



Inspecting policing  
in the public interest

**Policing in austerity:  
One year on**

**Suffolk Constabulary  
July 2012**

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## 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](http://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 Suffolk Constabulary, and is based on data provided by the force in February 2012.<sup>1</sup>

HMIC will continue to monitor the progress made by the force, and to publish the results on our website ([www.hmic.gov.uk](http://www.hmic.gov.uk)).

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<sup>1</sup> 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.

Suffolk Constabulary is a small force compared to other forces in England and Wales. The force covers a geographical area of 1,400 square miles with a population of 720,000 people. It has a relatively small budget in comparison to other similarly sized forces.

The force has undertaken a comprehensive review of many of its key policing functions and departments. This is part of its change programme in response to the financial challenges experienced by policing nationally. It has made reductions in the number of police officers, particularly at supervisor level. This has been done in order to preserve the numbers of frontline officers within neighbourhood teams. The force has also made reductions in the number of police staff.

Suffolk has undertaken an extensive and ambitious programme of collaboration with its preferred partner Norfolk Constabulary. The collaboration programme between the two forces is one of the most ambitious and well planned in the country. One of the major elements of the collaboration has seen the two forces introduce six Police Investigation Centres (PICs) across their force areas (where arrested people are detained and dedicated units complete the investigations). The partnership has already successfully delivered savings through shared services, such as major crime and operational planning, while others provide non-cashable benefits (e.g. PICs). Further significant savings are due to be delivered as other units collaborate later this year. Nationally, Suffolk plans to achieve the highest proportion of savings from collaboration.

Because of the changes it is making Suffolk 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 similar to most other forces. The proportion of police officers on the front line increases over the same period from 86% to 89%, resulting in a proportion of police officers which is again in line with the rest of the country. The total number of crimes recorded by the force remains stable, although this is out of step with England and Wales as a whole, where crime rates have fallen. Surveys show that 82% of victims in Suffolk are satisfied with the overall service provided by the force: this is in line with national figures.

The following sections of this report explore: money (how much Suffolk 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 the public, not only to understand how your force is meeting savings, but how it continues to improve the services you receive.

## Money – meeting the savings

### What is the financial challenge in Suffolk Constabulary?

**£16.9 million** – the amount Suffolk Constabulary will need to save between 2011 and 2015 (based on the force's calculations). There are 31 forces in England and Wales with larger savings to make as a proportion of their overall budgets.

**By Spring 2012, Suffolk had developed plans which outlined how it will achieve £16.7m (99%) of its savings requirement. The force is using reserves to balance its budget.**



Suffolk's four-year plan is based on the force saving £6m by March 2012 (i.e. in the first year of the budget reductions). The force reported that by December 2011 it had already saved £3.9m.

As well as funding from the Government, forces also receive money from local council tax. The police authority has decided to increase by 3.8% the amount of money you pay for policing from your council tax in 2012/13. This is one of 22 forces in England and Wales where it will increase.

Within the force'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 force 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?

**190** – the number of posts the force plans to cut by 2015. 10 of these will be police officer posts. This is a 1% 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 force in February 2012, Suffolk Constabulary is planning to make the following changes to its workforce between March 2010 and March 2015. By March 2012 the force will have achieved 81% 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).

|                       | <b>31 March 2010<br/>(actual)*</b> | <b>Planned<br/>Change 31<br/>March 2010 –<br/>31 March 2015*</b> | <b>% change in<br/>Suffolk</b> | <b>% change<br/>across<br/>England and<br/>Wales</b> |
|-----------------------|------------------------------------|--|--------------------------------|--|
| <b>Officers</b>       | 1,250                              | -10  | -1%                            | -10%   |
| <b>PCSOs</b>          | 170                                | -10  | -3%                            | -10%   |
| <b>Police staff**</b> | 970                                | -170   | -17%                           | -19%   |

#### Notes:

\* 2010 is a snapshot of the number of people in post, whereas the 2015 data is projected number of posts.

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.

\*\* To note: 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) Suffolk Constabulary estimates will be working on the front line by 2015.

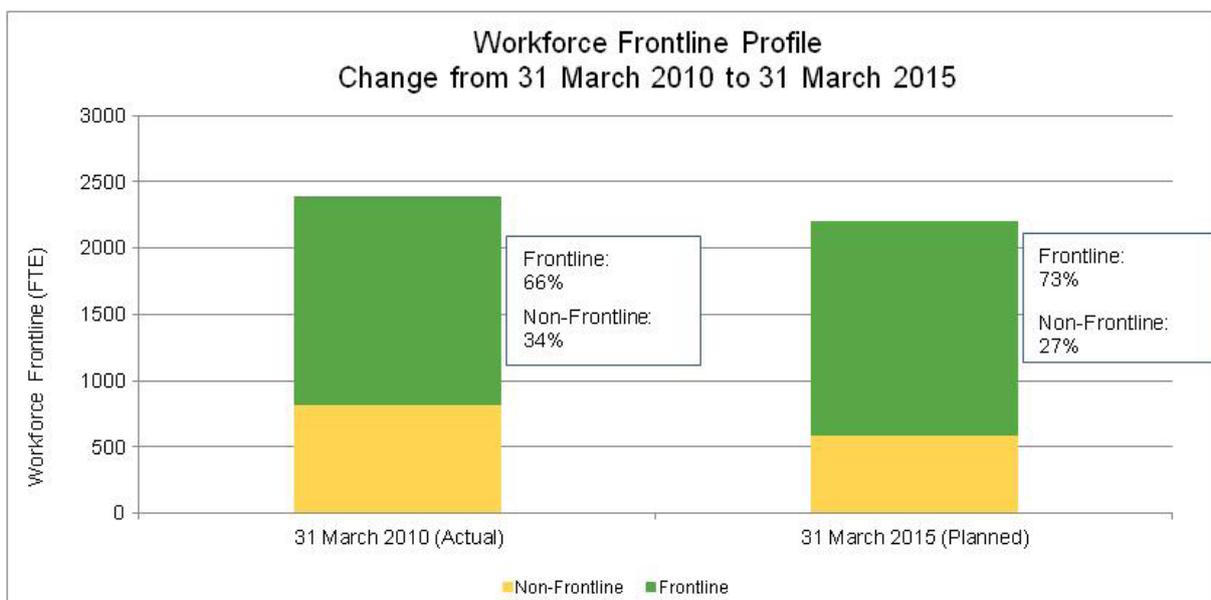
**89%** – the proportion of police officers specifically the force estimates will be working on the front line by 2015, an increase of three percentage points from 2010.

### 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 increase from 1,580 in March 2010 to an estimated 1,620 by March 2015.

Based on these figures, the **proportion** of Suffolk’s total workforce allocated to frontline roles will increase from 66% to 73%. This compares with an increase across England and Wales from 67% to 74%.

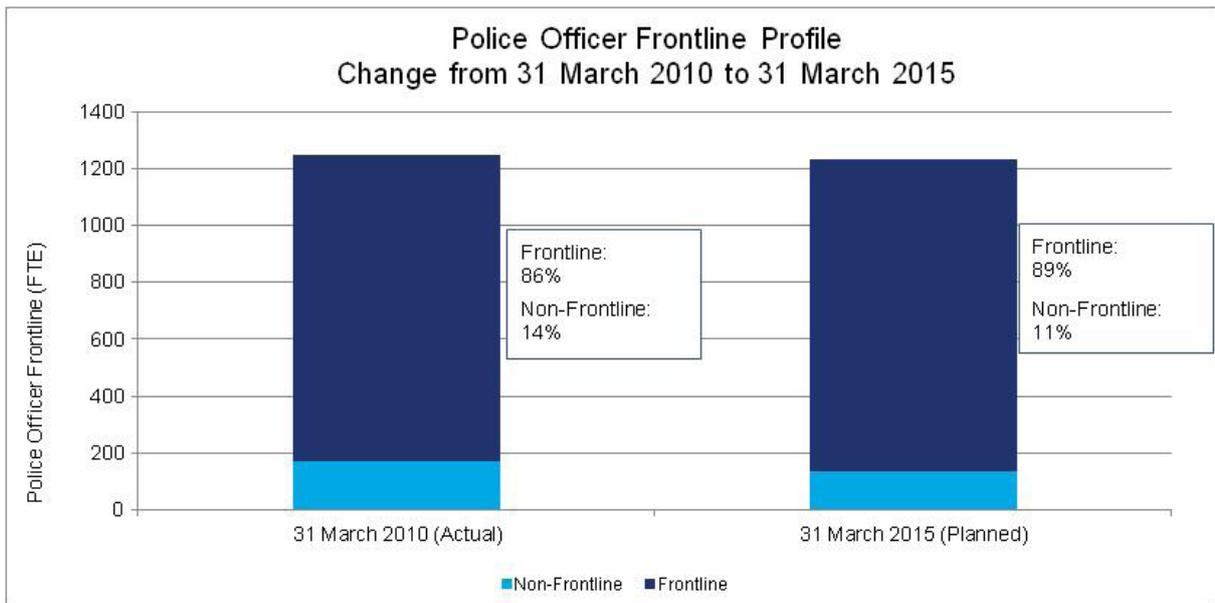
The following chart shows the change in the workforce frontline profile for Suffolk.



## Number and proportion of police officers in frontline roles

Looking specifically at police officers: the **number** of officers working on the front line will increase from 1,080 in March 2010 to an estimated 1,100 by March 2015. The number working in non-frontline roles will drop (from 170 to 130).

Based on these figures, the **proportion** of Suffolk's police officers allocated to frontline roles will increase from 86% to 89%, as the following chart shows. This is in line with 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?**

**65%** – the proportion of police officers and PCSOs which Suffolk 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](http://www.hmic.gov.uk)).

HMIC recently looked at whether Suffolk 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 a decrease 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.

Between 2010 and 2015 Suffolk will reduce the number of front counters by 11, but will increase the number of other locations (e.g. local authority buildings) where you will be able to physically access policing services by 11, compared with 2010. The provision of front-counter services remains a key element of service delivery for the force.

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

**1%** – the reduction in recorded crime levels overall in Suffolk between the 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 21st out of 42<sup>2</sup> 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 Suffolk in a separate report, which is available on our website.)

| Type of crime           | Difference between years ending Dec 2010 and Dec 2011 in Suffolk | Difference between years ending Dec 2010 and Dec 2011 across England and Wales |
|-------------------------|--|--|
| All crime               | -1%  | -3%  |
| Victim-based crime*     | 0%   | -2%  |
| Robbery                 | 19%  | 3%   |
| Burglary                | -8%  | -1%  |
| Criminal damage & Arson | -5%  | -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 Suffolk. 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) 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.

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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 Suffolk is 82%, which is in line with the rate for England and Wales as a whole.