Taking time for crime

A study of how police officers
prevent crime in the field

Contents

Executive Summary

This paper sets out the key findings of a short observational study of individual uniformed and detective officers in 36 shifts across six police forces conducted by HMIC, with some accompanying data analysis. The study was designed to examine how frontline officers actually carried out their policing role in the field. Crucially, observers looked at how they were supported in doing this by organisational systems and structures such as technology, intelligence, supervision, or training.

The study is intended to trigger discussion about the development of policing that deals with the needs of austerity. It seeks to identify opportunities to shift policing from a reactive to a preventive approach.

A preventive policing approach is critical because it reduces crime and the demands that go with it. This study found that an absence of clarity around the mission for policing, together with weaknesses in operational support and limitations in training, are barriers to the majority of constables taking time to prevent crime. This will pose a real difficulty in achieving what the future requires – more for less.

- Some claim only 20 percent of officers' time is spent on crime – we found if you include responding where there is a risk of crime it is at least 80 percent.
- Crime prevention is only one out of the 190 modules constables receive in their initial training.
- Out of the 19 basic technology operating systems now required by a constable to carry out frontline roles away from police stations, only one was consistently available and was not always effectual.

Although this scoping study was small, it identified clear barriers preventing frontline police officers from being able to fight crime proactively, which appeared consistently across the board. These can be grouped under three main headings:

Absence of clarity around a single mission for policing – forces all use different mission statements and these vary even across departments within a force. This undermines the legitimacy of both leadership and crime-fighting roles.

Weaknesses in operational support – intelligence systems lack the capability to provide officers with near real-time, relevant information and intelligence in the field. Also, the deployment of officers was rarely planned throughout shifts to achieve the best effect. Technology was patchy and varied and, where available, was often not fully functioning or adopted by officers.

Failures in training – training was focused on procedures and legal use of police powers rather than on becoming an effective crime-fighter. The emphasis is on removing risk rather than proactive intervention. Some evidence-based knowledge is taught, but there is little evidence that this is being applied on the ground (CID officers being the exception).

In each of the six forces, we found elements of '**advanced practice**' which, if combined, would support constables as independent professionals in the field and deliver improved public protection in the years ahead. However, no one force had all the elements necessary for efficient and proactive crime prevention.

We found that much of the activity not currently classed as 'crime fighting' by the service does in fact relate directly or indirectly to crime – 80 percent of officers' time was spent responding to demand in order to protect people from becoming victims of crime, or to stop crimes happening (for example, investigating reports of suspicious activity, dealing with missing persons etc). This was supported by the quantitative incident analysis: 90 percent of incidents reported to police related directly or indirectly to crime.

However, after responding to incidents in this way, officers were often left to follow up in situations where other agencies were slow to act or reluctant to pick them up.

Summary of next steps for consideration:

- The role of the frontline officer, the most precious asset in the delivery of policing to the public, should be at the forefront of the task to professionalise the police service.
- The mission of policing should be reduced to a core set of words that is understood and used by frontline officers and staff across the 43 forces.
- Police intelligence infrastructure should be designed around the roles of frontline professionals who should be given a real voice in how this is done.
- Authorised Professional Practice should be built around evidence-based practice, setting out the design and intended effect of all frontline roles, especially for the ranks of constable to superintendent.
- Police training curricula and standards should deliver knowledge and skills in law, procedure and evidence-based practice to equip officers to operate as independent professionals in the field.
- Innovation and not procurement should drive technology development that is directly focused on enabling productivity of independent professionals in the field.

Introduction

'It should be understood, at the outset, that the principal object to be attained is "the prevention of crime". To this great end every effort of the Police is to be directed'. [1]

A preventive policing approach is critical because it reduces crime and the demands that go with it. This study found that an absence of clarity around the mission for policing, together with weaknesses in operational support and limitations in training, are barriers to the majority of constables taking time to prevent crime. This will pose a real difficulty in achieving what the future requires – more for less. We have found elements of advanced practice in six police forces which, if combined, would support constables as independent professionals in the field and deliver improved public protection in the years ahead.

- Some claim only 20 percent of officers' time is spent on crime – we found if you include responding where there is a risk of crime it is at least 80 percent.
- Crime prevention is only one out of the 190 modules constables receive in their initial training.
- Out of the 19 basic technology operating systems required by a constable now to carry out frontline roles away from police stations only one was consistently available and was not always effectual.

The aspiration here is for policing to become more 'preventive' in nature, embedding an approach where officers are supported and enabled to anticipate, whenever possible, the risk of crimes happening and to act to prevent them or reduce their impact on victims[2]. It is an approach that is supported by strong academic evidence of what works to reduce crime and is much wider than the 'crime prevention' label given to the narrow field of designing out crime – for example fitting locks on doors. It requires a level of knowledge and understanding of what causes high volume offending, repeat victimisation or problems in hotspots, and of what the solutions to these might be.

This study has been a 'bottom-up' look at what works, and how to improve the way individual uniformed and detective officers are supported and enabled to tackle crime. It seeks to build on success in other sectors where strategy is developed around the need to co-ordinate the tactical capability to deliver the mission and is underpinned by doctrine that describes the 'effect' that frontline officers should have in the field.

These officers are right on the front line of policing. The best use is not being made of their time. In austerity they need the best support to deliver a preventive policing approach that reduces demand and improves outcomes with less resource. The alternative of trying to increase productivity top-down, that is, through the 43 forces and 151 Basic Command Units (BCUs), has historically introduced more bureaucracy and demands on the front line.

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[1] Draft Instructions on establishing the Metropolitan Police, courtesy of Metropolitan Police Museum,1829
[2] American Crime Prevention Institute, http://acpionline.com/law-enforcement/

The challenge for police leaders to transform the police operating model can be incredibly frustrating. They work in a landscape characterised by complicated lengthy procurement processes, a historical layering of technology and an absence of common agreement on what is needed between forces, police authorities and government departments. Leaders are left to fight the present with what was inherited from the past. These challenges used to be overcome by increasing officer numbers, setting up pro-active units, legislation and policy and, of course, bureaucracy. That is no longer an option. Being able to collaborate within the public sector, or contract and leverage private sector support, is difficult in a change landscape characterised by interminable delays. Credit must be given to those who have made progress despite the barriers.

Methodology

This report used analysis of incident data, stakeholder interviews and an observational study of uniform and detective officers working during 36 shifts, covering 24 hours and across six forces. The six forces who agreed to participate in this study were representative of a range of operating contexts from large urban to small rural areas. Full details of the methodology can be found in Appendix A.

Key Findings

What do the police do and what time do they spend doing it?

There has been a debate about how much time the police spend on crime. This study looks at how frontline officers actually spend their time. Overwhelmingly it is spent on crime or stopping things that the public feel are dangerous or wrong and should cease immediately.

All police forces are required to record the incidents that are reported to them in a consistent manner[3]. HMIC looked at the recorded incident types across the six forces for 2011/12, a total of 7.8m incidents. After stripping out administrative records[4] (3.1m incidents) HMIC grouped the 4.7m remaining incident types into categories created to illustrate whether there was a potential for crime associated with the incident type. HMIC also considered whether police powers could typically be needed as part of an effective response. In determining the category into which to place an incident type, HMIC had to apply a judgement on what might constitute preventing crime in the eyes of the public who, in a previous HMIC inspection[5], were found not to differentiate anti-social behaviour (ASB) from crime.

The data supplied by the six forces suggested that in 28 percent of the 4.7m recorded incidents a crime had actually taken place, and in 17 percent of the 4.7m incidents some form of ASB had occurred. However, HMIC found that in the bulk of

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[3] The National Standard for Incident Recording (NSIR), 2011, National Policing Improvement Agency

[4] Administrative records are primarily messages and records of contact

[5] Stop the Rot, HMIC (2010). Research carried out by MORI for the HMIC inspection

the remaining incidents (a further 55 percent) there was a potential for crime that the police could not discount without a closer assessment of the circumstances. This is illustrated in the two charts that follow. Figure 1 sets out the categories of incidents, not already recorded as crimes, that HMIC judged to be potential crime (i.e. where there was a risk of crime associated with the incident type).

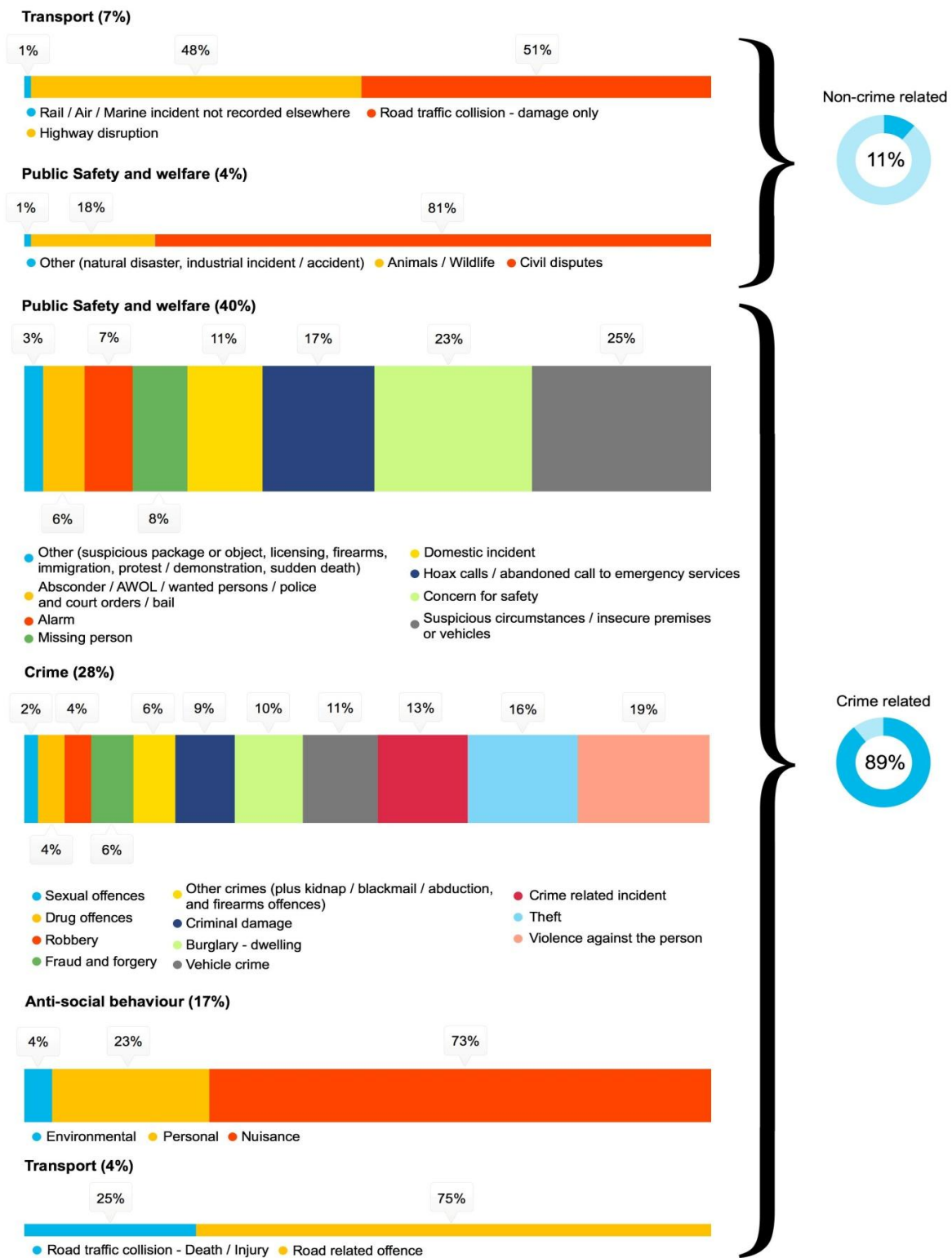**Figure 1 – The Public call the Police for Crime and Potential Crime***

Incident sub category description	Incident Main Category Description	Crime and ASB	Potential Crime
Road Traffic Collision – Death/Injury	Transport	No	Yes
Road Traffic Collision – Damage Only	Transport	No	No
Highway Disruption	Transport	No	No
Road Related Offence	Transport	No	Yes
Rail/Air/Marine Incident	Transport	No	No
Anti-social Behaviour - Personal	Anti-social Behaviour	Yes	Yes
Anti-social Behaviour - Nuisance	Anti-social Behaviour	Yes	Yes
Anti-social Behaviour - Environmental	Anti-social Behaviour	Yes	Yes
Absconder/AWOL	Public Safety and Welfare	No	Yes
Alarm	Public Safety and Welfare	No	Yes
Animals/Wildlife	Public Safety and Welfare	No	No
Civil Disputes	Public Safety and Welfare	No	No
Concern for Safety	Public Safety and Welfare	No	Yes
Domestic Incident	Public Safety and Welfare	No	Yes
Firearms	Public Safety and Welfare	No	Yes
Hoax Calls/Abandoned Call to Emergency Services	Public Safety and Welfare	No	Yes
Immigration	Public Safety and Welfare	No	Yes
Industrial Incident/Accident	Public Safety and Welfare	No	No
Licensing	Public Safety and Welfare	No	Yes
Missing Person	Public Safety and Welfare	No	Yes
Natural Disaster	Public Safety and Welfare	No	No
Protest/Demonstration	Public Safety and Welfare	No	Yes
Sudden Death	Public Safety and Welfare	No	Yes
Suspicious Circumstances	Public Safety and Welfare	No	Yes
Suspicious Package or Object	Public Safety and Welfare	No	Yes
Violence against person	Crime	Yes	Yes
Burglary - dwelling	Crime	Yes	Yes
Criminal damage	Crime	Yes	Yes
Kidnap/Blackmail/Abduct	Crime	Yes	Yes
Robbery	Crime	Yes	Yes
Sexual offence	Crime	Yes	Yes
Theft	Crime	Yes	Yes
Vehicle Crime	Crime	Yes	Yes
Drug offences	Crime	Yes	Yes
Firearms offences	Crime	Yes	Yes
Fraud and Forgery	Crime	Yes	Yes
Crime Related Incident	Crime	Yes	Yes
Crime other	Crime	Yes	Yes

*Management information provided by six forces

As can be seen in Figure 2 below, in almost 90 percent of incidents recorded in the six forces, there was a crime or the potential for a crime to happen. Having ascertained this fact, HMIC went on to examine the time officers spent on these crime-related incidents. Across the 36 shifts observed, officers spent about 80 percent of their time on activity that related directly or indirectly to crime. However, the study found that too often the officers who responded to these calls were

provided with poor information about the incidents they were attending and were left with the issue, once there was no longer a risk of crime, because other agencies were slow and sometimes reluctant to pick them up.

Figure 2 – Incidents the police deal with*

*Management information provided by six forces

What is the mission and how is it understood?

Clarity of mission is a fundamental building block for any successful organisation. It enables leaders at all levels to focus resources, objectives, decisions and activities on a common purpose. This study found that the six forces used different mission statements, none of which were the nationally agreed statement[6]. The word-cloud below illustrates the range and frequency of the words used.

Figure 3 – Word-cloud of words used in 43 force mission statements

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[6] Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) Police Mission Statement, www.acpo.police.uk. A further National Policing Vision is in development.

Only one of the force mission statements was explicit about preventing crime. Communication of mission statements was, more often than not, lost among other messages.

The different words HMIC found in mission statements served only to confuse officers and staff and undermined the legitimacy of both force's leadership and the role of officers in preventing crime. With 43 different force-level mission statements, and well-intentioned attempts by leaders at BCU level to influence values and behaviours, officers have become unclear about exactly what the mission is. Concerns about accountability and responsibility then drive the service to absorb the demands made of it, regardless of their relevance to a core mission.

Even when responding to a public who wanted them to deal with things they regarded as wrong or dangerous, officers sought to justify why they were not dealing with 'proper' crimes more of the time.

The diagram at Figure 4 (below) illustrates how clarity of the core mission is lost as it is interpreted and re-interpreted in different areas and at different organisational levels. It ends with police officers and Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs) in response, neighbourhood and Criminal Investigation Department (CID) roles in England and Wales, in the order of 89,544[7], having their own individual version of what they think they are there to do and the effect they are meant to have.

Figure 4 – Mission Pyramid

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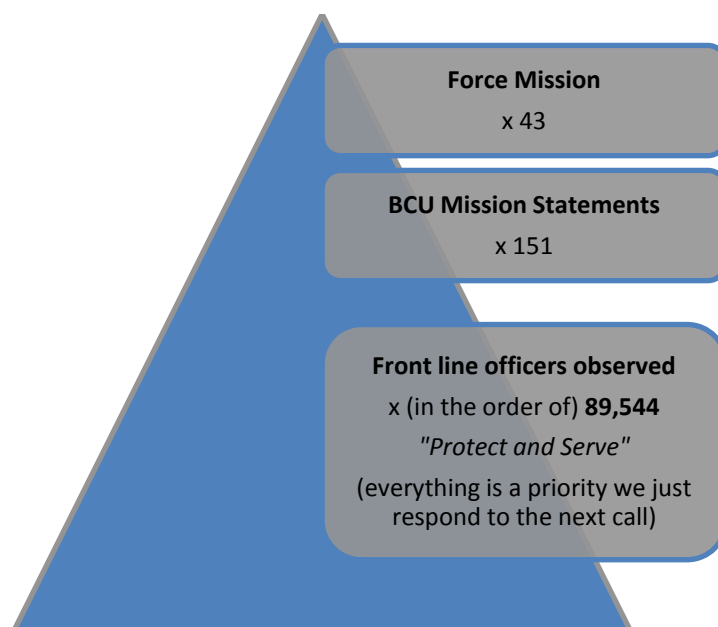
[7] Police service workforce strength statistics for March 2012, published by the Home Office on 26 July 2012 (39,537 police officers and 18 PCSOs in response, 20,722 police officers and 13,880 PCSOs in neighbourhood policing, 15,384 police officers and 3 PCSOs in CID).

What knowledge do officers have to fight crime?

Training for officers in this study focused more on how to use powers legally, than how to use them to be more effective crime-fighters. Officers relied heavily on their own experience and that of their colleagues for the knowledge they used to carry out their roles. After their first two years probation, uniformed officers on the front line receive little in terms of role specific training. However, where a need to reduce risk to the officer or organisation was identified (for example, police driving and health and safety) then technical training was provided.

In their first two years officers receive training through the Initial Police Learning and Development Programme (IPLDP). The curriculum contains core national learning objectives with the flexibility to incorporate training modules that are specific to local needs. The 'word-cloud' at Figure 5 below is derived from the IPLDP curriculum. It demonstrates the breadth of training received by police officers joining the service. The size of the text represents the frequency with which the word appears in the initial police training curriculum which, for uniform officers, forms the bulk of their training (aside from the technical risk-based training).

Figure 5 – IPLDP Curriculum

Although initial training includes one module out of 190 on evidence-based approaches to crime prevention, it is not reinforced as important in the workplace and no evidence was found that the knowledge was being applied on the ground by the officers. This was not the case for CID officers who received role-specific training, development and the associated accreditation through the Professionalising Investigation Programme.

How does the intelligence infrastructure support crime-fighting?

With an increasingly mobile criminal community that is globally connected, an effective intelligence infrastructure is crucial in the fight against crime. The value of quality and timely information in the hands of an independent police professional cannot be overstated. The briefings and intelligence support available to operational police officers are the foundations of their actions and decision making.

HMIC found that information imparted at briefings usually related to incidents and events of interest that had already happened, rather than what was anticipated, thus they tended to be 'reactive' rather than 'preventive'. Often the information was not tailored for the specific needs of the officers. Some officers in one of the forces visited had designed their own briefing system, sharing intelligence between themselves, rather than relying on the corporate systems. There was evidence that officers did not value, understand or trust the corporate intelligence systems to provide them with the near real-time intelligence that would be of most use to them.

The need for change was highlighted in August 2011 when criminals on the streets of the UK were using social media to plan serious disorder and theft at a pace faster than the service could monitor. This led to HMIC recommending the creation of an 'all-source hub' to scan traditional and social media for warning signals[8]. The aim was not simply to receive and monitor tweets and blogs but to analyse and predict in a more sophisticated way. Such analysis of mood and sentiment behind online activity, and detection of anomalies, is capable of providing an intelligence assessment to inform deployment decisions and optimise effectiveness.

One force trialled an 'all-source hub' in the run up to the Olympic Games. It monitored sentiment and mood across social media, to deliver intelligence and evidence for use against criminal gangs and domestic extremism.

The need to provide officers with real time, accurate information to enable better informed decisions is well recognised. A BCU in one of the forces visited has drawn on academic research findings[9] to pioneer a technique of 'predictive mapping', highlighting where burglaries are likely to occur in the future (not simple hotspot maps of where they have occurred). It then deploys staff to patrol high-risk areas at specific times and uses satellite tracking as a supervision aid. This approach, as the

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[8] 'The Rules of Engagement: A review of the August 2011 disorders'', December 2011, HMIC
[9] Farrell, G., & Pease, K. (2007). Repeat victimisation. Environmental Criminology and Crime Analysis
Johnson, S. D., & Bowers, K. J. (2004b). The burglary as a clue to the future: the beginnings of prospective hot-spotting. European Journal of Criminology, 1, 237–255

central part of a package of measures, has delivered significant burglary reduction in the areas concerned. It clearly has scope to be adopted more widely and an evaluation has since been published[10].

Other aspects of infrastructure are equally important. Respondents in three forces highlighted the extent to which hire cars were relied upon to augment the core fleet. These vehicles commonly had no bespoke police equipment installed. Officers also reported problems with faulty or unreliable computer equipment and vehicles, pointing to a failure in the way outsourced contracts were delivered on the front line.

Overall, intelligence systems lacked the capability to provide relevant, timely and specific information for officers. Officers do not have real-time intelligence provided to them in the field. With one or two worthwhile exceptions, there was little evidence that the deployment of officers was actively planned throughout a shift in order to achieve the best effect. The use of intelligence hubs in two forces that provide real-time intelligence and direction to officers during their shift, and the provision of automatic resource location systems to allow real-time deployment of assets in five forces both show promise, but were variable in their effectiveness on the ground.

Officers were, in the main, left to be a reactive resource and leadership from sergeants and inspectors was not always visible. Officers often found effective ways to carry out their crime-fighting role, but this was despite the infrastructure rather than because of it. This study found a commitment from top to bottom among officers to dealing effectively with whatever situation arose – 'getting by' – regardless of rank.
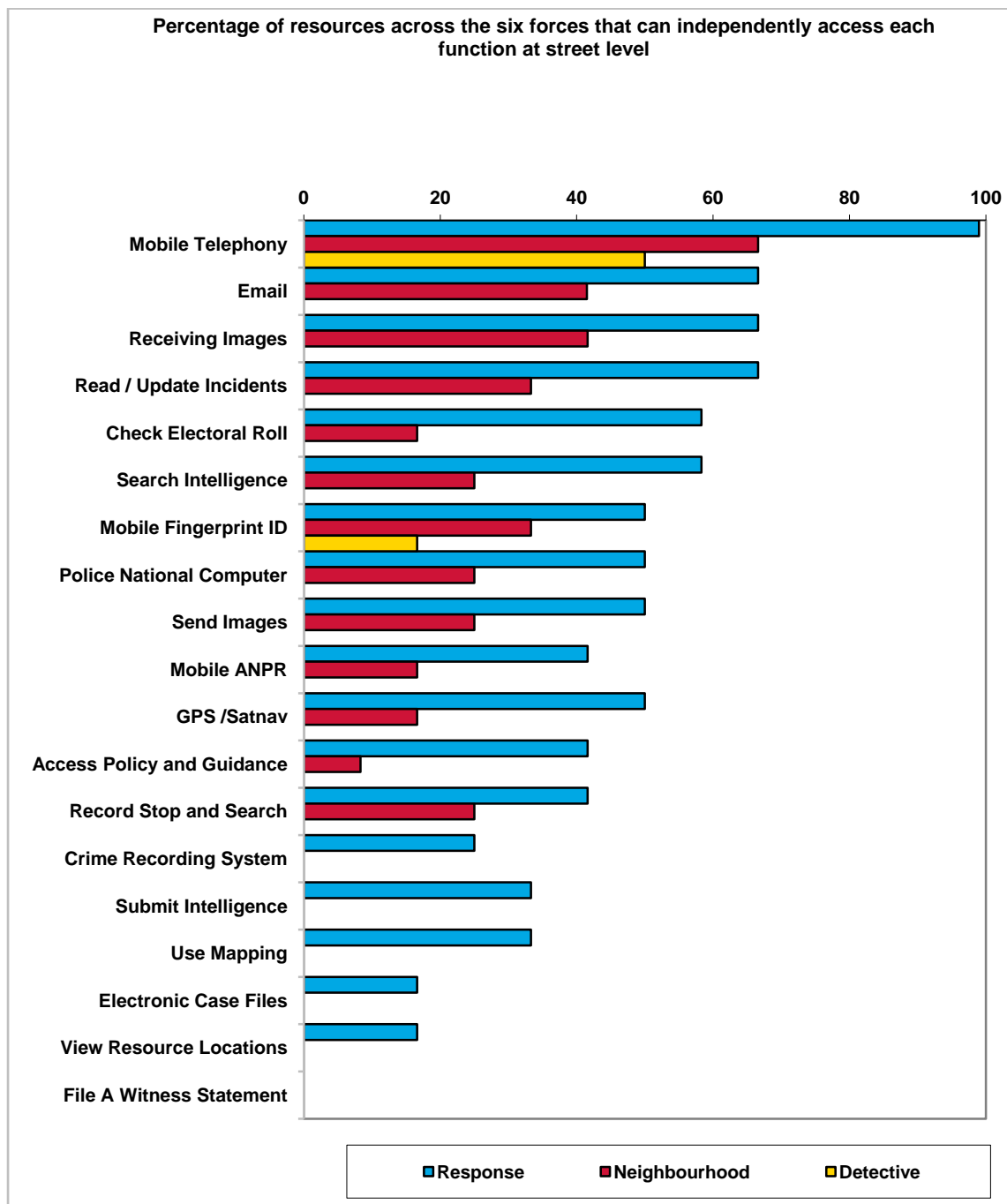
What technology is provided and how well does it support officers?

Officers are provided with a range of technologies to support them. However provision is characterised by layers that are not integrated and vary widely across forces. The study found that supporting and enabling technology was available to key roles in some forces but not in others. Where it was available, it was often not fully functioning in the field and where it was functioning there remained a differential in its take-up by officers.

HMIC created a list of 19 functions (such as email or sending images) that police officers use in their operational role, routinely relying on technology to do so. HMIC looked at 18 teams across the six forces and assessed whether they had access to the technological support they needed to operate independently in the field. A scoring process was then applied to each force's provision so as to reach a comparison between forces. A percentage score was awarded based on the proportion of response, neighbourhood and detective teams that could remotely access each of the 19 functions. Findings are displayed at Figure 6.

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[10] Fielding, M, & Jones, V, (2011), 'Disrupting the optimal forager': predictive risk mapping and domestic burglary reduction, International Journal of Police Science & Management Volume 14 Number 1

Figure 6 – Technology in the field

Percentage of resources across the six forces that can independently access each function at street level

Categories (top to bottom): Mobile Telephony, Email, Receiving Images, Read / Update Incidents, Check Electoral Roll, Search Intelligence, Mobile Fingerprint ID, Police National Computer, Send Images, Mobile ANPR, GPS /Satnav, Access Policy and Guidance, Record Stop and Search, Crime Recording System, Submit Intelligence, Use Mapping, Electronic Case Files, View Resource Locations, File A Witness Statement

Legend: Response | Neighbourhood | Detective

Two of the forces had invested in flexible mobile computing and emerged as having greater capabilities than the other forces. Where it is available, mobile computing enables officers to remotely access and process information away from police stations, both in and out of vehicles. Officers in these forces can do more without needing to return to police stations. Figure 7 offers a comparison of capabilities between a force with a comprehensive mobile data platform and one without.

Figure 7 – Mobile computing benefits

● Fully functional (all officers in a team can use)

◐ Partially functional (some officers in a team can use)

	Force A			Force B		
	Investigation	Neighbourhood	Response	Investigation	Neighbourhood	Response
Mobile Telephony	● (yellow)	● (red)	● (blue)	◐ (yellow)	● (red)	● (blue)
Email		● (red)	● (blue)			
Receiving images		● (red)	● (blue)			
Read / update incidents		● (red)	● (blue)			
Check electoral roll			● (blue)			
Search Intelligence		◐ (red)	● (blue)			
Mobile fingerprint IDs		◐ (red)	◐ (blue)		◐ (red)	◐ (blue)
Police National Computer		● (red)	● (blue)			
Sending images			● (blue)			
Mobile ANPR		◐ (red)	◐ (blue)			◐ (blue)
PS/Satnav			● (blue)			
Access policy / guidance			● (blue)			
Record Stop and Search			● (blue)			
Crime recording system			● (blue)			
Submit intelligence			● (blue)			
Use mapping			● (blue)			
Electronic case files						
View resource location						
File a Witness Statement						

There was also significant evidence that contracted services to keep the technology available and functioning is not effective (for example faulty mobile data terminals and vehicles off the road for servicing).

During the course of this study, HMIC consulted 28 IT companies through the Justice and Emergency Services Information Communication Association (JESICA) on how to improve the service's use of technology. JESICA members described how issues such as public sector procurement practice, which continues to act as a serious barrier to collaborative working with potential customers, have been successfully addressed within other parts of the public sector. They pointed to the success of Niteworks[11] and the opportunities presented by the emergence of Bluelightworks[12].

Niteworks and Bluelightworks

Established in 2003 by the Ministry of Defence (MOD), **Niteworks** is an MOD and pan-industry partnership, which is governed and funded by the MOD. It works across the MOD and industry to analyse problems, examine options and de-risk requirements, helping the MOD to make better, faster and more informed decisions and, ultimately, enable the delivery of solutions to make the soldier more effective at the front line. Niteworks cites impartiality, scalability and agility as the key components of its approach and operates in a way which permits the MOD to access the full range of expertise without individual company bias. The breadth of the partnership (12 core partner companies and over 100 associate companies) avoids narrow solutions, and a collaborative approach to working with stakeholders ensures that the right operational and technical expertise is employed on each project.

Bluelightworks is an embryonic organisation that is taking the core concepts of Niteworks (that is, impartiality, scalability, agility, a pan-industry partnership) and is employing them in the emergency services sector. The intention is to create a collaborative model that is tailored to the organisational structures of the emergency services. Working across the domains of technology, people, training, infrastructure etc, Bluelightworks' goal is to deliver evidence-based options to support strategic outcomes. The partnership would receive problems from police service member organisations and design solutions, using a range of disciplines. There is no procurement obligation but the 'design' can inform the process.

Although developing innovation in partnership is to be encouraged, HMIC is clear that care must be taken to avoid building solutions in isolation from each other. This often results in fragmented information systems which, when taken together, are expensive to maintain and fall short of providing the necessary intelligence infrastructure to the frontline professional. The service, therefore, needs to improve not only the way it innovates, but also the way it procures technology that measurably transforms the productivity of frontline officers. Police and crime commissioners (PCCs) should be wary of investment proposals that do not achieve these aims.

It should be said that even in the worst cases, officers showed an ability to get past all these issues, and the outcomes that followed were often outstanding. They were masterful at 'getting by'.

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[11] See http://www.niteworks.net.gridhosted.co.uk/
[12] See http://bluelightworks.org/

Conclusion

HMIC's role is to challenge and reveal, but this is not confined to looking at the past or just the present. We must, in the public interest, have our eyes to the future of policing.

While society and the operational context were both vastly different, the original policing model created by the first Commissioners in 1829 had a sharp clarity in the mission for officers. Within this mission, there was also absolute certainty about how officers should spend their time in the field shaped by the establishment of beats and supervised by sergeants who were visible and active. A system for passing information to and from the officers was in place and of its time, and officers understood their role was to prevent crime. In essence, the infrastructure was designed specifically to support and enable the constable to be as effective as possible in the field. Over time the police service has experienced an increasing regulatory burden, a widening mission into 'risky' off-street aspects of people's lives such as sex offender management, child abuse and domestic abuse. **As it has interpreted these new demands, it has not adapted rapidly enough to enable the individual professional to operate independently and effectively in the field.**

In other sectors such as the Ambulance Service and the military (as a result of learning from combat in Afghanistan), new operating models are enabling practitioners to work in the field more effectively. The Ambulance Service has shifted its operating model from what was essentially a medical transport service that was staffed by first aiders with some support kit, to today's model where NHS response staff are highly trained paramedics able to operate from a variety of platforms and send real-time data to the hospital to assist diagnosis, offering in the field the kind of support that was previously only delivered in hospitals. The use of technological interventions delivered by fewer, but much more highly qualified staff has delivered a preventive approach that is successful in lowering demand and improving outcomes for patients.

The police service already has very good examples of where its own professionals are enabled to be more effective. For example, detectives in murder investigation, (a clearly defined national role) are supported by a body of role-specific knowledge and policy, elements of which are evidence-based; an effective infrastructure and are supplied real-time intelligence as well as technology that is designed to support their role. However, even at this high level of specialism, the technology does not yet allow real-time access to information and intelligence in the field. The key learning from these examples is the way they have placed the effectiveness of the practitioner at the heart of their strategy, policy and practice.

There is evidence from this study that chief officers are trying to shift gear, but their progress is painfully slow because of:

- a lack of a common view about a way forward;
- lengthy public sector change processes; and
- the difficulties of relating effectively to the private sector and, to a lesser degree, working with other public sector bodies with a different focus.

Leaders across the police service may intend to deliver clarity of mission for a well trained, equipped and supported workforce. However, there is too often a gap between their well-intentioned efforts and the actual experiences of officers on the ground. The officers HMIC interviewed provided ample evidence of how some of the clarity of mission, training, equipment and infrastructure they sought were not available to them.

To conclude, HMIC found that the police spend more of their time fighting crime than is reflected in the debate that has been played out across the service and Government. The use of different mission statements causes confusion among officers about what they are expected to achieve, and sometimes leads to them feeling that what they do in practice is not valued by leaders. For uniformed officers, training is not providing the knowledge of evidence-based practice that is necessary to allow them to operate most productively to prevent crime, as well as deal with risky situations.

The reliance on experience over knowledge encourages a craft-based professionalism that demonstrates real advantages in 'getting-by', despite the organisation's infrastructure and lack of availability of other service providers to support people in need. However, it holds the service back from getting ahead of demand by shifting policing from a reactive to a preventive approach.

More than ever policing needs a view of the future that transcends everyday demands and the requirements of austerity. This report is designed to trigger discussion about how this should be done.

Way Forward

With the imminent creation of a College of Policing and the development of the service's accumulated policy and guidance into a tighter body of Authorised Professional Practice, the time is right to recommend a renewed focus on the frontline police officer. The prospect of successfully improving productivity depends on how well she or he is supported and empowered to operate in the field as an independent professional.

The first step of the College, should be to take the opportunity to place the role of the frontline officer at the forefront of its task to professionalise what is currently a craft-based operation, where experience and/or habit is the driving force for action – not evidence-based knowledge and practice.

The leadership of the service would then need to undertake to provide the required knowledge and to shape the infrastructure around the newly designed 'professional roles' of the frontline officers in the same way it has for what it currently designates as specialist roles. This approach would support an approach to pay and reward that recognises contribution, skills and expertise rather than experience, as recommended in the Winsor Report[13].

The creation of a single, clear mission for policing, with resonance throughout the service, is of central importance to successfully establishing the professionalization of these frontline roles. There is already an Association of Chief Police Officers' (ACPO) Police Mission Statement which could provide this framework if it were able to be easily understood and remembered by frontline officers and leaders alike. Moreover, clarity around the mission is not helped by debate about whether policing is about crime fighting or a wider mission of protecting people when, in practice, what police officers are doing for at least 80 percent of their time is seen by the public as stopping things that are 'criminal' from happening.

Finally, this all needs supporting by technology that works across networks and devices in a way that we are seeing emerge as best practice in the new digital world. The Home Office should take steps to support the service in finding a way where innovation and not procurement drives technology development.

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[13] The Winsor Report – The Independent Review of Police Officer and Staff Renumeration and Conditions

Next Steps

Next steps for consideration:

- The police service and College of Policing should place the role of the frontline officer, the most precious asset in the delivery of policing to the public, at the forefront of their task to professionalise what is currently a craft-based operation; making evidence-based practice the primary driving force for action, rather than experience and habit.

- The College of Policing should work with the leadership of the service to agree and have the discipline to stick to a core set of words which clearly expresses the mission of policing in a way that is understood and used by frontline officers and staff across the 43 forces.

- PCCs and chief constables should consider how to design an effective infrastructure around the roles of the frontline professionals, giving them a real voice in how infrastructure enables them in the field and how contracts for support services (e.g. vehicles and IT) are managed.

- The service and the College should ensure Authorised Professional Practice is built around evidence and is underpinned by tactical doctrine that sets out the design and intended effect of all frontline roles, especially in the ranks of constable to superintendent.

- The College should work with the service to develop the curriculum and standards for training of officers in law, procedure and evidence-based practice to equip them with the knowledge to operate as independent professionals in the field.

- PCCs and the service to work with the private sector to ensure that innovation and not procurement drives technology development, and that it is directly focused on enabling productivity of the independent professionals in the field. They should work with the Home Office to explore how something like 'Bluelightworks'[14] might assist in this.

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[14] New emergency services variant of existing MOD partnership with private sector industry.

Appendix A – Methodology

The methodology used by HMIC for developing the evidence base to support this report is set out below:

1. A document review to develop a service wide view of strategic leadership priorities, mission statements and core values to determine their influence in developing a crime preventing culture.

2. A review of relevant data including incident demand and resourcing data.

3. A selection process to determine which six forces would be included in inspection visits. Forces were selected against the following criteria:

- Forces that had agreed to participate in developing this work.
- Forces that covered a wide variety of operating contexts including cities, towns and rural areas.
- Forces that were able to manage HMIC's visit without it impacting on operational delivery.

4. Site visits were undertaken between Monday 23 April 2012 and Friday 18 May 2012 to the six forces, by a team of six HMIC staff, for a period of four days in each force. The in-force activity consisted of:

- Reality checking of force process and practices.
- Interviews and focus groups with staff including:
    - Force ACPO officer
    - PC Focus Groups
    - Sergeants Focus Groups
    - Inspectors Focus Groups
    - PCSO Focus Groups
    - CID Focus Group
    - Control room visits
    - Force IT managers

In addition to interviews, HMIC undertook observational work of frontline staff from the following groups:

- Detective Constables in the main CID office
- Response team Police Sergeants
- Neighbourhood Police Constables
- Neighbourhood PCSOs
- Response team Inspectors
- Response team Police Constables

Six observations were undertaken in each force covering early, late and night shifts.

The full breakdown of the shifts observed covering staff and times is set out in the table below:

Shifts Observed

'Early' is a shift starting before 9am

'Late' is a shift starting between 1pm and 4pm

'Night' is a shift starting at 9pm

	Response staff			Neighbourhood staff		CID	Totals
	PC	Sergeant	Inspector	PC	PCSO	DC	
Early	4	2	0	3	2	4	15
Late	1	0	0	5	4	1	11
Night	4	2	4	0	0	0	10
Total	9	4	4	8	6	5	36

HMIC observers recorded both quantitative and qualitative data for each person they observed. In developing its observational methodology, HMIC took into account the approach used by the National Policing Improvement Agency in its *Diary of the Police Officer*[15] reports. In categorising activity HMIC used nine primary codes:

- Anti-social Behaviour
- Concern for Safety
- Crime
- Suspicious Activity
- Domestic/Civil dispute
- Other non-crime
- Public Safety/Event Management
- Traffic/Road Related
- Transport/Deliveries

For the purposes of analysis the first six codes were considered as fitting within the police mission of 'crime preventing' and the last three codes were not.

5. An extensive evidence database was developed from the in-force activity and this was collected on bespoke evidence-gathering templates, which were combined to produce the comprehensive evidence base. The evidence base was also supplemented with evidence taken from the initial document review and later benchmarking research, with organisations within and outside of the UK. In total this evidence base contains:

- 1,545 interview records
- 36 shifts observed
- 529 observational records

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[15] Police Research Series paper 149 – "Diary of a police officer" P. A. Consulting Group 2001