



Inspecting policing
in the public interest

**Policing in austerity:
One year on**

**Avon and Somerset Constabulary
July 2012**

ISBN: 978-1-84987-857-9

Contents

About this review	3
Summary	4
Money – meeting the savings	6
What is the financial challenge in Avon and Somerset Constabulary?	6
People – reconfiguring the workforce	7
What is the impact on the workforce?	7
What is the effect on the front line?	8
Number and proportion of officers, PCSOs and staff in frontline roles	8
Number and proportion of police officers in frontline roles	9
Public – reviewing the services you receive	10
What proportion of police officers and police community support officers are visible and available to the public?	10
How is the way you can access policing services changing?	10
Has there been any change in crime levels over the last year?	11
Does the force’s own survey work show any change in public satisfaction with the service they provide?	12

About this review

In October 2010, the Government announced that the central funding provided to the police service would reduce by 20% in the four years between March 2011 and March 2015.

Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC) carried out an inspection of all 43 police forces in England and Wales in Spring 2011, to see how they were planning to meet this financial challenge. When the results were published in July 2011 (search for 'Valuing the Police' on www.hmic.gov.uk), we committed to returning one year later to report on progress, and to assess whether there had been any impact on the service provided to the public.

A thematic report, *Policing in Austerity: One year on*, brings together the findings from all 43 forces and looks at the picture in England and Wales. We found that, across England and Wales:

1. Forces have risen to the financial challenge, balanced the books and largely maintained the service they provided to the public in year one;
2. Their plans show that over the whole spending review period (i.e. until March 2015), they are working to protect, although not preserve, frontline services;
3. As there are significant variations between force plans and performance, HMIC has some concerns about whether all forces can sustain this position;
4. Forces should ensure the changes they are making now transform efficiency and will provide a strong enough foundation to face future spending reviews.

This report summarises the findings for Avon and Somerset Constabulary, and is based on data provided by the force in February 2012.¹

HMIC will continue to monitor the progress made by the constabulary, and to publish the results on our website (www.hmic.gov.uk).

¹ Figures are rounded (financial figures to the nearest million and workforce figures to the nearest 10) and financial figures are in cash prices.

Summary

The challenge for police forces and police authorities isn't just to balance the books, but to transform the way they deliver policing and make it more efficient, so that the public can continue to receive improving services.

Avon and Somerset Constabulary is a large force that covers an area of 1,855 square miles with an estimated population of 1.6m. It has a budget comparable with other large forces.

The constabulary has a track record of reducing costs, and has undertaken a number of reviews as part of its careful approach and ongoing change programme to deliver the savings required following the spending review of 2010.

The constabulary plans aim to protect the front line as far as possible and adopt a staged approach to achieving savings, starting with non-mission critical areas and functions. Its intention is to continue to deliver the same or better levels of service on the front line by investing in modern technology and changing the way it works.

The constabulary is an enthusiastic supporter of collaboration and has enhanced its capacity and capability through collaborating with other forces in the South West Region, providing better value for money to the public and communities. In 2008 the constabulary joined with the county council, Taunton Deane Borough Council and IBM to achieve 'back office savings' through the creation of a joint venture company, Southwest One. As Avon and Somerset Constabulary moves forward in the next four years, it will continue to work with South West Regional forces to build and share a Joint Firearms Training Centre.

The constabulary is maximising the use of its estates and front counter services to make sure that staff are in the areas that meet customers' needs and are visible to the wider communities. In some areas the constabulary has opened new front counters.

As a result of the ongoing change programme, the constabulary is in a good position to achieve its savings target by March 2015 – and may exceed it.

The constabulary has an ambition to continue to deliver improved policing in Avon and Somerset, ensuring the highest levels of confidence in policing services and making communities feel safe.

Because of the changes it is making Avon and Somerset Constabulary will be able not only to balance the books but to increase the proportion of its workforce in frontline, crime-fighting roles. By 2015 73% of its workforce will be on the front line, which is broadly in line with the proportion in England and Wales as a whole. The proportion of police officers on the front line will increase (from 86% to 93%) over the same period, resulting in a higher proportion than in most other forces. The constabulary continues to drive down crime, and 88% of victims were satisfied with the service from Avon and Somerset Constabulary, which is higher than other forces.

The following sections of this report explore: money (how much Avon and Somerset Constabulary needs to save and its progress in achieving this); people (its planned changes to the number and type of its workforce and the effect of this on the front line); and the impact on services to the public. We have looked at these areas because they are important in helping you to understand how your force is making savings, and how it continues to improve the services you receive.

Money – meeting the savings

What is the financial challenge in Avon and Somerset Constabulary?

£42 million – the amount Avon and Somerset Constabulary will need to save between 2011 and 2015 (based on the constabulary's calculations). There are 33 forces in England and Wales with larger savings to make (as a proportion of their budget).

By Spring 2012, Avon and Somerset had developed plans which outlined how it will achieve £36m (86%) of its savings requirement. The force is using its reserves to balance its budget.



Avon and Somerset Constabulary's four-year plan is based on the constabulary saving £12m by March 2012 (i.e. in the first year of the budget reductions). The constabulary reported that it had already saved £11.6m by December 2011.

As well as funding from the government, forces also receive money from local council tax. The police authority has decided to not increase the amount of money you pay for policing from your council tax in 2012/13. This is one of 20 forces in England and Wales where it will not change.

Within the constabulary's plans are a number of assumptions on future costs, including pay increases, rate of inflation and the level of funding it will receive from council tax. If these change this may impact on the amount of savings the constabulary has to find.

Forces will continue to develop the detail of their plans between now and 2015. The amount of savings they need to find may therefore go up or down as they revise their assumptions and update their plans.

People – reconfiguring the workforce

What is the impact on the workforce?

610 – the number of posts the force plans to cut by 2015. 400 of these will be police officer posts. This is a 12% reduction in police officer posts, compared with a 10% reduction across England and Wales.

Because 81% of police budgets (on average) are spent on staff costs, it is not surprising that forces across England and Wales are planning to achieve most of their savings by reducing the number of police officers, police community support officers (PCSOs) and police staff they employ.

According to data provided by the constabulary in February 2012, Avon and Somerset Constabulary is planning to make the following changes to its workforce between March 2010 and March 2015. By March 2012 the constabulary planned to have achieved 66% of the required reduction of its workforce. (We use March 2010 as our starting point here because many forces started to reduce their workforce in the year before the funding cut was implemented, anticipating that they would have to make savings later on.)

	31 March 2010 (actual)*	Planned Change 31 March 2010 – 31 March 2015*	% change in Avon and Somerset	% change across England and Wales
Officers	3,300	-400	-12%	-10%
PCSOs	430 ^{^^}	-40	-9%	-10%
Police staff	1,870 ^{^^}	-160	-9%	-19%

Notes:

* 2010 is a snapshot of the number of people in post and is taken from data supplied annually by the force to the Home Office, whereas the 2015 data is projected number of posts. ^{^^}Avon and Somerset Constabulary have subsequently indicated that in March 2010, 40 members of police staff were wrongly categorised as PCSOs. March 2010 figures should show 390 PCSOs and 1910 police staff. On this basis there is no change in PCSO numbers between March 2010 and March 2015, and the corresponding change in police staff numbers is -200. All workforce figures are rounded to the nearest 10; columns may therefore not add up. In the workforce baseline data (March 2010), included within the non-frontline is an 'Other' function. This is made up of staff absent from duty due to maternity / paternity leave, career break, full time education or suspension and those on long-term leave (sickness, compassionate, special and unpaid leave). In March 2010 the 'Other' function made up 1 percent of the total workforce across England and

Wales. The projected data for March 2015 was provided by forces, and forces have budgeted for this in different ways. As a result there will be some variability in this data when used for the purposes of comparisons. Police staff actual figures for 2010 include Designated Officers. Designated Officers are not included in 2015 estimated figures.

What is the effect on the front line?

HMIC defines the people who work on the police front line as: “those who are in everyday contact with the public and who directly intervene to keep people safe and enforce the law”.

73% – the proportion of the total workforce (i.e. officers, PCSOs and staff) Avon and Somerset Constabulary estimates will be working on the front line by 2015.

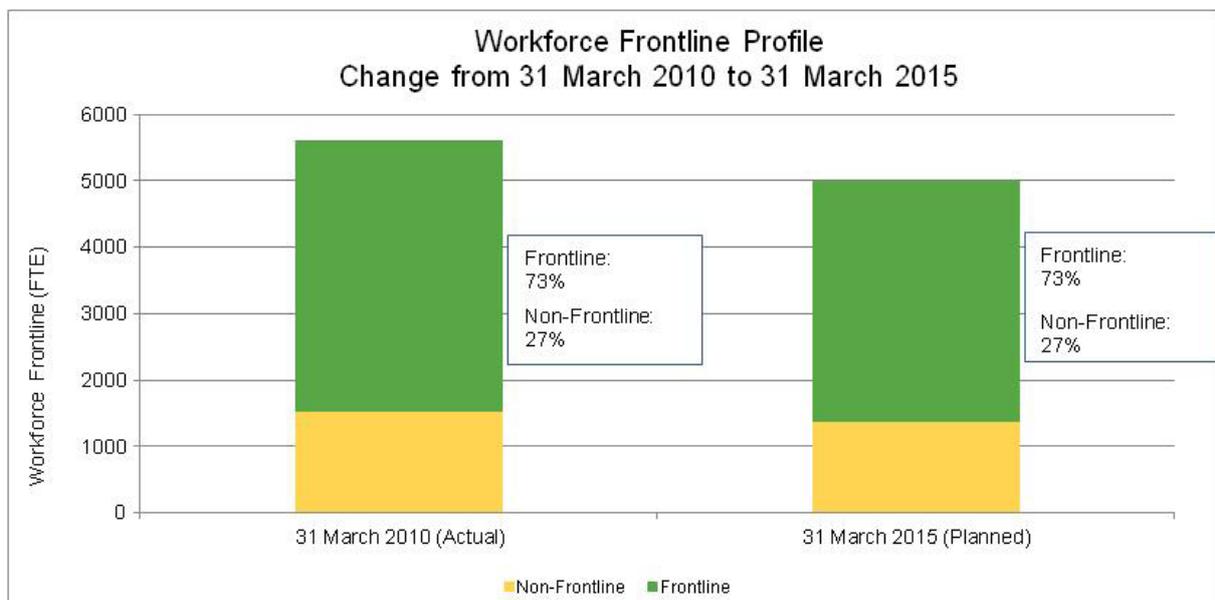
93% – the proportion of police officers specifically the constabulary estimates will be working on the front line by 2015, up by seven percentage points from 2010.

Number and proportion of officers, PCSOs and staff in frontline roles

The **number** of officers, PCSOs and staff (i.e. the force’s total workforce) working on the front line will drop from 4,090 in March 2010 to an estimated 3,630 by March 2015.

Based on these figures, the **proportion** of Avon and Somerset Constabulary’s total workforce allocated to frontline roles will remain the same at 73%. This compares with an overall increase across England and Wales from 67% to 74%.

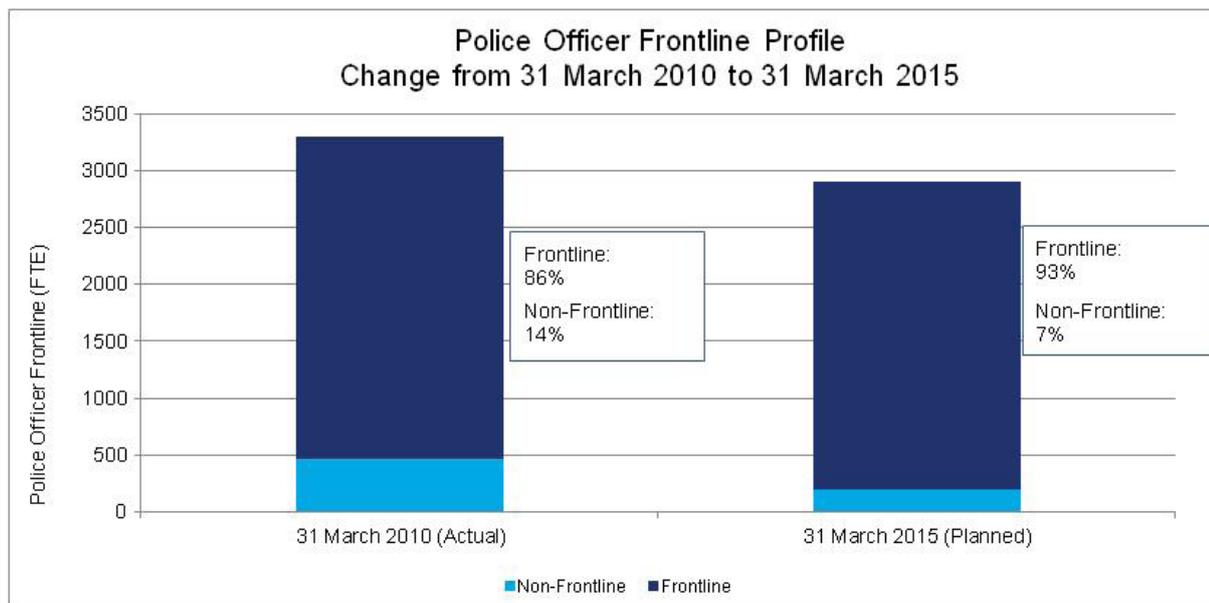
The following chart shows the change in the workforce frontline profile for Avon and Somerset.



Number and proportion of police officers in frontline roles

Looking specifically at police officers: the **number** of officers working on the front line will drop from 2,830 in March 2010 to an estimated 2,690 by March 2015. The number working in non-frontline roles will also drop (from 470 to 200).

Based on these figures, the **proportion** of Avon and Somerset police officers allocated to frontline roles will increase by seven percentage points to 93%, as the following chart shows. This is higher than the figure for England and Wales, which is 89%.



Public – reviewing the services you receive

What proportion of police officers and police community support officers are visible and available to the public?

68% – the proportion of police officers and PCSOs which Avon and Somerset allocates to visible roles (such as officers who respond to 999 calls, deal with serious road traffic accidents or patrol in neighbourhoods). This is greater than the England and Wales figure.

HMIC defines ‘visible’ as police employees who wear uniform and mainly work in public. ‘Available’ means police officers and PCSOs who are actually ready for duty (i.e. as opposed to being on a training course, attending court, off shift, on leave or sick, etc).

It is important to note that the work done by those in visible roles represents only a part of the policing picture. Chief constables need to allocate resources to many other functions in order to protect the public, such as counter terrorism, serious and organised crime and child protection (to name just three).

Research has shown that people who see the police at work in uniform at least once a week are more likely to have confidence in their local force (see our 2011 report *Demanding Times*, available from www.hmic.gov.uk).

HMIC recently looked at whether Avon and Somerset has police officers available when they are most likely to be needed, a repeat of a survey which we last carried out in 2010. This showed that there was no change in the proportion of police officers and PCSOs available in visible roles at key times.

How is the way you can access policing services changing?

Forces are exploring different ways in which the public can access policing services. They are making more use of the internet and social media to communicate with people and reviewing the number of face-to-face access points they need.

By 2015 Avon and Somerset plans to reduce the number of front counters by nine (compared to 2010), although the number of other locations where you will be able to physically access policing services (e.g. libraries or local authority buildings) will remain the same (compared to 2011). The constabulary has also increased the hours of operation of its nine mobile police stations by 40 hours per week and is currently investing in additional mobile police stations.

Has there been any change in crime levels over the last year?

2% – the reduction in recorded crime levels overall in Avon and Somerset between years ending December 2010 and December 2011 (compared with a 3% fall across England and Wales).

The first job of the police is to reduce crime and keep the peace; and in 2010 the Home Secretary Theresa May stated that she expects forces and authorities to make financial cuts while still reducing crime, and without impacting on the front line.

Based on the number of crimes per 1,000 people recorded in the 12 months to December 2011, the force came 33rd out of 42² forces (where first equals lowest crime rate).

The table below shows how rates of crime changed between years ending December 2010 and December 2011. (ASB is not included because data is not available for the same time period; however, HMIC has examined how this problem is tackled in Avon and Somerset in a separate report, which is available on our website.)

Type of crime	Difference between years ending Dec 2010 and Dec 2011 in Avon and Somerset	Difference between years ending Dec 2010 and Dec 2011 across England and Wales
All crime	-2%	-3%
Victim-based crime*	-4%	-2%
Robbery	-14%	3%
Burglary	-11%	-1%
Criminal damage & Arson	-6%	-9%

*This category includes all crime where there is a direct victim – either an individual, a group, or an organisation.

We have chosen these types of crime to give an indication of the nature of offending in Avon and Somerset. For information on the frequency of other kinds of crimes in your area, go to www.hmic.gov.uk/crimeandpolicingcomparator where you will find more detailed information. You will also find links to the force's own website, where it publishes the latest crime figures.

2 City of London Police is not included.

Does the force's own survey work show any change in public satisfaction with the service they provide?

As forces reconfigure their resources to meet the budget challenge it is important that they understand the impact on service delivery. One way of measuring whether this is changing is by tracking how satisfied the public are with the overall service they receive when they seek police assistance.

The overall victim satisfaction for Avon and Somerset is 88%, which is greater than the rate for England and Wales as a whole³.

³ This is a statistically significant difference.