



Inspecting policing  
in the public interest

# **North Wales Police's response to the funding challenge**

**July 2013**

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# **North Wales Police: Executive summary**

North Wales Police is facing a less challenging financial position than most forces. The savings requirement is lower for other forces and, as North Wales Police spends proportionately more on policing, there are opportunities to reduce costs.

This is, however, not without challenge for the force, because it covers a very large rural area; has diverse communities; and an influx of visitors in the tourist season adding to the demand for policing services.

The force has made the majority of its savings already, and is on target to meet its financial challenge. It has developed plans for how it will deliver reductions for 2013/14, with an expected over achievement. It is finalising plans for 2014/15 and is looking beyond the current spending review period.

## **Financial challenge**

North Wales Police needs to save £15.9m over the four years of the spending review (i.e. between March 2011 and March 2015).

North Wales Police faces a less difficult challenge than many other forces. As a proportion of its overall budget (10%), the savings requirement is considerably lower than that of most other forces. In addition, the force's original funding gap has been reduced because it received a higher than anticipated grant settlement from central Government, and an increase in the amount of funding it receives from the precept (council tax) this year.

The force has a comparatively higher spend on policing than most other forces. It has a larger workforce (officers and staff) and spends more on each officer and staff member; this may provide North Wales Police with opportunities for achieving efficiencies and savings. However, North Wales Police faces challenges as it meets savings requirements, because the force covers a very large rural area with diverse communities. Large increases in population as a result of tourism (in particular during the summer months) adds to the demands placed on the force.

## **Progress in making savings**

North Wales Police has broadly planned how it will save all of the £15.9m required by March 2015. The majority of the savings have been found in the first two years of the spending review period, and plans are in place for 2013/14, with an expected over achievement. At the time of inspection, outline plans were in place for the final year of the spending review, with the detail being finalised. Based on the force's track record and over achievement of savings, we would expect North Wales Police to achieve the savings requirement.

In addition, the force has been able to reinvest a further £1.7m in recruiting extra police officers this year, and there is an explicit commitment to protect and enhance the front line.

## Changes to the workforce

All forces spend most of their money on staff costs (such as wages and overtime), and so have focused on reducing this expenditure in order to cut costs.<sup>1</sup> North Wales Police is no exception.

The force has been reducing police officer numbers by limiting recruitment and holding vacancies, although recruitment started again during 2012/13. It has created a number of police staff roles to replace police officer posts, which in turn has reduced the overall impact of police staff reductions. As a result, by the end of the spending review period, the force plans to have 128 fewer police officers in North Wales. This means the number of police officers is planned to reduce by 8% between March 2010<sup>2</sup> and March 2015. This is a considerably smaller reduction than in most other forces.

Based on current plans, North Wales Police is protecting frontline posts as it makes these reductions: between March 2010 and March 2015, the proportion of police officers in frontline crime-fighting roles is planned to increase from 92% to 94%. This compares to an overall increase across England and Wales from 89% to 93%.

The force has made some police staff redundant and not replaced others as they have left (e.g. through retirements and resignations). As a result, by the end of the spending review period, there will be 22 fewer police staff in North Wales Police. This means the number of police staff is planned to reduce by 2% between March 2010 and March 2015. This is a considerably smaller reduction than in most other forces. North Wales Police also plans to increase the number of community support officers (CSO) by 67% (from additional funding provided by the Welsh Government), when most other forces are reducing their CSO numbers.

With further savings necessary to close the funding gap, more workforce reductions may be necessary.

## Impact on the public

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

Over the first two years of the spending review, recorded crime<sup>3</sup> (excluding fraud) fell by 9% in North Wales, which is less than the decrease for England and Wales (13%). Victim satisfaction remains high at 81.4%,<sup>4</sup> although this is lower than for most other forces.

This performance indicates that North Wales Police has been able to make savings and plans to protect frontline officers. HMIC would expect that this focus on officers in crime-fighting roles will lead to greater reductions in crime levels and improved victim satisfaction.

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1 See *Adapting to Austerity*, HMIC, London, July 2011, p.13. Available from [www.hmic.gov.uk](http://www.hmic.gov.uk).

2 We use 2010 as our baseline as many forces started to make staff reductions in anticipation of the spending review.

3 Crime excluding fraud, as per the new crime classifications released in July 2013 by the Office for National Statistics.

4  $\pm 1.7\%$ .

## Future challenges

The force has a good track record of reducing costs through careful management and reviewing and reshaping services. Early planning involved a fundamental review of the force, and the reorganisation of the delivery of policing services. This realised significant savings from a reduction in senior posts and a streamlined back office.

While much of North Wales Police's savings requirement has been achieved, more work is necessary to develop the detail of its plans for the final year of this spending review.

Looking ahead, the force faces further potential pressures should the additional grant it receives from Government (over and above the allocation from the police funding formula<sup>5</sup>) be phased out, or if the expected year-on-year increases in income from council tax set out in the force's financial forecast are not realised.

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<sup>5</sup> The mechanism used by Government to determine the allocation of police funding grant to forces.

# The challenge

Over the four years of the spending review (March 2011 to March 2015), North Wales Police identified that it needed to find savings of £15.9m, equating to 10% of its total expenditure<sup>6</sup> (which in 2012/13 was £154.5m). Across England and Wales, a 17% reduction in total expenditure is required.

## **Progress in making savings: Years 1–2**

The force successfully made 67% (£10.7m) of the total savings required by March 2015 in the first two years of the spending review period. Prior to the spending review, early planning involved a fundamental review of the force. This led to the reorganisation of policing services, a reduction in senior posts and a streamlined back office.

## **Plans for Year 3–4**

The force intends to make further savings of £2.9m in 2013/14, and another £2.3m in 2014/15, to achieve a balanced budget. Savings plans for 2013/14 were developed and are expected to yield £2m more than required this year, partly as a result of a better than expected grant settlement from the Home Office. This approach, coupled with an increase of 3.98% in the precept, means that the force has been able to re-invest an extra £1.77m in frontline delivery, with the recruitment of 51 additional police officers.

However, at the time of inspection the plans to find the remaining savings for 2014/15 were still being fully developed. With the force's track record and over achievement of savings we would expect North Wales Police to achieve its savings requirement.

In addition, the force has recently adopted a 'systems thinking' approach, which it is piloting. This approach aims to secure savings by more efficient and effective ways of working.

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<sup>6</sup> Based on a gross expenditure baseline in 2010/11.

## Looking beyond the current spending review

The force has started to consider what savings it might need to make after March 2015.

In addition to any further reductions, the force faces further potential challenges which could have a significant impact on future income:

- North Wales, along with a number of other forces, currently receives an additional £10.5 million from Government, over and above its main funding grant.<sup>7</sup> If the current arrangements were to be phased out, this would place significant pressure on the budget in the medium term; and
- the force has assumed a 4% increase in the income it receives from council tax until 2015. This is not guaranteed.

The force has identified future potential pressures and has modelled various scenarios for 2015/16 onwards, using different assumptions. Savings plans for 2015/16 and beyond continue to be developed.

## The scale of the challenge in North Wales

Although the size of the savings requirement for North Wales Police is relatively small when compared with many other forces, there are some additional uncertainties around the force's future funding. However, there are opportunities to reduce costs further because:

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

## Demand

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

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

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<sup>7</sup> When the funding formula is allocated, each police force is assured a minimum percentage increase in grant each year. This is known as the floor. Those forces that get less than the minimum percentage based purely on the formula are topped up to the minimum percentage. In order to pay for this, any force receiving an increase based purely on the formula that is greater the minimum percentage has its grant scaled back by a standard proportion. This process is commonly referred to as floor damping or damping.

<b>12 months to March 2013</b>	<b>North Wales</b>	<b>England and Wales</b>
Emergency and priority calls per 1,000 population	144	134
Victim-based crime per 1,000 population	47.9	54.5
Prosecutions (charges) per 1,000 population	10.1	10.2

This table shows that, in 2012/13, North Wales Police received slightly more emergency and priority calls from the public, and had marginally fewer crimes; but it supported a similar number of prosecutions per head of population as other forces.

## **How difficult is the challenge?**

The force has a proportionately higher spend per head of population, and greater workforce costs. This may provide some opportunities to secure efficiencies. North Wales Police faces a less challenging savings requirement than other forces, however, it is not without its difficulties. The force covers a large geographic rural area and faces significant additional demands on resources through tourism, particularly during the summer months.

## Response to the challenge

Over 80% of a police budget (on average) is spent on staff costs.<sup>8</sup> It is not surprising that forces across England and Wales plan to achieve most of their savings by reducing the number of police officers, CSOs and police staff they employ.

North Wales Police is no exception. It made an early start on this in 2010, when it slowed recruitment of new police officers and police staff and reduced the number of police staff. The force plans to make 62% of its spending review savings requirement from its pay budget. This is a lower proportion than in most other forces and shows that North Wales Police has made progress in driving down non-pay costs, to protect police officer and staff numbers. However, this may change as the force works to identify further savings to close the outstanding gap.

### Changes to workforce numbers

The following table shows the force's planned changes to workforce numbers over the spending review period, and compares these to the change for England and Wales.<sup>9</sup>

	<b>31 March 2010 (baseline)</b>	<b>31 March 2015</b>	<b>Change</b>	<b>North Wales change %</b>	<b>Change for England and Wales %</b>
Police Officers	1,590	1,462	-128	-8%	-11%
Police Staff	921	899	-22	-2%	-16%
CSOs	157	261	+105	+67%	-17%
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,667</b>	<b>2,622</b>	<b>-45</b>	<b>-2%</b>	<b>-13%</b>
Specials	193	209	+16	+8%	+60%

Overall, the table shows that North Wales Police plans to lose fewer officers than other forces. Staff numbers will decrease – but by a much smaller proportion than in most forces, and this is partly due to the force identifying a number of police officer posts which it has converted into staff posts. CSO numbers will increase significantly as a result of additional funding provided by the Welsh Government.

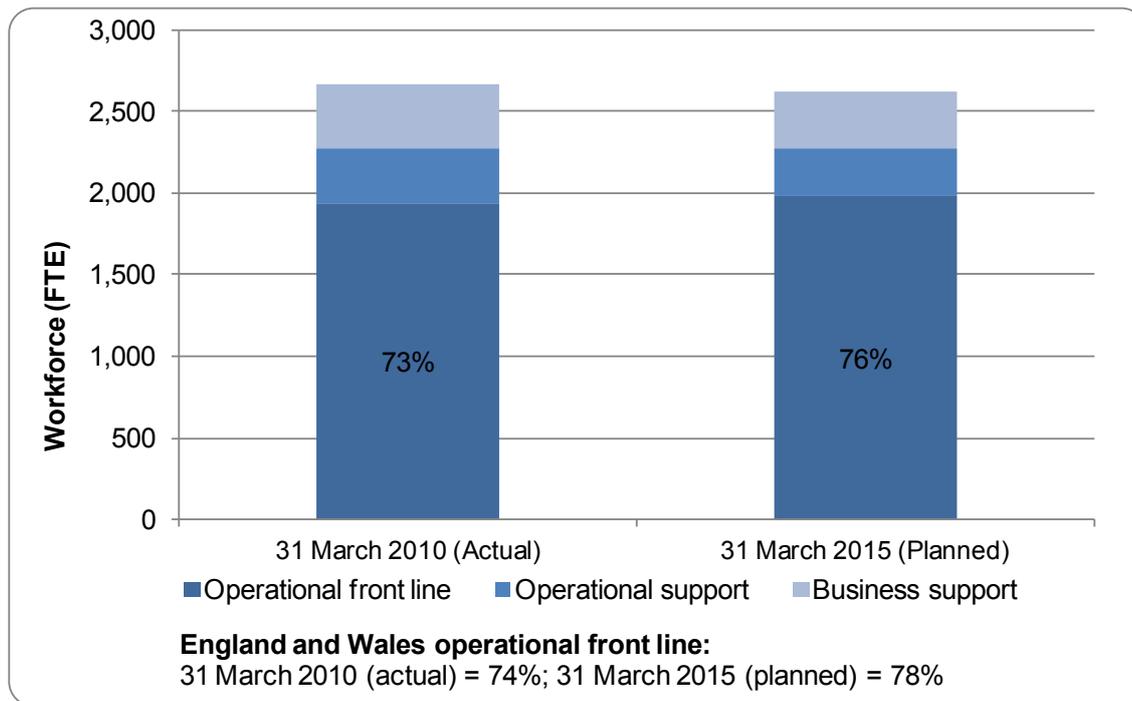
<sup>8</sup> See *Adapting to Austerity*, HMIC, London, July 2011, p.13. Available from [www.hmic.gov.uk](http://www.hmic.gov.uk).

<sup>9</sup> Workforce figures for March 2010 show the actual number of people working for the force in permanent posts on the 31 March in that year. People on long-term absences (such as maternity leave) are included in these 'actual' figures, but vacant posts are not. Workforce projections for March 2015 are for budgeted posts, so the actual number of people who will be working for the force at that point in reality may be different, because some posts will be vacant or filled by temporary staff. Forces' projections may also exclude people who will be on long-term absences. The difference between actual workforce numbers and projected numbers should therefore be taken as an approximate expected change.

## Changes to the proportion of workforce on the front line

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

The following chart shows the change in the workforce frontline profile in North Wales.<sup>10</sup>

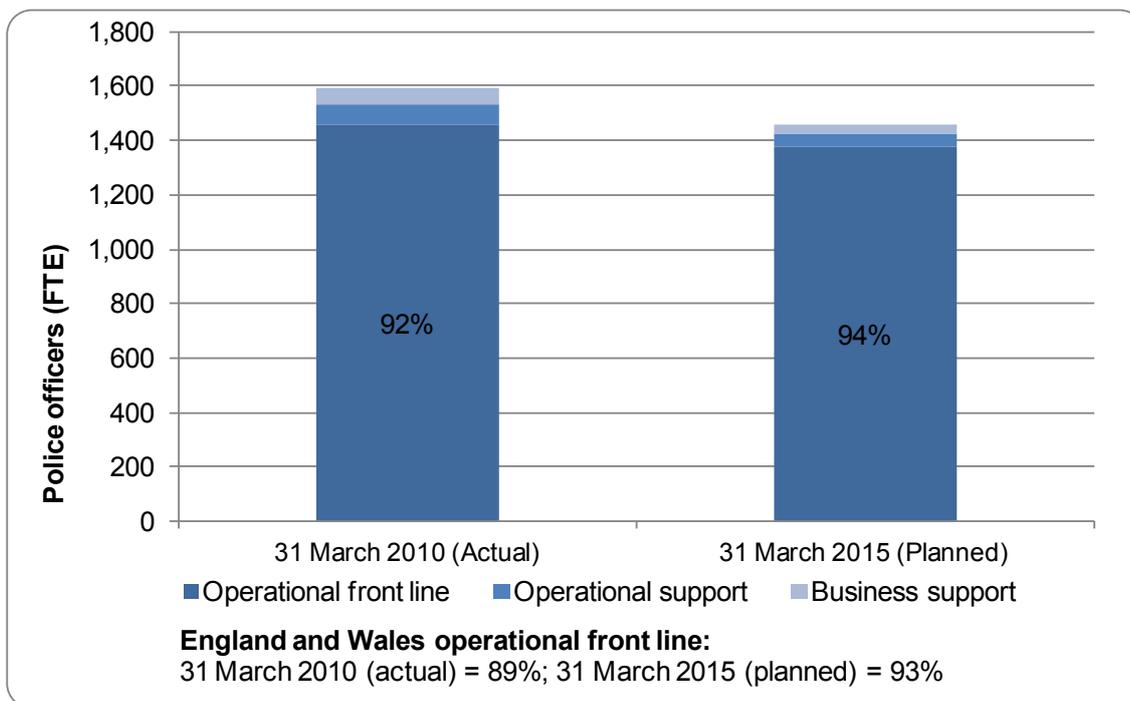


The **number** of officers, CSOs and staff (i.e. of the force’s total workforce) working on the front line is planned to increase by 2% between March 2010 and March 2015 (from 1,939 to 1,980).

Over the same period, the **proportion** of North Wales’s total workforce allocated to frontline roles is planned to increase from 73% to 76%. This compares with an overall increase across England and Wales from 74% to 78%.

The **number** of North Wales’s police officers in frontline roles is planned to increase to reduce by 6% from 1,458 in March 2010 to 1,376 by March 2015, as the chart on the next page shows. The proportion of these remaining on the front line is planned to increase from 92% to 94%. This compares to an overall increase across England and Wales from 89% to 93%.

<sup>10</sup> From 2010 Gwent, the Metropolitan Police Service, Wiltshire and North Wales police forces chose to code those officers and staff who are on long-term absence from duty due to maternity/paternity leave, career break, full-time education or suspension, and those on long-term leave, to their normal working role. This has the effect of inflating their workforce and frontline figures by up to 1% compared to other forces.



With further savings to identify, additional workforce reductions may be necessary. This may affect the force’s ability to protect the proportion of officers and staff on the frontline.

## Collaboration

HMIC monitors forces’ progress on collaboration<sup>11</sup> because it offers the opportunity to deliver efficient, effective policing and help achieve savings.

North Wales Police works in a range of collaborations with other forces, particularly in Wales and North-West England. Collaboration enhances the force’s capability and capacity, and helps it to better manage and mitigate risk. Further opportunities for collaboration are being actively explored (particularly with Cheshire Constabulary, but the force does not have a clear strategy for collaboration, and major cost savings have not been made

The force anticipates that only a relatively small proportion of its future spending will be on collaboraion. In 2014/15 the force expects to spend 3% of its total expenditure on collaboration. This is lower than the 11% figure for England and Wales. Overall, collaboration is expected to contribute just 2% of the force’s savings requirement. This is again lower than the 7% figure for England and Wales.

<sup>11</sup> HMIC defines collaboration as “all activity where two or more parties work together to achieve a common goal, which includes inter force activity and collaboration with the public and private sectors, including outsourcing and business partnering”.

## Managing change

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

Early planning, prior to the spending review, involved a fundamental review of the force. This led to the reorganisation of the delivery of policing services in North Wales which resulted in a reduction in senior posts and a streamlined back office. The reorganisation in 2011 was not wholly successful. The force found that performance fluctuated and there was a negative impact on the workforce.

Following a post implementation review, commissioned by the Chief Constable, a new localised policing model, based on three local policing areas, was introduced in May 2012 to provide a more effective and efficient service. Additional specialist resources are available force-wide and are managed from force headquarters. Local policing services are supported by radically reshaped, reduced and centralised support functions based at force headquarters. This includes strategic human resources (HR), finance and information technology.

The new model resulted in a reduction in the workforce size and enabled early savings to be made. The force is now piloting a 'systems thinking' approach to finding further efficiencies, delivering savings and improving services. Although the early indications are promising, the force cannot confidently predict what this approach will yield in terms of savings and service improvements. Depending upon the nature and scale of the future savings requirement, the force is clear that further review of all service areas may be required, along with some reshaping of the policing model.

There are changes in the chief officer team which may have a bearing on the future leadership of change and risk management. The Deputy Chief Constable (DCC) has recently retired; he previously led on the management of change and had a strategic co-ordinating role across the force. The Assistant Chief Constable who is acting DCC has taken over this key role in addition to other duties.

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

HMIC found that North Wales Police recognised the need for sustainable cultural change within the workforce to enable it to make future changes.

Staff associations and unions are represented within the key change forums, and the post-implementation review of the reorganisation in 2011 was informed by feedback gathered from a significant number of frontline staff. The force also uses a number of communications channels to inform and engage staff.

The force carries out and publishes an annual cultural survey of all staff to seek their views on a range of issues that affect them and their working environment. Findings from the most recent survey in July 2012 show an overall improvement in positive responses. However, responses from those in local policing on the impact of change were generally less positive than their colleagues in other parts of the force.

This was also reflected by staff in focus groups during the inspection, where frontline officers were markedly less positive about change than business support staff. Frontline police officers said they did not feel fully engaged with the process; for example, they told us that they had not received feedback from the staff survey.

Business support staff were very clearly engaged, knowledgeable and enthusiastic about the developing 'systems thinking' approach and the potential benefits it could bring. They also described how they now work in a more integrated and efficient manner to support the front line.

## **How effective has the response been?**

North Wales Police faces a less challenging savings requirement than many other forces. The force made over two-thirds of the total savings needed during the first two years of the spending review period, and anticipates making the remaining savings by 2015. There are plans in place for 2013/14, although those for 2014/15 require further development.

# Impact of the changes on the public

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

## Visibility

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

That being said, research shows that the public value seeing visible police officers on patrol in the streets, and that those who see police in uniform at least once a week are more likely to have confidence in their local force.<sup>12</sup> HMIC therefore examined how far the changes being implemented by the force had affected the visibility of the police on the streets of North Wales.

In March 2013, North Wales Police allocated 66% of its police officers to visible roles. This is three percentage points more than it allocated in 2010, and higher than the figure for most other forces (which was 54% across England and Wales).

Police visibility is further enhanced by community support officers (CSOs), who principally support community policing. Looking at the proportion of police officers and CSOs, North Wales Police allocated 71% to visible roles. This is five percentage points higher than it allocated in 2010 and greater than the 59% figure for England and Wales.

HMIC conducted a survey<sup>13</sup> of the public across England and Wales to assess whether the public had noticed any difference in the way their area is being policed. Of those people surveyed in North Wales, 11%<sup>14</sup> said that they have seen a police officer more often than they had 12 months ago; this is broadly in line with the 13% average across all survey respondents in England and Wales.

Of those people surveyed, 78%<sup>15</sup> said they felt either as safe or safer in the areas where they live, compared with two years ago. This is broadly in line with the figure for most other forces, which is 75%.

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<sup>12</sup> See *Demanding Times*, HMIC, London, 2011. Available from [www.hmic.gov.uk](http://www.hmic.gov.uk).

<sup>13</sup> A YouGov survey was carried out during a four-week period during March 2013. Satisfaction and confidence surveys are also carried out at a national level by the Crime Survey of England and Wales. These use larger sample sizes and are carried out quarterly over a rolling year period. Some forces also carry out their own surveys of the general public. More information can be found at [www.crimesurvey.co.uk](http://www.crimesurvey.co.uk), [www.hmic.gov.uk](http://www.hmic.gov.uk) or from force websites.

<sup>14</sup>  $\pm 5\%$ .

<sup>15</sup>  $\pm 5\%$ .

## Calls for service

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

We found that over the three years from 2010 to present, North Wales Police maintained the same target response time of within 20 minutes for calls classed as 'emergency'. The force has no recorded target attendance time for any other category of calls.

Over that period, the force met this target response time 91% of the time in 2010/11, 87% in 2011/12, and 89% of the time in 2012/13.

## Crime

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

Between 2010/11 and 2012/13 (the first two years of the spending review), North Wales Police reduced recorded crime (excluding fraud) by 9%, compared to 13% in England and Wales. This was among the lowest reductions in England and Wales. Over this period, victim-based crime (that is, crimes where there is a direct victim – an individual, a group, or an organisation) reduced by 7%, compared with 12% in England and Wales.

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

<b>12 months to March 2013</b>	<b>Rate per 1,000 population in North Wales</b>	<b>England and Wales rate per 1,000 population</b>
Crimes (excluding fraud)	54.0	61.4
Victim-based crime	47.9	54.5
Burglary	6.6	8.2
Violence against the person	12.1	10.6
Anti-social behaviour incidents	36.6	40.7

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

North Wales's sanction detection<sup>16</sup> rate (for crimes excluding fraud) for the 12 months to March 2013 was 28.4%. This is broadly in line with the England and Wales sanction detection rate of 27.0%.

<sup>16</sup> A sanction detection is a 'solved crime' where a suspect has been identified and notified as being responsible for committing that crime and what the full implications of this are, and has received an official sanction. Official sanctions include charges, cautions, penalty notices, offences taken into consideration (TICs) and cannabis warnings.

We have chosen these types of crime to give an indication of offending levels in North Wales. For information on the frequency of other kinds of crimes in your area, go to [www.hmic.gov.uk/crime-and-policing-comparator](http://www.hmic.gov.uk/crime-and-policing-comparator).

## Victim satisfaction surveys

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

In the 12 months to March 2013, 81.4%<sup>17</sup> of victims were satisfied with the overall service provided by North Wales Police. This is lower than the England and Wales figure of 84.6%.<sup>18</sup>

## Changes to how the public can access services

Forces are exploring different ways in which the public can access policing services. North Wales has reviewed the use of its buildings and premises as part of an estates strategy, to ensure an effective balance between the needs of the force and the provision of accessible services to the public.

North Wales Police is planning to shut ten front counters<sup>19</sup> and close ten police stations between 2010 and 2015, but will open six new shared access points.<sup>20</sup> Opening hours of shared access points are significantly increasing, and the force's signage and livery are clearly displayed in shared buildings.

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17 ± 1.7%.

18 ± 0.2%.

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

20 A non-police building open to the general public to obtain face to face access to police services. For example, shared facilities with council services (e.g. libraries or offices), the fire service or other partners.

## Conclusion

HMIC considers that North Wales Police faces a less difficult financial challenge compared to other forces. It has a smaller savings requirement, a relatively high income, and spends more on police officers and staff (compared with other forces in England and Wales).

The force has already made a major proportion of its savings by reorganising its operating model and reducing its workforce. Because of the proportionately smaller cut to its budget, it plans to lose fewer police officers and staff than most other forces. By saving more than needed in the first half of the spending review, North Wales Police has been able to recruit additional officers, and plans to focus these on the front line. HMIC would expect that an increase in the proportion of officers in crime-fighting roles will lead to greater reductions in crime levels, and improved victim satisfaction.

North Wales Police is finalising savings plans for 2014/15. Based on the force's track record and over achievement of savings, we would expect North Wales Police to achieve its savings requirement.

Looking ahead, the force faces further potential pressures should the additional grant it receives from Government be phased out, or if the expected year-on-year increases in income from council tax set out in the force's financial forecast are not realised.

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

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

Our inspection focused on three questions:

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

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

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

This report provides the findings for North Wales Police.