



Inspecting policing  
in the public interest

## Responding to austerity

Bedfordshire Police

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# How well does the force provide value for money?

## Overall judgment

HMIC is encouraged by the progress Bedfordshire Police is making in achieving its required savings. The force has ambitious plans for the future to improve policing in Bedfordshire and achieve good value for money. However, the force faces some significant policing challenges in the short-term. The force now needs to implement its ambitious plans for improving policing in Bedfordshire in an affordable way more quickly, and in doing so it must ensure that policing services to the public remain effective.

**Requires improvement**

## Summary

Bedfordshire Police is on track to achieve its required savings of £20.8m over the spending review period. The force has faced a difficult challenge and is making progress towards achieving a secure financial position. HMIC is encouraged by the progress made in developing the plans for the alliance with Cambridgeshire and Hertfordshire Constabularies. This is a clear signal of the commitment to collaboration and to achieving future savings and improvements in policing across the three forces.

Recorded crime levels had been falling in Bedfordshire over recent years, but in the 12 months to March 2014, overall recorded crime went up in the force area.

The force previously reduced its police officer numbers to a level that put at risk its ability to provide effective policing and this had a serious impact on performance. The force recognised this. Under the leadership of the new chief constable, with oversight by the police and crime commissioner (PCC), it is now taking steps to increase its police strength to safer levels through the recruitment of 60 police officers. HMIC is encouraged that the force leadership has a good grasp and understanding of the issues and areas that need to improve. We found that the force is moving in the right direction and the pace of change is now increasing. Success depends on developing the required plans in detail and speeding up the pace in order to address HMIC's concerns and to secure a more certain future.

**To what extent is the force taking the necessary steps to ensure a secure financial position for the short and long term?**

**Good**

Bedfordshire Police has faced a difficult challenge and made good progress towards achieving a secure financial position.

It is on track to achieve its savings requirement over the spending review period and has built up some reserves to ease the achievement of future savings.

The force has worked well with Hertfordshire and Cambridgeshire Constabularies to develop an ambitious plan for a tri-force collaboration.

The progress made in the tri-force financial plans is a clear signal of the commitment to future collaboration and to achieving future savings across the three forces.

**To what extent has the force an affordable way of providing policing?**

**Requires improvement**

Police officer numbers were reduced to a level that put at risk the ability of Bedfordshire Police to provide effective policing. The force is now restoring its police strength to safer levels.

Ambitious plans are in development for a tri-force alliance with the potential to achieve savings, transform policing through ICT changes and provide more effective and resilient police service. However, HMIC is concerned that a significant amount of work remains to be done, and that any delay in finalising or implementing the plans would seriously affect the force's ability to provide effective policing in the longer-term.

**To what extent is the force efficient?**

**Requires improvement**

Bedfordshire Police is a small force with an unusually high level of serious threat including organised crime. It has to deal with a breadth of criminality not normally seen in a rural force. It understands this well but does not currently have the capacity to deal with all the demand effectively.

At the same time as developing the tri-force alliance, the force faces challenges in continuing to provide an effective policing service. It needs to address these challenges in the short term while developing its long-term plans.

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**To what extent has the force an affordable way of providing policing?**

**Requires improvement**

The force leadership has a good grasp and understanding of the issues and areas that need to improve. The force is moving in the right direction and the pace of change is now increasing. The force rightly needs to move quickly to secure a more certain longer-term position.

**To what extent is the force efficient?**

**Requires improvement**

Recorded crime levels for the area fell over recent years but in the 12 months to March 2014 total recorded crime went up. The level of victim satisfaction has increased since the 12 months to March 2011, but remains lower than the England and Wales figure.

Over the spending review period, the number of emergency and priority calls responded to within the force's own target had deteriorated and is of concern to HMIC.

# The force in numbers



## Financial position

The force's savings requirement

Requirement    Gap

**£20.8m**

**£0.0m**



## Providing policing

Planned change in police officer numbers 2010/11 – 2014/15

Bedfordshire    England and Wales

**-14%**

**-11%**

Planned change in total workforce numbers 2010/11 – 2014/15

Bedfordshire    England and Wales

**-11%**

**-14%**

Planned proportion of police officers on the front line 2014/15 vs 2010/11 (percentage points)

Bedfordshire    England and Wales

**+5.7**

**+3.0**

Planned proportion of total workforce on the front line 2014/15 vs 2010/11 (percentage points)

Bedfordshire    England and Wales

**+4.7**

**+3.7**

## Efficiency

Police officer cost per head of population  
2013/14

Bedfordshire	England and Wales
<b>£88.9</b>	<b>£117.7</b>

Workforce cost per head of population  
2013/14

Bedfordshire	England and Wales
<b>£136.3</b>	<b>£168.1</b>

Change in recorded crime  
2010/11 – 2013/14

Bedfordshire	England and Wales
<b>-15%</b>	<b>-14%</b>

Victim satisfaction 2013/14\*

Bedfordshire	England and Wales
<b>82.3%</b>	<b>85.2%</b>

\*Confidence intervals: ± 0.1% for Bedfordshire; ± 0.2% for England and Wales.



# Introduction

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In October 2010, the Government announced that central funding to the Police Service in England and Wales would reduce by 20 percent in the 4 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, our fourth year.

Our inspection focused on how well the force is achieving value for money. To answer this question we look at three areas:

- To what extent is the force taking the necessary steps to ensure a secure financial position for the short and long term?
- To what extent has the force an affordable way of providing policing?
- To what extent is the force efficient?

During our inspection 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, when possible, the chief constable, police and crime commissioner (PCC) and the chief officer leads for finance, change, human resources and performance in each force, and held focus groups with staff and other officers.

This report provides the findings for Bedfordshire Police.

# To what extent is the force taking the necessary steps to ensure a secure financial position for the short and long term?

HMIC looks at the saving plans forces have developed in order to meet the financial challenge of the spending review and for the following financial year of 2015/16. It is also important that forces look to the future beyond 2016 in their planning, so we also explore how they are starting to prepare for further financial challenges.

## Financial challenge

Bedfordshire Police has identified that it needs to save £20.8m over the four years of the spending review (between March 2011 and March 2015). As a proportion of its overall budget, this savings requirement of 17 percent is broadly in line with most other forces, but HMIC considers that Bedfordshire Police faces a particularly difficult challenge. It has lower than average funding and a complex crime profile compared with most forces of its size. As a small force, it also has limited opportunities for economies of scale.

## The scale of the challenge

Bedfordshire Police faces a particular challenge because of the scale of the financial savings that must be made. There are limited opportunities for it to reduce its costs because:

- it is a low-cost force: it spends less on policing and its officer costs are lower than other forces;
- it is a small force with low financial reserves; and
- it has a challenging crime mix and faces an unusually high level of serious threats and criminality for a force of its size.

## Savings plans for 2014/15 and 2015/16

HMIC found that Bedfordshire Police had made good progress towards achieving a secure financial position in spite of a difficult challenge. The force has a strong track record of achieving planned savings. Over the past three years, budget savings have been achieved ahead of schedule and these have been transferred to reserves either to be used for specific purposes or to assist with future budget gaps.

There are clear plans in place to achieve all the savings of £4.8m needed in 2014/15 and the £3.5m required in 2015/16 through making savings and the use of reserves. The force's medium-term financial plan highlights that for 2014/15 there is no reliance on the planned collaboration with Cambridgeshire and Hertfordshire Constabularies to achieve the required savings, although there will be in 2015/16.

## Outlook for 2016 and beyond

The plans for 2016/17 and beyond are less well developed but, based on past performance and the progress with the plans for collaboration, it is likely that the savings needed can be achieved. The sound financial position, supported by healthy reserves and effective financial management, has laid the basis for an ambitious approach to collaboration and an innovative approach to achieving efficiency through ICT (Programme Metis).

In 2016/17, there will be a reliance on efficiency savings from collaboration and the quality improvement programme. There will also be a need for a limited use of reserves in each year through to 2017/18. This is in order to bridge the funding gap until recurring savings are sufficient to achieve a balanced budget.

Frontline policing will be protected. However, numbers could be reduced if there is evidence that this reduction would lead to more efficient working – for example, by the increase in available operational hours made through Programme Metis or the quality improvement programme. The force has made some assumptions for 2018/19 and 2019/20 when savings will be made by transforming policing through Programme Metis (though these savings may also be seen sooner) and through wider regional and blue light collaboration.

The force, together with Cambridgeshire and Hertfordshire Constabularies, has worked hard to develop the joint tri-force medium-term financial plan. This is impressive, and signals a clear commitment from all involved for much greater collaboration and, together, to generate over £26m in savings across the three force areas over the next three years.

## Summary



**Good**

- Bedfordshire Police has faced a difficult challenge and made good progress towards achieving a secure financial position.
- It is on track to achieve its savings requirement over the spending review period and has built up some reserves to ease the achievement of future savings.
- The force has worked well with Hertfordshire and Cambridgeshire Constabularies to develop an ambitious plan for a tri-force collaboration.
- The progress made in the tri-force financial plans is a clear signal of the commitment to future collaboration and to achieving future savings across the three forces.

# To what extent has the force an affordable way of providing policing?

HMIC looks at how the force is structured to provide policing. We ask if this is affordable as the force responds to its financial challenge. We look at what the force is doing to reduce its costs, how it is protecting officers and staff engaged in fighting crime and keeping communities safe and how it is making the required change through its change programme.

## How the force provides policing

Since Bedfordshire Police introduced its current way of providing policing in October 2011, it has been reviewed on three occasions. Changes were made each time, with staffing levels being reduced to ensure savings were met. HMIC was concerned that the force had reduced police officer numbers on the front line below the level needed to make this model work, and that this has had a detrimental effect on the service.

The force's last review of the model in 2013 concluded that it was still fit for purpose but included a number of recommendations, including the recruitment of additional officers and special constables. The force accepted this and has now started to recruit more officers to get back to the level needed to safely meet the policing demands.

## Collaboration

HMIC monitors forces' progress on collaboration because it offers the opportunity to achieve efficient, effective policing and it helps to achieve savings.

Bedfordshire Police has existing and well-established joint arrangements with the Cambridgeshire and Hertfordshire Constabularies. The three forces already jointly provide a range of protective services, including police dogs, firearms and major crime teams. For a small force like Bedfordshire, this type of joint arrangement has meant that the force has been able to provide better equipped and more resilient specialist policing services than it would have been able to on its own.

The three forces have now established plans for a tri-force strategic alliance, which will take this joint working approach to a much more ambitious and innovative level. In November 2013, a formal agreement was made between the three PCCs and their respective chief constables to form an alliance. This agreement describes the rationale for greater collaboration and sets out the framework for an integrated approach to achieve most of the required business changes across the forces. It aims to support the forces in maintaining frontline policing services in the face of significant budget reductions. Lead forces for each of the main areas of collaboration – protective services, operational support and organisational support – have been agreed. The plans are still only in outline at this stage and much more work is required to develop the details. HMIC is concerned that if implementation is delayed, then Bedfordshire Police would face a very difficult challenge in

both balancing its budget and policing effectively in the longer term.

In 2014/15, the force expects to spend 20 percent of its net revenue expenditure on collaboration, which is significantly higher than the 11 percent figure for England and Wales. Collaboration is expected to contribute to 18 percent of the force's savings requirement, which is again higher than the 10 percent figure for England and Wales and is reliant on the proposed alliance between the Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire and Hertfordshire forces.

## Managing change

Reductions in police budgets have inevitably led to a shrinking workforce. HMIC expects forces to look at longer term transformation that can help maintain or improve the service they offer to the public, and prepare for future funding reductions.

Programme Metis is being led by Cambridgeshire Constabulary on behalf of the Hertfordshire and Bedfordshire forces. It is an ambitious IT-led programme designed to:

*"...deliver transformational change through the streamlining of processes and development of enabling technology across all area of business to enable the forces to protect frontline operational policing, continually improve the quality of service provided to the public, and to optimise all available resources in order to work within a balanced budget."*

If implemented as intended, Programme Metis will improve the flow of information within and across the forces, thereby enabling officers to spend more time out in their communities.

Cambridgeshire, Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire forces submitted a successful joint bid to the police innovation fund for support to bring together their operational and organisational support service through Programme Metis. The project received Home Office funding of £8.4m. Again, this programme is ambitious and has the potential to achieve significant savings and more effective services. But plans are developing and more detailed work is needed before Bedfordshire Police can have confidence that these savings will help to balance the budget.

The force knows that its total estate of land and police buildings is currently costing too much money and does not match the requirement for policing today. It has developed a new strategy to deal with this. The five-year estates strategy is intended to balance residents' needs for visible policing against the challenge of reducing operating costs and providing a more sustainable 'footprint' for future policing. One of the core principles of the strategy is to significantly reduce the running costs of the estate.

The force identified that the main elements of its change programme during the spending review were:

- structural change in local policing;
- priority-based budgeting;
- collaboration with other forces;
- changes in business support in areas such as HR and finance; and
- better alignment of resources to demand.

The force identifies that the main elements of its change programme as it responds to future financial pressures will include:

- collaboration with other forces;
- use of business improvement methodologies;
- estate rationalisation;
- priority-based budgeting; and
- improved procurement and contract renegotiation.

## How is the force supporting its workforce to manage change and effective service provision?

Police officer numbers had been allowed to fall to levels that made effective policing extremely challenging. This placed excessive pressures on staff and officers who were striving to do a good job in difficult circumstances. Bedfordshire is a small force, with already low levels of resources, set against a backdrop of some serious policing challenges normally encountered in larger metropolitan forces with greater capacity. There is now a clear determination on the part of the chief constable and the PCC to preserve police officer and police community support officer (PCSO) numbers and to improve service provision. The force has recently recruited 60 police officers and plans a further recruitment exercise in October 2014. The force needs to ensure that police officer numbers do not fall below the agreed level so that service to the public is not put at risk.

The force recognises that, even with the additional recruitment, continuing austerity means that the workforce will inevitably be smaller than it once was; and that, as a consequence, staff need to be helped to work differently. There are plans to bring about the cultural change needed to make the organisation function more effectively. The force conducted a staff survey in July 2013. The feedback from staff led to the development of a range of actions including the introduction of annual and five-year provision plans, a realignment of force priorities and the reintroduction of annual appraisals.

The chief constable produces a weekly blog and uses this to keep staff up to date with changes and further plans. Together with the implementation of the annual and five-year provision plans, the blog has been an effective way to communicate clear messages to the workforce. One example of this is the force's emphasis on moving away from action being driven by targets, to a focus on taking whatever action is necessary to safeguard victims. Staff are being encouraged and supported in using their professional judgment to make decisions and do what is important for the community.

HMIC is encouraged that the force leadership has a good grasp and understanding of the issues and areas that need to improve. We found that the force is moving in the right direction and the pace of change is now increasing; however, many of the plans are still developing and there remains much uncertainty about the future. Nevertheless, there is an overriding sense of pride in the force itself. Leadership is clear and visible and as a consequence the workforce understands that the difficulties they are facing are not because of any lack of leadership. The force's difficulties are as a result of financial and other pressures, including the complex crime environment which, in some areas, is comparable to that of a large urban force.

## How is the force achieving the savings?

Because around 80 percent of a police budget (on average) is spent on staff costs, it is not surprising that forces across England and Wales plan to achieve most of their savings by reducing the number of police officers, PCSOs and police staff employed.

However, we also expect forces to bear down on their other costs (non-pay) such as the equipment they buy, the accommodation and vehicles they use, and the contracts they negotiate for services such as cleaning.

Non-pay costs have been carefully considered across the business support function with the force undertaking an internal review process challenging areas of business to maximise efficiency. A number of contracts have been renegotiated to achieve savings and other budgets have been centralised to ensure there is greater oversight and control of spending. However, the force is planning to make 36 percent of its total savings from non-pay costs. This is a higher percentage than other forces in England and Wales.

As with other forces, most of the savings come from reducing the workforce. Bedfordshire Police made an early start on this in 2010 when it slowed its recruitment of new police officers and police staff, and reduced the number of police staff. The force then recognised that it had reduced its police officer numbers to a level that put at risk its ability to provide effective policing and this had a serious impact on performance. The force is now restoring its police strength to safer levels.



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

Please note, these figures are rounded.

	<b>31 March 2010 (baseline)</b>	<b>31 March 2015</b>	<b>Change</b>	<b>Force change %</b>	<b>Change for England and Wales %</b>
Police officers	1,246	1,067	-179	-14%	-11%
Police staff	880	814	-66	-8%	-17%
PCSOs	116	108	-8	-7%	-22%
Total	2,243	1,989	-254	-11%	-14%
Specials	210	320	110	52%	44%

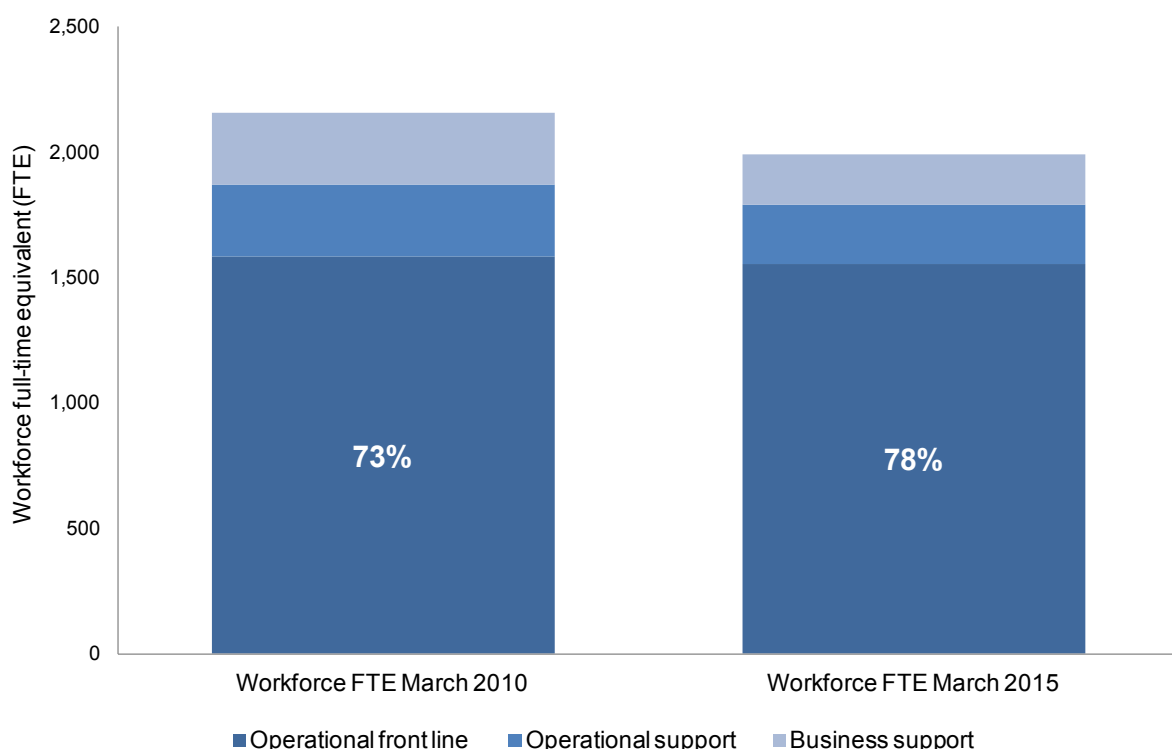
Over the spending review Bedfordshire plans to lose a larger proportion of police officers than other forces in England and Wales. Despite this, over the spending review, the force plans to lose a smaller proportion of its overall workforce and in particular police staff and PCSOs.

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 frontline crime-fighting roles.

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.

The following chart shows the change in the workforce frontline profile in Bedfordshire

Police.



**Note: England and Wales reports an increase in the proportion of workforce on the front line from 74 percent in March 2010 to 78 percent in March 2015.**

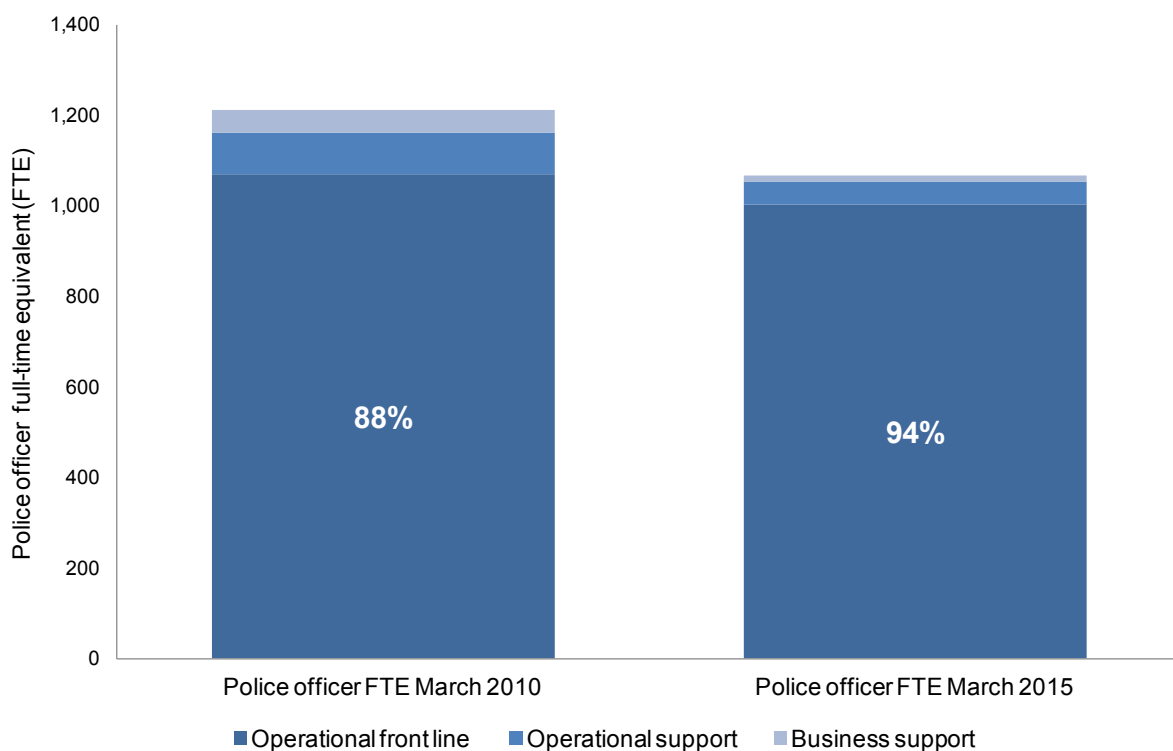
The number of officers, PCSOs and staff (i.e. of the force’s total workforce) working on the Bedfordshire Police front line is projected to reduce by 30 (two percent) between March 2010 and March 2015 (from 1,583 to 1,553).

Over the same period, the proportion of Bedfordshire Police’s total workforce allocated to frontline roles is projected to increase from 73 percent to 78 percent. This compares with an overall increase across England and Wales from 74 percent to 78 percent.

The number of Bedfordshire’s police officers in frontline roles is planned to reduce by 67 (6 percent) from 1,070 in March 2010 to 1,003 by March 2015.

The proportion of those remaining on the front line is projected to increase from 88 percent to 94 percent. This compares well with an overall increase across England and Wales from 89 percent to 92 percent and shows that Bedfordshire Police is successfully protecting frontline crime-fighting roles as it makes these cuts.

The following chart shows the planned change in the frontline profile of police officers.



**Note: England and Wales reports an increase in the proportion of police officers on the front line from 89 percent in March 2010 to 92 percent in March 2015.**

## Summary



Requires improvement

- Bedfordshire Police previously reduced its police officer numbers to a level that put at risk its ability to provide effective policing and this had a serious impact on performance. The force is now restoring its police strength to safer levels.
- Ambitious plans are in development for a tri-force alliance with the potential to achieve savings, transform policing through ICT changes, and a more effective and resilient policing service. However, HMIC is concerned that a significant amount of work remains to be done, and that any delay in finalising or implementing the plans would seriously affect the force's ability to provide effective policing in the longer-term.
- As part of the alliance, there are innovative and ambitious plans to transform policing in all three forces through ground-breaking ICT changes.
- HMIC is encouraged that the force leadership has a good grasp and understanding of the issues and areas that need to improve. The force is moving in the right direction and the pace of change is now increasing. The force rightly needs to move quickly to secure a more certain longer-term position.

# To what extent is the force efficient?

HMIC looks at how the force understands the demands that it faces and how it allocates both financial resources and staff to meet these demands. We look at how these decisions are achieving effective results for the public, in particular, that police are visible, they attend promptly when called, are fighting crime and keeping communities safe and that victims are satisfied with the service they receive.

## How well does the force understand and manage demand?

In early 2014, HMIC found that Bedfordshire Police did not have a full understanding of its current level of demand. It faces an unusually high level of serious threats for a force of its size. It has a high serious crime mix compared with many forces. Bedfordshire is home to a disproportionately high number of organised crime groups. In 2013, there was an increase in gun and gang-related activity, and the force launched an operation to respond to this.

The force has recognised that it needs a better understanding of demand in order to manage its response more effectively. Recently, some constructive work has developed a greater awareness. The force is using a performance management tool to provide day-to-day understanding of high-demand locations and repeat or vulnerable victims. More work is needed to ensure that demand is managed effectively so that the best use can be made of a comparatively small force of police officers, facing some difficult and complex challenges.

## How efficiently does the force allocate its resources?

Bedfordshire Police reviews demand by analysing and identifying peaks and troughs based on historical data throughout the year. Resources are allocated based on this analysis. Extra resources are put in during known critical events. The force also predicts the call handling demand using a similar model, and plans officers' shifts accordingly to ensure that more officers are available during periods of high demand.

The force's response to emerging issues, threat, harm and risk is reviewed and refreshed on a regular basis through the operational meetings that take place. On a daily basis at force level, senior officers make decisions about where to allocate resources to deal with emerging threats, particularly those relating to safeguarding of victims. The force gives due consideration to national requirements, particularly in relation to the regional and national impact of serious and organised crime originating in the force area.

In the future, the force is looking to manage demand better through the collaboration within the alliance (with Cambridgeshire and Hertfordshire Constabularies) of operational support (control room, custody and criminal justice), organisational support (HR, finances, IT) and the ICT transformation through Programme Metis.

The force is currently developing projects as part of Programme Metis to identify and establish future initiatives. Programme Metis is aimed at streamlining the business and aims to improve back office support to the front line by reducing duplication and bureaucracy. The force has made significant steps in developing plans to provide officers with mobile technology to enable them to access police information and submit their reports without needing to return to a police station. The plans will enable the force to make better use of officers' time and provide a more effective service.

The force has struggled to meet demand for policing over the past year as a result of having allowed its police officer numbers to fall below the level needed to operate effectively. Although the force has recently recruited additional police officers to replace those who have left, the recruits will not be fully trained and effective until November 2014; this will significantly increase the force's capacity to meet demand, particularly around the safeguarding of victims.

For the future, collaborative working, Programme Metis and a review of the estates strategy, together with more effective partnership working, are all planned to ease some of the burden placed on the force in meeting demand, and ensuring that the way it provides policing remains affordable and effective.

## How does the force respond and keep its communities safe?

The challenge for forces is not only to save money and reduce their workforce numbers, but also to ensure that 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 how a force responds and keeps communities safe is at the heart of its choices.

Bedfordshire Police is placing a great deal of reliance on: collaborative working with the alliance; its internal quality improvement program; and on Programme Metis to increase its efficiency and enable it to provide a better service with fewer resources. HMIC is encouraged by its willingness to work with others and the ambition shown in the plans; however, these plans are still developing and we do not underestimate the complexity of major structural and cultural changes taking place across three forces simultaneously. Transformational change is likely to take some time to achieve. In the meantime, Bedfordshire is facing some serious policing challenges and continues to have a 'very thin blue line' with which to keep its communities safe.

### **Calls for service**

HMIC examined whether Bedfordshire 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 four years since 2010, Bedfordshire had maintained the same target response times of 15 minutes for calls classed as 'emergency' (also known as Grade 1). Over the same period, calls classed as a 'priority' (also known as Grade 2) had a target response time of within 60 minutes.

The following table compares the forces performance in 2010/11 to 2013/14.

<b>Calls for service</b>	<b>2010/11</b>	<b>2013/14</b>
Percentage of urban emergency calls on target	93.0%	61.6%
Percentage of priority calls on target	77.0%	57.7%

HMIC is very concerned that over the spending review period the timeliness of attendance for both emergency and prompt calls has declined significantly. The force failed to meet its own target for responding to emergencies on time in over a third of all cases last year and in over 40 percent of calls requiring a 'prompt' police response.

## 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 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. HMIC therefore examined how far the changes being implemented by the force had affected the visibility of the police in Bedfordshire.

In 2014, Bedfordshire Police allocated 49 percent of its police officers to visible roles. This is a 0.5 percentage point lower than the number allocated in 2010 and also lower than the figure across England and Wales, which was 56 percent.

Police visibility is further enhanced by PCSOs, who principally support community policing. Looking at the proportion of police officers and PCSOs, Bedfordshire Police allocated 54 percent of these staff to visible roles in 2014. This is 0.1 percentage point more than it allocated in 2010, and again below the 60 percent figure for England and Wales.

HMIC conducted a survey<sup>1</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 Bedfordshire, 10 percent said that they have seen a police officer more often than they had 12 months ago; this compares to 12 percent of respondents in England and Wales.

Furthermore, 77 percent of respondents in Bedfordshire said they felt safe from crime where they lived, compared to 84 percent of respondents in England and Wales. Finally, 5 percent said they felt safer from crime than they did two years ago, compared to 9 percent of respondents in England and Wales.

## Crime

In 2010, the Home Secretary, Theresa May, set a clear priority for the police service to reduce crime. Between 2010/11 and 2013/14 (which includes the first three years of the spending review), Bedfordshire Police reduced recorded crime (excluding fraud) by 15 percent, which is in line with a 14 percent reduction in England and Wales. Over this period, victim-based crime (i.e. crimes where there is a direct victim such as an individual, a group, or an organisation) reduced by 17 percent, compared with 14 percent in England and Wales.

Looking just at the past 12 months, recorded crime (excluding fraud) rose by 3 percent, compared with a 1 percent reduction for England and Wales.

By looking at how many recorded crimes occur per head of population, we can get an indication of how safe it is for the public in that police area.

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<sup>1</sup> Sample sizes for each force were chosen to produce a confidence interval of no more than  $\pm 6$  percent and for England and Wales, no more than  $\pm 1$  percent. Forces' differences to the England and Wales value may not be statistically significant.



The table below shows recorded crime and anti-social behaviour rates in Bedfordshire (per head of population) compared with the rest of England and Wales.

<b>12 months to March 2014</b>	<b>Rate per 1,000 population</b>	<b>England and Wales rate per 1,000 population</b>
Crimes (excluding fraud)	58.0	61.1
Victim-based crime	52.1	54.3
Sexual offences	0.9	1.1
Burglary	8.2	7.8
Violence against the person	10.7	11.1
ASB incidents	31.4	37.2

The table shows that recorded crime rates in Bedfordshire are broadly similar to the picture for England and Wales; however, HMIC is concerned that there has been a recent upturn in crimes in the Bedfordshire area. The 3 percent increase in overall crime in the 12 months to March 2014, compared with a national picture of a one percent decrease, reflects an in-year increase in the key crime categories of overall crime, victim-based crime, and violence against the person. This is an area the force must address alongside developing plans to achieve further savings.

It is important that crimes are effectively investigated and that the perpetrator is identified and where appropriate, brought to justice. When sufficient evidence is available to identify who has committed a crime, it can be described as detected. Bedfordshire Police's detection rate (for crimes excluding fraud) for the 12 months to March 2014 was 24 percent. This is below the England and Wales detection rate of 26 percent.

We have chosen these types of crime to give an indication of offending levels in the Gwent area. 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 provision 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 2014, 82.3 percent ( $\pm 0.1$  percent) of victims were satisfied with the overall service provided by Bedfordshire Police. The level of satisfaction is lower than the England and Wales figure of 85.2 percent ( $\pm 0.2$  percent).

## **Changes to how the public can access services**

Forces are exploring different ways in which the public can access policing services. Bedfordshire Police is reviewing how many police stations and front counters it needs as part of its estates strategy. The force sees opportunities to work with partner organisations such as the local authority to provide a range of shared access points to maintain a physical presence in the community.

The force is making greater use of the internet and social media to communicate with the public. As more and more people become accustomed to engaging with large commercial and public organisations in different ways, the force is planning to offer the public different ways to contact them.

## Summary

Requires improvement

- Bedfordshire Police has some significant challenges to overcome in order to improve efficiency and provide effective policing. HMIC is encouraged by its ambitious plans to work in alliance with Cambridgeshire and Hertfordshire Constabularies to bring about significant transformational change to meet these challenges.
- Bedfordshire Police is a small force with an unusually high level of serious threat including organised crime. It has to deal with a breadth of criminality not normally seen in a rural force. It understands this well, but does not currently have the capacity to deal with all the demand effectively.
- At the same time as developing the tri-force alliance, the force faces challenges in continuing to provide an effective policing service. It needs to address these challenges in the short term while developing its long-term plans.
- Recorded crime levels had been falling in Bedfordshire over recent years but the 12 months to March 2014 overall crime went up in the force area. Since the 12 months to March 2011 victim satisfaction with the service provided by the police has increased in Bedfordshire, although it is still lower than the England and Wales average. HMIC considers that keeping communities safe, responding to the needs of victims and the public must be addressed as part of the changes the force is making.
- The force's response to calls from the public (both emergency calls and priority calls) has declined markedly. HMIC is very concerned about the deteriorated response to the public at times of need.
- The force is placing a heavy reliance on the three-force alliance to achieve the change needed. While we can see that there is a real commitment to achieve this change, the plans are complex and still in the early stages of development. At the same time, the force still faces some real challenges in continuing to provide an effective policing service, and it needs to address these challenges in the short term while developing the long-term plans.

## Our judgments

HMIC uses four categories for making judgments, two are positive and two are negative. The categories are:

- outstanding;
- good;
- requires improvement; and
- inadequate.

Judgment is made against how well the force achieves value for money, it is not an assessment of the overall effectiveness of policing. In applying the categories HMIC considers whether:

- the way the force is achieving value for money is good, or exceeds this standard sufficiently to be judged as outstanding;
- the force requires improvement in the way it achieves value for money, and/or there are some weaknesses; or
- the force's provision of value for money is inadequate because it is considerably lower than is expected.