



Inspecting policing  
in the public interest

## Responding to austerity

Cheshire Constabulary

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# How well does the constabulary provide value for money?

## Overall judgment

HMIC found that Cheshire Constabulary has made good progress in saving money and has made strenuous efforts to make savings in areas that limit the impact on frontline policing. The constabulary is well placed to continue providing effective policing and to face future financial challenges.

Good

## Summary

Cheshire Constabulary is on track to meet its financial challenge of the spending review period and also for the year beyond, in 2015/16. In terms of 2016/17, there is an agreed timeline for developing and refining budget plans. These will be considered by the new chief officer team that comes into post over the summer of 2014.

The constabulary has a proven track record of meeting financial challenges, while at the same time providing high-quality community policing to those working and living in Cheshire. The constabulary's change programme is developing how policing will be provided more efficiently and with fewer resources in the future. HMIC found that the way the constabulary manages change is a real strength. Its programme is well-led and ownership is shared widely among senior management and staff throughout the organisation. There is to be a complete change in the leadership team by the summer of 2014, and HMIC is reassured that there are good systems and processes in place and that the constabulary is well placed to face future challenges.

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

**Good**

Cheshire Constabulary has clear plans in place to achieve all of the £6.7m savings needed in 2014/15 and a further £6.1m in 2015/16.

The constabulary already has a proven track record of meeting financial challenges. Cheshire's planning processes are a strength and give confidence that savings will continue to be achieved.

The constabulary's plans for 2016/17 and beyond are less well developed and will be considered by a new chief officer team that comes into post over summer 2014. However, there is an agreed timeline for developing and refining budget plans. It is likely that any savings needed can be achieved.

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

**Good**

The constabulary has had a strong focus on reducing non-pay costs and where possible protecting front line budgets. The constabulary has made less of its savings from cutting staff than other forces.

The constabulary is open to considering all forms of collaboration if they can be of benefit, and it has developed a range of arrangements. Collaboration is expected to contribute to 12 percent of the constabulary's savings requirement, compared to ten percent for England and Wales.

Leading and managing change is strength in Cheshire Constabulary, the approach of sharing responsibilities and accountability for leading change programmes widely among senior managers has been a success.

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

**Good**

The constabulary has a good understanding of the demand it faces. Further analysis is now underway to establish how much resource will be required to provide policing in the future.

The constabulary takes steps to make the most efficient use of police time.

The constabulary makes good use of its information about the nature of demand. Crime is closely monitored so that action can be taken to tackle problem areas and information is used to target problem-solving activities.

Recorded crime has continued to fall in Cheshire over the spending review period and in the last 12 months it has fallen at a faster rate than in the rest of England and Wales.

# The constabulary in numbers



## Financial position

The constabulary's savings requirement

Requirement    Gap

**£33.3m**

**£0.0m**



## Providing policing

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

Cheshire    England and Wales

**-12%**

**-11%**

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

Cheshire    England and Wales

**-16%**

**-14%**

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

Cheshire    England and Wales

**+3.4**

**+3.0**

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

Cheshire    England and Wales

**+4.3**

**+3.7**



## Efficiency

Police officer cost per head of population  
2013/14

Cheshire

England and Wales

**£98.4**

**£117.7**

Workforce cost per head of population  
2013/14

Cheshire

England and Wales

**£145.6**

**£168.1**

Change in recorded crime  
2010/11 – 2013/14

Cheshire

England and Wales

**-13%**

**-14%**

Victim satisfaction 2013/14\*

Cheshire

England and Wales

**87.1%**

**85.2%**

\*Confidence intervals:  $\pm 2.0\%$  for Cheshire;  $\pm 0.2\%$  for England and Wales.

# Introduction

In October 2010, the Government announced that central funding to the Police Service in England and Wales would reduce by 20 percent in the four 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 constabulary is achieving value for money. To answer this question we looked at three areas:

- To what extent is the constabulary taking the necessary steps to ensure a secure financial position in the short and long term?
- To what extent has the constabulary an affordable way of providing policing?
- To what extent is the constabulary 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, where possible, the chief constable, police and crime commissioner 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 provides the findings for Cheshire Constabulary.



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

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

## Financial challenge

Cheshire Constabulary has identified that it needs to save £33.3m over the four years of the spending review (i.e., between March 2011 and March 2015). As a proportion of its overall budget, this savings requirement of 16 percent is below the 18 percent figure for England and Wales.

## The scale of the challenge

HMIC considers that Cheshire Constabulary faces a similar challenge to most forces as its central funding contribution is in line with most other forces, which means that central funding cuts impact in a similar way to most forces. However, there are opportunities for the constabulary to consider in identifying further efficiencies:

- the cost of its workforce per head of population is above most other forces in England and Wales; and
- the cost of police officers per head of population is above most other forces in England and Wales.

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

The constabulary has clear plans in place to achieve all of the savings needed in 2014/15 (£6.7m) and 2015/16 (£6.1m). The constabulary regularly reports financial forecasting and performance through a medium-term financial plan. This shows that the savings requirements have been achieved and are planned until 2016/17 with a forecast over achievement in 2014/15 of approximately £3m.

## Outlook for 2016 and beyond

The constabulary's plans for 2016/17 and beyond are less well developed and will be considered by a new chief officer team that comes into post over the summer of 2014. However, there is an agreed timeline for developing and refining budget plans. It is likely that any necessary savings can be achieved.

Cheshire Constabulary has a planning process that reviews current plans every three months. This process includes regular contact with the Home Office and local authority partners so that it can update financial assumptions where required. As a result, assumptions in relation to future income and expenditure (such as pay and inflation) are prudent. The planning process is an important strength for the constabulary, ensuring that plans are updated and refreshed where appropriate.

The constabulary has a proven track record of meeting financial challenges while at the same time providing high-quality community policing to those working and living in Cheshire. Its change programme is developing how policing will be provided more efficiently and with fewer resources in the future. The programme is being led by operational managers and staff to make changes based on a strong understanding of the current operational policing environment. It is envisaged that the change programme will ensure an affordable way to provide neighbourhood policing in Cheshire by 2016.

## Summary

**Good**

- Cheshire Constabulary has clear plans in place to achieve all of the £6.7m savings needed in 2014/15 and a further £6.1m in 2015/16;
- The constabulary already has a proven track record of meeting financial challenges and for 2014/15 it is projecting that it will over achieve its savings target by £3m. The constabulary's planning processes are a strength and give confidence that savings will continue to be achieved;
- Plans for 2016/17 and beyond are less well developed and will be considered by the new chief officer team that comes into post over the summer of 2014. However, there is an agreed timeline for developing and refining budget plans. It is likely that any savings that are needed can be achieved.

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

HMIC looks at how the constabulary is structured to provide policing. We ask if this is affordable as the constabulary responds to its financial challenge. We look at what the constabulary 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 changes through its change programme.

## How the constabulary provides policing

The current change programme is working on many of the issues that will inform how policing will be provided in Cheshire in the future. Proposals for future policing include the removal of geographical basic command units, which are to be replaced by a smaller number of larger neighbourhood beat areas that are self-sufficient. These will have specific capabilities designed to match the demand of each different neighbourhood.

To support this approach, the constabulary's estates strategy is based on a new model that supports frontline policing teams by providing a base for officers' daily briefings. However, the remainder of officers' time will be spent in the community, supported by mobile technology that will reduce the requirement to return to the station. A trial is currently underway at Ellesmere Port, including a limited test of the effectiveness of mobile data technology. A second phase is due to commence in the Chester area in January 2015, with full implementation across the whole area by 2016.

The constabulary has made financial projections up to 2017/18 and workforce projections up to March 2016. Cheshire has plans in place to recruit officers and members of the special constabulary. However, members of the special constabulary have joined the service to become police officers, which has made it difficult to achieve the required number of special constables (700) within the desired timescales.

## Collaboration

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

Cheshire collaborates not only as part of the North West Regional Collaboration Agreement (covering the forces in the North West) but also looks wider for other opportunities that may benefit the constabulary. As a result, the constabulary has developed a range of collaborative arrangements, which includes a collaborative venture supported by private sector provided technology for back office functions. There are also arrangements with other regional forces for serious and organised crime, and negotiations are ongoing to develop preferred partner options with Merseyside Police. As part of its change programme, the constabulary compares its level of service provision with that provided by other forces

and considers collaboration on a case-by-case basis to assess the benefits that might be achieved as each work area is developed.

The multi-force shared service (MFSS) is a collaborative venture between Cheshire Constabulary and Northamptonshire Police in which a range of financial and HR services, and a duty-management system are provided using private sector hosted technology. The MFSS has been in place for two years and has been subject to evaluation and review, first by the former police authority and more recently by the police and crime commissioner. It was agreed that the MFSS is meeting expectations, and both forces are getting good value. Future collaboration with Nottinghamshire Police in the MFSS has the potential to reduce costs for all parties. There is a monthly contract review with the private-sector company in order to monitor the levels of service provided.

The constabulary recently undertook a 90-day review with Merseyside Police, which examined back office functions, IT and operational policing to identify opportunities for collaboration. This work is still ongoing. The constabulary acknowledges that it needs to align its IT infrastructure if it is to exploit all opportunities for collaboration with Merseyside.

The constabulary has progressed collaborative arrangements with North Wales Police in relation to firearms and dogs, along with public order training. The business case detailed savings across both forces through reduced running costs as well as increased resilience, capability and availability of specialist skills. The project analysed the capital costs of setting up the alliance along with projected savings. A project governance structure includes representation across both forces.

In 2014/15 the constabulary expects to spend four percent of its net revenue expenditure on collaboration, which is lower than the 11 percent figure for England and Wales. Collaboration is expected to contribute to 12 percent of the constabulary's savings requirement, which is above the ten percent figure for England and Wales.

## Managing change

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

The constabulary has demonstrated that it has the leadership capacity and capability to achieve the savings and required organisational change, although HMIC acknowledges that with the departure of the current chief officer team, there will be a new senior leadership team coming into the constabulary in the summer of 2014.

Cheshire has procedures in place for good finances and it has good control over spending.

Currently, there is a commitment to three-year forecasting and financial projections, which are reviewed every three months. All aspects of the change programme take a long-term view that allows decisions now to be balanced with the challenges of the future.

Reserves are being used for strategic investment, reducing expensive debt and providing funds to commence initiatives rather than covering savings gaps. As a result of the early investment needed to set up the MFSS and the need to pay back some previous borrowing, the constabulary used its reserves in the early years of the spending review. This enabled later savings to be made from the investments and avoided the constabulary having to pay ongoing interest on debts. There has been a strategy to build the reserves back up and the constabulary has so far deliberately saved £3m more than needed to replenish the reserves.

HMIC found that the leadership of change is a major strength in Cheshire Constabulary. All major work areas are led by a manager between chief inspector and chief superintendent rank and police staff equivalents, and all have undergone a driving high performance programme. Leaders are empowered, supported and held to account for clear objectives, and there is encouragement to experiment and develop learning. This approach has been a strength and engenders a sense of sustainable change and a culture of improvement across a wide span of the constabulary's senior management. Frontline staff also have a clear role in continuous improvement. There has been a move to provide a more blended approach to change management. Responsibilities are now shared more widely around the management of the constabulary, rather than being run from a central change team. In addition, the business improvement team's 40 posts were reduced to ten.

The constabulary identified that the main elements of its change programme during the current spending review are:

- making processes more efficient and reducing bureaucracy;
- analysing systems/process improvement/removal of waste;
- better online services;
- collaboration with other forces; and
- demand reduction/prevention.

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

- zero-based budgeting;
- improving the way operational support is undertaken;
- reducing demand and improving prevention by making processes more efficient and reducing bureaucracy;
- improving the skills, efficiency and competencies of staff by introducing multi-skilling; and
- improving analytical and intelligence support to increase evidence-based policing.

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

The constabulary has a well-established process of staff involvement and consultation that has resulted in the majority of changes being agreed with staff within 30–45 days. UNISON, Police Federation and staff associations attend the strategic board and are involved in discussions at an early stage prior to formal consultation. Information about change is displayed on the constabulary intranet and includes those issues raised by staff and staff associations. In addition, chief officers held discussion days involving 2,000 staff over a period of six months.

Development of the change plans involved 4–500 members of staff to drive the changes that are now being progressed within the programme. Many workshops took place during which a range of ideas were discussed. This has proved to be a valuable approach to identifying areas for change and process improvement.

Feedback from staff identified that more support was required for managers to understand and adapt to new ways of working. As a result, a driving-high-performance programme has been established and has been given to all senior managers to enable them to take a more flexible approach to managing and developing staff. This is now being provided to frontline supervisors.

The constabulary has invested in ensuring that leaders and staff are aware of the financial challenges. This was demonstrated in a range of meetings and focus groups with leaders and operational staff, who confirmed they felt well informed and recognised that the front line had been protected. In addition, chief officer discussion days have been held to inform and involve staff in plans for the future, and these were welcomed. Evidence was also provided, in the form of a briefing that was provided to the workforce, providing clarity on savings of £39.4m over the next four years.

## How is the constabulary 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, police community support 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 enter for services (e.g., for cleaning). The constabulary plans to make 32 percent of its savings from non-pay, which is higher than for other forces.

The constabulary uses a range of comparison tools to identify opportunities for reductions in non-pay costs including HMIC value-for-money profiles, independent statistics for the vehicle fleet, IT and estates, and also industry benchmarking. The constabulary has consistently reduced costs from budgets not connected with the front line and it has examined in detail a small number of non-pay items that had high fixed costs (e.g., private finance initiative (PFI) arrangements and the multi-force shared service). As a result, total non-pay costs have been reduced by 11 percent. Methods used have included reduction in borrowing to bring down finance costs and moving to a position of neutral cost for estates (self-funding). While there is a focus on high-cost non-pay items, more can be done to focus on low-cost items.

The constabulary does not shy away from renegotiating complex financial arrangements to reduce costs. For example, Cheshire has reassessed PFI arrangements to see if these were the best financing arrangements that the constabulary could arrange, in light of austerity measures. For the PFI headquarters site, external advisers have been brought in to ensure that financial rules, legalities and small print are clear in terms of alternative options for consideration.

The constabulary has conducted a review of overheads, comparing its costs against other forces and reviewing regulations to establish the maximum reductions that the constabulary could achieve in terms of non-pay costs over and above basic salary. Terms and conditions for staff and officers have been reviewed in order to bring them into line with industry and to reduce costs wherever possible. This has reduced overtime expenditure and travel expenses, achieving savings of approximately £1m. A review of statistics from the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy identified high spend on hire cars, which in turn led to an internal audit that resulted in savings in this area. All constabulary contracts have been reviewed, with £0.5m saved so far, and further savings of £1.5m planned.

The constabulary has undertaken a number of invest-to-save initiatives to achieve future cost reductions. An example of this is the firearms arrangement with North Wales Police, in

which the constabulary invested £250k, along with a £500k grant from the innovation fund. This is forecast to achieve savings of £1m per annum.

As with other forces, most of the savings come from reducing the workforce. Cheshire 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 constabulary plans to make 68 percent of its spending review savings requirement from its pay budget. This is lower than the England and Wales figure.

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

Please note, these figures are rounded.

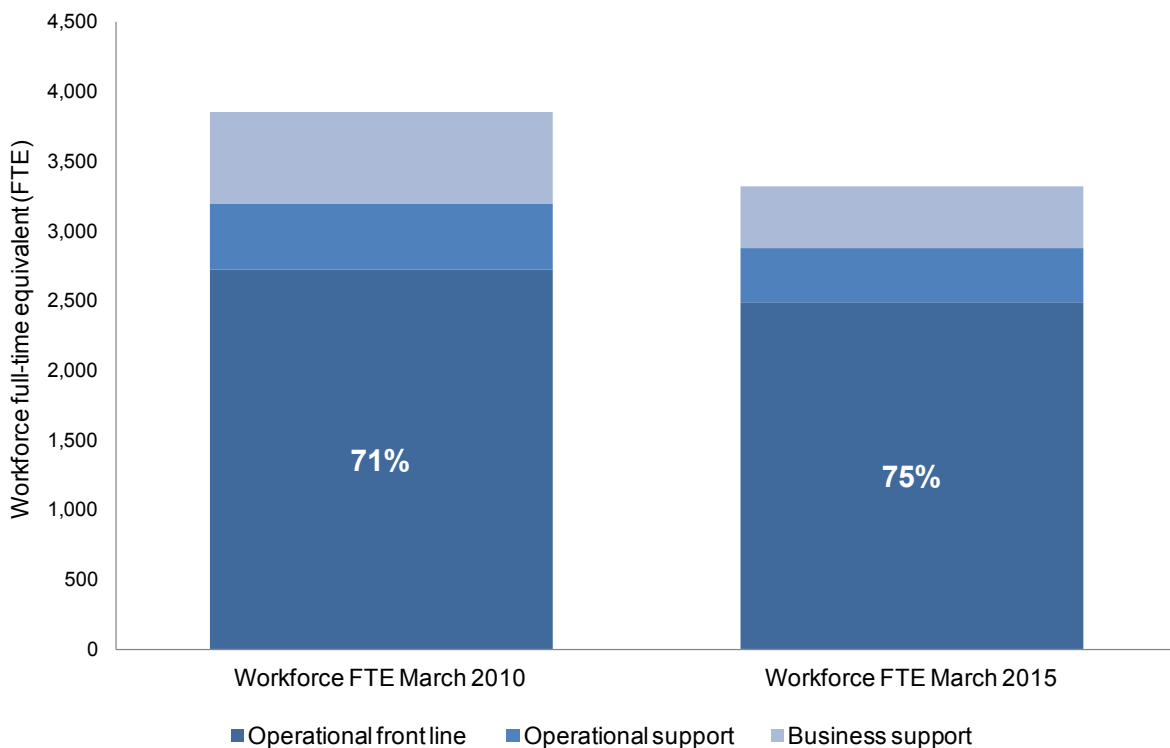
|                 | <b>31 March<br/>2010<br/>(baseline)</b> | <b>31 March<br/>2015</b> | <b>Change</b> | <b>Constabulary<br/>change %</b> | <b>Change for<br/>England<br/>and Wales<br/>%</b> |
|-----------------|---|--------------------------|---------------|----------------------------------|---|
| Police officers | 2,155                                   | 1,900                    | -255          | -12%                             | -11%  |
| Police staff    | 1,550                                   | 1,197                    | -353          | -23%                             | -17%  |
| PCSOs           | 237                                     | 220                      | -17           | -7%                              | -22%  |
| Total           | 3,943                                   | 3,317                    | -626          | -16%                             | -14%  |
| Specials        | 300                                     | 520                      | 220           | 73%                              | 44%   |

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 Cheshire Constabulary.



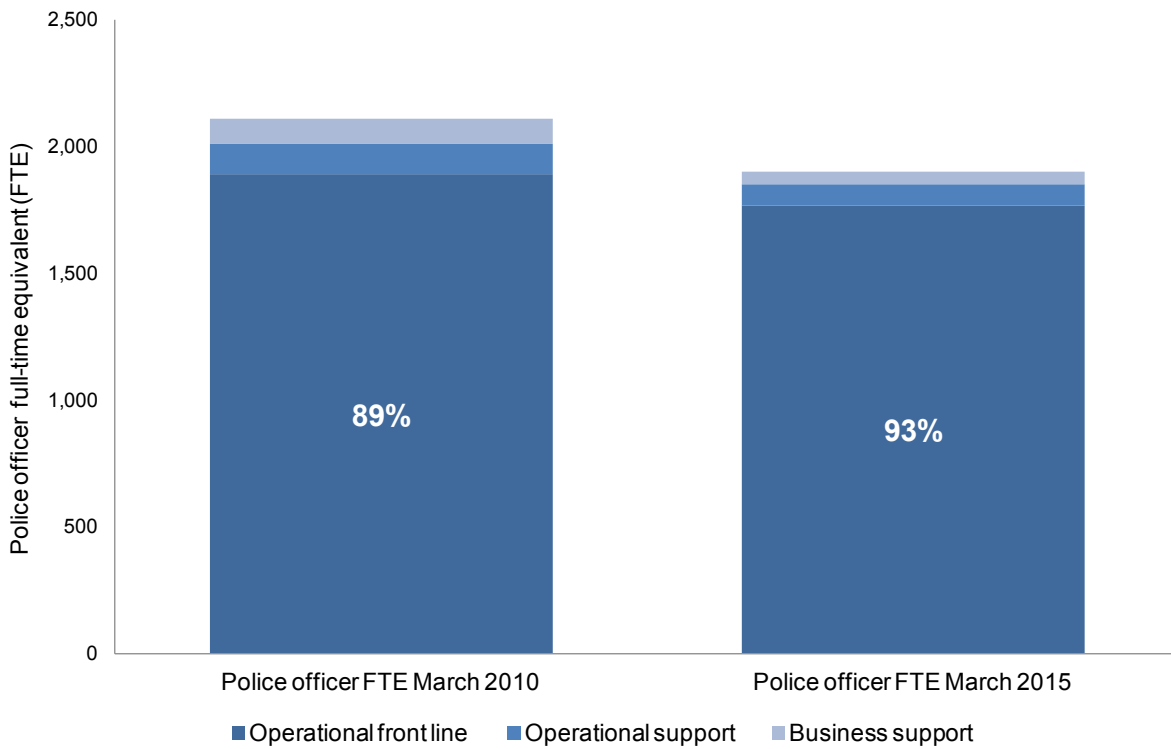
**Note: England and Wales reports an increase in the proportion of workforce on the front line from 74 percent in March 2010 to 78 percent in March 2015.**

The number of officers, PCSOs and staff working on the front line is projected to reduce by 240 between March 2010 and March 2015 (from 2,725 to 2,485).

Over the same period, the proportion of Cheshire's total workforce allocated to frontline roles is projected to increase from 71 percent to 75 percent. This compares with an overall increase across England and Wales from 74 percent to 78 percent.

The number of Cheshire's police officers in frontline roles is planned to reduce by 123 from 1,888 in March 2010 to 1,765 by March 2015, as the following chart shows. The proportion of those remaining on the front line is projected to increase from 89 percent to 93 percent. This compares to an overall increase across England and Wales from 89 percent to 92 percent and shows that Cheshire is successfully protecting frontline crime-fighting roles as it makes these cuts.

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



**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



Good

- The constabulary has had a strong focus on reducing non-pay costs and has tried to protect frontline budgets wherever possible. The constabulary has made less of its savings from cutting staff than other forces. Non-pay costs overall have been reduced by 11 percent.
- The constabulary is open to considering all forms of collaboration if they can be of benefit, and it has developed a range of collaborative arrangements, including with other forces and the private sector.
- Collaboration is expected to contribute to 12 percent of the constabulary's savings requirement, which is above the 10 percent figure for England and Wales.
- Leading and managing change is a strength in Cheshire Constabulary. The approach of sharing responsibilities and accountability for leading change programmes widely among senior managers has been a success.

# To what extent is the constabulary efficient?

HMIC looks at how the constabulary 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 leading to effective results for the public; in particular, that police are visible and that they attend promptly when called, that they are fighting crime and keeping communities safe, and that victims are satisfied with the service they receive.

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

The constabulary has undertaken some research to understand the current level of demand. This research included an analysis of hour-by-hour demand across the constabulary. Further analysis is continuing to determine how much time is spent by officers on patrol and what resources are required to provide policing services in the future.

Cheshire has a good understanding of how much demand for service is being made in terms of numbers of calls made by the public to the constabulary control room. The constabulary is in the process of establishing how existing resources should be distributed to meet this demand. Figures are produced each month, which allow officers to see what makes up demand in terms of the numbers of incidents recorded and where they are occurring. This information can be viewed at all levels across the constabulary to a neighbourhood, beat or postcode to allow officers and staff to understand the nature of calls for service in their area to allow them to focus their resources accordingly.

We found this information being used to good effect by one neighbourhood policing team in Stockton Heath. Officers were using the data to inform which problem-solving activity would be prioritised by the neighbourhood policing team in order to have the biggest impact on reducing demand on the police service locally.

Current response-staffing levels are based on a declaration of need by area commanders to inform minimum staffing levels. We found that numbers of staff were set around the number of calls they were likely to manage, rather than the complexity and time taken to manage actual incidents.

There has been a shift in emphasis towards officers developing the skills to help them to work more flexibly. A new arrangement has been introduced to improve efficiency and provide a greater level of accountability around crime investigation. This means that the original officer who attends a crime incident retains ownership of the investigation through to a conclusion, instead of handing the case over to one or more other officers.

## How efficiently does the constabulary allocate its resources?

All staff are now required to update a duty-management system when coming on duty. This allows operators in the constabulary control room to have an overview of all the staff potentially available for deployment. The constabulary also uses automatic police location software that provides regular updates on where each officer is located. This is activated by officers on their personal radios.

To be effective, these systems rely on officers showing themselves as available by booking onto duty and activating the location software on their radios. In practice, we found that some officers were not routinely activating the software. As a result, control room staff did not always have a full picture of who was potentially available for deployment. Better supervision is needed.

Within the control room environment, area incident supervisors ensure that calls received from the public are attended by staff appropriately skilled to deal with incidents they are required to attend.

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

The challenge for forces is not just to save money and reduce their workforce numbers, but also to ensure the choices they make do not have a negative impact on the service they provide to their communities. HMIC looked for evidence that keeping the communities safe is at the heart of the constabulary's decision.

Cheshire Constabulary has a principle of continuous improvement in performance, with emphasis on seeing strong year-on-year reductions of crime. All staff are empowered to use discretion to resolve each case they deal with. In every situation, there is an expectation that staff will do what is right for the victim, the offender and the wider community.

Crime levels across Cheshire are closely monitored and any unanticipated increases in specific types of crime or increases at specific locations are flagged up as soon as they are identified. In these cases, local area commanders are held accountable for understanding the specific issue and initiating an appropriate response.

Issues of staff attendance and sickness absence have become more important as the number of staff in the workforce has decreased; sickness levels have been increasing. The constabulary is managing this more closely now, and a retained HR function within the constabulary provides support and guidance to line managers to enable them to ensure that officers and staff under their supervision receive an appropriate level of support to remain available for duty.

The constabulary supports the development and welfare of its workforce, although it needs to address deficiencies in the occupational support contract to help managers tackle long-term sickness. HMIC found that, although officers understood the importance of tackling long-term sickness absence, the current occupational health contract was considered to be too inflexible. Unless the constabulary takes effective action in relation to sickness management, sickness rates could impair the ability of the constabulary to provide policing in the future.

### Calls for service

HMIC examined whether Cheshire 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, Cheshire had maintained the same target response times of 15 minutes for calls classed as ‘emergency’ (also known as Grade 1). In 2013 Cheshire changed its grading policy for calls classed as a ‘priority’ (also known as Grade 2) incorporating those previously classed as ‘appointments’ (also known as Grade 3). At the same time the target was removed.

The following table compares the constabulary’s performance in 2010/11 to 2013/14.

| <b>Calls for service</b>                | <b>2010/11</b> | <b>2013/14</b> |
|---|----------------|----------------|
| Percentage of emergency calls on target | 81.0           | 81.0           |

Over the spending review, the number of emergency calls responded to within target has been maintained, despite the reduction in the constabulary’s workforce numbers.

### 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 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 constabulary. HMIC therefore examined how far the changes being implemented by the constabulary had affected the visibility of the police in the Cheshire area.

In 2014, Cheshire Constabulary allocated 62 percent of its police officers to visible roles. This is 5.7 percentage points higher than the number allocated in 2010, and higher than the figure for 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, Cheshire allocated 66 percent to visible roles. This is 4.9 percentage points higher than it allocated in 2010, and higher than 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 Cheshire 7 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, 84 percent of respondents in Cheshire said they felt safe from crime where they lived, compared to 84 percent of respondents in England and Wales. Finally, 8 percent of respondents in Cheshire 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 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), Cheshire reduced recorded crime (excluding fraud) by 13 percent, compared with a 14 percent reduction in England and Wales. Over this period, victim-based crime (crimes where there is a direct victim such as an individual, a group, or an organisation) reduced by 12 percent, compared with 14 percent in England and Wales.

Looking just at the last 12 months, recorded crime (excluding fraud) reduced by 3 percent, which is higher than the figure for England and Wales, where there was a 1 percent reduction.

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

<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 crime and anti-social behaviour rates in Cheshire (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)       | 53.2                             | 61.1   |
| Victim-based crime             | 47.8                             | 54.3   |
| Sexual offences                | 0.9                              | 1.1  |
| Burglary                       | 6.8                              | 7.8  |
| Violence against the person    | 9.9                              | 11.1   |
| ASB incidents                  | 42.7                             | 37.2   |

It is important that crimes are investigated effectively and that the perpetrator is brought to justice. When sufficient evidence is available to identify who has committed a crime, it can be described as detected. Cheshire Constabulary’s detection rate (for crimes excluding fraud) for the 12 months to March 2014 was 25 percent. This is broadly in line with 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 Cheshire constabulary 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, 87.1 percent (± 2.0 percent) of victims were satisfied with the overall service provided by Cheshire. This is broadly in line with the England and Wales figure of 85.2 percent (± 0.2 percent).

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

Forces are exploring different ways in which the public can access policing services. The constabulary has not closed any front counters since 2010/11 and it has joined with some partners in sharing accommodation for community engagement as part of the estate strategy, such as the shared arrangement at Widnes Stadium.

The estates strategy may result in a reduction in the policing estate. However, research is ongoing to evaluate where police patrolling is happening less often, with the aim of



providing public contact points in shared partner premises at these more remote locations. The intention is to ensure that officers patrol these areas and have a base where they can access constabulary systems and engage with the public as required. Staff interviewed felt strongly that the reduction of the estate and sharing premises were positive steps forward.

The constabulary has also considered the potential impact of new communication methods by mapping the level of contact received via phone calls, web chat and from emails. The constabulary's external website is being redesigned to provide important information required by the public, and to link visitors to the most appropriate service for their needs.

## Summary

**Good**

- The constabulary has a good understanding of the demand it faces. Further analysis is now underway to establish how much resource will be required to provide policing in the future.
- The constabulary takes steps to make the most efficient use of police time. Supervisors ensure that calls received from the public are attended by staff appropriately skilled to deal with the incident, and the officer who attends initially will continue through to the conclusion of the investigation.
- The constabulary is making good use of its information about the nature of demand. At a constabulary level, crime is closely monitored so that action can be taken to tackle problem areas. Information is used to target problem-solving activities at a local level.
- Recorded crime has continued to fall in Cheshire over the spending review period, and in the last 12 months it has fallen at a faster rate than in the rest of England and Wales.

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