



Inspecting policing
in the public interest

Valuing the Police: Preparedness Inspection

**South Yorkshire Police
July 2011**

Purpose of the review

The Police Service, along with all other parts of the public sector, is facing its biggest financial challenge in a generation. This could be seen either as an opportunity to innovate and refresh – or as a reason to continue as is and see services cut back.

Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC) has been heavily involved in monitoring the Service's reaction and preparedness for cutting crime while reducing costs. As part of this, in Spring 2011 we carried out an inspection of all 43 forces and authorities in England and Wales, to assess:

- how they are planning to meet the financial challenge; and
- what the impact will be on the service they provide to the public.

This report summarises the findings for South Yorkshire Police. A thematic report, *Adapting to Austerity*, which brings together findings from all 43 forces, is also available from www.hmic.gov.uk.

Findings for South Yorkshire Police

What is the financial challenge in South Yorkshire?

South Yorkshire Police and South Yorkshire Police Authority reported that they are facing a **£40.9m** cash reduction to their budget over the four years of the comprehensive spending review period (2011/12–14/15). In real terms (ie when inflation is taken into account), this equates to 13% of their gross revenue expenditure.

Are the force and authority prepared to meet this financial challenge?

The force and authority clearly understood the scale of their immediate budget challenge. However, some of the assumptions they were using to assess what their financial position will be in future years (for instance, around how much pay will go up, or the amount of funding they will receive from council tax) were more optimistic than those being used by other forces and authorities. This creates a risk that their final budget reduction may turn out to be larger than they were anticipating (although they did have reserve funds available, which could be used if necessary).

At the time of inspection, financial plans were in place for 2011/12, although budgeting for future years required further development. South Yorkshire Police was using a combination of force-wide and local plans to address the financial challenge, but did not have an effective overarching programme plan, with clear schedules and savings milestones. Governance, programme and project management structures were still evolving and had not yet been fully embedded. As a result, some plans were contradictory and did not align with agreed policies.

What will be the impact on the number of police officers and staff?

South Yorkshire Police planned to make the following changes to its workforce numbers.

	Police Officers	Police Staff	PCSO
31 March 2010 (actual)	2,974	2,408	317
31 March 2015 (proposed)	2,538	1,615	299

March 2010 figures have been used as the baseline, because most forces began a recruitment freeze in that year, and as a result workforce numbers started to fall. The proposed figures shown for March 2015 were provided to HMIC by the force in June 2011.

The force and authority's plans for the workforce will continue to be refined as the change programme progresses.

What will be the impact on service to the public?

At the time of inspection, neither the force nor the authority fully understood what impact the planned changes would have on the service delivered to the public. The Chief Constable had a vision for the force, which focused on retaining capability while reducing capacity; but there was little evidence that this was driving the financial planning.

Public engagement had been limited to consulting about policing priorities rather than about the cuts or possible impact on service delivery. The force and authority both had communications plans in place; however, these were not yet aligned to ensure that a consistent message went out to the community.

Does the force have targets to reduce crime and ASB?

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

South Yorkshire's *Policing Plan 2011/12* includes objectives to reduce both crime and anti-social behaviour (ASB).

