



Inspecting policing
in the public interest

Responding to austerity

Dorset Police

July 2014

© HMIC 2014

ISBN: 978-1-78246-425-9

www.hmic.gov.uk





Contents

How well does the force provide value for money?	4
The force in numbers	6
Introduction	8
To what extent is the force taking the necessary steps to ensure a secure financial position for the short and long term?	9
To what extent has the force an affordable way of providing policing?	11
To what extent is the force efficient?	19
Our judgments	25

How well does the force provide value for money?

Overall judgment

Dorset Police has made good progress in making savings and continuing to fight crime, in spite of a difficult challenge. There is some risk that it will struggle to find savings in the future.

Good

Summary

Dorset Police is on track to meet its financial challenge of the spending review period. It also has plans in place to find nearly all of the savings it needs for the following financial year of 2015/16.

The force is also looking beyond this period and is developing plans through to 2018, including an ambitious alliance with neighbouring Devon and Cornwall Police. There is some risk to savings plans beyond 2016, as it already has one of the largest percentage cuts to officer numbers. The levels of reserves the force has access to are one of the lowest in England and Wales and could only support a budget shortfall for a limited time period.

Overall, the force understands the issues facing it, and has made good progress in making sure that its reducing workforce is being used as effectively as possible. HMIC was reassured that the force is working hard to find ways of making further savings through collaboration, which will protect frontline policing and crime fighting.

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

Good

Dorset Police faces a significant challenge in cutting its spending at the scale required. It already spends less on policing than most forces in England and Wales and has less scope to make the savings.

The force has made good progress and is on track to achieve the £23.2m savings it needs over the spending review period.

It has plans in place that will achieve most of the further £10.4m savings needed in 2015/16.

The force is developing plans through to 2018, but there is some risk as it already has one of the largest percentage cuts to officer numbers. However, HMIC is reassured that the force is working hard to find ways to find further savings without impacting on its ability to fight crime.

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

Good

Dorset Police has a well-established change programme, which has reduced the size of the workforce while protecting neighbourhood policing and addressing local crime fighting priorities.

The force has worked hard to protect frontline policing and has found ways of making savings to limit staff cuts. However, the force has still seen one of the largest reductions in its workforce of any force in England and Wales.

Even though the number of officers on the front line have fallen the force has increased proportion of police officers working in frontline roles.

Working in collaboration has added to the savings made and the force is developing ambitious plans for further efficiencies with Devon and Cornwall Police.

To what extent is the force efficient?

Good

HMIC found that Dorset Police has a good understanding of the demand it faces and has an effective way of making sure it maintains the right number of staff with the skills needed to respond to that demand. It is carrying out further detailed analysis of the true demand on safer neighbourhood teams to ensure that it has the capacity to provide effective local policing.

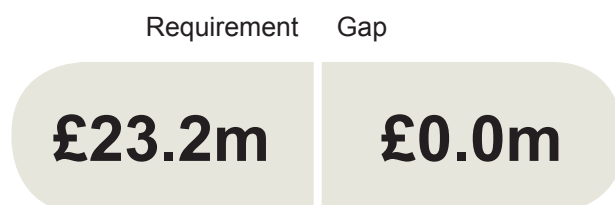
The force works well with local partners to improve the quality of service to local people.

Crime has continued to fall in Dorset at a greater rate than England and Wales, although levels of victim satisfaction with the police are below the average. The police and crime commissioner has begun an initiative to improve the way victims are kept updated.

The force in numbers

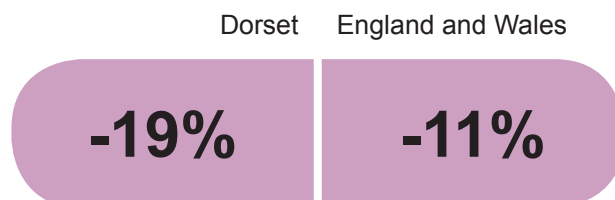
Financial position

The force's savings requirement

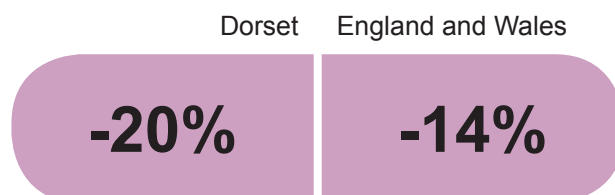


Providing policing

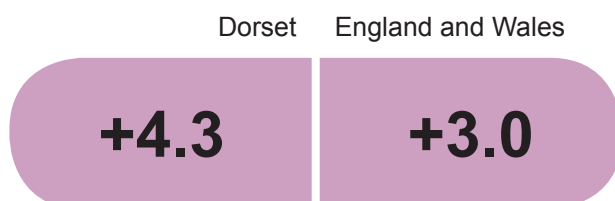
Planned change in police officer numbers 2010/11 – 2014/15



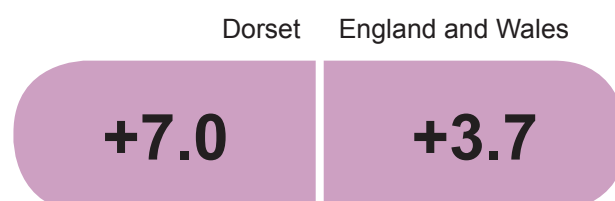
Planned change in total workforce numbers 2010/11 – 2014/15



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



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





Efficiency

Police officer cost per head of population
2013/14

Dorset	England and Wales
£85.7	£117.7

Workforce cost per head of population
2013/14

Dorset	England and Wales
£130.6	£168.1

Change in recorded crime
2010/11 – 2013/14

Dorset	England and Wales
-18%	-14%

Victim satisfaction 2013/14*

Dorset	England and Wales
83.6%	85.2%

*Confidence intervals: $\pm 1.4\%$ for Dorset; $\pm 0.2\%$ 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 force is achieving value for money. To answer this question we looked at three areas:

- To what extent is the force taking the necessary steps to ensure a secure financial position in 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, 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 Dorset Police.

To what extent is the force 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

Dorset Police has identified that it needs to save £23.2m 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 lower than the 18 percent figure for England and Wales; but HMIC considers that Dorset Police still faces a particularly difficult challenge.

The scale of the challenge

HMIC considers that Dorset Police faces a particularly difficult challenge because of the scale of the financial savings that must be made for what is an already low spending force. The force had made significant cuts before the spending review began and has less scope to find savings because:

- it spends less per head of population on policing than most other forces in England and Wales;
- it has fewer police officers and police staff per head of population than most other forces in England and Wales; and
- the cost of police officers and police staff per head of population is lower than most other forces in England and Wales.

Savings plans for 2014/15 and 2015/16

The force has clear plans in place to achieve all of the savings needed in 2014/15 (£7.2m). In 2015/16 the force is facing a further £10.4m cut in its budget and has plans in place that will achieve £9.6m savings, leaving a funding gap of £0.8m. The force has sufficient money in reserves to bridge this gap if additional savings are not found in that year. For 2013/14 it is projecting that it will achieve its savings target with £3.0m savings expected.

Outlook for 2016 and beyond

While future reductions to central funding beyond 2016 have not been confirmed at this time, should the current approach continue, forces are likely to experience reductions of between three and five percent to their central funding year-on-year.

Dorset Police has made some predictions about future savings that will be required through to 2017/18, based on prudent assumptions about likely grant reductions, cost increases and precept increases. In spite of the challenge, the force has made good progress with its savings plans and it is developing plans to achieve savings through to 2018.

There remains some risk in the future, if the force does not find further savings in time. Dorset Police has already seen one of the largest percentage cuts to its police officer numbers. As the levels of reserves the force has access to is one of the lowest in England and Wales it has limited funds to fall back on if the future savings cannot be found in time or take longer to achieve than expected.

HMIC is reassured that despite significant challenges the force has continued to make good progress with savings and is working hard to put in place realistic plans for future savings, which will not compromise its ability to provide effective policing. In particular the positive work with Devon and Cornwall Police to develop a two-force alliance aimed at enabling them to reduce costs by extending collaboration across a range of policing operations and functions.

Summary



Good

- Dorset Police faces a significant challenge in cutting its spending at the scale required. It already spends less on policing than most forces in England and Wales and has less scope to make the savings.
- The force has made good progress and is on track to achieve the £23.2m savings it needs over the spending review period.
- It has plans in place that will achieve most of the further £10.4m savings needed in 2015/16.
- The force is developing plans through to 2018, but there is some risk as it already has one of the largest percentage cuts to officer numbers. However, HMIC is reassured that the force is working hard to find ways to find further savings without impacting on its ability to fight crime.

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 changes through its change programme.

How the force provides policing

Dorset Police has reorganised the way it provides policing in order to remain effective with a reducing workforce. It adopted its 'one team' approach early in the savings programme, designed to bring about a cultural as well as a structural change. A commitment to neighbourhood policing is at the heart of the new structure. Safer neighbourhood teams working in local areas to tackle crime and anti-social behaviour are supported by dedicated response officers based at tactically located hubs around the force area. This is designed to provide efficient use of resources and prompt response to calls for police help. In the more rural neighbourhoods where demand is lower, the neighbourhood teams also support the response service. Early in the spending review period, all back office support functions were centralised to reduce costs and cut staffing levels. The force has seen a large decrease in support staff since 2010.

Collaboration

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

Dorset Police, because of its size and the scale of the challenge, has recognised that it cannot keep cutting police officer numbers and staff numbers without having an impact on its ability to fight crime and serve its communities effectively. The chief constable has made it clear that further collaboration is required if the force is to continue to provide an effective policing service in the current financial climate. The force is now engaged in a range of joint working arrangements with other police forces in the south-west region and local partners. These include; the regional organised crime unit (ROCU) and forensic services.

Extending collaboration is seen as a key element of the force's future savings plans. Dorset Police and Devon and Cornwall Police are working together to explore the potential for a strategic alliance between their two forces. They have set up a joint project team to examine every aspect of their business to identify further opportunities for collaboration. Some 13 work streams incorporating 60 potential areas for progression are being explored, led by chief officers. Both forces have much to gain from an alliance of this nature. They both have good savings plans for the next two years but achieving further savings after this period becomes more challenging. An alliance offers the opportunity for future savings and

enhanced services through better joint investment opportunities and realising economies of scale.

The programme team has taken considerable time to 'learn the lessons' from other forces' collaborations and academic research. Local neighbourhood policing is to remain the preserve of each force respectively and is the foundation from which business and operational support collaboration would develop. The work has had independent assessment, a cultural review and a joint approach to identifying risks, for example, the potential loss of skilled and experienced staff.

While the relationship with Devon and Cornwall Police continues, Dorset Police is continuing to explore other avenues for collaborating; for example, 'e-commerce' opportunities with 26 other forces; a mobile data solution with Sussex Police; HR functions with Wiltshire Police; and a collaboration with Dorset County Council on corporate legal matters.

In 2014/15 the force expects to spend 9 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 14 percent of the forces savings requirement, which is higher than the 10 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 that can help to maintain or improve the service they offer to the public, and to prepare for future funding reductions.

Following the spending review announcement, the force responded quickly by introducing the change programme, branded 'one team'. The new structure was agreed and a plan developed, to manage the workforce reductions down to the optimum affordable number required by the new model. The plan is known as 'blueprint', the force set up a dedicated team to manage the change and implement the blueprint plan. The force introduced a voluntary severance scheme and in this way cut a comparatively large number of police staff quickly. This enabled it to remove the posts, which were no longer required in the blueprint, and redeploy displaced staff into the vacant posts left by those who had left voluntarily. The blueprint also set the desired police officer strength at 1,204 and as officers have left and retired, new recruitment has been closely scrutinised and managed so as to reach the required overall reductions in numbers. The blueprint model was intended to be fully in place by 2015 and the force is on track to achieve this. It is not clear at this stage what the impact of a strategic alliance with Devon and Cornwall Police will mean for the future sustainability of the blueprint workforce.

All change projects are tightly managed and any new proposals for inclusion in the change

programme are scored against a business benefits matrix. The force has commissioned independent reviews of key change projects to ensure they are managed effectively, including; the 'one team' programme and operation blueprint; stop and search procedures; domestic abuse; and the business case for the proposed alliance with Devon and Cornwall Police.

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

- better alignment of resource to demand;
- structural change in business support;
- structural change in operational policing;
- structural change in local policing; and
- estate rationalisation.

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

- collaboration with other forces;
- structural change in local policing;
- collaboration with other parts of the public sector;
- structural change in protective services; and
- improved IT.

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

The force has a clear 'one team' brand and its well-established and understood principles and values have become part of the force mindset. Chief officers actively communicate with staff face to face and through blogs on the staff intranet, encouraging ideas to meet force priorities and improve efficiency and effectiveness. Annual chief officer and police and crime commissioner road shows share up-to-date information such as the collaboration with Devon and Cornwall and the police and crime plan. The chief constable has given a commitment to see and speak to each member of staff personally in small groups to brief them on the future challenges and plans. Staff demonstrated a good knowledge of force priorities and the financial challenges ahead.

Staff associations say they are regular consulted by chief officers and have a beneficial working relationship with them, regularly attending strategic meetings.

Frontline training is dependent on National Centre for Applied Learning Technologies (NCALT), online interactive education packages, which staff feel are an ineffective substitute for classroom-based teaching. However, officer safety and public order training is provided on a regular basis.

The force leadership demonstrates a strong focus on supporting staff health and wellbeing, for example through occupational health and voluntary health monitoring for staff in public protection posts, and a force confidential reporting line for financial and emotional counselling.

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, police community support officers (PCSOs) and police staff employed.

However, we 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 such as cleaning. The force plans to make 33 percent of its savings from non-pay, which is higher than the figure for England and Wales.

HMIC found that Dorset Police has worked hard to drive out savings in non-pay areas to limit the cuts to the workforce. The force uses comparison tools such as HMIC's value for money profiles to look for areas where it could potentially save money. The force centralised all budget control and purchasing in 2012 with only overtime and small budgets devolved to local policing areas. The force is also a member of the south-west procurement collaboration, in which four police forces in the region join up to contract for goods and services, getting better value for money by purchasing collectively.

The force has saved money through making better use of its buildings, getting rid of those it no longer needs, investing in the remaining estate to make it fit for purpose, and sharing premises with partner agencies where possible. However, HMIC is concerned that there are still underused properties where further savings could be made.

One-off savings have been reinvested to improve efficiency and productivity, such as installation of vehicle data recorders to help reduce running costs. The force is also investing in mobile technology to enable officers to operate more effectively out in their communities without the need to return to a police station.

As with other forces most of the savings comes from reducing the workforce. Dorset 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 plans to make 67 percent of its spending review savings requirement from its pay budget. This is a lower proportion than that of most other forces.

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

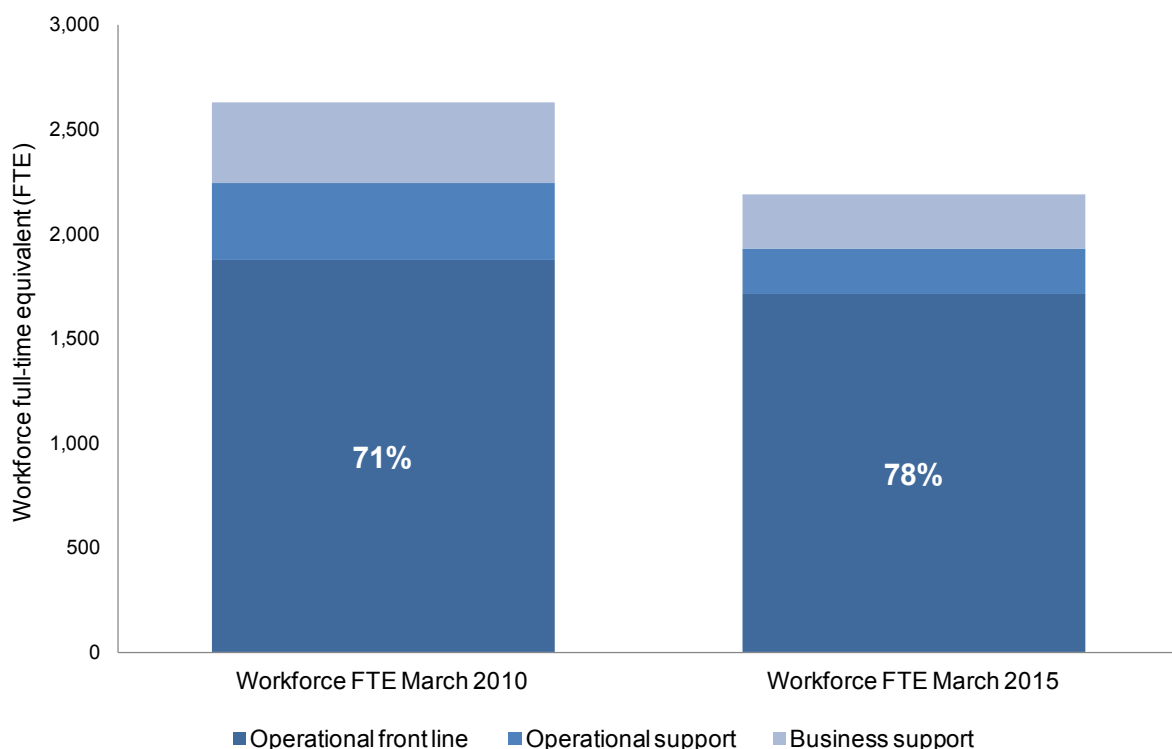
Please note, these figures are rounded.

	31 March 2010 (baseline)	31 March 2015	Change	Force change %	Change for England and Wales %
Police officers	1,486	1,204	-282	-19%	-11%
Police staff	1,077	830	-248	-23%	-17%
PCSOs	164	155	-9	-5%	-22%
Total	2,727	2,189	-539	-20%	-14%
Specials	300	300	0	0%	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 planned change in the workforce frontline profile in Dorset Police.



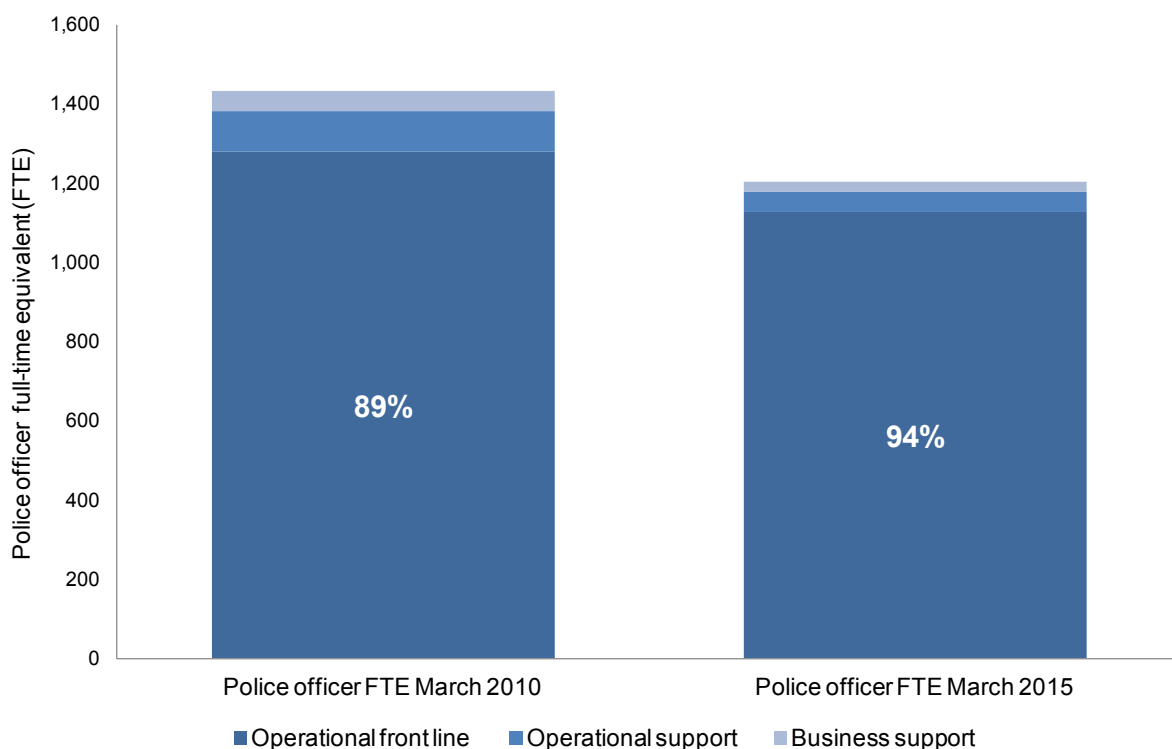
Note: England and Wales reports an increase in the proportion of workforce on the front line from 74 percent in March 2010 to 78 percent in March 2015.

The number of officers, PCSOs and staff (i.e. of the force’s total workforce) working on the front line is projected to reduce by 161 between March 2010 and March 2015 (from 1,873 to 1,712).

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

The number of Dorset’s police officers in front line roles is planned to reduce by 152 from 1,278 in March 2010 to 1,126 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 94 percent. This compares to an overall increase across England and Wales from 89 percent to 92 percent.

The following chart shows the planned 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

- Dorset Police has a well-established and tightly managed change programme, which has successfully reduced the size of its workforce and set up a structure, which protects neighbourhood policing and meets local crime fighting priorities.
- The force has worked hard to protect frontline policing and find ways of making savings to limit the cuts to staffing. However, the force is planning one of the largest reductions (20 percent) in its workforce of any force in England and Wales.
- Even though the numbers on the front line of policing in Dorset have fallen as a result of the cuts, the force has managed to increase the proportion of police officers working in frontline roles.
- Working in collaboration with others has also added considerably to the savings made by Dorset Police and the force is developing ambitious plans for achieving further efficiencies through a strategic alliance with neighbouring Devon and Cornwall Police.

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 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 force understand and manage demand?

HMIC found that the force has a good understanding of demand. It conducts a comprehensive annual demand assessment and activity analysis on all of its operational functions. It also carries out an annual strategic assessment, based on local, regional and national priorities, which together with a community threat assessment helps the force to develop its control strategy and workforce plan. The strategic performance board reviews plans and assessments regularly, responding to changes in demand and ensuring that resources are directed at responding to demand in line with force priorities. This has helped set the optimum number of officers needed for response, neighbourhood teams and investigations in both urban and rural areas.

The force has developed effective IT systems which enable it to monitor the effectiveness of its response. The demand of other services on the police, particularly any additional demand on the police caused by cutbacks in other public services, for example reductions in the out-of-hours provision of social services, is kept under close review and discussed with local partners. National funding has paid for a mental health nurse to trial 'street triage' of vulnerable people to find the safest location for their assessment and treatment while relieving the police of some escort and safeguarding duties.

How efficiently does the force allocate its resources?

The force has developed a comprehensive and effective workforce plan, which enables it to ensure that resourcing levels and skills within the workforce are sufficient to match the identified demand and required level of service. It incorporates the force recruitment plan, the training plan and the change programme and is closely linked to the financial plans.

From the regular analysis of police activities, the force has gained a better insight into how best to allocate resources to meet demand. It has recently implemented a changed shift pattern, so that the busier areas have a five-shift model for response officers. The rural areas with fewer resources operate with a three shift system, which involves the neighbourhood teams also carrying out response functions. There are some concerns among neighbourhood staff that they are being too frequently drawn away from their local areas to respond to other police issues and, as a result, are not able to provide an effective local service. Neighbourhood teams form the backbone of Dorset's operating model and the

force has recognised that it needs to have a better understanding of the true demand placed on the safer neighbourhood teams, which cannot necessarily be measured effectively by the number of calls into the control room or crime data. The force has commissioned a study to be carried out with the help of the University of Portsmouth, known as Project Genesis. This project examines the entire workload of the safer neighbourhood teams over three days, it is hoped that the close observation and analysis will reveal the extent of the hidden demand and whether the force has the resourcing levels right in neighbourhood policing.

The force has carried out a review of the way prosecution cases are managed, known as Operation Advance. As a result it has streamlined procedures giving staff greater discretion in deciding on the best course of action within clear guidelines. This has led to an increased use of restorative justice, which has helped victims as well as reducing case file preparation and court time. The force is assessing the investigation of all crime to see the effect on preventing crime and improving victims' satisfaction with the service.

How does the force 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 force's decision.

The force recognises the important role of neighbourhood teams in local problem solving and preventing crimes. It has two crime prevention advisers and a team of officers that work with partner organisations to provide crime-prevention training to young people, parents and teachers on subjects such as internet safety.

Dorset Police faces a challenge in responding to increased demand in the summer months with its relatively static level of resource. The force makes good use of its special constabulary and a growing number of volunteers who add to the frontline. Its aim is to have as many volunteers as paid staff. Currently there are 2,100 volunteers supporting the police in towns and the countryside and this number grows by around a hundred each month.

The force has a good relationship with other local public and voluntary services with some effective joined-up working; for example, a partnership project tackling speeding drivers, with regular education and enforcement campaigns. The force is also working with partners to improve safeguarding services for vulnerable people and has set up its first multi-agency safeguarding hub (MASH) in Poole with an ambition to extend this across the whole force area.

Calls for service

HMIC examined whether Dorset 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, Dorset had maintained the same target response times of 15 minutes for calls classed as ‘emergency’ (also known as Grade 1). Dorset does not set a target for ‘priority’ calls (also known as Grade 2), they aim to attend within 60 minutes.

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

Calls for service	2010/11	2013/14
Percentage of emergency calls on target	93.0	90.7
Percentage of priority calls on target	77.0	81.0

Over the spending review, attendance for emergency calls has declined marginally. Although not set as a target the number of priority calls responded to within 60 minutes has increased.

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

In 2014, Dorset Police allocated 60 percent of its police officers to visible roles. This is 2.1 percentage points higher than the number allocated in 2010, and higher than the figure for most other forces (which was 56 percent across England and Wales).

Police visibility is further enhanced by PCSOs, who principally support community policing. Looking at the proportion of police officers and PCSOs, Dorset Police allocated 64 percent to visible roles. This is 1.9 percentage points higher than it allocated in 2010, and again

higher than the 60 percent figure for England and Wales.

HMIC conducted a survey¹ 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 Dorset, 8 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, 89 percent of respondents in Dorset 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 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), Dorset Police force reduced recorded crime (excluding fraud) by 18 percent, compared with a reduction of 14 percent in England and Wales. Over this period, victim-based crime (that is, crimes where there is a direct victim – an individual, a group, or an organisation) also reduced by 18 percent, compared with a reduction of 14 percent in England and Wales.

Looking just at the last 12 months, recorded crime (excluding fraud) fell by 6 percent, which is a greater reduction than the 1 percent for England and Wales.

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

¹ Sample sizes for each force were chosen to produce a confidence interval of no more than ± 6 percent and for England and Wales, no more than ± 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 Dorset (per head of population) compared with the rest of England and Wales.

12 months to March 2014	Rate per 1,000 population	England and Wales rate per 1,000 population
Crimes (excluding fraud)	49.6	61.1
Victim-based crime	45.7	54.3
Sexual offences	0.8	1.1
Burglary	6.7	7.8
Violence against the person	7.9	11.1
ASB incidents	39.2	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. Dorset Police's detection rate (for crimes excluding fraud) for the 12 months to March 2014 was 24 percent. This is lower than the England and Wales's sanction detection rate of 26 percent.

We have chosen these types of crime to give an indication of offending levels in the Dorset force area. For information on the frequency of other kinds of crimes in your area, go to 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, 83.6 percent (± 1.4 percent) of victims were satisfied with the overall service provided by Dorset Police. This is lower than the England and Wales figure of 85.2 percent (± 0.2 percent).

For some time, surveys of victim satisfaction have shown that the force is not performing as well as others. The police and crime commissioner launched the first of five phases of the force victims' bureau last year. This sets out to make sure that victims of serious crime are kept fully updated about the progress of cases through the criminal justice system. The second phase will be launched later this year to coincide with the PCC's commissioning of support to victims and will extend the range of crimes included. The force told HMIC that it is beginning to see an improvement in its quarterly victim survey results.

Changes to how the public can access services

Forces are exploring different ways in which the public can access policing services. With many public service counters underused, the force is continuing to consult with the public on what access to policing should look like. The force has been closing front counters and police stations, which it found to be underused as part of its savings plans. The force has closed four police stations and three front counters since 2010/11; however it has opened one shared access point with a front counter. Following the public's recent concern about station closures, the force has slowed down the reduction in the number police stations and opening hours of public service counters, but is keen to have an efficient service that meets demand without waste.

Summary

Good

- HMIC found that Dorset Police has a good understanding of the demand it faces and has an effective way to make sure that it maintains the right number of staff with the skills needed to respond to that demand.
- It is carrying out further detailed analysis of the true demand on safer neighbourhood teams to ensure that it has the capacity to provide effective local policing.
- The force makes good use of joint work with local partners to improve the quality of service to local people.
- Crime has continued to fall in Dorset at a greater rate than in the rest of England and Wales, although levels of victim satisfaction with the police are below the level for England and Wales. The police and crime commissioner has begun an initiative to improve the way victims are kept updated.

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.