



Inspecting policing  
in the public interest

**Policing in austerity:  
One year on**

**Thames Valley Police  
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 Thames Valley Police, 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.

Thames Valley Police is a large force, and has a big budget compared to the rest of England and Wales. It has a history of bringing down costs while increasing efficiency and effectiveness, and this has stood it in good stead as the force has worked to understand the financial challenge of the 2010 comprehensive spending review. As a result it is a good position to achieve its savings target by 2015.

The force introduced a new local policing model in April 2011, which delivers local policing through 15 local policing areas. It is committed to maintaining the number of officers who deliver local policing. These include officers who work on neighbourhood policing teams, patrol teams and local investigation teams. The savings that the force made in other areas of policing enabled it to increase the number of officers delivering frontline policing by 35 during 2011/12, and it forecasts that it will make further increases over the next two years.

The force shares some people and work with Hampshire Constabulary and this has already produced significant savings, with more savings forecast during 2012/13 and beyond. It is collaborating with Hampshire on information and computer technology, information management and some specialist areas of policing such as officers who police the road networks, officers who work with police dogs and officers who carry firearms.

The force is also looking at other areas of work which may be shared with Hampshire Constabulary. The challenge of delivering this sort of collaborative working is not to be underestimated, but there is a strong commitment from both the force and the authority to making it work.

Thames Valley is also making savings from its administration costs, particularly from those departments based within its police headquarters. The force is also reducing the numbers and costs of the vehicles and buildings that it uses. It is planning to keep all police stations that are currently open to the public, although some will have reduced opening hours from July 2012. The force is increasing the number of activities that the public can complete online. These include crime reporting, firearms licence applications and freedom of information requests.

Because of the changes it is making Thames Valley Police 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 also increases over the same period from 81% to 90%, which is broadly in line with most other forces. Crime levels are decreasing in Thames Valley at the highest rate in England and Wales. 85% of victims were satisfied with the service from Thames Valley Police, which is above the national rate.

The following sections of this report explore: money (how much Thames Valley Police 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 you to understand both how your force is making savings, and how it continues to improve the services you receive.

## Money – meeting the savings

### What is the financial challenge in Thames Valley Police?

**£55 million** – the amount Thames Valley Police will need to save between 2011 and 2015 (based on the force's calculations). There are 36 forces in England and Wales with larger savings to make as a proportion of their budget.

**By Spring 2012, Thames Valley had developed plans which outlined how it will achieve £55m (100%) of its savings requirement.**



Thames Valley Police's four-year plan is based on the force saving £15.6m by March 2012 (i.e. in the first year of the budget reductions). The force reported that it had already saved this amount by December 2011.

As well as funding from the Government, forces also receive money from local council tax. The police authority has decided not to increase the amount of money you pay for policing from your council tax in 2012/13. This is one of 20 forces in England and Wales where it will not 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?

**360** – the number of posts the force plans to cut by 2015. 120 of these will be police officer posts. This is a 3% reduction in police officer posts, compared with a 10% reduction across England and Wales.

Because 81% of police budgets (on average) is 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, Thames Valley Police is planning to make the following changes to its workforce between March 2010 and March 2015. (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.) By March 2012 the force will have achieved 23% of the required reduction of its workforce.

	<b>31 March 2010 (actual)*</b>	<b>Planned Change 31 March 2010 – 31 March 2015*</b>	<b>% change in Thames Valley</b>	<b>% change across England and Wales</b>
<b>Officers</b>	4,430	-120	-3%	-10%
<b>PCSOs</b>	500	-50	-9%	-10%
<b>Police staff**</b>	3,000	-200	-7%	-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) Thames Valley Police estimates will be working on the front line by 2015.

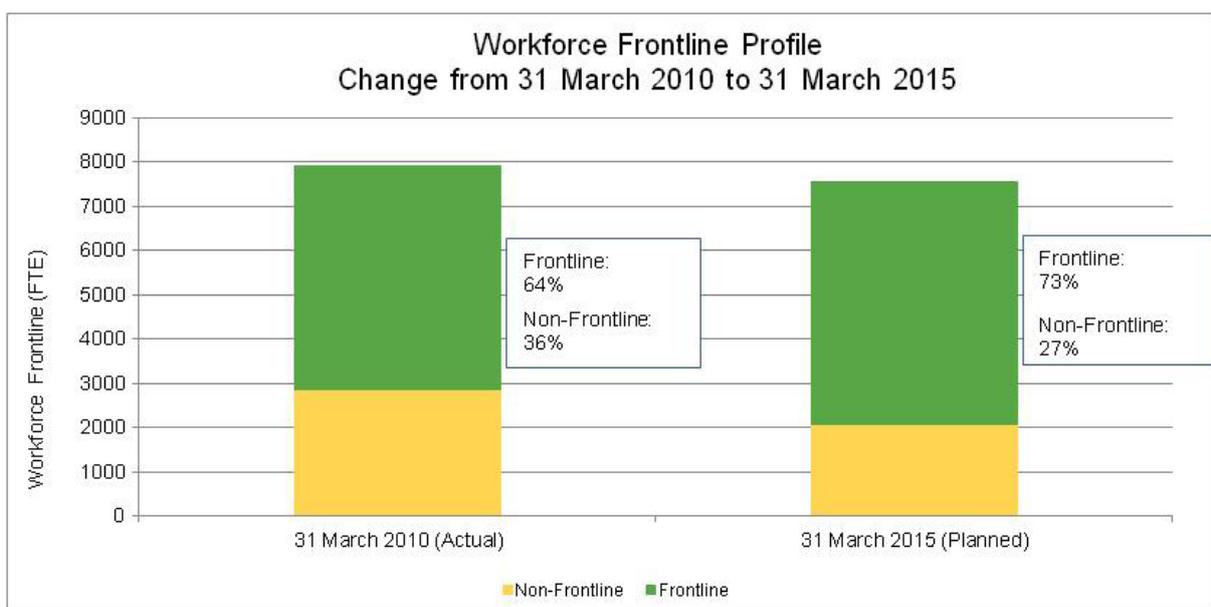
**90%** – the proportion of police officers specifically the force estimates will be working on the front line by 2015, up by nine percentage points from 2010.

### 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 5,090 in March 2010 to an estimated 5,540 by March 2015.

Based on these figures, the **proportion** of Thames Valley Police’s total workforce allocated to frontline roles will increase from 64% to 73%. This compares with an overall increase across England and Wales from 67% to 74%.

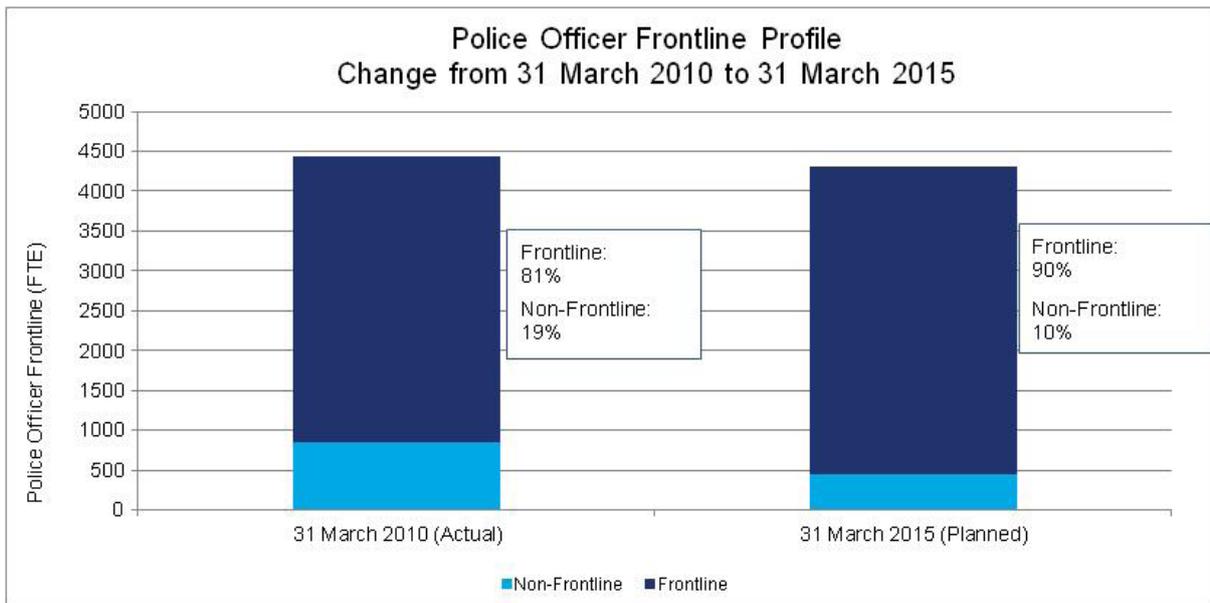
The following chart shows the change in the workforce frontline profile for Thames Valley Police.



## 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 3,590 in March 2010 to an estimated 3,880 by March 2015. The number working in non-frontline roles will drop (from 840 to 440).

Based on these figures, the **proportion** of Thames Valley police officers allocated to frontline roles will increase by nine percentage points to 90%, as the following chart shows. This is broadly 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?**

**61%** – the proportion of police officers and PCSOs which Thames Valley Police 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 Thames Valley 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 that there was an increase 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.

By 2015 Thames Valley Police will reduce the number of front counters by one and the number of other locations where you will be able to physically access policing services (e.g. libraries or local authority buildings) will remain the same as in 2010.

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

**11%** – the reduction in recorded crime levels overall in Thames Valley Police between 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 27th out of 42<sup>2</sup> forces (where first equals lowest crime rate).

The table below shows how rates of crime changed in the twelve months to 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 Thames Valley in a separate report, which is available on our website.)

Type of crime	Difference between years ending Dec 2010 and Dec 2011 in Thames Valley	Difference between years ending Dec 2010 and Dec 2011 across England and Wales
All crime	-11%	-3%
Victim-based crime*	-9%	-2%
Robbery	-8%	3%
Burglary	-5%	-1%
Criminal damage & Arson	-14%	-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 Thames Valley. 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 Thames Valley is 85%, which is greater than the rate for England and Wales as a whole<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>3</sup> This is a statistically significant difference.