



Inspecting policing
in the **public interest**

MAJOR CHALLENGE

THE THEMATIC INSPECTION OF MAJOR CRIME

Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Constabulary

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Executive Summary

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. Major crime comprises the most serious incidents of violence and death investigated by police. Such incidents have a devastating impact on victims, families and communities. But how common are such incidents and do the public get the quality of service they deserve?
2. Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC) inspected forces between July and September 2008 and found that, while there is much progress to report – notably on homicide – some forces remain unable to deliver a consistent and effective service to victims and families affected by major crime. Such deficiencies need to be addressed urgently if the confidence of the public is to be retained.
3. Homicide in England and Wales fell by 26% over the previous year, following consistent reductions over the last five years.¹ The latest available information shows that the homicide rate in England and Wales has fallen slightly to 1.41 offences per 100,000 population.² To put this in context, this remains higher than Spain (0.77), Germany (0.88) and Italy (1.06) but lower than Ireland (1.59) and the USA (5.62).
4. While the trend for homicide is broadly positive, there remain areas of challenge across major crime policing:
 - The most recent recorded crime data shows that most serious violence³ rose by 44% in the 12 months to 1 April 2009;¹ however, initial analysis indicates that much of this rise may be due to further guidance issued to forces on the recording of assault allegations.
 - The impact of knife crime on communities, and on young people in particular, has received considerable attention through a number of tragic incidents. While overall the use of knives as a weapon in violence has remained steady at 6–7% for over a decade, it sadly remains the case that young people are four times more likely to be victims of violence than the national average.⁴
 - Reported incidents of kidnapping rose by 1% last year and the nature of these incidents is becoming more serious and complex, often involving organised crime groups.⁵
 - The number of reported rape offences rose last year by almost 4% despite broad recognition that the under-reporting of offences to police is still a concern. Rape will be subject to a specific HMIC inspection next spring.
5. HMIC inspection results

HMIC found that the majority of forces met the Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) standard for delivering service to victims, families and communities affected by major crime. The best four performing forces were larger, metropolitan ones (Greater Manchester, Merseyside, Metropolitan and West Midlands). These forces demonstrated the capacity, capability and leadership to exceed the expected standard. This does not mean that every risk can be perfectly covered but they have a strong infrastructure and some very good practices. The four forces that did not attain the standard (City of London, Cumbria,

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Lincolnshire and North Yorkshire) were smaller with less relative threat but were challenged in these aspects.

- The overall allocation of HMIC grading from our inspection is shown in Table 1 below.

Table 1: The major crime inspection grades (based on the ACPO standard)

Exceeds the standard	Meets the standard	Fails to meet the standard
4	35	4

- Strengths

The service has made significant progress in homicide investigation and many of the inspection findings were encouraging. Most forces (39 of 43) were able to demonstrate that they had procedures in place to respond quickly to major crime incidents, with the support of partners where needed. They demonstrated that they were compliant with national guidelines on resourcing and delivering major crime investigations, including oversight by senior and chief officers. This progress

should be recognised but also tempered by findings that there is less consistency and scrutiny of investigations in some areas, notably in the area of domestic and serious sexual violence. This area should be considered as a priority for forces and ACPO to address.

- Public expectation

The public are entitled to expect that all police forces, as a minimum, should be capable of responding to incidents of major crime. The challenge for forces is to provide an enhanced service, moving beyond simply a 'response' role towards proactively understanding the threat from serious violence and taking the early, decisive action needed to prevent public harm. This must be the goal if the public are to be protected.

- Areas for improvement

Our findings suggest that some forces are unable to adopt such a proactive approach, as lack of investment in intelligence means they do not fully understand the threat from major crime within their communities. Table 2 overleaf shows some critical areas where forces were found not to be meeting ACPO standards in this regard.

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10. By understanding emerging threats, police resources can be directed towards addressing the underlying drivers of violence within communities. Operation Alliance is an example where police and partners in London have targeted the problems of gang-related criminality, contributing to 2,029⁶ fewer victims of youth violence in the capital last year. There is scope for other forces to adopt such end-to-end strategies to reduce public harm. HMIC welcomes the direction provided through partnership initiatives such as the Tackling Knives Action Programme (TKAP) and Tackling Gangs Action Programme (TGAP). HMIC is aware of ongoing development work led by the ACPO Homicide Working Group to share this learning with forces, and further guidance to forces on major crime prevention programmes would be beneficial.
11. Forces manage major crime in different ways, influenced by local threat, priorities and resources. Some forces manage this issue centrally, through dedicated staff; other forces rely on local staff to lead their response, or to bolster central teams at times of high demand. While performance outcomes (for example, sanctioned detections) are measured at both local and national level, there is currently little information available on which model may offer the best deal for the public in managing cost and risk. Research conducted by HMIC indicates that the highest spending force spends almost three times as much on the dedicated staffing of a homicide as the lowest spending force.⁷ This research is only indicative of variation in cost and approach; however, the availability of similar accurate and comparable

Table 2: Inspection findings

Summary of inspection area	Forces not achieving standard
The force has sufficient dedicated analytical resources to meet the identified demands from major crime.	6
The force profiles vulnerable locations and communities. Future risks and threats are identified in a timely way.	15
The force monitors the impact of preventative and enforcement activity. Community policing assets are used to help understand levels of harm in the community.	13

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information across forces would benefit policing leaders, and the public, in assessing whether their local services could be made more effective or efficient. The HMIC report *Get Smart: Planning to Protect*, published in February 2009, offered a planning model to help forces understand threat and make best use of their resources to reduce risk to communities. This is an area that requires further development and HMIC welcomes the ongoing work by the ACPO Homicide Working Group on common performance information in these areas, which is due to be shared with forces in autumn 2009.

12. In the current economic climate, forces must consider whether there are alternative ways to offer such high-cost and specialist assets

without impacting on visible front-line policing resources. Collaboration between forces, such as the joint Major Crime Unit for Hertfordshire and Bedfordshire Police, may offer this opportunity. The benefits of collaboration between forces have been explored by HMIC in *Getting Together*, which was published in June 2009. HMIC believes that the establishment of a national collaboration strategy, the Informed Choice Model, could – if adopted – provide police leaders with timely, credible information on how joint working may offset risks and the costs of providing expensive specialist operational and support services to improve services for the public.

13. This report makes three recommendations and these can be found in Section 4.

1. The Threat Posed by Major Crime

THREAT AND

1.1 Major crime can be defined as any crime requiring the appointment of a Senior Investigating Officer and the deployment of specialist resources. This will include not only homicide, attempted homicide and manslaughter but also may potentially encompass sexual assaults and other serious offences. In assessing the threat presented by major crime, HMIC has used performance data for these offences and has drawn upon information available from the Serious Organised Crime Agency (SOCA), individual forces, National Policing Improvement Agency (NPIA) and ACPO.

Reported incidents of kidnapping rose by 1% last year and the nature of these incidents is becoming more serious and complex, often involving organised crime groups.⁵

Rape

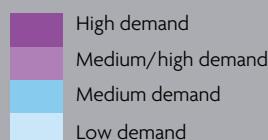
1.3 Reported crime for 2008/09 shows a rise of 4% in recorded offences of rape (13,111 compared with 12,654 in 2007). The under-reporting of sexual violence and high attrition rate for rape prosecutions remains a

Homicide and most serious violence

1.2 Figure 2 (see page 8) provides an overview of recorded major crime levels. The figure shows that homicide has fallen steadily over the last five years from 868 offences in 2004/05 to 645 in 2008/09, a total reduction of 26%. The downward trend for most serious violence halted in 2008/09 with recorded offences rising 44% from 16,939 in 2007/08 to 24,448 in 2008/09. Initial analysis indicates that much of this rise may be due to further guidance issued to forces on the recording of assault allegations. The impact of knife crime on communities, and young people in particular, has received considerable attention through a number of tragic incidents. While overall the use of knives as a weapon in violence has remained steady at 6–7% for over a decade, it remains the case that young people are four times more likely to be victims of violence than the national average.¹

Table 3: Regional demand based on the percentage contribution to total demand⁸

Region	Homicide 2003–08	Rape 2003–08	Kidnapping 2003–08
South West	Low demand	Low demand	Low demand
South East	Medium demand	Medium/high demand	Medium demand
London	High demand	High demand	High demand
Eastern	Low demand	Medium demand	Low demand
East Midlands	Low demand	Low demand	Low demand
West Midlands	Medium demand	Medium demand	Medium demand
Wales	Low demand	Low demand	Low demand
North West	Medium/high demand	Medium/high demand	Medium/high demand
Yorkshire and Humber	Medium demand	Medium demand	Medium demand
North East	Low demand	Low demand	Low demand

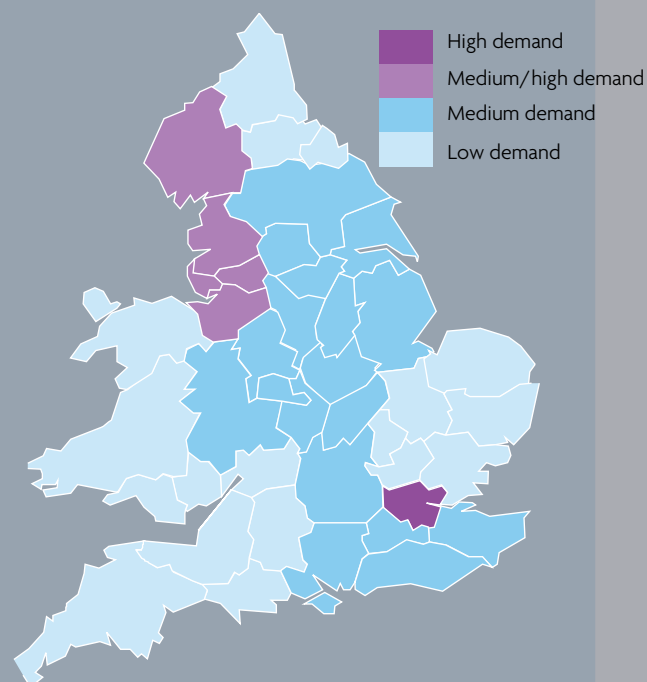


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concern and forces must continue with efforts to enhance performance in this area. The ACPO Rape Working Group is shortly due to publish guidance to forces on rape initial response and investigation, which should prove of assistance in addressing this area of concern. The standard of rape investigations will be assessed by HMIC through a thematic inspection in spring 2010.

- 1.4 The impact of major crime, particularly homicide, on force resources is significant. The low number of homicides in many force areas challenges the need for dedicated resources to be allocated to this crime type; however, quality and reputational considerations make the argument for dedicated resources compelling. Collaborative arrangements are increasingly being used to bridge this resourcing gap, with forces realising the synergies offered by sharing specialist capacity and capability. The inspection found a broad range of collaborations in place with significant variation in their structure and arrangement. Some forces rely on informal understandings with neighbours for mutual support in times of high demand. Other forces have adopted formalised agreements or shared units with dedicated staff and resources. Where forces seek to address gaps in capacity through collaboration, they must ensure that such arrangements are sufficiently robust and resilient to mitigate the threat.

Figure 1: Indicative map of regional demand for resources in relation to major crime



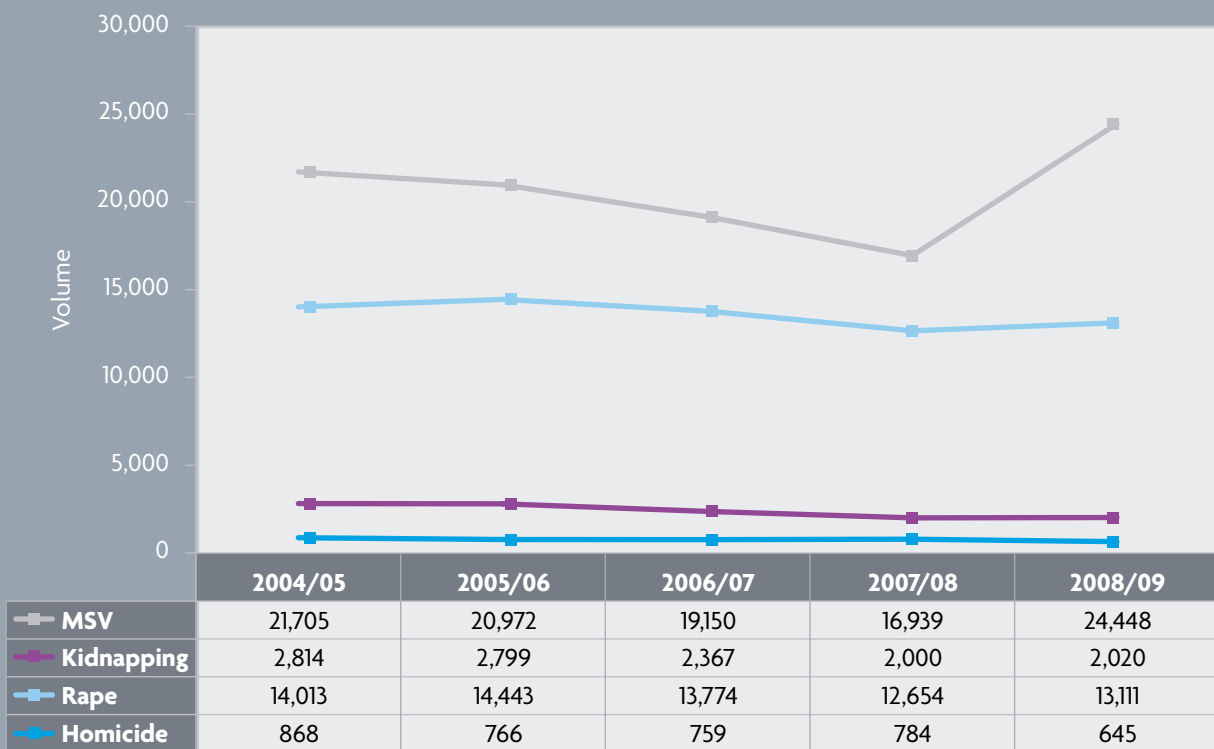
1. The Threat Posed by Major Crime

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Figure 2: Recorded crime – most serious violence rates

Violent Crime Comparison: 2004/05 to 2008/09

Data sourced from *Crime in England and Wales 2007/08*; Home Office, and Crux Matrix for 2008/09 figures



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Drivers of major crime

- 1.5 The most effective forces recognise key drivers of major crime in their Force Strategic Assessments, including vulnerable people, Organised Crime Group (OCG) activity, violent and dangerous offenders and high-risk locations. These risks are mitigated through tactical interventions, often using problem-solving approaches. A number of forces, particularly the larger, metropolitan forces facing a higher level of threat, have developed end-to-end processes to counter specific challenges, including serious youth violence and gun crime. Partnership approaches such as the Metropolitan Police Operation Alliance (see case study on page 10) are to be welcomed and reflect current government-led activity on nationally co-ordinated programmes, such as the TKAP and TGAP.
- 1.6 All forces, however, have scope to deepen their understanding of major crime and to enhance the role of violence reduction strategies in tackling this threat. Research commissioned by the ACPO Homicide Working Group into homicides committed within the Metropolitan Police area found that 342 opportunities⁹ had arisen for these incidents to be prevented by interventions from family, friends, police and other public agencies. If major crime strategies are to be effective, they must recognise and fully incorporate the contribution that local partnerships, as well as specialist resources, can make in addressing the drivers of homicide and serious violence. By

developing understanding at all levels, including Neighbourhood Policing, forces will both improve their intelligence on major crime and increase opportunities for effective preventative intervention. To deliver such an approach requires that forces ensure major crime is fully embedded within performance, intelligence and tasking regimes. HMIC is aware of ongoing development work led by the ACPO Homicide Working Group to share this learning with forces, and further guidance to forces on major crime prevention would be beneficial.

Performance and risk

- 1.7 The inclusion of the domain 'Serious Crime and Protection' in the Assessment of Policing and Community Safety (APACS) performance management framework since April 2008 recognises the impact of major crime on victims, families and communities. Despite the high level of scrutiny the police encounter on major crime, there remain few ways in which to compare the effectiveness and efficiency of force arrangements, aside from statutory performance indicators. Forces manage major crime in different ways, influenced by local threat, priorities and resources. Some forces manage this issue centrally, using dedicated staff on investigation and prevention activity; other forces are more reliant on local resources to lead this response or bolster central teams at times of high demand. A sample of major crime budgets from six forces conducted by HMIC

1. The Threat Posed by Major Crime

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Case study: Operation Alliance, Metropolitan Police

To counter a rise in homicides involving young people and the harm associated with street gangs in South London, Operation Alliance was developed to:

- deliver sustainable reductions in gang-related violence;
- remove criminal gangs or significantly reduce their impact on serious violence; and
- work with voluntary and statutory partners to prevent further youth involvement in gang-related violence.

The project focused co-ordinating enforcement, prevention and educational activity across five boroughs towards high-risk individuals, gangs and venues. A dedicated intelligence structure was established which linked to the Metropolitan Police Service and partner assets through the force tasking and co-ordination system.

A comprehensive assessment of threat and existing resources was undertaken which enabled the Metropolitan Police Service to identify gaps in capacity and capability. These gaps were addressed through more effective deployment of resources, the innovative tasking of additional resources in the affected Basic Command Units (BCUs), and the engagement of partners and supporting agencies. Partnership activity is central, with preventative and educational inputs being critical to the sustainability of the work. The engagement of educational establishments and information-sharing agreements has been particularly important.

This initiative has been critical in achieving the ongoing reductions in gun-enabled crime and shootings, notably those linked to licensed premises, the disruption of gangs through imprisonment and increases in statutory control (bail and licence conditions).

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found that the highest investing force has a spending level on dedicated staff of almost three times as much as the lowest, allowing for differences in threat levels.⁷ The limited sample size means that these figures are purely indicative; however, currently there is no way for policing leaders, and the public, to obtain accurate information on cost and risk across forces if they wish to assess whether their local approach offers value for money. HMIC's report *Get Smart: Planning to Protect*,

published in February 2009, offered a planning model to help forces understand threat and make best use of their resources to reduce risk to communities. This is an area that requires further development and HMIC welcomes the ongoing work by the ACPO Homicide Working Group on common performance information in these areas, which is due to be shared with forces in autumn 2009.

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2. National Capability

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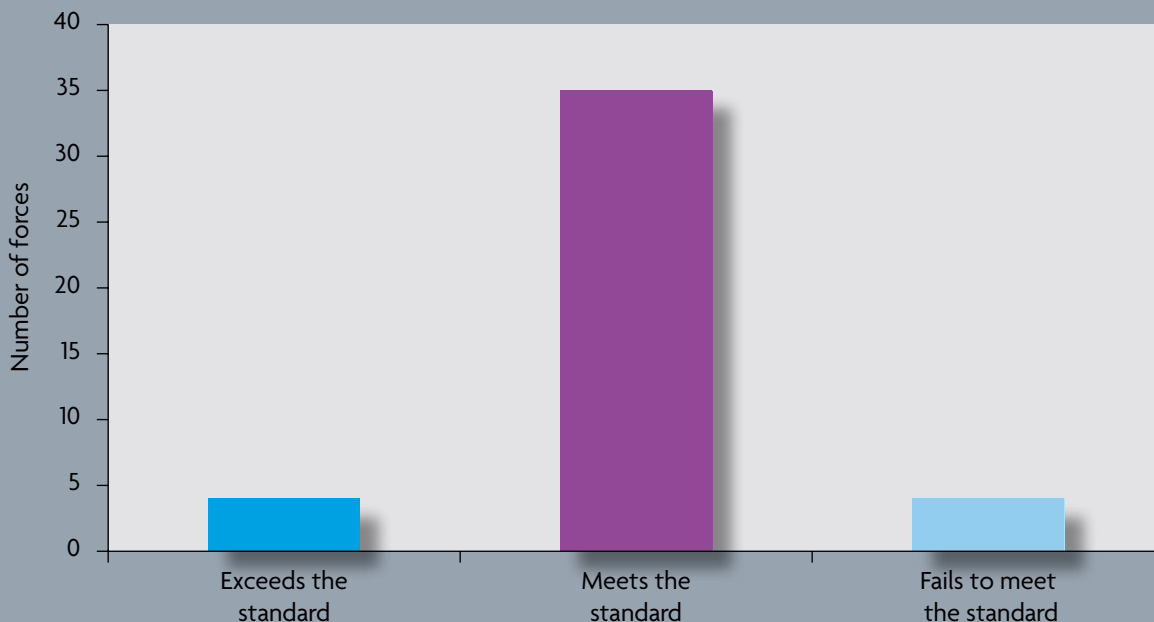
2.1 The analysis in the previous section scoped the current threat from major crime, and this section will consider the effectiveness of service response to addressing this threat.

2.2 Figure 3 below shows the results from the 43 forces inspected. The inspection identified areas of considerable progress for the service in tackling the threat of major crime; however, there remain

inconsistencies between forces in key areas and scope for further improvement. If forces are to continue to improve performance, the service needs to ensure:

- a clear governance structure providing agreed standards;
- embedding of major crime into force intelligence and tasking regimes;

Figure 3: Summary of grades, HMIC major crime inspection, 2008



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- greater focus on the cost of major crime capacity and capability benefits offered by collaboration; and
- a performance regime that focuses on the quality of service delivery to victims, families and the community. This would include evaluation and review of investigations and the effective use of resources.

Governance and standards

- 2.3 The service has made significant progress in homicide investigation, meeting ACPO standards for Major Investigation Management and Major Incident Room Standard Administrative Procedures (MIRSAP). The clear lead provided by the ACPO Homicide Working Group has been important in raising awareness of these standards through its contribution to doctrine and disseminating of best practice. There is scope for the lessons learnt within homicide to be transferred into other areas of major crime where compliance with standards is more variable.
- 2.4 The development of skilled investigators remains fundamental to ensuring an effective response on major crime. The Professionalising Investigation Programme (PIP) is a critical piece of work for the service in this regard. The aim of PIP is to develop the investigative skills, knowledge and practice of all police officers and staff whose roles entail conducting or managing investigations.

The programme has defined a series of levels of investigation, ranging from volume and priority (level 1) through to Senior Investigating Officers for major investigations (level 3), and aligned learning and development programmes to professional practice and national occupational standards. The most recent NPIA review of PIP implementation found that, while all forces had systems in place to develop effective level 3 accredited staff, only eight forces could satisfy the standard of professional development required by PIP.¹⁰ Likewise, there was scope in most forces to enhance knowledge, systems and support functions.

- 2.5 The inspection found that in-force ACPO governance is generally visible and well established. Despite many forces having limited major crime experience within their command teams, there is an expectation that an ACPO lead will perform the role of Officer in Overall Command (OIOC), setting strategy and directing activity for the most high-risk and complex investigations. The investigative and strategic functions are critical components of an effective policing response and require different skill and experience sets. The ongoing development by the NPIA of a new PIP4 accreditation will see the direct investigative aspect of this role pass to a senior investigator, while ACPO would retain overall responsibility as Gold commander setting strategy and co-ordinating resources and partnership support

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for the investigation. HMIC believes that this would provide clarity of role and responsibility and offer greater resilience for these functions.

Intelligence and tasking

- 2.6 Major crime featured in almost all force strategic intelligence products. Most associated analysis was narrowly focused on specific threats such as gun or knife crime, rather than considering how preventative intervention targeting the underlying drivers of violence and serious sexual offending may be progressed. The best performing forces demonstrated a clear understanding of the complexity that the threat from major crime presents and had mature processes to direct sufficient specialist resources to counter key elements of this threat. These processes must include a co-ordinated response, in conjunction with partners, to managing high-risk locations and offenders and ensuring effective support for vulnerable individuals.
- 2.7 Targeting the drivers of the most serious violence can only be enabled through a clear understanding of the threat major crime presents to communities. The inspection found scope to raise the profile of major crime within intelligence and tasking regimes and develop greater integration with other policing functions and partnership agencies. The investment made in Neighbourhood Policing Teams offers significant opportunity to develop an informed

picture of the impact violence has on particular communities. Merseyside Police have embraced this approach through their 'Total Policing' model, with HQ and BCU Intelligence functions focused towards community intelligence as a means of developing a rich picture on key priorities of major crime, gun crime and counter-terrorism. Neighbourhood Policing Teams adopt a problem-solving approach, working with partners and communities to support vulnerable individuals, such as repeat victims of domestic abuse. There is opportunity for this co-ordinated approach to be adopted by other forces, to enhance how they co-ordinate all of their assets to mitigate the threat from serious violent crime and serious sexual offences.

Complexity and cost

- 2.8 The true economic and social cost of major crime is hard to quantify and analyse. The growth of dedicated Murder Investigation Teams within many forces means that financial costs are increasingly collated at force level but variations in practice and costing models make national comparison difficult. Research commissioned by one force¹¹ found the current average financial cost of homicide, excluding forensic submissions, to be:
- Category A – £3,127,825.66
 - Category B – £434,849.91.¹²

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2.9 Categorisation is not necessarily an effective predictive tool for assessing the cost of investigations, as initial assessment of risk will vary between forces and may subsequently be reviewed and changed. However, if the financial costs above were replicated across the country, assuming that 5% of homicides are Category A, the financial cost of investigating the 645¹ murders in 2008/09 would be approximately £367 million. The scale of this expense and lack of standardised costing data limit opportunities to identify best practice for financial management in major crime and should be addressed within a broader performance framework.

2.10 While the aspiration of the service must be to prevent major crime, there is a duty to ensure an effective response when tragedies do occur. The complexity of this response has increased over recent years, as developing technology has offered investigators greater opportunities and new challenges.

Forensic science and DNA

2.11 Forensic science has always been central to investigations; the rapid pace of developments in this field now offers investigators a raft of new evidential opportunities. Developments in DNA analysis mean that the national DNA database has become a vital resource to major crime investigation. With in excess of 4.3 million profiles,

the UK database currently generates 3,500 matches a month for further police investigation. The full impact on the database of the recent ruling by the European Court of Human Rights is currently unclear; however, it remains a valuable resource for major and volume crime investigation.

2.12 The National Ballistics Intelligence Service (NABIS), launched in November 2008, and the National Firearms Intelligence Cell (NFIC) should prove to be valuable assets to investigators. The aim is to provide a comprehensive forensics and intelligence service which will assist forces in mitigating the threat to communities from major crime and those involved in the criminal use of firearms. Forces should ensure that they have the procedures and policies in place to fully utilise this significant resource.

2.13 While forensic advances, such as familial profiling, have greatly enhanced investigation, the increasing range of techniques available from established and emerging suppliers of forensic services requires that forces carefully consider how best to manage this area. This test must balance potential evidential benefit with cost, quality and accreditation of supplier. The recent appointment of the post of forensic regulator should inform forces in managing performance in these areas.

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Telecommunications

2.14 The pervasive role of telecommunications in society has greatly impacted upon major crime investigation, with analysis of telephone and internet data offering potentially compelling evidence to investigators. Enquiries with forces indicate that telephony spend can range from an approximate average of £15,000 per investigation rising to over £100,000 for particularly complex inquiries.¹³ While investigators will make informed decisions balancing the cost of analysis against potential evidential benefit, the expansion of sources of electronic information inevitably means that this is a growing area of expense for forces.

Family liaison and community engagement

2.15 Major crime has a devastating impact on families and the broader community. An effective police response to such incidents is critical in maintaining confidence and managing the fear of crime. Progress has been made in this area. All forces retain and deploy trained family liaison staff and the best performing forces ensure that community engagement is embedded within their response, through independent advisory groups and neighbourhood key individual networks. The direct cost of this work may be difficult to quantify; however, the benefits in terms of quality of service and community confidence are clear.

Collaboration

2.16 The short and medium-term financial landscape for policing is challenging. The Home Office drive to cap the growth of force budgets and require policing to deliver cash-releasing efficiency savings of 9.3% over the three financial years from 2008/09 means that forces must consider whether they are best managing resources. To respond effectively to the threat of major crime requires a complex range of specialist skills and assets. The cost of maintaining such assets is high, and regional or national collaboration presents significant opportunities for some forces facing a limited threat from major crime to realise cost and capacity benefits.

2.17 The inspection found good practice emerging through collaboration at ACPO regional level and in bilateral agreements between forces. The scope and governance of collaboration varied significantly. Some mature partnerships, such as the joint Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire Major Crime Task Force, are formalised with clear arrangements and protocols. Other arrangements are more informal and driven by working relationships that have established organically. The range of collaborative frameworks adopted and the lack of resilience in many of these agreements are of concern. The benefits of collaboration between forces have been explored by HMIC in *Getting Together*, a report published in June 2009. HMIC believes that the establishment of a national collaboration strategy, the Informed Choice Model, could – if adopted – provide police leaders with timely, credible information on how joint working may offset risks and the costs of providing expensive specialist operational and support services to improve services for the public.

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3. Force Capability

FORCE CAPABILITY

- 3.1 The overview provided by this inspection identifies some good practice but also marked gaps in provision. The inspection confirmed that the majority of forces in England and Wales are delivering to an acceptable standard against the threat of major crime. A small number, mainly the larger, metropolitan forces exposed to the highest threat from major crime, exceeded the national standard set. These forces are Greater Manchester, Merseyside, Metropolitan and West Midlands. These high-performing forces demonstrated processes that understand specific threats from major crime and are able to respond effectively with dedicated resources when called upon.
- 3.2 Four forces were unable to meet some key aspects of the national major crime standard. These forces are City of London, Cumbria, Lincolnshire and North Yorkshire.

Response, investigation and governance

- 3.3 Forces have improved their understanding of the threat from major crime and have developed arrangements to ensure a timely and effective response to incidents that occur. The inspection found that all forces had an understanding of 'golden hour' principles and the impact of initial response on investigative success and community confidence. Forces have published clear and well-understood guidance to first responders in the event of major crime, and established 'on-call' arrangements to ensure investigative control and continuity. The best performing forces have enhanced their service by ensuring that dedicated specialists are available at all times to oversee initial response to major crime. In the larger, metropolitan areas, this includes dedicated teams to assess potential major crime incidents, while many other forces ensure that a Senior Detective Officer is always on duty to lead initial response. All forces should consider adopting these approaches, dependent on the level of threat they face.
- 3.4 All forces have, or are in the process of developing, 'fast alert' arrangements with partners to identify and share information on significant changes to the major crime threat. A range of contingency plans and supporting measures flow from these arrangements. In a number of forces, these agreements are informal and ad hoc, with little overarching governance and co-ordination. Resilience is therefore a matter of concern and consideration should be given to formalising such arrangements, to ensure organisational oversight and understanding.
- 3.5 The inspection found that forces had made considerable progress in ensuring the professionalism and resourcing of major crime investigation. All forces were assessed to be compliant with the Murder Investigation Manual (MIM) and ACPO (2005) Guidance on MIRSAP. While progress in homicide has been made, there remains scope for these lessons to be applied to the investigation of rape and serious sexual assault, where practice remains less consistent.

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- 3.6 The inspection found that forces consider relevant professional standards issues in the operational planning for major crime work. All forces have vetting policies in place to ensure that staff are appropriately vetted commensurate with exposure. All forces have policies for physical and operational security. Implementation of these policies was broadly found to be effective, with the best performing forces proactively testing vulnerability according to identified risk. There was evidence that some forces have difficulty in ensuring sufficiency of vetted Police Authority contacts and external or community stakeholders for sensitive enquiries. This is a key area in assuring police response and forces should ensure the resilience of their arrangements.
- 3.7 The compliance of forces with MIM and MIRSAP is testament to the work of the ACPO Homicide Working Group in framing standards of investigation and governance, as well as providing practical guidance and support to forces responding to challenging incidents. The inspection found that the majority of forces had rigorous ACPO Lead and Police Authority governance arrangements in place, with appropriate liaison through security vetting. These arrangements covered both dynamic investigative supervision and broader oversight arrangements for managing strategic risks through Force Risk Registers. In addition, forces had mature

or developing arrangements to establish Gold support groups at the earliest practicable stage, as major investigations developed, to ensure that appropriate consideration was given to community views and concerns.

Partnership engagement and involvement

- 3.8 Force plans generally recognised the key role that partners and community stakeholders play in improving understanding of the threat from major crime and undertaking joint activity to mitigate this threat. They also have established strong local arrangements to respond effectively to incidents of major crime and provide public reassurance. The best performing forces have mature and well-supported public protection and community safety processes, with established information-sharing protocols. There is evidence of joint strategic assessment and partnership tasking and activity to tackle major crime under violence and homicide reduction strategies. In other forces, partnership involvement was less well established, with informal arrangements driving activity. There is scope for these forces to improve the governance arrangements of their partnership activity, to ensure that it is supported by formalised agreements and processes which provide greater resilience and co-ordination.

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Community and independent advice

3.9 The inspection found that forces had made progress in realising the benefit of community advice and guidance in major crime response and investigation. All forces had processes to inform their service delivery through Independent Advisory Groups (IAGs) and via Neighbourhood Policing meetings and networks. There was clearly understood guidance on their function, outcomes and composition. This was supported by effective diversity training for major crime staff, tailored to their specialist roles. IAGs were provided with relevant and regular training and practical inputs, to ensure a clear understanding of police response. The best performing forces maximised the effectiveness of these partnership arrangements with structures at force and local level. The Metropolitan Police Service, for example, has established IAGs on each BCU, to provide meaningful contribution to critical decision making at local level. Less-effective forces failed to maximise the benefit attainable from IAGs and Key Individual Networks (KINs) by only seeking their contribution in a broadly consultative role on issues of strategy, with limited regular engagement. Composition and skills were rarely reviewed and refreshed, and outcomes were less tangible.

The growth of regional and bilateral collaboration

3.10 There is an improving understanding of the challenge forces face to deliver an effective response to major crime and other protective services. This is not, however, always reflected in their planning processes. For forces facing a relatively low threat from major crime, collaboration presents the opportunity to retain specialist capacity and capability, while sharing the cost of specialist resources. To this end, the Government is funding 13 demonstrator sites, involving 34 forces, to test a range of approaches and disseminate the lessons learnt. The evaluation of these projects should be completed by autumn 2009. Elsewhere, collaborative activity is developing more organically, with some arrangements more mature than others. As collaboration grows, there is a need for forces to review their business planning processes and, at service level, the tripartite partners need to formalise and rationalise arrangements, if resilience and value for money is to be delivered.

Review

3.11 The inspection found that all forces undertake reviews of major crime investigations, with the majority attaining or exceeding the standard. Forces exceeding the standard were not those facing the highest demand, but rather those with clear direction set by the ACPO Lead and with a willingness to invest sufficient dedicated staff and resources. The best

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performing forces, both large and small, have a structured review policy and formal processes to ensure that investigations of major crime are efficient, effective and economical. These processes are designed to identify organisational learning and inform future training needs, creating a 'virtuous circle' of continuous improvement. There may be an opportunity for those forces that are not performing as well to explore this learning. All forces may also consider the potential of regional or bilateral collaboration to deliver this critical function in a more sustainable way.

Gaps in provision

Governance and standards

3.12 While the professionalism of homicide investigation has improved, there remains a wide variation in how forces respond to allegations of serious assault and wounding. In the larger, metropolitan forces where demand from such incidents is high, investigative responsibility will rest within the caseload of relatively junior and inexperienced officers. In contrast, forces facing less demand may allocate such incidents to a dedicated Major Investigation Team. In practice, the difference between an incident being one of serious assault rather than homicide may be the speed of initial medical response. There is scope to build on the lessons learnt in homicide to deliver consistent standards in the investigation and administration in cases of serious assault.

Intelligence and tasking

3.13 The inspection highlighted considerable variation between forces on how successfully major crime activity is informed and driven by intelligence and tasking. Most forces have invested sufficiently in their intelligence capacity to understand the threat presented by major crime and explore some of the drivers of this activity. Six forces (Cheshire, City of London, Cumbria, Lincolnshire, North Yorkshire and Wiltshire) were found to lack the dedicated analytical support necessary to inform strategic and tactical intelligence products. The most effective forces (Cambridgeshire, Merseyside, Police Service of Northern Ireland and West Midlands) have embedded an analytical approach within their major crime structure, supporting daily activity and proactively developing intelligence and identifying patterns and trends, to inform a broader partnership-based approach to homicide and violence reduction.

3.14 Recognising the interdependencies between major crime and localised policing is vital if forces are to effectively reduce most serious violence and fear within communities. This requires effective intelligence exchange and a robust tasking process at force and regional level. While the major crime function features in all force tasking processes, there remains considerable opportunity for forces to improve co-ordination in this area. Much tasking of specialist resources occurs outside the formal tasking process and this may rely on incomplete

3. Force Capability

FORCE CAPABILITY

analysis or appreciation of other available resources. This approach limits intelligence flows between policing functions and prevents a rich picture of major crime being developed. The inspection found that, in 13 forces, there was insufficient understanding of the threat which major crime presented to locations and communities. In many cases, this was compounded by a lack of appreciation of the contribution that Neighbourhood Policing Teams can make when responding to major crime incidents. In total, 15 forces were unable to demonstrate an effective system to monitor the harm caused to communities by major crime and the impact of their response.

3.15 There remains scope to improve interoperability between intelligence systems both within and between forces. The inability of the current HOLMES system (v13/14) to link automatically with force intelligence systems remains an obstacle for many forces. While most forces had developed manual systems to bridge this problem, these are often subject to delay, incompleteness and have limiting opportunities for fast-time tasking. HOLMES 20/20 should address this weakness; however, it is not due for release until 2013, so forces must ensure that current practice is effective. The NPIA is working to provide forces with best practice in the meantime.

3.16 Progress has been made on interoperability of intelligence systems between forces and regions. The most effective forces have established formal intelligence-sharing protocols with policing and other partners in response to the threat they face; however, elsewhere, arrangements remain informal and ad/hoc at the working level. OCG activity remains a key driver of major crime, and the cross-border nature of their operations means that forces must be satisfied that their intelligence arrangements are sufficiently co-ordinated and resilient to be effective. There is a need to ensure intelligence-gathering and provision arrangements within forces support existing stakeholders at levels 2 and 3.

Organisational learning

3.17 The inspection found scope for forces to enhance the extent to which lessons learnt in the investigation of major crime could be captured and used to inform subsequent activity. Few forces could evidence a systematic linking of the learning points arising from reviews, debriefing and results analysis, with staff training and organisational development. Many forces also demonstrated a lack of awareness of the potential benefits to be gained from generating new learning opportunities by encouraging external review of major crime. Forces, particularly those that infrequently conduct major investigations, should consider the benefits of such external support.

ABILITY

Policies and practice

3.18 Some gaps in provision relate to the absence of, or inadequate, policy frameworks, in particular the following.

'Threat to life' policies

3.19 The requirement that forces react proportionately to a credible threat to an individual's safety has led to a raft of policies and procedures to raise awareness and prompt officers to take the necessary action when a threat is identified. HMIC has found that authority levels differ across the country – high-risk cases generally receive ACPO attention, but forces should review their policies to ensure the appropriate level of oversight. Of particular concern is the failure of many forces to record, monitor and quality assure the issue of 'Osman warnings'. While no evidence was found that administration of 'threat to life' warnings had placed any individual at risk, forces need to be vigilant in ensuring that processes in this area are suitably intrusive and robust.

Staff vetting

3.20 Vetting to appropriate levels is essential in countering the ever-present threat of corruption to officers who may be targeted by OCGs. Some forces use a five-year cycle of security clearance for officers and police staff in sensitive posts – this may be inadequate and should be subject to regular risk assessment informed by expert advice. The level of threat from infiltration means that forces should consider management vetting at more regular intervals where officers have routine access to confidential material. This should also apply to stakeholders who see restricted material or receive confidential briefings. Professional standards departments should lead in the policy and practice of operational security.

4. Recommendations

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Collaboration

- (i) The National Protective Services Board, in line with the national strategy for collaboration (the Informed Choice Model), should identify whether collaboration and joint working may offer opportunities to improve the service to the public in terms of reduced cost or risk, and facilitate guidance and support to forces and authorities where appropriate.
- (ii) Forces and authorities not attaining the standard, or with significant identified needs, should seek opportunities to improve services through collaboration with policing partners.

2. Developing consistent practice on major crime reduction

The public will be best served by forces that understand, and seek to prevent, the drivers of major crime within communities. ACPO/NPIA should develop and publish guidance on preventative action that forces can take to reduce homicide and other major crimes.

3. Performance management of major crime

- (i) There is a need for ACPO/NPIA to develop consistent performance measures for managing homicide performance, including issues of cost, quality and public confidence. Comparable information will enable policing leaders and the community to assess whether they are getting a good deal from local services.
- (ii) Clear guidance on governance and standards of rape and serious assault investigations needs to be provided to forces by ACPO/NPIA to ensure quality and consistency of service. The standard of rape investigations will be assessed by HMIC through thematic inspection in spring 2010.

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Appendix

APPENDIX

Context for the inspection

The Police Service's response to major crime benefits from direction by the Government, ACPO and the Association of Police Authorities as set out in the following:

- The *National Policing Plan 2005–08* (www.police.homeoffice.gov.uk/national-policing-plan/policing-plan-2008.html) made reduction of violence and confidence of communities key policing priorities.
- The National Protective Services Analysis Tool (NPSAT) brings together a range of indicators to inform assessments of the demand arising from major crime. These indicators include homicide; rape; and kidnapping.
- The ACPO *National Strategic Assessment for 2007* (www.acpo.police.uk) confirmed the requirement to fill the identified gap in the provision of protective services, with a tri-lateral focus.
- The ACPO *Core Investigative Doctrine* (www.acpo.police.uk) provides guidance to police forces on the conduct and administration of major crime investigation, including guidance on MIRSIP and the MIM.
- HM Government's *National Community Safety Plan 2008–11* (www.police.homeoffice.gov.uk/national-policing-plan/national-community-safety-0609) declared the Home Secretary's key strategic priorities for 2008/09, including a focus on more serious violence.
- HM Government's *Action Plan for Tackling Violence 2008–11* (www.homeoffice.gov.uk/documents/violent-crime-action-plan-08/) declared the Home Secretary's key priorities on violence reduction, including focus on gun crime, violent crime and sexual violence.

Endnotes

ENDNOTES

Endnotes

1. Data sourced from *Crime in England and Wales 2007/08*; Home Office, and Crux Matrix for 2008/09 figures.
2. Tenth United Nations *Survey of Crime Trends and Operations of Criminal Justice Systems*, covering the period 2005–06 (2008); UNODC.
3. The Home Office definition for ‘most serious violence’ covers a range of violent offences: homicide and child destruction; attempted murder; wounding with intent; grievous bodily harm without intent; and death by dangerous driving.
4. *Crime in England and Wales Update* (December 2008); Home Office.
5. Data sourced from *Crime in England and Wales 2007/08*; Home Office, Crux Matrix for 2008/09 and the *SOCA Annual Report 2008/09*; SOCA.
6. *MPS Crime Statistics Annual for Youth Violence 2008/09*; www.met.police.uk (last accessed 16 April 2009).
7. Findings are based on an HMIC telephone survey of six forces (June 2009) of the 2008/09 investment in dedicated major crime staffing budget compared with three-year average homicide levels.
8. Data drawn from ACPO, National Protective Service Assessment Tool (NPSAT), April 2009.
9. Greenaway K, Sully P and Reeves S (2001) ‘The Suppression of Murder’. *Police Review*, 109(5643):26–28.
10. NPIA PIP Peer Review (February 2008); NPIA.
11. Homicide Data 2006–08; Merseyside Police.
12. Categories of homicide are defined in ACPO’s guidance to forces, *Major Incident Room Standardised Administrative Procedures* (2005).

Category A

A homicide or other major investigation which is of grave concern or where vulnerable members of the public are at risk, and where the identity of the offender(s) is not apparent or the investigation and securing evidence requires significant resource allocation.

Category B

A homicide or other major investigation where the identity of the offender(s) is not apparent, the continued risk to the public is low and the investigation or securing evidence can be achieved within normal force resourcing arrangements.

13. Data provided by Merseyside Police in December 2008.



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Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary
Ashley House
2 Monck Street
London SW1P 2BQ

This report is also available from the HMIC website
<http://inspectrates.justice.gov.uk/hmic>

Published in July 2009.

Printed by the Central Office of Information.

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ISBN: 978-1-84726-965-2

Ref: 297377