



Inspecting policing  
in the public interest

## Responding to austerity

Gwent Police

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# How well does the force provide value for money?

## Overall judgment

It is important and necessary that Gwent Police develops plans to improve the force in a way that not only provides an effective service for the public, but is affordable within its projected income.

**Requires improvement**

## Summary

Gwent Police has plans in place to achieve almost all the savings required for the spending review period. However, plans for dealing with the savings requirements for the future are undeveloped. In 2015/16, the force has a savings requirement of £9.2m with current planned savings of £5.1m, leaving a current budget gap of £4.1m in that financial year. While Gwent intends to use some reserves, there are currently no plans to find the additional recurring savings, other than through the loss of staff. The force has made disappointing progress since last year and faces some significant risks in the future, if it does not develop plans to structure the provision of policing services within budget.

It does not have a sufficiently detailed understanding of the demand it faces and therefore cannot effectively make best use of its resources to meet that demand. Savings plans to balance the budget are based principally on reducing the size of the workforce by not filling vacancies as they arise. However, this approach is taken without a full understanding about whether the reduced workforce has the required skills and rank mix, and can continue to provide effective policing.

Despite relatively small planned reductions in police officer numbers compared with England and Wales, and a big increase in the numbers of community support officers (CSOs), police performance has declined. Crime levels have increased over the last 12 months to March 2014, and success in crime detection and levels of victim satisfaction have both fallen. HMIC is concerned that the force faces deteriorating performance and in the absence of a credible plan to meet its savings requirement, risks further decline.

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

**Requires improvement**

The force needs to find £3.7m savings in 2014/15; it has clear plans in place to achieve most of this and will use reserves to meet any shortfall.

In 2015/16 it requires saving of £9.2m with plans for £5.1m. While the force intends to use some reserves there are currently no plans to find the additional recurring savings, other than through the loss of staff.

The plans for dealing with savings requirements beyond 2016 are underdeveloped and it is not clear how the force will achieve future savings needed while maintaining effective policing.

HMIC is concerned that in the absence of sustainable plans for the future the force will balance their budget by not replacing staff as they

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

**Requires improvement**

There are some areas of progress in the force's approach to affordable provision of policing. In particular: the force continues to make good use of collaboration with other Welsh forces and local partners to get better value for money; there has been a positive cultural change across the organisation and; the increased proportion of police officers on the front line is also encouraging.

It is also encouraging that the force is intending to carry out work on demand and workforce modelling: It is hoped that this will allow the force to develop a strategy for matching demand with resources in the future.

However, HMIC is concerned that the force's change plans are mainly based on reducing the workforce by not replacing

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

**Requires improvement**

Gwent Police have a limited understanding of the demand the force faces. It has not carried out any comprehensive demand analysis since 2009.

Without this understanding the force cannot be confident that it is using its resources in the most efficient way.

In the 12 months to March 2014 recorded crime levels have increased in the Gwent police force area, notably there has been an increase in crimes involving violence. At the same time the force's level of victim satisfaction has fallen.

HMIC is concerned that the force faces deteriorating performance and in the absence of a credible plan to meet its savings requirement risks further decline.

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

**Requires improvement**

leave. It is likely that such an approach will mean that the force will not be able to maintain effective levels of service for the public in Gwent.

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

**Requires improvement**

staff as they leave. While this may make most of the savings needed, the force cannot evaluate the impact of the job losses on the service or be confident that it will result in a model that can provide effective policing in Gwent.

While the force is planning to lose fewer police officers than most other forces in England and Wales over the spending review period, the gap in the force's savings plans means that this is not likely to be sustained beyond 2015. Further staffing reductions will prove necessary in order to balance future budgets. It is imperative that the force develops a structure which is sustainable and affordable going forward, and which continues to protect vital crime fighting roles.

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

**Requires improvement**

The impact of planning for and policing the NATO summit taking place in the Gwent area later this year has the potential to further delay the force's progress in making improvements in these key areas. A significant number of experienced middle and senior managers are currently attached to planning for the policing operation. Coupled with increasing demand associated with the lead up and event duration, creates a reduction in the availability of staff at all levels to drive change and address day-to-day policing demand.

# The force in numbers



## Financial position

The force's savings requirement

Requirement    Gap

**£24.0m**

**£0.0m**



## Providing policing

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

Gwent    England and Wales

**-8%**

**-11%**

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

Gwent    England and Wales

**-9%**

**-14%**

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

Gwent    England and Wales

**+1.9**

**+3.0**

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

Gwent    England and Wales

**+5.7**

**+3.7**

## Efficiency

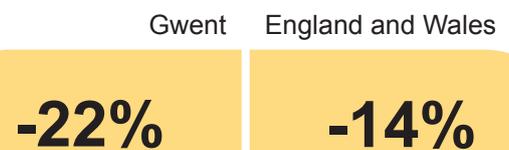
Police officer cost per head of population  
2013/14



Workforce cost per head of population  
2013/14



Change in recorded crime  
2010/11 – 2013/14



Victim satisfaction 2013/14\*



\*Confidence intervals: ± 1.7% for Gwent; ± 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 providing 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, 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 Gwent 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 explored how they are starting to prepare for further financial challenges.

## Financial challenge

Gwent Police has identified that it needs to save £24.0m 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 17 percent is broadly in line with the value for England and Wales; HMIC considers that Gwent Police faces a moderately difficult challenge. The force area presents some complex policing challenges with areas of concentrated demand as well as dispersed rural communities; however, overall the force spends more per head of population on policing than most other forces.

## The scale of the challenge

Gwent Police faces a moderately difficult challenge because of the scale of the financial savings that must be made. However, there are opportunities to reduce its costs in line with other forces as:

- it employs more police officers and police staff per head of population than most other forces in England and Wales; and
- despite reductions in workforce costs, the cost of police officers per head of population is higher than most other forces in England and Wales.

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

The force needs to find £3.7m savings in 2014/15; it has clear plans in place to achieve most of this and will use reserves to meet any shortfall. In 2015/16 the gap is wider and the force is predicting that it will have to find a further £9.2m of savings but has plans for only £5.1m, leaving a gap of £4.1m to be found. While the force intends to use £1.4m of reserves there are currently no plans in place to find the additional recurring savings beyond an approach of not replacing police officers and staff as they leave. HMIC is concerned that while this approach may achieve a balanced budget for the force, there is no assurance that the remaining workforce will be fit for purpose in terms of overall numbers or an appropriate skills and rank mix. Therefore this presents a risk that the force may not be able to provide effective policing.

## Outlook for 2016 and beyond

The force has made some predictions about future savings requirements based on prudent assumptions about likely grant reductions, increased costs and council tax (precept) increases. However, the plans for achieving savings beyond 2015/16 are, on the whole, underdeveloped compared to other forces.

The force operates an executive-led approach to vacancy management through its force resource board. This strategic oversight is informed by departmental heads, organisational change staff, finance department staff and a wider understanding of workforce management.

The force's only approach, however, for the longer term is one of achieving savings by continuing to reduce the workforce by not replacing officers and staff as they leave. This means that the way the force is currently structured to achieve policing is not affordable. HMIC is concerned that simply continuing to reduce the numbers of police officers and staff without a comprehensive understanding of demand and the resources needed to meet that demand, will mean that the force cannot be confident that it will continue to be effective. It is important that Gwent Police recognises this and develops plans to improve the force in a way that not only provides effective service provision for the public but is affordable within its projected income.

The force now has a stable chief officer team and a new deputy chief constable in place. It is hoped that this will provide the focus to achieve improved levels of performance and the opportunity to drive the necessary change to close the anticipated savings gap.

## Summary

Requires improvement

- Gwent Police has made all of the savings it needed up to the end of 2013/14 and has plans to achieve the savings required in 2014/15 with the use of reserves. However, there is a gap in 2015/16 of £4.1m. While the force intends to use some reserves there are currently no plans to find the additional recurring savings, other than through the loss of staff.
- The plans for dealing with savings beyond 2016 are underdeveloped and it is not clear how the force will balance its budgets in the future.
- HMIC is concerned that continuing to respond to the need for future savings by not replacing staff as they leave – without a thorough understanding of current and future demand – may mean that the force cannot maintain effective levels of service in Gwent.

# 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 their 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 required changes through its change programme.

## How the force provides policing

The force faces some challenges in policing Gwent. It is a comparatively small force serving around half a million people across a diverse area, with pockets of high demand in urban areas and sparsely populated rural areas. As a small force it has more limited opportunities for economies of scale. The NATO summit being held in the Gwent area in September 2014 will pose a significant operational challenge to the force. A significant number of experienced middle and senior managers are currently attached to planning for the policing operation. The increasing demand associated with the lead up and event duration has resulted in a reduction in the availability of staff at all levels to drive change and address day-to-day policing demand.

Gwent Police last restructured the way it operates in 2009 when it changed from three separate borough command units to a single force-wide model, divided into five local policing areas, each covering a different local authority area. Although this model brought greater efficiencies and enabled the force to centralise many support functions, it now needs to look again at the model, to ensure that it can continue to operate as the workforce size continues to reduce in line with the budget cuts.

The force recognises that it needs to redesign some aspects of its operational policing, to enable it to meet the future needs of its communities. The force's approach to achieving most of the savings so far has been by reducing the number of police officers and staff it employs. The force is predicting that this could reduce to 1,134 police officers by 2017/18.

This reduction in numbers would achieve most, but not all of the savings required to balance the budget. However, the force has a limited understanding of the current and future demand it faces; although it recognises this as an area for improvement, which it is planning to address through the next phase of the Staying Ahead programme. HMIC is concerned that, without this comprehensive understanding of the demand in the future, the force is not clear how this reduction in numbers would impact on their ability to achieve effective policing in Gwent, or whether there is any further need to restructure or take steps to better manage demand.

## Collaboration

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

Gwent Police has recognised that as a small force, joining up with others offers opportunities to save money and build operational resilience. It has been pro-active in collaborating with other Welsh police forces, developing a range of operational and support opportunities with South Wales Police and Dyfed-Powys Police. For example, the three forces now work together to provide one joint firearms unit. This not only saves Gwent Police money, it also gives them access to a better equipped armed response than they could have afforded on their own. Other examples include: crime recording, mobile data, a joint forensic service; an all-Wales joint extremism and counter terrorism unit (WECTU) and a joint organised crime unit tackling serious and organised cross-border crime (TARIAN). The force is also actively looking at other opportunities for further collaboration such as custody, which may contribute to additional savings.

The force is now building on established partnerships with other local partners, for example, Gwent police has joined up with Monmouthshire and Torfaen County Borough Councils to provide IT support to all three organisations. It is also working jointly with a number of agencies in support of the domestic abuse conference call (DACC), integrated offender management (IOM) and missing children project.

The force acknowledges that there are further opportunities, particularly linked to the recent Williams Review<sup>1</sup> which has recommended a reorganisation of local government in Wales leading to fewer, larger local authorities within the region. Cuts in other public services are creating additional demand on police forces. The impact in Gwent has yet to be quantified, however the force recognises this is adding to their workload, for example, they are seeing an increase in occasions where the ambulance service do not have capacity to attend incidents, resulting in officers conveying those in need of medical attention to hospital. The force is in discussions with the Welsh ambulance service to address this.

In 2014/15 the force plans to spend 13 percent of its net revenue expenditure on collaboration, which is higher than the 11 percent figure for England and Wales. Collaboration is expected to contribute to 8 percent of the forces savings requirement, which is below the 10 percent figure for England and Wales.

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<sup>1</sup> Sir Paul Williams, The report of the Commission on Public Service Governance and Delivery, Welsh Government, January 2014,

## Managing change

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

'Staying Ahead' has been the force's programme for change over a number of years. The force is now developing 'Staying Ahead 8' as its next phase. This phase will start to analyse demand and seek to align resources available to meet that demand. The plans to save money and bridge the future funding gaps are, at the moment, led by vacancy management rather than a comprehensive change plan. The force has some confidence that the savings can be achieved through natural wastage and managing recruitment robustly. However, at present, it is not in a position to evaluate the impact of the reduced workforce on outcomes for the service.

HMIC is also concerned that the force does not have a full understanding of the resulting workforce profile and whether it provides a sustainable mix of skills and experience. For example, the force monitors those leaving and likely to leave through retirement in order that it can have confidence that sufficient pay savings can be achieved through this natural wastage of staff. However, while the force has detailed management data on officers by rank and supervisory ratios available, HMIC found that the analysis is not rank specific, with the force currently being over strength in the number of sergeants and inspectors, but under strength in constable numbers, with no immediate plans to undertake further recruitment of police officers. The force is planning to do some work on demand and workforce modelling, which should aid this understanding and enable it to align the resources to need, and available funding.

There are clear leadership and governance arrangements which provide confidence that the force can monitor the achievement of individual projects within its change programmes. This is achieved through the following meeting structures:

- Strategic performance board
- Chief officer team meeting
- Staying Ahead assurance board
- Staying Ahead operations board
- Staying Ahead business support board

There is a small team of staff working on the change programmes and HMIC found genuine energy and enthusiasm from those directly involved in the planning and management of change. However, their capacity to support the process as much as they would like is

limited, and the resource is being spread very thinly across a very large number of projects, plans and programmes. Staying Ahead phases 5, 6 and 7 are still at varying stages of achievement, at the same time as phase 8 is being planned. HMIC is concerned that there is no single, overarching high level plan that draws all of the various Staying Ahead programmes and projects from the various phases together, or which considers the total risks and interdependences.

There have been some successful projects as part of previous Staying Ahead phases which have enabled improved service and efficiency. For example, the use of independent management consultancy to support the force in redesigning the processes for dealing with high volume crime, such as burglary; where the whole process from start to finish was examined and an improved process put in place which avoids waste and improves efficiency. This has led to real financial savings in officer time, reported by the force as being £3.175m a year.

The innovation funding bids made in 2013 for the procurement of body-worn video cameras to issue to all officers in order to improve the quality of evidence gathering, although delayed due to problems with the procurement process, demonstrate a willingness to use new technology to improve effectiveness. The force has recently changed its crime recording system and once this is fully embedded and operating effectively, these should provide the force with the means to improve efficiencies. While collaborative evaluations have taken place through the Southern Wales collaborative management board, including reviews of the joint legal services and the shared resource collaborations, there has been limited evaluation of past change programmes.

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

- better alignment of resources to demand;
- improved call management;
- borderless deployment;
- targeted patrol; and
- use of business improvement methodologies.

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

- further work to align resources to demand;
- structural change to the way it provides local policing;
- structural change to the way it provides specialist police resources;

- structural change in the way it provides operational support and functions; and
- improved call management.

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

There is a strong focus in the force's strategic vision on the importance of being a good employer and ensuring staff are well supported. Being an 'employer of choice' is a key element in the Staying Ahead programme. HMIC observed a clear change in culture across the organisation; we found staff and officers feeling more positive about the organisation and although they are mostly aware that further cuts are required, do recognise that the leadership team is more open and supportive. Staff commented that they initially felt disengaged at the start of the Staying Ahead programme, but that, as it has progressed, they feel more involved.

The force leadership team have taken steps to ensure that there is clear communication to staff about the changes affecting them. 'Team Gwent' events have been a successful way of disseminating information to senior staff. Approximately 100 people attend the briefings to hear and discuss the current issues facing the force and how they are being addressed. At the time of the inspection the new deputy chief constable had just joined the force and taken up his post, which means that the leadership team is now up to full strength.

The force has recently undertaken a staff survey, with a high completion rate of 65 percent. The results were not yet available at the time of the inspection; HMIC was told that early results were positive. The force intends to share the outcomes of the survey with staff, and there will be an action plan to manage specific areas arising from the survey.

## 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, CSOs and police staff employed.

However, we do expect forces to also 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 24 percent of its savings from non-pay costs; this is lower than the 29 percent figure for England and Wales.

The force is seeking to reduce non-pay costs in order to limit the impact on workforce numbers. There have been a range of programmes that have enabled the force to minimise non-pay costs; for example, through buying supplies and equipment in conjunction with

neighbouring forces, South Wales and Dyfed-Powys, in order to get a better deal. The force has considered other areas such as the estate, fleet and stores but is not yet in a position to make progress.

As with other forces most of the savings come from reducing the workforce. The force plans to make 76 percent of its spending review savings requirement from its pay budget. This is higher than in 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.

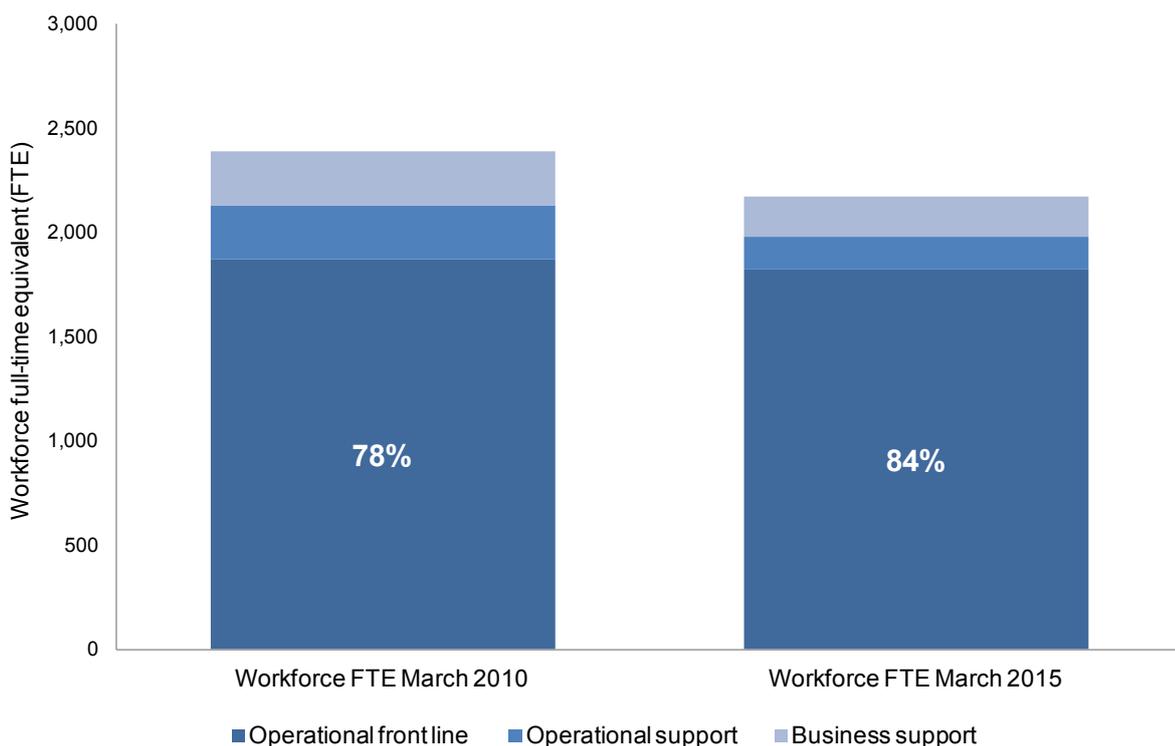
	<b>31 March 2010 (baseline)</b>	<b>31 March 2015</b>	<b>Change</b>	<b>Force change %</b>	<b>Change for England and Wales %</b>
Police officers	1,437	1,328	-109	-8%	-11%
Police staff	810	632	-178	-22%	-17%
CSOs	143	212	69	48%	-22%
Total	2,390	2,172	-218	-9%	-14%
Specials	144	150	6	4%	44%

The proportional reduction in police officers is smaller than for England and Wales. The force will also see an increase in the numbers of CSOs with the support of a grant from the Welsh Assembly Government. The expected reduction of police staff is greater than that of other forces in England and Wales. While this staffing picture is positive when looking over the spending review, beyond this period the force will need to make further reductions to close the outstanding savings gap.

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 Gwent Police.

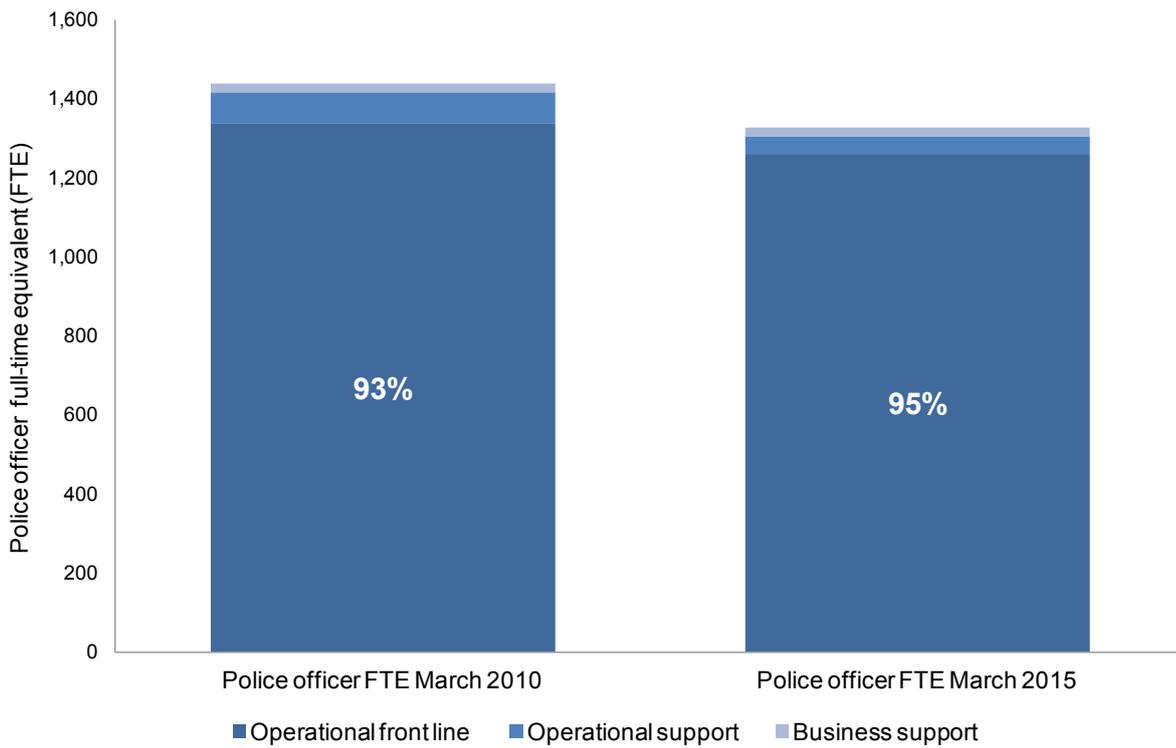


**Note: England and Wales reports an increase in the proportion of workforce on the front line from 74 percent in March 2010 to 78 percent in March 2015.**

The number of officers, CSOs and staff (i.e. the force’s total workforce) working on the front line is projected to reduce by 3 percent between March 2010 and March 2015 (from 1,867 to 1,819). Over the same period, the proportion of Gwent’s total workforce allocated to frontline roles is projected to increase from 78 percent to 84 percent. This compares with an overall increase across England and Wales from 74 percent to 78 percent.

The number of Gwent’s police officers in frontline roles is planned to reduce by 6 percent from 1,336 in March 2010 to 1,260 by March 2015, as the following chart shows. The proportion of those remaining on the front line is projected to increase from 93 percent to 95 percent. This compares to an overall increase across England and Wales from 89 percent to 92 percent and shows Gwent Police force is currently successfully protecting frontline crime-fighting roles as it makes these cuts. However, HMIC is concerned that this may not be sustainable, given the current gap in the force’s savings plan and the reductions in staff numbers the force will have to make in 2015 and beyond.

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

- There are some areas of progress in the force's approach to affordable provision of policing. In particular: the force continues to make good use of collaboration with other Welsh forces and local partners to get better value for money; there has been a positive cultural change across the organisation.
- The increased proportion of police officers on the front line and the force intention to carry out work on demand and workforce modelling are encouraging developments. It is hoped that this will allow the force to develop a strategy for matching demand with resources in the future.
- However, HMIC is concerned that the force's change plans are mainly based on reducing the workforce by not replacing staff as they leave. While this may make most of the savings needed, the force cannot evaluate the impact of the job losses on the service or be confident that it will result in a model that can provide effective policing in Gwent.
- While the force is planning to lose fewer police officers than most other forces in England and Wales over the spending review period, the gap in the force's savings plans means that this is not likely to be sustained beyond 2015. Further staffing reductions will prove necessary in order to balance future budgets. It is imperative that the force develops a structure which is sustainable and affordable in the future, and which protects vital crime fighting roles.

## 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?

The force undertakes an annual strategic threat assessment which informs the allocation of resources to provide policing services. On a daily basis the force leadership stays informed about crime and incidents and allocates resources to these challenges through the force daily management meeting (DMM) structure.

While there is effective daily co-ordination of resources HMIC found limited evidence of a strategic understanding of demand and how resources are currently aligned to known demand. The force acknowledges this and is planning to take steps to gain a more comprehensive understanding as part of the next phase of Staying Ahead. The force last undertook a 'whole force' review of demand in 2009, with advice and assistance from external consultants. As a result of the findings the force was restructured from three basic command units (BCUs) to one. There has been only slight modification to the operating model since that time, as part of the continuous improvement programme being undertaken by the force.

### How efficiently does the force allocate its resources?

Because the force does not have an up-to-date comprehensive understanding of the sources and scale of demand, it can have no certainty that it is allocating resources in the most efficient way to manage and meet demand.

The force has started to look at calls from the public into the control room to assess demand at this first point of contact. The force have also created 'hubs' of expertise within the control room and is seeking to have staff trained and experienced in all areas of control room activity, i.e. 'omni-competent' staff, capable of covering both call handling and despatch, providing greater resilience to cover this important area of work.

The force has recognised that it needs to have a better understanding of demand and as part of Staying Ahead Phase 8 there is a specific project planned to understand the demands placed upon the whole force, develop an approach to reduce unwanted demand and provide options for change, where necessary. This work will give the force a better basis from which to align available resources to an affordable operating model that will respond to demand; however, this work is at a very early stage.

The force, in common with all police forces is expected to provide resources to contribute to the national policing requirements. HMIC found that this is organised effectively in Gwent. In addition the force has undertaken a review of critical posts as well as those required to undertake agreed national requirements, ensuring sufficient resources are available. Succession planning is also undertaken; reviewing requirements on a quarterly basis ensuring the force remains ‘future proof’ against forthcoming retirements of specialist staff.

Gwent Police is the host force for the forthcoming NATO summit. Although extra policing resources will be provided from other forces to support the event, it is clear that this requires a great deal of resource planning, and has the potential to impact on the ability of Gwent Police to achieve change in other areas in advance of this significant policing operation. The force has acknowledged this issue, and has indicated that a large volume of work identified as part of the Staying Ahead programme, will not progress until the NATO summit has concluded.

## 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 to ensure 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 the force responds and keeps communities safe is at the heart of their choices.

### **Calls for service**

Gwent Police does not currently gather information on the time it takes officers to respond to emergency and urgent calls. This means HMIC is unable to assess the effectiveness of how the force responds to these calls for service from the public. The force is currently in the process of procuring a replacement computer system to manage calls from the public. Gwent are considering including the facility to monitor attendance times in the purchase specification.

### **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 being 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 Gwent area.

In 2014, Gwent Police allocated 59 percent of its police officers to visible roles. This is 8.5 percentage points lower than the number allocated in 2010, but higher than the 56 percent figure for England and Wales.

Police visibility is further enhanced by CSOs, who principally support community policing. Looking at the proportion of police officers and CSOs, Gwent Police allocated 64 percent of these staff to visible roles in 2014. This is 6.0 percentage points lower than it allocated in 2010, but higher than the 60 percent figure for England and Wales. Gwent Police have benefited from a grant from the Welsh Assembly Government to enable Welsh forces to take on extra CSOs.

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 Gwent, 10 percent said that they have seen a police officer more often than they had 12 months ago; this is lower than the 12 percent average across all survey respondents in England and Wales.

Of those surveyed in Gwent, 83 percent of respondents in Gwent said they felt safe from crime where they lived, this compares to 84 percent of respondents in England and Wales. Also, 9 percent said they felt safer from crime than they did two years ago, this compares 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 (the first three years of the spending review), Gwent Police reduced recorded crime (excluding fraud) by 22 percent, compared with 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) reduced by 23 percent, compared with 14 percent in England and Wales.

Looking over the spending review, however, the force's performance has markedly deteriorated over the last 12 months. Over this period recorded crime (excluding fraud) rose by 4 percent, compared with a 1 percent reduction across England and Wales. Victim-based crime showed an increase of 5 percent, compared with the 1 percent reduction in England and Wales.

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<sup>2</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.

Of particular concern to HMIC is the increase in violence against the person offences which has risen by 19 percent, in comparison with the 6 percent increase in England and Wales.

Nevertheless in 2013/14 the force report a 7 percent reduction in dwelling burglary and reductions in metal thefts of 36 percent and shoplifting of 3 percent.

By looking at how many crimes are committed per head of population, we can get an indication of how safe it is for the public in that police area. The table below shows recorded crime and anti-social behaviour rates in Gwent (per head of population) compared with the rest of England and Wales. As can be seen from the table violence against the person and anti-social behaviour rates are higher than the figure for England Wales. In contrast, last year Gwent's overall crime level was lower than the figure for England and Wales. This reflects in-year increases in the key crime categories of overall crime, victim-based crime, violence against the person and anti-social behaviour. This is of concern to HMIC and is an area the force must address alongside developing sound plans to achieve further savings.

<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)	61.2	61.1
Victim-based crime	53.9	54.3
Sexual offences	1.1	1.1
Burglary	7.8	7.8
Violence against the person	12.0	11.1
ASB incidents	46.3	37.2

It is important that crimes are effectively investigated and the perpetrator identified and where appropriate, brought to justice. When sufficient evidence is available to identify who has committed a crime, it is described as detected. Gwent Police's detection rate (for crimes excluding fraud) for the 12 months to March 2014 was 28 percent. While this is higher than the England and Wales's detection rate of 26 percent it is lower than the force achieved in the previous year.

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.

Victim satisfaction in Gwent is low in comparison to other forces in England and Wales. In the 12 months to March 2014, 79.0 percent ( $\pm 1.7$  percent) of victims were satisfied with the overall service provided by Gwent Police. This is considerably lower than the England and Wales figure of 85.2 percent ( $\pm 0.2$  percent). The force is aware of the need to improve but HMIC is concerned that progress in improving levels of satisfaction has not been made, despite being identified as an area of declining performance over a number of years.

The force is aware that one of the key causes of victim dissatisfaction with the police is failure of officers to keep victims updated as their cases are investigated. The force has recognised that it is important that officers understand the victims' perspective. It recently ran a workshop where victims who had expressed their dissatisfaction to the force, were invited to meet with senior managers, who could then hear at first hand the experiences of victims. This was well received and reported as extremely positive, enabling managers to gain an insight and understanding of victims' perspectives.

It is important that the force now puts in place measures to ensure victims of crime receive a consistent and effective response and that this leads to an increase in the levels of satisfaction in the service received.

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

As part of the force engagement strategy, it is running an accessibility project, which aims to improve access for the public and keep them better informed. The accessibility plan previously identified a reduction in the numbers of people visiting certain smaller local police stations, which led to the closure of some station front office counters and police buildings. However, the PCC has re-opened a number of front counters, the costs of which have been met from reserves. These new arrangements will be reviewed after 12 months. Over the spending review period the force plans to reduce the number of police stations from 45 to 30, and front counters from 23 to 15. Over this period the force will open one shared service access point.

HMIC was advised that further discussions will take place in relation to these stations, as part of a review of the entire force estate. An evaluation toolkit has been developed to monitor station front counters, ensuring that any future decision on their viability is informed by accurate data about demand and use.

The online watch link (OWL) is another mechanism, which enables the force to

communicate with the public and is the cornerstone of the force engagement strategy. Currently 16 percent of all households are enrolled on OWL, with a target to increase this to 25 percent in 2014.

The force is also seeking innovation funding from the Home Office on behalf of all the police forces in Wales to develop an 'app' to enable the public to have better access to policing services. This 'app' will enable the public to access services, contact individual officers who have dealt with them, submit self reports and receive updates on crimes that they have reported.

## Summary

**Requires improvement**

- Gwent Police has a limited understanding of the demand the force faces. It has not carried out any comprehensive demand analysis since 2009. Without this understanding the force cannot be confident that it is using its resources in the most efficient way.
- Over the last 12 months there has been a notable decline in the force's response to crime. Despite reductions in the first two years of the spending review, the force has seen an increase in overall recorded crime which has risen by 4 percent, compared with a reduction of 1 percent for England and Wales. Notably there has been a 19 percent increase in crimes involving violence. Crime levels, in key categories have increased over the last 12 months meaning overall crime (per head of population) is now marginally higher than the figure for England and Wales, whereas last year it was lower.
- At the same time the force's success in detecting crimes has fallen in comparison with last year, although it remains higher than other forces in England and Wales.
- Public satisfaction with the police remains a challenge in Gwent. Victims of crime in Gwent are more dissatisfied with the way they are dealt with than in England and Wales as a whole.
- HMIC is concerned that the force faces deteriorating performance and in the absence of a credible plan to meet its savings requirement, risks further decline.
- The impact of planning for and policing the NATO summit taking place in the Gwent area later this year has the potential to delay the force's progress in making improvements in the areas outlined in this report.

## 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.