



Inspecting policing  
in the public interest

## Responding to austerity

Merseyside Police

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# How well does the force provide value for money?

## Overall judgment

Merseyside Police has made good progress and is well placed to respond to further austerity in the future.

**Good**

## Summary

Merseyside is not only on track to meet its financial challenge from the spending review period but also for the following financial year of 2015/16. Importantly, the force is also looking beyond this period and is planning now for further funding reductions and future financial pressures.

Overall, the force understands the issues facing it, and has a comprehensive and well-managed change programme in place to achieve the savings required, while minimising as far as possible the impact on frontline policing. HMIC was reassured by the level of detail that underpins Merseyside's saving plans and by the leadership team's ability and determination to make changes while fighting crime and keeping its communities safe.

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

**Good**

Merseyside Police has clear plans to achieve its savings requirement of £18.0m in 2014/15 and £21.7m in 2015/16.

The force already has a strong track record of achieving the savings it has planned to make. For 2013/14, the force achieved savings over its target by a considerable margin.

The force's plans for 2016/17 and beyond are less well developed. But it has an agreed timeline for developing and refining these plans. It is likely that the savings needed can be achieved.

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

**Good**

The way the force works has supported the early achievement of savings for the spending review period without any significant reorganisation.

In January 2010, the force reviewed its business support functions and staff, which resulted in savings of £26.7m. This has enabled the force to defer any further significant reorganisation through the spending review.

The force has achieved the bulk of the required savings through reducing its pay costs, and while there has been no specific plan to achieve savings from non-pay costs, savings have resulted from renegotiating cleaning contracts and centralisation of custody arrangements. The force plans more non-pay savings from procurement and estates specifically.

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

**Good**

During the course of its change programme, the force reviewed 'demand' across the local policing functions of response, neighbourhood policing and local crime investigation. Work is also being undertaken to understand the demand flow within the force contact centre.

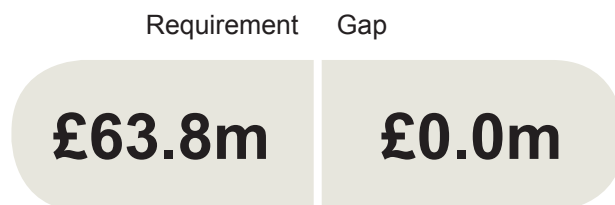
From this review it was able to put in place a way of ensuring that its resources – the people, the technology, and the vehicles for example – are allocated exactly where they need to be to achieve the best results.

The force is improving its response to calls from the public, has reduced recorded crime over the spending review and victims report higher levels of satisfaction in comparison to other forces.

# The constabulary in numbers

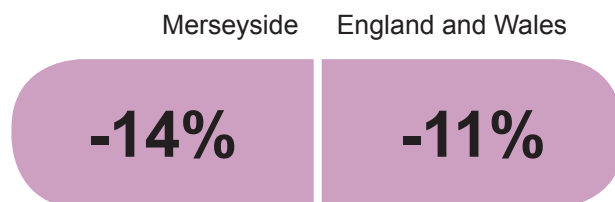
## Financial position

The force's savings requirement

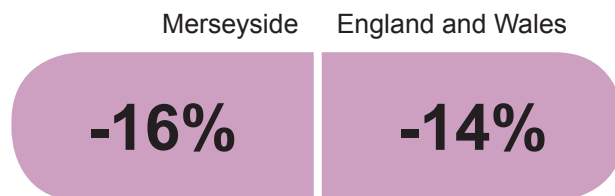


## Providing policing

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

Merseyside

England and Wales

**£140.3**

**£117.7**

Workforce cost per head of population  
2013/14

Merseyside

England and Wales

**£195.4**

**£168.1**

Change in recorded crime  
2010/11 – 2013/14

Merseyside

England and Wales

**-6%**

**-14%**

Victim satisfaction 2013/14\*

Merseyside

England and Wales

**86.9%**

**85.2%**

\*Confidence intervals:  $\pm 0.1\%$  for Merseyside;  $\pm 0.2\%$  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 Merseyside 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

Merseyside Police has identified that it needs to save £63.8m over the four years of the spending review (between March 2011 and March 2015).

As a proportion of its overall budget, this savings requirement of 17 percent which is broadly in line with the figure for England and Wales; but HMIC considers that Merseyside Police faces a particularly difficult challenge. It attracts a high central funding contribution, but lower local funding than many other forces, which means that central funding cuts have a more considerable impact compared to other forces.

## The scale of the challenge

Merseyside faces a particular 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 spends more per head of population than most other forces in England and Wales
- it has a higher number of 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 higher than most other forces in England and Wales.

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

The force exercises effective financial management and this has allowed it to consistently achieve (and overachieve) its savings targets. In 2013/14 the force over achieved its savings targets by £5.2m and reported an under spend of over £7.1m. The force has clear plans for achieving the £18.0m savings required in 2014/15 and the £21.7m in 2015/16.

## Outlook for 2016 and beyond

Merseyside 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. It has plans in place to make all expected savings required through to March 2016. The force's plans for 2016/17 and beyond are less well developed, but there is an agreed timeline for developing and refining these plans and it is likely that the savings needed can be achieved.

The force has started to develop its assumptions and plans, looking beyond the spending review. It has now extended its current approach, the 'sustaining excellence programme' to phase five, known as SEP5.

The force's approach for the future is to re-engineer its services. It plans to do this by reducing demand and developing a continuous improvement process and efficiency driven ways of working. Phase five of the 'sustaining excellence programme' aims to enable the operating model to continue to function with fewer officers and staff. The force's investment to save plans (from the £7.1m under spend in 2013/14) aim to make better use of police time to tackle local priorities, for example, with personal issue laptops for all frontline officers and body worn video cameras to improve the quality of evidence gathering.

### Summary

**Good**

- Merseyside Police has clear plans to achieve their savings requirement of £18.0m in 2014/15 and £21.7m in 2015/16.
- The force already has a strong track record of achieving the savings it has planned to make. For 2013/14 the force achieved an additional £5.2m savings over its target.
- The 'sustaining excellence programme' (SEP 5) plans are still embryonic and require much detailed work, but a clear timetable and an outline project plan are in place to enable further development.

# 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 the required changes through its change programme.

## How the force provides policing

The way the force currently works and polices Merseyside has successfully supported the early achievement of savings for the whole spending review period without any significant reorganisation. Frontline policing continues to be provided from geographical Basic Command Units (BCU), although these will be reduced in number from six to five so that they provide services to the same areas as the five local authorities. Provision of policing is supported by a new joint command centre (JCC) – a control and call handling centre shared with the Merseyside fire service – which will replace three separate control room sites and two call handling sites.

To date the force has achieved the bulk of the required savings through reducing its pay costs. No specific plan has been used to achieve savings from non-pay costs.

While the way in which Merseyside provides policing has served the area well through the current spending review, a revised model will be needed to meet the requirements of the next spending review. This approach aims to enable the force to provide policing with fewer officers and staff.

The force's approach for the future is to redesign its services. With its 'sustaining excellent policing' programme, it plans to do this by reducing demand and developing a continuous improvement process and efficiency driven ways of working. The force is working to develop a greater understanding of demand, and then to manage this demand through the implementation of the JCC. Although at an early stage, during the next two years, this work is expected to influence the future estates strategy and the way in which the force provides policing in the future.

## Collaboration

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

The force has a number of collaboration arrangements predominantly with forces in the North West to tackle serious and organised crime. The force is also collaborating with Merseyside fire service with a joint command centre which has the potential for further

business support collaboration. It is currently considering forensic service collaboration with Cheshire Constabulary which may lead to further areas of collaboration as part of a preferred partner model.

In 2014/15 the force expects to spend five 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 1 percent of the forces savings requirement, which is lower 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 which can help maintain or improve the service they offer to the public and prepare for future funding reductions.

The force's change programme is a mature process which is addressing the financial situation effectively. Over time the change programme iterations have developed logically one from another, growing and learning from each phase.

In January 2010, the force set about a major review of its business support functions and staff and subsequently implemented the 'strategic options programme', consisting of 43 separate savings project, which resulted in savings of £26.7m. This enabled the force to defer any further significant reorganisation during the spending review.

Following the spending review announcement, the force embarked on a second phase of reviews, the 'excellent policing programme'. Together these two programmes secured sufficient savings for the whole of the four-year savings requirement.

The way in which the force provides policing has successfully supported the early achievement of savings for the whole spending review period – without any significant reorganisation.

The force's aim is to ensure that future savings are achieved while supporting frontline policing and protecting communities. As a result the force is now considering changes to the way it will provide policing in the future. These are contained within the 'tracks' of the 'sustaining excellence programme' and include reviews of all areas of business to achieve the best way to provide policing in Merseyside. These 'tracks' include several strategic savings projects underpinned by the estates strategy, and how centralised budgeting, procurement, investment in IT, collaboration opportunities and the joint control centre all fit together.

Chief officers have recently agreed on a new estates strategy which is now before the police and crime commissioner for approval. The current police estate does not match

the requirement for policing today. Some older inefficient stations will be closed on the understanding that for every one that is closed, a community police station will be opened; in some cases this will include services shared with local authority partners. The next level after community police stations will be centres at which patrol officers will be based. Their locations will depend upon the work the force is doing to better understand demand. The strategy includes the intention to review all of the Merseyside estate with a view to achieving efficiencies and savings. For example, the force headquarters will be subject to a £26m refurbishment, which is significantly less than the cost of acquiring a new site and rebuilding.

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

- better alignment of resource to demand;
- changes to the way operational support functions are provided;
- changes to local policing;
- streamlining processes and reducing bureaucracy; and
- changing the way specialist police functions are provided.

The constabulary 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, including reducing demand;
- further streamlining processes and reducing bureaucracy;
- use of business improvement methodology;
- Improved call management and the establishment of single control centre; and
- borderless deployment.

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

The change programme continues to have a strong communication element. Staff and officers from across the force are engaged with the programme, with leadership for the change coming from the chief constable. The six-stage consultation model for organisational reviews has a communication programme to support it. As a result staff, unions, and officer representatives are fully involved and supportive.

The chief constable communicates directly with the workforce as part of his 'Just Talk, Just Think, Just Lead' campaign. Over the last 18 months, he has met with 4,650 staff. While not specific to the spending review or savings plans, the chief constable has used this as an

opportunity to update staff about the major changes that are taking place. In addition, the 'In Touch' newsletter has been used as a targeted communication to keep staff informed about the developments in the change programme.

The force recently circulated its SEP phase 5 timeline to all staff via the intranet. Every BCU was covered in a three month timeframe and commanders informed of the plan. This has also been communicated at the professional reference group in which every department and unit has a representative. These occur on a quarterly basis and the representatives go back to their units and departments and discuss it with their colleagues. Sometimes this meeting is used for communication and sometimes for allocating work to the representatives.

The chief constable also meets with each staff association, separately, every two months, and updates them on developments of the SEP phase 5 programme. The head of change meets fortnightly with the collective staff associations and informs them of progress. Before any change is implemented there is a mechanism for the head of change to provide a confidential briefing to the staff associations. The staff associations are then welcome to put a subject matter expert onto the project and produce alternative proposals to make savings.

Morale is changeable, as is typical in an organisation in times of austerity and varies depending on what the specific situation is for any one area. Officers on restricted and recuperative duties are being managed well, long-term sickness is reducing with investment in ill-health pensions, and the performance improvement unit is making a difference. The force has not conducted an overall staff survey for some time and training varies. Staff and officers reported an increasing awareness of stress levels rising and depression increasing.

However, there is an overriding sense of pride in the force itself. The senior leaders make sure that they are seen out and about around the force, providing visible leadership. Members of the workforce spoken with were clear that change was taking place as a result of financial pressures – not because of any lack of leadership.

## 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 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 (e.g., cleaning). The force plans to make 10 percent of its savings from non-pay, this is lower than the figure for other forces in England and Wales.

To date the force has achieved the bulk of the required savings through reducing pay costs and while there has been no specific plan to achieve savings from non-pay costs, savings have resulted from activities such as renegotiating cleaning contracts and centralisation of custody arrangements. The force plans to achieve more non-pay savings from procurement and estates specifically.

As with other forces most of the savings comes from reducing the workforce. Merseyside 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 90 percent of its spending review savings requirement from its pay budget. This is a higher proportion than that of 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.

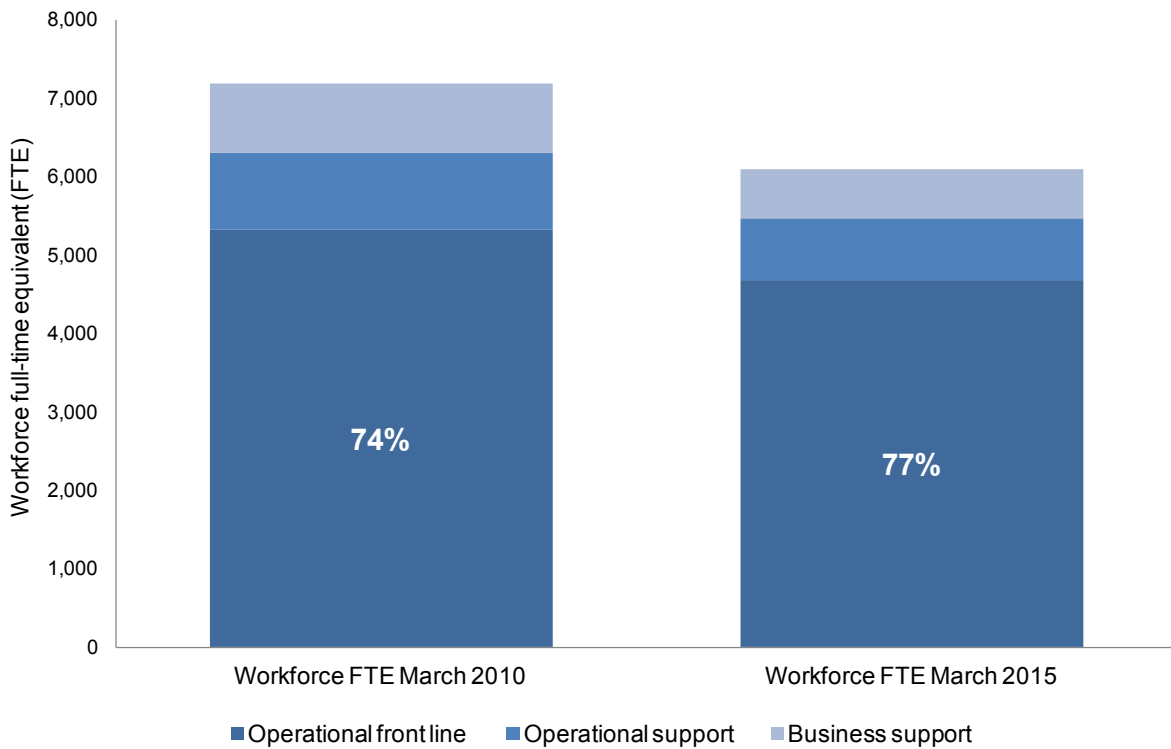
Please note, these figures are rounded.

	<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	4,516	3,886	-630	-14%	-11%
Police staff	2,252	1,850	-402	-18%	-17%
PCSOs	468	352	-116	-25%	-22%
Total	7,236	6,088	-1,148	-16%	-14%
Specials	446	700	254	57%	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 Merseyside 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.**

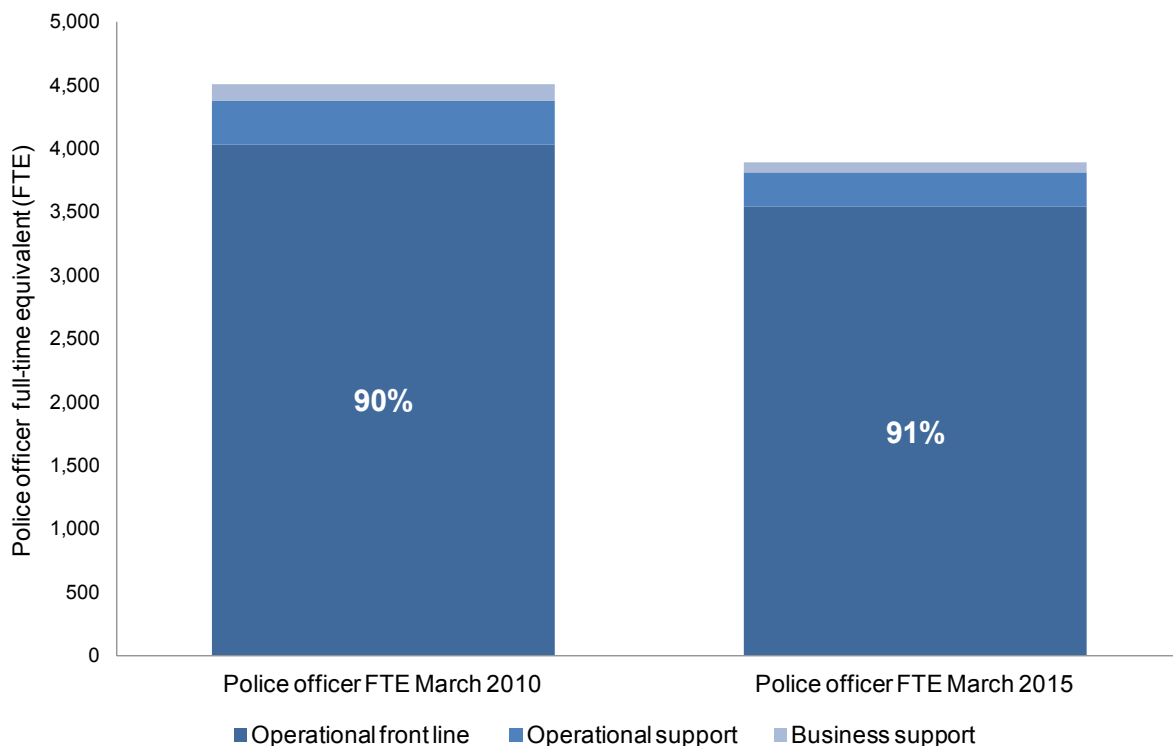
The number of officers, PCSOs and staff (i.e. of the force’s total workforce) working on the front line is projected to reduce by 633 between March 2010 and March 2015 (from 5,317 to 4,684).

Over the same period, the proportion of Merseyside’s total workforce allocated to frontline roles is projected to increase from 74 percent to 77 percent. This compares with an overall increase across England and Wales from 74 percent to 78 percent.

The number of Merseyside’s police officers in frontline roles is planned to reduce by 497 from 4,033 in March 2010 to 3,536 by March 2015, as the following chart shows. The proportion of those remaining on the front line is projected to increase from 90 percent to 91 percent. This compares to an overall increase across England and Wales from 89 percent to 92 percent in England and Wales.



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**

- The way the force currently works and polices Merseyside has successfully supported the early achievement of savings for the whole spending review period without any significant reorganisation.
- In January 2010, the force set about a major review of its business support functions and staff, which resulted in savings of £26.7m. This has enabled the force to defer any further significant reorganisation during the spending review.
- To date the force has achieved the bulk of the required savings through reducing its pay costs, and while there has been no specific plan to achieve savings from non-pay costs, savings have resulted from activities such as renegotiating cleaning contracts and centralisation of custody arrangements. The force plans to achieve more non-pay savings from procurement and estates specifically.

# 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?

The force carries out regular and comprehensive assessments of demand, threat, risk and harm. These assessments are refreshed for the fortnightly tasking and coordinating meetings. The assessments are updated with current information at the daily operational meetings which make decisions about deploying resources to deal with emerging threats. The force gives due consideration to national requirements, particularly in relation to the regional and national impact of serious and organised crime originating in the force area.

During the course of the three phases of its change programme, the force has reviewed demand across the local policing functions of response, neighbourhood policing and local crime investigation. As a result the force developed a resource allocation model. This shaped the current way in which the force provides policing which has served the force well to date. The resource allocation model is refreshed on an annual basis and resources are redistributed to areas of greatest need.

The force is committed to understanding and managing demand. Work is being undertaken to understand the demand flow within the force contact centre. A demand management unit (DMU) was introduced six months ago to reduce demand on local policing officers by dealing directly with those crimes that do not require police attendance. The DMU undertakes 22 percent of crime investigations as desk-based investigations. An incident resolution team (IRT) works alongside the DMU. The IRT reviews all the grade 3 incidents, those incidents that do not require an immediate or priority police response, to establish if they can be resolved without police deployment.

## How efficiently does the force allocate its resources?

A review of neighbourhood policing that took place 18 months ago. This led to the redistribution of resources from some neighbourhood areas to others, aligning resources with threat, harm and risk. Prior to the review, each neighbourhood policing area had been allocated the same number of police officers and PCSOs for neighbourhood policing. This redistribution has resulted in a more targeted approach. Neighbourhood staff are given clear direction, including prevention activity in relation to organised crime groups (OCGs) within their core neighbourhood role. An example of a reduction in firearms discharges in one policing area was attributed to this activity.

The force has made alterations to the structure of its protective services in response to an assessment of demand, risk, harm, threat and organisational need. The assessment of risk led the force to identify a need to enhance its response to people trafficking and cyber crime. Also, following the targeting of OCGs, firearms discharges had reduced by 40 percent which in turn reduced the resource requirement for firearms investigation. As a result, a new protective services model was designed, replacing four portfolios: intelligence; force crime operations unit; force operations; and Matrix, with three distinct commands: uniform services, Matrix investigation (widening the Matrix portfolio to major incident investigation) and Matrix central support. This was introduced in January 2014, ahead of the original date of 1 April 2014.

The force is also implementing a partnership approach to tackling serious and organised crime. Matrix was put in place in 2005 to tackle gun and gang crime. MSOC (Matrix serious organised crime team) builds on this and brings together the existing team, the force intelligence bureau, force crime operations unit, and the operational support unit. The Matrix central support command includes an interventions unit and a partnership unit developing a multi-agency approach, working with the public and private sectors to tackle and dismantle OCGs. Although only in place for six weeks at the time of inspection, successes were already reported.

## 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 has streamlined its performance management arrangements, reducing the number of performance meetings and focusing on measuring performance that contributes to address the PCC's five priorities in the police and crime plan with an emphasis on reducing crime and anti-social behaviour (ASB), maintaining public safety and providing neighbourhood policing. Quarterly performance inspections take place on each BCU and include a review of victim satisfaction.

### **Calls for service**

HMIC examined whether Merseyside 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, Merseyside had maintained the same target response times of 10 minutes for calls classed as 'emergency' (also known as Grade 1). Over the same period, calls classed as a 'priority' (also known as Grade 2) had a target response time of within 60 minutes.

The following table compares the force'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	93.0	95.3
Percentage of priority calls on target	77.0	92.2

Over the spending review, attendance for both emergency calls and priority calls has improved.

## 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 Merseyside area.

In 2014, Merseyside Police allocated 58 percent of its police officers to visible roles. This is 3.7 percentage points lower than the number allocated in 2010, but 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, Merseyside Police force allocated 61 percent of these staff to visible roles. This is 4.2 percentage points lower than it allocated in 2010 and in line with 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 Merseyside, 12 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, 76 percent of respondents in Merseyside 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 (the first three years of the spending review), Merseyside Police force reduced recorded crime (excluding fraud) by 6 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) increased by 1 percent, compared with a reduction of 14 percent in England and Wales.

Looking just at the last 12 months recorded crime (excluding fraud) rose by 4 percent, compared to the figure for England and Wales (reduction of 1 percent).

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. The table below shows crime and anti-social behaviour rates in Merseyside (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)	67.4	61.1
Victim-based crime	56.4	54.3
Sexual offences	1.0	1.1
Burglary	8.8	7.8
Violence against the person	9.3	11.1
ASB incidents	42.2	37.2

<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.

It is important that crimes are investigated effectively and the perpetrator brought to justice. When sufficient evidence is available to identify who has committed a crime, it can be described as detected. Merseyside Police's detection rate (for crimes excluding fraud) for the 12 months to March 2014 was 29 percent. This is higher than the detection rate in England and Wales of 26 percent.

We have chosen these types of crime to give an indication of offending levels in the Merseyside 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](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, 86.9 percent ( $\pm 0.1$  percent) of victims were satisfied with the overall service provided by Merseyside Police. This is higher than the England and Wales figure of 85.2 percent ( $\pm 0.2$  percent).

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

Forces are exploring different ways in which the public can access policing services. The force has closed 26 front counters since 2010/11, but has introduced revised arrangements for the public to access policing services. The force has shared access points with local authority partners and has in excess of 250 other locations where staff make themselves available to the public – at locations such as supermarkets, shops, churches and libraries. The force also holds 'Have Your Say' meetings in each neighbourhood.

Like other forces, Merseyside Police is making use of the internet and social media to communicate with the public and developing different mechanisms for the public to contact the police. The force is encouraging the greater use of online reporting of crime as a convenient alternative to attending a traditional police station. In 2013/14 the force reports that 2.4 percent of crimes recorded were reported online.

Where it is appropriate, social media, such as YouTube, Twitter and Facebook, will be used. The force website receives 80,000 visits per month on average, 50,000 of which are unique visitors, Twitter has over 40,000 followers and in December 2013, 145 YouTube videos received a total of 23,000 views.

## Summary

**Good**

- During the course of its change programme, the force reviewed ‘demand’ across the local policing functions of response, neighbourhood policing and local crime investigation. Work is also being undertaken to understand the demand flow within the force contact centre.
- From this review it was able to put in place a way of ensuring that its resources – the people, the technology, and the vehicles for example – are allocated exactly where they need to be to achieve the best results.
- The force is improving its response to calls from the public, has reduced recorded crime over the spending review and victims report higher levels of satisfaction in comparison to other forces.



# 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.