HMIC has graded forces on their overall effectiveness so a year-on-year comparison is not possible.

Summary

Overall West Mercia Police is judged to require improvement at keeping people safe and reducing crime.

West Mercia Police is good at preventing crime and anti-social behaviour. The force vision and values demonstrate a strong commitment to protecting people from harm and working in partnership, and these are generally well understood throughout the force. It ensures appropriate processes and resources are assigned to work effectively with partner organisations to tackle problems of concern for the community.

When a crime has occurred, the force acts quickly and carries out good quality investigations, and keeps victims informed about how their cases are progressing. However, better arrangements are needed to retrieve digital evidence from smartphones, tablets and other devices as this is delaying some investigations.

The force works well with others to divert offenders away from crime, and is effective at identifying, investigating and bringing to justice repeat and dangerous offenders to stop them re-offending.

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

West Mercia Police generally provides a good service in identifying vulnerable victims and responds appropriately with its partners. However, the approach to responding to vulnerable missing children and assessing the risks to domestic abuse victims is inconsistent and requires improvement.

The force needs to develop its understanding of the threats from serious and organised crime, including more effectively mapping new and emerging OCGs. Completion of local profiles, formal mapping of new groups as they emerge and greater involvement of local policing teams and partners will enhance the force's understanding of threats posed to the public by serious and organised crime. This is an area that requires improvement.

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

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



Good

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

The force's vision and values reflect a commitment to protect people from harm and to work in partnership; and these are generally well understood throughout the force.

The force recognises the value of dedicated officers and staff working within neighbourhoods to prevent crime and anti-social behaviour. To that end it ensures that every local area has a visible and accessible safer neighbourhood team.

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



Good

West Mercia Police's approach to investigating crime and managing offenders is good. This is consistent with HMIC's crime inspection in 2014, which assessed the force as good at investigating offending.

Crime investigations are well managed, have well documented investigation plans and are effectively supervised. Victims are generally kept well informed as investigations progress.

Investigators are trained and equipped to conduct investigations appropriate to their role. Good investigation support is provided through forensic analysis of exhibits to help identify offenders.

The force works effectively with partner agencies to keep people safe and tackle anti-social behaviour. Partner organisations spoke positively about the force's commitment and contribution to effective joint working and HMIC found good examples of new legislation being used to tackle emerging issues of anti-social behaviour.

There is room for improvement in the way the force evaluates and shares information about effective problem solving, although it is planning to improve information sharing with partner agencies by introducing a shared problem-solving database. The public can feel confident that the force is working well to prevent crime and anti-social behaviour, and keep people safe.

However, better arrangements are needed to retrieve digital evidence from smartphones, tablets and other devices.

Good procedures are in place to focus activity on those offenders who are committing most crime and anti-social behaviour in neighbourhoods. Arresting outstanding offenders is a priority for all staff and is monitored through daily governance meetings.

The force effectively uses its integrated offender management programme to divert offenders out of the criminal justice system and prevent further offending. There are effective partnership arrangements in place to support this and local officers have good levels of awareness of offenders within the programme.

Management of offenders under multi-agency public protection arrangements is good with appropriate strategic governance and effective partnership working.

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



Requires improvement

West Mercia Police generally provides a good service in identifying vulnerable victims and responds appropriately with its partners, and the public can be confident that many victims are well-supported. However, in some areas improvement is needed to ensure that the force provides a consistent service to victims and gives vulnerable people, particularly missing children, the response they need and keeps them safe.

HMIC found that the force's approach to responding to vulnerable missing children and assessing the risks to domestic abuse victims is not consistently good enough. This means that the force is not always fully addressing the needs of some of the most vulnerable victims. However, where risk and vulnerability has been correctly identified, the police response to victims is good.

Generally, investigations into crimes against vulnerable victims and victims assessed as high risk are conducted by specialists to a satisfactory standard with effective supervision. The force works well with partner organisations to share

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



Requires improvement

West Mercia Police requires improvement in tackling serious and organised crime. This is the first year HMIC has graded forces on their effectiveness at tackling serious and organised crime, including its arrangements for fulfilling its responsibilities under the strategic policing requirement, so no year-on-year comparison is possible.

The force needs to develop its understanding of the threats from such crime. It has only completed serious and organised crime profiles for one of its five local policing areas.

Some new and emerging organised crime groups (OCGs) are not mapped, and professional judgment is used to tackle them without a full assessment of the threat they pose. The level of involvement of local policing teams in tackling OCGs is not effective in all areas.

HMIC found limited evidence of collaborative activity with partners, although the force has made use of the media to provide information to communities about the risk of such crime.

information and jointly safeguard and support victims.

This inspection only considered how well prepared the force is to tackle child sexual exploitation. The force has made an encouraging start in ensuring it is adequately prepared to tackle child sexual exploitation, however some of its missing persons processes mean that further work is required if the public can be confident that this preparation is sufficient.

The force has good links to other partners in law enforcement regionally and is making use of intelligence gathering opportunities through government and partner arrangements.

The force has arrangements in place to fulfil its responsibilities under the strategic policing requirement. The response to some aspects, such as counter-terrorism is well established, while progress in others is more recent, such as the dedicated child sexual exploitation team funded by the police and crime commissioner (PCC).

The force in numbers



Calls for assistance

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

West Mercia Police

England and Wales

229

350



Crime

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

West Mercia Police

England and Wales

52.1

63.0

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

West Mercia Police

England and Wales

46.4

60.3

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

West Mercia Police

England and Wales

+12.3%

+4.5%

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

West Mercia Police

England and Wales

-7.1%

-12.6%



Charge rate

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

West Mercia Police

England and Wales

15.8%

16.0%



Anti-social behaviour

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

West Mercia Police England and Wales

36.8

32.9

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

West Mercia Police England and Wales

39.1

36.2



Domestic abuse

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

West Mercia Police England and Wales

10.6%

10.0%

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

West Mercia Police England and Wales

7.8%

8.5%



Organised crime groups

Organised crime groups per million population as at 30 June 2015

West Mercia Police England and Wales

21.2

74.7



Victim satisfaction rate

Victim satisfaction rate 12 months to 31 March 2015

West Mercia Police England and Wales

83.7%

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

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

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

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

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

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

² HMIC inspected forces on questions 1, 2 and 4 between September and November 2015. Question 3 was inspected between June and August 2015, and a separate report was published in December 2015 (available from: <http://www.justiceinspectors.gov.uk/hmic/publications/police-effectiveness-vulnerability-2015-west-mercias/>). In 2014, in preparation for the PEEL programme, forces were inspected to assess how effective they are at cutting crime (available from: www.justiceinspectors.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 West Mercia?

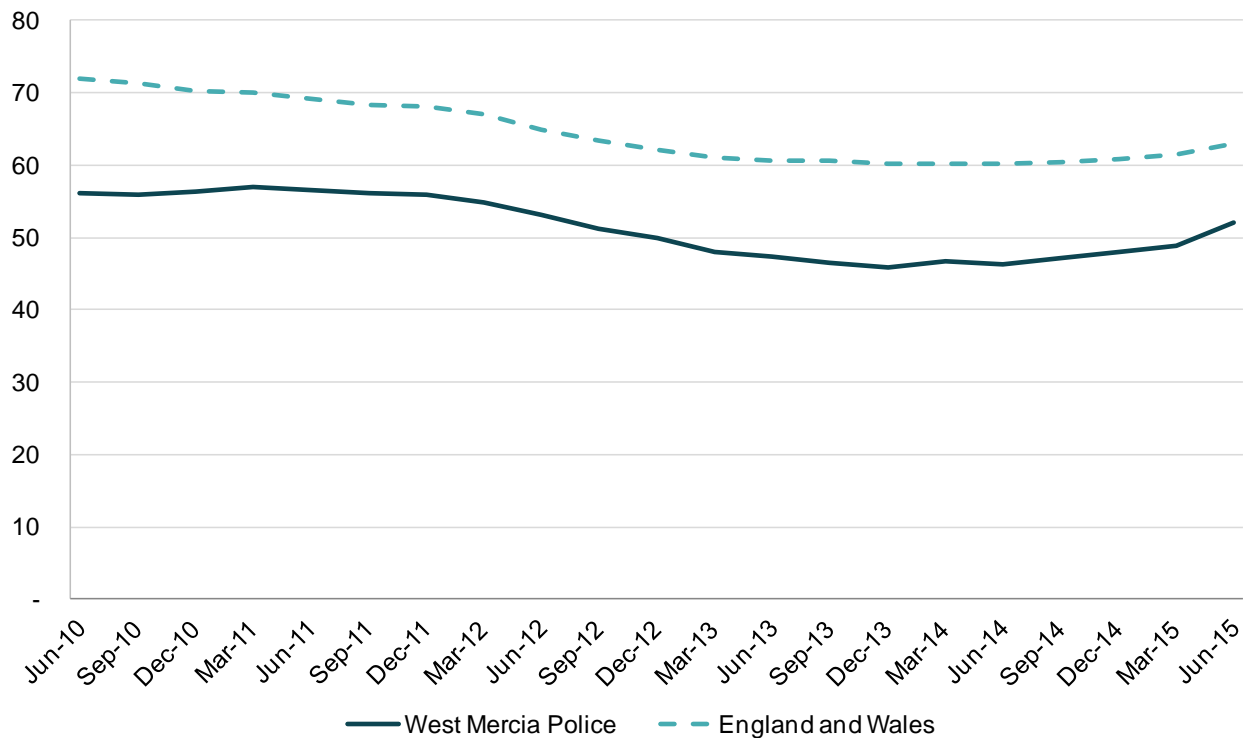
Although police recorded crime is by no means a complete measure of the totality of demand for calls on its service that a force faces, it does provide a comparable indication of performance across all forces. Crime rates are reported as a number of crimes per 1,000 population in each force area to enable 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 7 percent in West Mercia 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 7 percent in West Mercia, compared with a reduction of 12 percent across England and Wales.

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

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



Source: Home Office data

The volume of police recorded crimes and incidents of anti-social behaviour per head of population indicates how safe it is for the public in that police area. Figure 2 shows crime and anti-social behaviour rates in West Mercia (per 1,000 population) compared with England and Wales.

Figure 2: Police recorded crime rates (per 1,000 population) for the 12 months to 30 June 2015

Rates per 1,000 population	West Mercia Police	England and Wales
Recorded crime (excluding fraud)	52.1	63.0
Victim-based crime	47.0	56.0
Sexual offences	1.9	1.6
Assault with injury	6.2	6.3
Burglary in a dwelling*	5.6	8.4
Anti-social behaviour incidents*	36.8	32.9

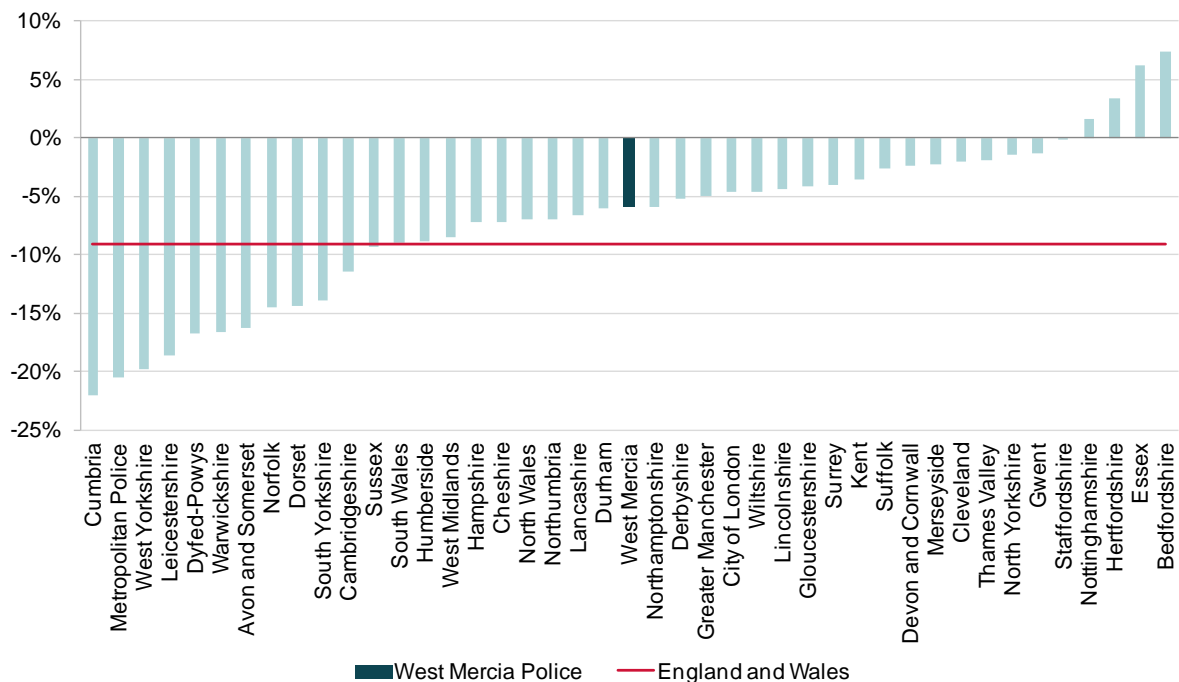
Source: Home Office data, HMIC data return

*Anti-social behaviour data is from the force’s data return and the rate for burglary in a dwelling is the rate per 1,000 households, not population.

HMIC has chosen these types of crime to indicate offending levels in the force area. We are not judging the effectiveness of the force on police recorded crime rates only.

In the 12 months to 30 June 2015, West Mercia Police recorded 45,734 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?

West Mercia Police has a clear commitment to prevent crime and anti-social behaviour and keep people safe. In forming the alliance with Warwickshire Police, the two organisations have developed a shared vision and values and provided a clear direction to the workforce on how the forces will operate. The force vision of protecting people from harm is reflected in the priorities of the police and crime commissioner’s police and crime plan.

The force analyses crime data, as well as information from other sources, to identify the threats and risks facing communities as part of the annual strategic assessment process.

The importance of preventing crime and anti-social behaviour and keeping people safe is widely understood across the force. Operational activity reflects force level and local prevention priorities. This is particularly evident in the harm reduction hubs that have been established across the force to co-ordinate a local response and problem solving, primarily in relation to anti-social behaviour.

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

West Mercia Police allocates officers and staff effectively to prevent crime and anti-social behaviour. The force recognises the value of dedicated officers and staff working within neighbourhoods to prevent crime and anti-social behaviour. To that end it ensures that every local area has a visible and accessible safer neighbourhood team (SNT) of neighbourhood officers and police community support officers (PCSOs).

The alliance with Warwickshire Police has established a programme of change known as StraDA (strengthening and deepening the alliance). To support this, both forces have carried out a comprehensive analysis of current demands in consultation with other public sector organisations and the community. This analysis has helped inform the allocation of resources to neighbourhood teams.

Neighbourhood officers and staff access management information, including crime and incident data about their neighbourhood, and this assists them to prevent crime and keep people safe. This includes the use of an effective electronic self-briefing tool. HMIC found that officers who respond to calls for service support their neighbourhood colleagues in prevention activity, for example by undertaking high visibility policing in areas identified as crime or anti-social behaviour hotspots.

Neighbourhood teams use a variety of methods to engage with communities to identify and solve short and long term problems relating to crime and anti-social behaviour. HMIC found good evidence that PCSOs and neighbourhood officers are rarely abstracted from their neighbourhood roles, and local supervisors have autonomy to manage their own resources. The force has introduced harm reduction hubs in each policing area to provide specialist advice and support to neighbourhood teams to tackle anti-social behaviour. The force recognises that the harm reduction hubs are not operating in the same way in all areas, and is planning to improve consistency.

The force is planning to introduce a joint anti-social behaviour policy for West Mercia Police and Warwickshire Police, as well as a performance framework that takes into account demand and harm reduction. The force uses risk management plans extensively to record and manage activity to keep people safe. These plans are used to identify the threat, risk and harm, from crime and anti-social behaviour associated with an individual, and to assist the officers in actively supporting and managing them. HMIC found that these plans are regularly updated and accessible to other officers so that they can contribute.

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

Safer neighbourhood teams use a broad range of tactics to prevent crime and anti-social behaviour and keep people safe. This includes the use of anti-social behaviour powers, for example the use of closure orders and injunctions. Neighbourhood teams are provided with support and specialist advice by anti-social behaviour coordinators and staff working in the harm reduction hubs. The force has a clear focus on prevention, and this is well understood by frontline staff and reduction activity and initiatives are evident across the force, for example a PCSO works with schools in the Malvern area to prevent anti-social behaviour.

While HMIC observed effective problem solving in risk management plans, the approach to problem solving is dependent on the individual as the force does not provide any training in this regard.

In HMIC's crime inspection report in 2014, we recommended that the force introduce a review process to evaluate the benefits of established and new crime fighting and anti-social behaviour initiatives; capture best practice around crime prevention and problem solving; and share best practice across the force.³ HMIC is disappointed that the force has made little progress in this regard. While we found some staff were identifying national best practice by carrying out their own internet research with the College of Policing, the force does not formally evaluate problem-solving activity. There is no central repository for best practice in the force and no single mechanism to share best practice. This remains an area for improvement for the force.

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?

The force has a clear commitment to work with partner organisations at a strategic level and this is articulated in one of the force values; 'Work in partnership to provide the best service we can'. This commitment is evident across all levels and roles within the force, particularly within safer neighbourhood teams, where HMIC found evidence of practical and effective joint working.

West Mercia Police force area covers five local authority areas. HMIC spoke with representatives from a number of partner agencies who described a positive working relationship at all levels of the force, although some reported that this was dependent on individual networking, and the movement of staff following the formation of the alliance meant that new relationships had to be developed. Officers and staff invest time in developing these relationships, and attend a range of meetings with partners.

³ *Crime Inspection 2014 – West Mercia Police*, HMIC, November 2014. Available from: www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmic/wp-content/uploads/west-mercias-crime-inspection-2014.pdf

This working relationship is also enhanced through joint patrols with the Fire and Rescue Service, and joint training with Victim Support.

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

HMIC found that the force has effective, well-established arrangements to collect, share and act on partner information to prevent crime and anti-social behaviour. The force works effectively with a variety of agencies to share information and safeguard victims. This is supported by a range of multi-agency meetings with information-sharing protocols in place, including with local GPs and hospital A&E departments.

Information sharing, case discussion and joint preventative activity takes place through informal arrangements with safer neighbourhood teams and formal arrangements such as the harm reduction hubs. The information obtained through these arrangements is used by the neighbourhood teams to develop and manage risk management plans that partners also have some opportunity to access and update. The force is planning to introduce a new partnership database (currently in use in Warwickshire) that is designed to enhance the two-way flow of information between police and partners still further.

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

The force works effectively with partner organisations to keep people safe and tackle anti-social behaviour in local neighbourhoods.

HMIC found many good examples of effective problem-solving with partner organisations. This included structured multi-agency problem solving meetings which are tailored to local needs across the force area, such as community safety partnership meetings. Examples also included partners supporting specific operations to target anti-social behaviour such as tackling damage caused by off-road motorcycling in the Newdale Lake area of Telford. The force has also conducted some joint patrols with the Fire and Rescue Service, in areas where there have been deliberate small fires, and has assisted partners with the training and accreditation of local authority community safety officers. The force also supports street pastor schemes to provide increased capacity to tackle anti-social behaviour and keep people safe particularly within the night time economy.

Together with partners, the force is exploring and using a range of new powers to keep people safe in public places including closure orders for premises linked to anti-social behaviour, criminal behaviour orders, and has recently worked with the local authority to secure a public space protection order in Kidderminster.

Summary of findings



Good

West Mercia Police is good at preventing crime and anti-social behaviour and keeping people safe. In HMIC's 2014 crime inspection, we judged the force to be good at reducing crime and tackling anti-social behaviour.⁴

The force's vision and values reflect a commitment to protect people from harm and to work in partnership; and these are generally well understood throughout the force.

The force recognises the value of dedicated officers and staff working within neighbourhoods to prevent crime and anti-social behaviour. To that end it ensures that every local area has a visible and accessible safer neighbourhood team.

The force works effectively with partner agencies to keep people safe and tackle anti-social behaviour. Partner organisations spoke positively about the force's commitment and contribution to effective joint working and HMIC found good examples of new legislation being used to tackle emerging issues of anti-social behaviour.

There is room for improvement in the way the force evaluates and shares information about effective problem solving, although it is planning to improve information sharing with partner agencies by introducing a shared problem-solving database. The public can feel confident that the force is working well to prevent crime and anti-social behaviour, and keep people safe.

Areas for improvement

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

⁴ *Crime Inspection 2014 – West Mercia Police*, HMIC, November 2014. Available from: www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmic/wp-content/uploads/west-mercias-crime-inspection-2014.pdf

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. This included the full range of ways police officers and staff can gather evidence to support investigations (these include the more traditional forensics, such as taking fingerprints, as well as digital sweeps to find evidence of online abuse, for instance).

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

How well does the force bring offenders to justice?

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

Given the work involved in amending police force crime-recording systems to accommodate fully the new outcomes framework, two forces have not yet been able to provide a full year of data for all new outcomes types. West Mercia 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)^{5 6 7}

Outcome type/group	West Mercia Police Number of outcomes	Rate	England and Wales Number of outcomes	Rate
Charged/Summoned	10,239	15.8	577,678	16.0
Taken into consideration	222	0.3	21,318	0.6
Out-of-court (formal)	2,956	4.6	165,384	4.6
Caution - youths	550	0.8	19,703	0.5
Caution - adults	2,019	3.1	115,000	3.2
Penalty Notices for Disorder	387	0.6	30,681	0.8
Out-of-court (informal)	3,490	5.4	159,915	4.4
Cannabis/Khat warning	669	1.0	41,964	1.2
Community resolution	2,821	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/khat⁸ 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 West Mercia Police are broadly in line with most other forces in England and Wales.

⁵ 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.

⁶ 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

⁷ 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.

⁸ 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.

West Mercia Police has good processes for initial investigation and subsequent allocation of crimes for further investigation. The force has a crime allocation policy that directs which resources should be allocated to investigate; taking into account the nature of the offence and the needs of the victim. The force has a crime bureau that supports the allocation policy, and also where appropriate, carries out initial (usually desk based) investigations without the requirement for an officer to attend.

The force has set a minimum standard for initial investigation, and staff must complete a 12-point plan detailing their actions. HMIC found this was used extensively, although as the template has to be completed at the time and cannot be updated some were lacking in detail. HMIC also found good levels of understanding in respect of the initial actions that must be undertaken by the officers responding to calls for service before the matter is transferred for secondary investigation. HMIC also found that victims were generally kept well informed as investigations progress.

How well does the force investigate different types of crime?

The force investigates different types of crime well. HMIC examined a range of investigations and found evidence of effective investigative action and supervisory review and direction.

Generally, non-complex crime, for example criminal damage and theft, are investigated by officers who respond to calls for service, neighbourhood officers, and police staff investigators. Officers dealing with these cases have the necessary skills and are closely supervised by line managers to ensure that cases are investigated effectively, victims are kept informed and relevant lines of enquiry are followed. Crimes assessed as being of higher risk or more complex such as burglary, robbery and serious assault are investigated by staff within CID teams or protecting vulnerable people (PVP) teams. These investigative staff are appropriately trained or working towards accredited status.

The force works to monitor and maintain the number of trained specialist investigators that it has available to investigate crime. It has identified a need to increase its investigative capacity and capability in relation to protecting vulnerable

people and is re-deploying a number of resources to this area to achieve this. The force has also trained officers to investigate more complex and serious crime, such as homicide, and serious sexual assault working in a major incident unit (MIU). The force hosts a quarterly senior detective forum, which has a standing agenda item in relation to operational learning and good practice. This has provided information on a range of topics, such as advances in DNA identification.

West Mercia Police has effective arrangements in place to ensure that staff have access to intelligence to support investigations, including local intelligence hubs, a force intelligence bureau (FIB) and 24 hour intelligence provision within the force control room (called i24).

The use of forensic specialists to support investigations is effective and consistent. Comprehensive forensic services support West Mercia Police as part of an alliance-wide provision, including a fingerprint bureau and a forensic enhancement lab accredited to ISO standards. A central forensic tasking unit ensures appropriate deployment of forensic specialists from one of four hubs to attend any crime scene where opportunities for the recovery of forensic evidence are identified. These resources include scene of crime officers, and crime scene managers, with an on-call provision outside of office hours.

The force has an effective process for identifying and quickly arresting those who are circulated as wanted for failing to appear at court and where appropriate those also identified as suspects for crime. The force uses a daily management meeting (DMM) process to highlight high risk offenders, including those who are wanted. Force electronic briefing systems also provide ready access to this information, and staff are specifically tasked to arrest those circulated as wanted.

How well does the force gather digital evidence?

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

The force recognises the importance of this work and has produced a two-year strategy outlining how the HTCU will be developed, supported by a substantial budget, and supplemented by an independent review by a third party contractor.

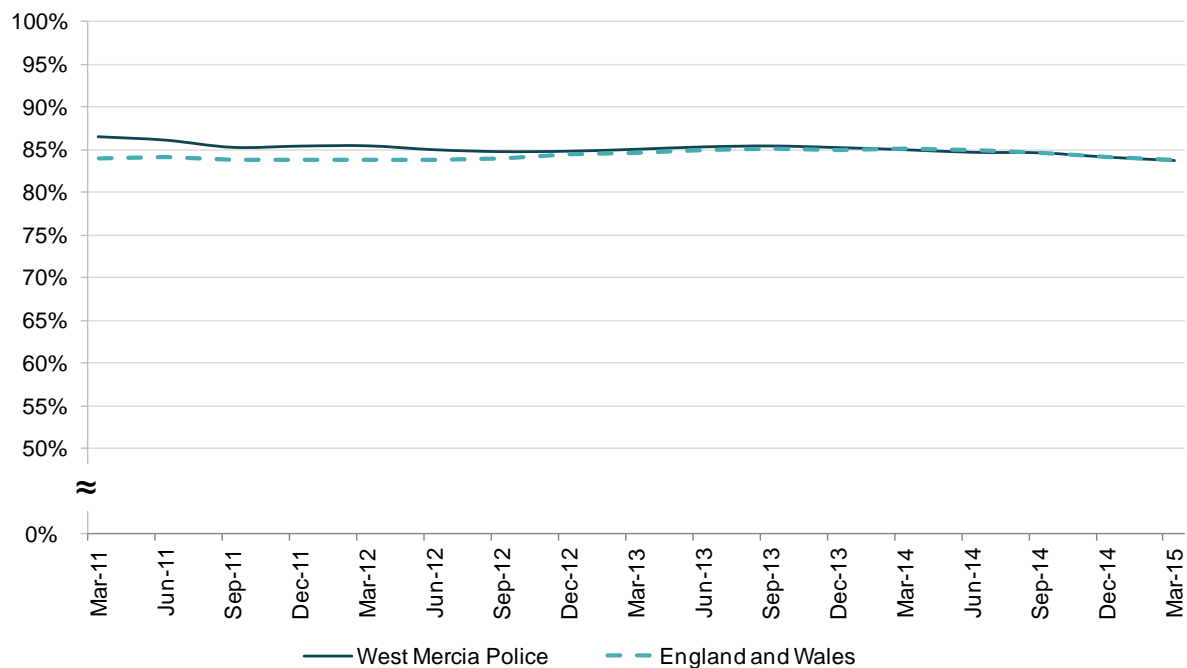
HMIC found that there was currently a delay of approximately three months for routine examination of computers, although this had been reduced through outsourcing some work. However, the force does prioritise certain offences such as homicide and child sexual exploitation, and uses a risk assessment process to prioritise others.

HMIC found that the force had a backlog in examining and recovering evidence from mobile phones, with no technology available to frontline officers to undertake basic examinations, which may alleviate the backlog. Staff felt there was not enough access to digital recovery. However, there are a number of digital media investigation trained staff across the alliance that can provide tactical advice regarding digital evidence recovery. Digital media investigation staff also attend daily management meetings and provide advice on digital evidence recovery. A digital forensic officer is based within the serious and organised crime unit (SOCU) to support senior investigating officers with digital media evidence recovery.

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

Of those who have been the victim of a crime in West Mercia in the 12 months to 31 March 2015, 83.7 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 West Mercia for the 12 months to 31 March 2015 is broadly in line with the previous year's rate, while it is significantly lower than the rate for the 12 months to 31 March 2011.

Figure 5: Percentage of victims satisfied with the overall service provided by the police, for the four year period to 31 March 2015



Source: Home Office data provided by forces

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

How well does the force divert offenders away from crime?

West Mercia Police identifies and seeks to divert offenders out of the criminal justice system and prevent further offending through its integrated offender management (IOM)⁹ programme which operates effectively across the force. The IOM scheme considers each offender separately and develops a bespoke programme in partnership with drug councillors, alcohol abuse support and others to help divert the individual from crime.

The force works effectively with partner agencies on the IOM programme, although they are not co-located. This includes work with a number of charities that assist with homelessness, and substance misuse. The force also has access to a police-funded counsellor available to those on the IOM scheme across the alliance.

HMIC found that individuals within IOM cohorts are predominately those who have a history of acquisitive crime, although the force is planning to extend the scope to include perpetrators of other offending behaviour such as domestic abuse.

HMIC found that local officers have a broad awareness of the IOM programme and of those individuals engaged locally with the programme. Local officers can access and update relevant risk management plans and understand how to refer subjects for inclusion on the scheme.

The force monitors the effectiveness of the IOM programme through strategic reducing re-offending boards, and the force has recently introduced an offender tracking tool to assist in measuring the success of the scheme.

How well does the force deal with repeat offenders?

The force uses a number of approaches to identify repeat offenders and prevent them re-offending. Like most forces, West Mercia Police has several groups of offenders ranging from serious sexual and violent offenders to those committing burglary and theft. There are formal arrangements for identifying and managing repeat and high risk offenders such as IOM and multi-agency public protection arrangements (MAPPAs).¹⁰

⁹ 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.

¹⁰ MAPPAs 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.

In addition there are less formalised arrangements, for example local officers will be required to focus on individuals suspected of committing crime and anti-social behaviour. Where a repeat victim or offender is involved the activity will be recorded in a specific risk management plan.

The force has well established processes within the custody environment to divert offenders from custody, such as referral schemes for those with drug, alcohol or mental health issues. Outside of the custody process the force is working with partners to identify and address at an early stage the many causal factors that can contribute to offending behaviour. One example of this is the connecting family's project in Bromsgrove. The harm reduction hubs also have a process to identify incidents of anti-social behaviour that could be a precursor to criminal offending.

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

West Mercia Police has effective processes for identifying and monitoring sexual and other dangerous offenders. Each local policing area has a team consisting of dedicated, skilled and accredited staff that carry out all aspects of intelligence gathering, monitoring and risk management in relation to these types of offenders. HMIC found that there are clear and effective supervision and governance arrangements in place. The force also uses sexual offence prevention orders (SOPO) to good effect to restrict the criminal activity of individuals.¹¹ The force has a good understanding of re-offending by registered sexual offenders and breaches of SOPOs through its force level performance monitoring processes.

The number of registered sexual offenders is increasing. The vast majority of registered sexual offenders are resident within communities and HMIC's fieldwork found that local officers are aware of the registered sexual offenders living in their area.

The force manages offenders within the MAPPA effectively. The force has recognised the risk from a growing number of dangerous offenders who are suitable for the MAPPA process. MAPPA are used by the force and partner organisations including prisons and probation to monitor those offenders assessed as presenting a high risk to the public, and to stop them re-offending. Offenders assessed as presenting the highest level of risk require co-ordinated action with partner organisations to reduce these risks. HMIC found clear evidence that MAPPA involves effective work by the partner organisations with appropriate strategic management arrangements in place.

¹¹ Sexual Offences Prevention Orders (SOPOs) were introduced by the Sexual Offences Act 2003 and are designed to protect the public or any particular members of the public from serious sexual harm from a defendant. As of March 2015, SOPOs were re-named Sexual Harm Prevention Orders (SHPOs).

These offenders are subject to regular scrutiny and review with the same dedicated team who monitor registered sexual offenders taking responsibility for MAPPA across the force area. HMIC found that the force has recently introduced a system whereby some specific dangerous offenders will be managed by detective officers from reactive CID teams, with support from the dedicated team. It is too early to determine whether this approach will be effective.

Summary of findings



West Mercia Police's approach to investigating crime and managing offenders is good. This is consistent with HMIC's crime inspection in 2014, which assessed the force as good at investigating offending.

Crime investigations are well managed, have well documented investigation plans and are effectively supervised. Victims are generally kept well informed as investigations progress.

Investigators are trained and equipped to conduct investigations appropriate to their role. Good investigation support is provided through forensic analysis of exhibits to help identify offenders. However, better arrangements are needed to retrieve digital evidence from smartphones, tablets and other devices.

Good procedures are in place to focus activity on those offenders who are committing most crime and anti-social behaviour in neighbourhoods. Arresting outstanding offenders is a priority for all staff and is monitored through daily governance meetings.

The force effectively uses its integrated offender management programme to divert offenders out of the criminal justice system and prevent further offending. There are effective partnership arrangements in place to support this and local officers have good levels of awareness of offenders within the programme.

Management of offenders under multi-agency public protection arrangements is good with appropriate strategic governance and effective partnership working.

Areas for improvement

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

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

This question was inspected between June and August 2015, and the full report was published in December 2015.¹² The following is a summary of the findings.

Summary of findings



Requires improvement

West Mercia Police is generally good at identifying vulnerable victims, and works well with partner organisations to respond to their needs appropriately. The public can therefore be confident that many vulnerable victims are well-supported by the force. However, there are some areas where the force needs to improve in order to ensure it is consistently giving the best service to victims and vulnerable people, particularly missing children, and keeping them safe. Given the risk that this represents to some of the most vulnerable people in the county, overall the force requires improvement.

Protecting people from harm is a priority for the force but this is not always translated into good practice at the operational level. There is an inconsistent approach to responding to vulnerable missing children and assessing the risks to domestic abuse victims, which means the force is not always fully addressing the needs of some of the most vulnerable victims. However, where risk and vulnerability have been correctly identified, the police response to victims is good.

Generally, investigations into crimes against victims who are assessed as vulnerable are conducted by specialists to a satisfactory standard, and are supervised effectively. The force works well with partner organisations to share information and safeguard (protect) and support victims. The force plans to develop multi-agency safeguarding hubs throughout the force area, similar to that already in place in Herefordshire, which should improve further the quality of joint working.

HMIC found some weaknesses in the way the force assesses the risks to children and young people who go missing. This means that the police response may not be consistently providing the right level of safeguarding and protection to missing

¹² *PEEL: Police effectiveness 2015 (Vulnerability) – West Mercia Police*, HMIC, December 2015. Available from: www.justiceinspectors.gov.uk/hmic/publications/police-effectiveness-vulnerability-2015-west-mercias/

children, especially children in care, who are already among the most vulnerable people in the county. For example, the force may be missing risks of grooming for sexual exploitation.

This inspection only considered how well-prepared the force is to tackle child sexual exploitation. The force was also subject to an inspection of its child protection services and a post-inspection review of recommendations. The more detailed findings from that inspection, published in February 2015, and the post-inspection review, yet to be published, should be read in conjunction with this inspection report.

The force has made an encouraging start in ensuring that it is adequately prepared to tackle child sexual exploitation. However, some of its missing persons processes mean that further work is required if the public can be confident that this preparation is sufficient.

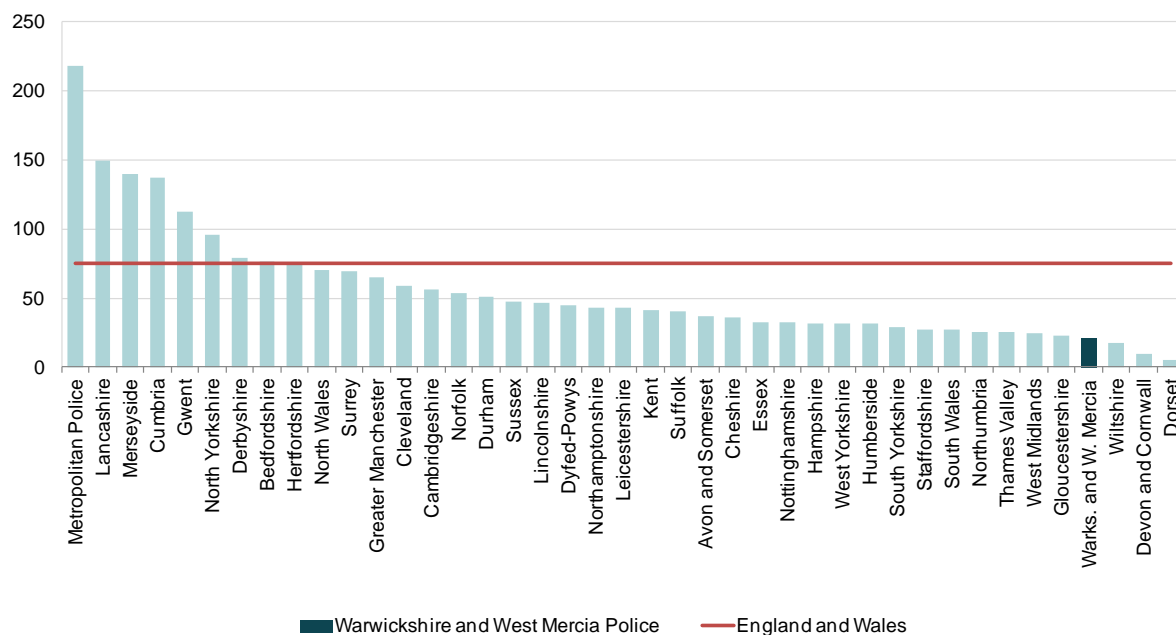
How effective is the force at tackling serious and organised crime, including its arrangements for fulfilling its national policing responsibilities?

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 (ROCU), the National Crime Agency (NCA) and other partner organisations.

Police forces that are effective tackle serious and organised crime not just by prosecuting offenders, but by disrupting and preventing organised criminality at a local level. They also use specialist capabilities (for example surveillance and 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.

West Mercia Police collaborates with Warwickshire Police on matters of organised crime with a common procedure being introduced under the alliance between the two forces. References to Organised Crime Groups (OCGs) per one million population rate is therefore, based upon their combined population figures. As at 30 June 2015, West Mercia Police and Warwickshire Police were actively disrupting, investigating or monitoring 38 OCGs. This represents 21 OCGs per one million of the population, which is low compared with other forces in England and Wales.

Figure 6: Organised crime groups per one million population, by force, as at 30 June 2015^{13 14}



Source: HMIC data collection

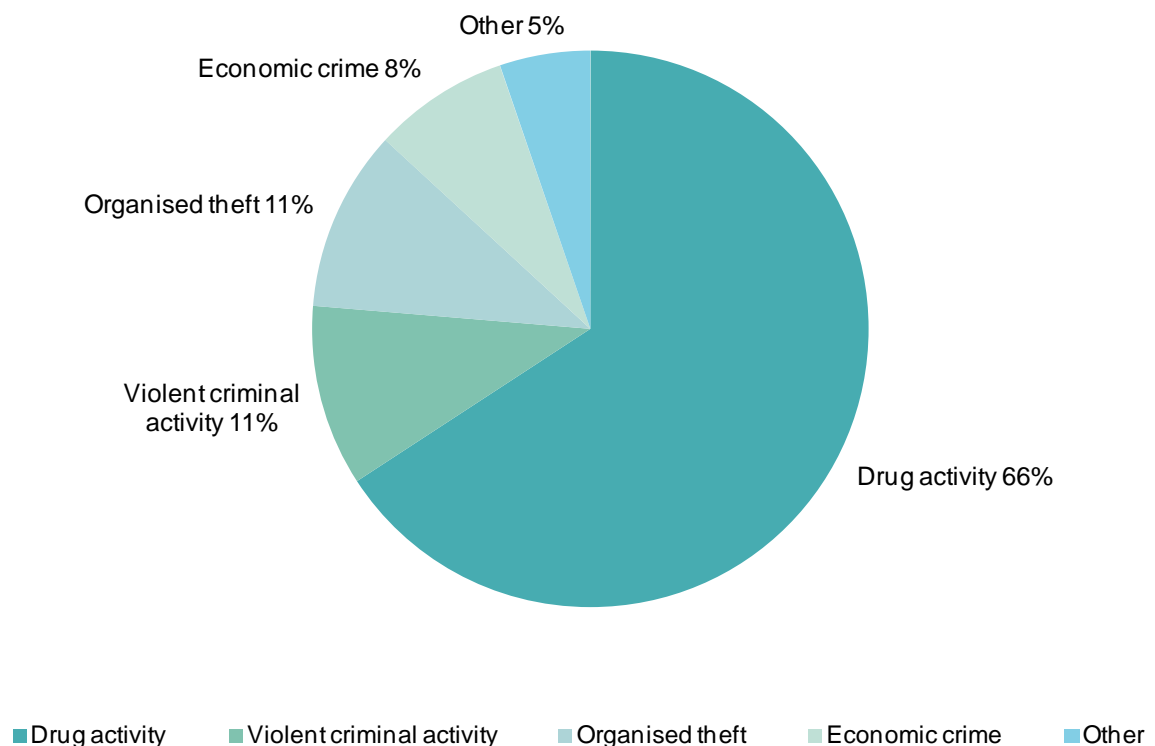
Forces categorise OCGs by the predominant form of criminal activity in which the group is involved. Although OCGs are likely to be involved in multiple forms of criminality, this indicates their most common characteristic. 'Drug activity' was the predominant crime type (66 percent) of the OCGs managed by West Mercia Police and Warwickshire Police as at 30 June 2015. 'Drug activity' was also the most common predominant crime type recorded by all forces in England and Wales¹⁵, with 64 percent of all OCGs classified in this way.

¹³ 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.

¹⁴ 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.

¹⁵ 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 2015¹⁶



Source: HMIC data collection

Serious and organised crime is one of six national threats specified within *The Strategic Policing Requirement*.¹⁷ These are terrorism, serious and organised crime, national cyber-crime incidents, threats to public order or public safety, civil emergencies, and child sexual abuse. These are complex threats which means that forces must work together to respond to them effectively. It is beyond the scope of this inspection to assess in detail whether forces are capable of responding to these national threats. Instead, HMIC has checked whether forces have the necessary arrangements in place to test their own preparedness for dealing with these threats, should they materialise.

¹⁶ Figures may not sum to 100 percent, due to rounding.

¹⁷ *The Strategic Policing Requirement*, Home Office, March 2015, available at: www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/417116/The_Strategic_Policing_Requirement.pdf

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

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

HMIC found that the overall response to tackling organised crime groups in West Mercia would benefit from a greater understanding of the threats and risks posed by serious and organised crime across the whole force area.

The force has completed a serious and organised crime strategic threat and risk assessment as part of its responsibilities under the strategic policing requirement.¹⁸ This assessment helps the force to understand the wider threats posed to the public.

The force understands the need to develop an improved shared understanding with partners of the localised threats posed by serious and organised crime and has started to complete serious and organised crime local profiles.¹⁹ Such profiles, which draw on intelligence from partners, enable forces to understand more fully the threats they face, and to develop bespoke joint problem-solving approaches with partners. However, the force has only completed an initial serious and organised crime local profile for one of its five local policing areas (South Worcestershire). This is being treated as a pilot to build more structured, collaborative arrangements to tackle serious and organised crime (a similar pilot is underway in the North Warwickshire local policing area). The force intends to enrich these profiles with partner information and then consider how to replicate this for all local policing areas across, to develop a comprehensive shared understanding of localised threats with its partners and better inform joint activity.

HMIC found that force processes for managing the threat from OCGs including identification, assessment and management are not being applied effectively. National guidance recommends that once an OCG has been identified, an assessment of the available intelligence should take place and the OCG placed in a band according to its criminality, capability and harmfulness. To further improve the intelligence picture and management of the threat posed by OCGs frequent review and re-scoring needs to occur, particularly when new intelligence is received or disruptive activity occurs.

While we found clear processes in place to ensure such reviews and re-scoring are being conducted by the force, we found that some new or emerging OCGs are being identified, but not formally mapped.²⁰ The force is applying professional judgment to

¹⁸ Police forces are required to produce an annual strategic threat and risk assessment (STRA). The STRA will be reviewed every six months, but as a living document it should be monitored, reviewed and updated on a regular basis to ensure it remains current.

¹⁹ A local profile is a report that outlines the threat from serious and organised crime within a specific local area.

²⁰ When a police force identifies a group of individuals whom they suspect may be involved in organised crime, an organised crime group or OCG, they go through a nationally standardised

determine which emerging groups should be tackled without a full assessment of the threat they pose. This inconsistent approach to mapping combined with the lack of local profiles for most local policing areas means the force cannot be confident in their level of understanding of the threat posed to the public by serious and organised crime.

In making this comment HMIC also recognise that OCG mapping lacks consistency across England and Wales. Despite the use of standard software and methods, forces carry out OCG mapping inconsistently and there is significant variation in the number of mapped OCGs per head of population across England and Wales. This inconsistency is partly due to the unavoidably subjective nature of some aspects of the mapping procedure, which relies on human judgment as well as computer algorithms. Sometimes, groups exhibiting similar characteristics are scored in different ways, and forces do not always use the full range of information available to generate OCG scores, which can compromise their accuracy and usefulness. For these reasons, HMIC has recommended that, on a national basis, ROCUs assume responsibility for OCG mapping on behalf of their constituent forces.²¹

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

The force is developing its response to serious and organised crime. The force holds a monthly OCG scrutiny meeting which is chaired by a detective superintendent (Head of Intelligence). This meeting monitors OCG activity in the force and is supported by analysis in the form of a tactical assessment document. For each mapped OCG the force appoints a lead responsible officer to develop local action plans and all appointed lead responsible officers attend the OCG scrutiny meeting. HMIC found that the national strategy that adopts a 4P approach of pursue, prevent, protect and prepare to tackle serious and organised crime is not being adhered to by the force in all cases.²² The force response relies on traditional police enforcement

'mapping' procedure. This involves entering details of the group's known and suspected activity, associates and capability on computer software, which assigns a numerical score to each OCG. It also places each OCG into one of several 'bands' which reflect the range and severity of crime in which a group is involved as well as its level of capability and sophistication. This helps the force to make informed decisions about how to prioritise its activity.

²¹ *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

²² The 4P Structure is the framework cited to tackle serious and organised crime, namely Pursue, Prevent, Protect and Prepare, see HM Government Serious Organised Crime Strategy (October 2013). Available from: www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/248645/Serious_and_Organised_Crime_Strategy.pdf

and disruption. The force intend to develop the OCG scrutiny meeting so that it will provide a more structured governance and accountability framework and a more consistent response across all four strands of the 4P strategy.

HMIC found that local staff are not always being used effectively to respond to serious and organised crime. In some parts of the force local officers are aware of OCGs operating in their area and are actively tasked with disruption and intelligence gathering. In other areas, we found that local officer awareness was limited and they had little involvement in tackling OCGs.

The force benefits from, and contributes to arrangements with other forces in the region to share operational resources to tackle serious and organised crime, for example through the West Midlands ROCU,²³ which provides support through the Government Agency Intelligence Network (GAIN),²⁴ Regional Intelligence Unit (RIU) and the Regional Asset Recovery Team (RART).

The force has its own serious and organised crime unit providing appropriate operational capability. An investigation conducted by this unit was reviewed and HMIC found it was well managed and supervised with a range of overt and covert tactics used that had resulted in the conviction of OCG members. The investigation was supported by well documented policies and a detailed management plan resulting in positive outcomes. A comprehensive closing report had been completed allowing the force to assess the impact of the investigation.

Overall, the use of an independent disruption panel, adherence to national disruption assessment guidance and more consistent use of mapping would enable the force to understand better the extent to which its activity is having a sustained positive effect on tackling serious and organised crime.

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

HMIC found only limited evidence of any recent collaborative activity with partners specifically aimed at preventing serious and organised crime or deterring those involved. The pilot area in South Worcestershire recently formed a joint police panel with a broad range of partners to implement a local 4P action plan to tackle serious and organised crime. We were encouraged to see the police taking a lead role in

²³ ROCUs provide police forces with access to a standardised range of 'capabilities' to help them tackle serious and organised crime. These capabilities encompass specialist areas such as covert policing, surveillance and cyber-crime investigation. The regional provision of these capabilities can reduce or remove the need for forces to maintain specialist capabilities of their own, many of which are expensive to maintain and only required on relatively rare occasions.

²⁴ The Government Agency Intelligence Network (GAIN) is a large network of partners, including all police forces in England and Wales, which shares information about organised criminals.

driving the formation of these strategic partnerships. There is a clear determination to ensure tangible joint activity is undertaken in the pilot areas. The longer-term plan is for good practice arising from this approach to be adopted across the force. The positive partnership work evident in the troubled families programme, and integrated offender management across the force are seen as further opportunities to improve the force's multi-agency approach to working with others to prevent serious and organised crime.

Only a limited number of operations can be undertaken by the force serious and organised crime unit which means that there has to be meaningful activity throughout the force to disrupt the activities of other groups. However, further work is required before a cohesive collaborative 4P approach for the force is fully embedded and the public can be confident that organised crime is being tackled effectively across the whole force.

The force has used media releases to inform communities of arrests and court convictions in relation to serious and organised crime, as well as the risks from serious and organised crime such as cyber-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.

West Mercia has effective arrangements in place to ensure that the force can fulfil its responsibilities in respect of the *Strategic Policing Requirement (SPR)*.²⁵ The force has recently compiled a strategic assessment outlining the medium term threats, risks and harm facing the force and the capacity and capability of the force to respond. While the assessment was being developed the force produced a control strategy outlining the force priorities identified as representing the highest risk to communities. The priorities were identified using the Management of Risk in Law Enforcement (MoRiLE) methodology, and include the following elements of the strategic policing requirement (SPR); cyber-crime, child sexual exploitation and

²⁵ *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.

serious and organised crime. A distinct strategic assessment has been compiled in respect of threats to public order.

The assistant chief constable (ACC) with responsibility for protective services is the portfolio owner for all of the elements within the SPR. Governance arrangements for each of these elements within the SPR are different – for example civil contingencies is led through the local resilience forum (LRF) chaired by the chief constable, and cyber-crime reports to the deputy chief constable. The force has developed an action plan in respect of the serious and organised crime aspect of the SPR with clear ownership assigned to actions to ensure progress.

The responses to certain elements of the SPR are more developed than others, such as the long-standing arrangements in place in respect of counter-terrorism, and the regional counter-terrorism unit (CTU). The preparedness of the force in other areas is more recent, for example the recently agreed cyber-crime strategy, and investment in this area to respond to this type of crime. In September 2014 West Mercia undertook a comprehensive analysis of child sexual exploitation with Warwickshire Police to better understand the scale and nature of this across both force areas, and more recently the PCC has funded a dedicated child sexual exploitation team.

The force has an effective assurance process in place to test its preparedness to deal with national threats. It conducts and participates in regular exercises to check capability and capacity, such as a recent exercise with the regional CTU, as well as testing emergency plans such as the response to a failure of the Ironbridge Gorge in Telford. The force ensures that sufficient staff are trained in relation to dealing with the threat of public order locally and more widely, and has also embarked on a programme of offering such training to special constables to provide added resilience. Arrangements are regularly tested and the force receives requests to provide public order resources to assist other forces, as was recently the case for a protest in Staffordshire.

Summary of findings



Requires improvement

West Mercia Police requires improvement in tackling serious and organised crime. This is the first year HMIC has graded forces on their effectiveness at tackling serious and organised crime, including a force's arrangements for fulfilling its national policing responsibilities, so no year-on-year comparison is possible.

The force needs to develop its understanding of the threats from such crime. It has only completed serious and organised crime profiles for one of its five local policing areas.

Some new and emerging OCGs are not mapped, and professional judgment is used to tackle them without a full assessment of the threat they pose. The level of involvement of local policing teams in tackling OCGs is not effective in all areas.

HMIC found limited evidence of collaborative activity with partners, although the force has made use of the media to provide information to communities about the risk of such crime.

The force has good links to other partners in law enforcement regionally and is making use of intelligence gathering opportunities through government and partner arrangements.

The force has arrangements in place to fulfil its responsibilities under the strategic policing requirement. The response to some aspects, such as counter-terrorism is well established, while progress in others is more recent, such as the dedicated child sexual exploitation team funded by the PCC.

Areas for improvement

- The force should complete its serious and organised crime local profile including relevant data from partner agencies, and ensure that it has a local partnership structure in place with responsibility for tackling serious and organised crime.
- The force should ensure that it maps all organised crime groups and re-assesses them at regular intervals in line with national standards.
- The force should improve the awareness of organised crime groups among neighbourhood teams to ensure that they can reliably identify these groups, proactively collect intelligence and disrupt their activity.
- The force should 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 take steps to identify those at risk of being drawn into serious and organised crime, and ensure that preventative initiatives are put in place with partner organisations to deter them from offending.

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.