



Inspecting policing
in the public interest

Responding to austerity

Northumbria Police

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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?	12
To what extent is the force efficient?	20
Our judgments	26

How well does the force provide value for money?

Overall judgment

Northumbria Police has faced one of the highest savings requirements of any force in England and Wales, and it has achieved these while continuing to reduce crime and maintain high levels of victim satisfaction.

Good

Summary

Northumbria Police has identified that it needs to save £91.9m over the four years of the spending review. The force is on track to meet this savings requirement and also for the year beyond, 2015/16.

Overall, the force understands the issues facing it, and has a comprehensive and well-managed change programme in place to achieve the savings required and to protect frontline and visible roles. HMIC was reassured by the level of detail that underpins Northumbria's saving plans and by the leadership's ability and determination to make changes while fighting crime and keeping its communities safe.

HMIC's assessment is that the force is achieving the required savings today while planning for the future.

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

Good

The force faces a particularly difficult challenge as it receives the highest proportion of central funding and lowest council tax precept in England and Wales.

Plans are in place to achieve all savings required, including the use of reserves to smooth the transition, meeting savings while reducing officer numbers.

The plans for dealing with further austerity beyond 2016 are still developing and there are risks to the current structures should extra funding be removed nationally.

In light of the challenge faced, the force has made a robust response to the funding challenge and will achieve the savings.

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

Good

Considerable savings have been made from non-pay budgets with further savings planned through the estates and technology programmes.

The workforce plan through to 2017 accounts for staff reductions as a result of change, promotion, expected leavers and retirements.

Police collaboration is evident with plans to increase this; public and private sector collaboration has been explored but not progressed.

Business improvement and change processes are evident, the workforce is involved, and there is a strong commitment from senior leaders.

To what extent is the force efficient?

Good

The force's assessment of demand using historic data has been used to decide on resource levels; this needs to be updated to reflect current levels of demand.

The force attends all reports of crime, has a strong focus on crime prevention and high levels of officers in visible roles.

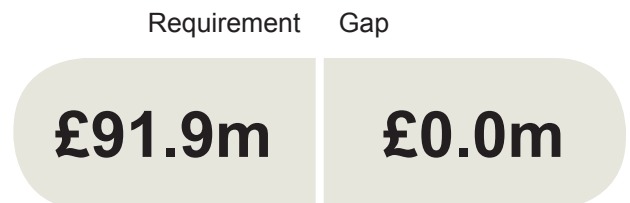
Technology needs improvement and there is a comprehensive plan in place to progress this.

The force has maintained one of the highest rates of victim satisfaction in England and Wales and has robust mechanisms for reviewing performance. Northumbria's continued focus and success in meeting the needs of victims is commendable.

The force in numbers

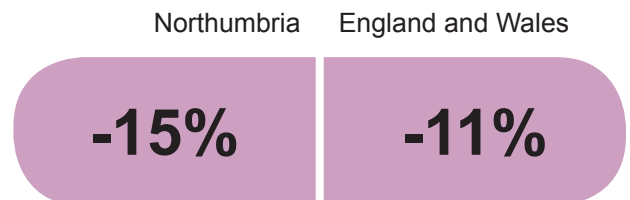
Financial position

The force's savings requirement

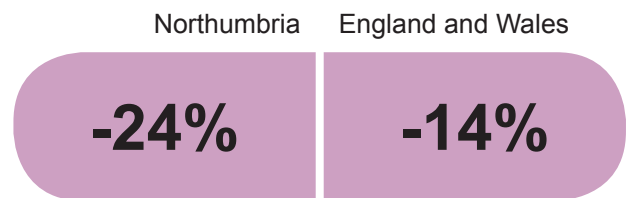


Providing policing

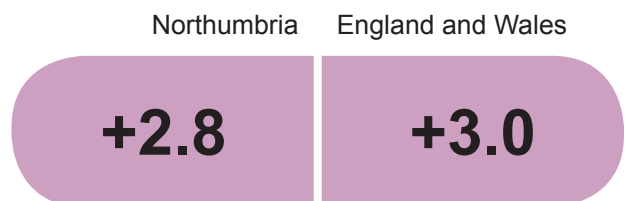
Planned change in police officer numbers 2010/11 – 2014/15



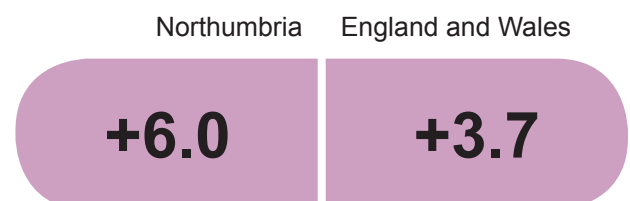
Planned change in total workforce numbers 2010/11 – 2014/15



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

Northumbria

England and Wales

£131.7**£117.7**

Workforce cost per head of population
2013/14

Northumbria

England and Wales

£169.8**£168.1**

Change in recorded crime
2010/11 – 2013/14

Northumbria

England and Wales

-14%**-14%**

Victim satisfaction 2013/14*

Northumbria

England and Wales

90.3%**85.2%**

*Confidence intervals: $\pm 1.2\%$ for Northumbria; $\pm 0.2\%$ 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 Northumbria 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

Northumbria Police has identified that it needs to save £91.9m over the four years of the spending review (between March 2011 and March 2015).

As a proportion of its overall budget, the savings requirement is 26 percent and is one of the highest requirements for a force in England and Wales. HMIC considers that Northumbria Police faces a particularly difficult challenge due to the sheer scale of this requirement and its already low spend on police staff (in comparison with other forces). The force receives the highest percentage contribution from national funding with one of the lowest council precept levels in England and Wales, which means that central funding cuts impact more considerably compared with other forces.

The scale of the challenge

Northumbria 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 on officers than the England and Wales average;
- it has a high number of police officers per 1,000 population; and
- the cost of police officers, police staff and PCSOs per head of population is above most other forces in England and Wales.

Savings plans for 2014/15 and 2015/16

The force has clear plans in place to achieve £19.2m of the £25.7m savings required in 2014/15 and will use reserves to meet the remaining £6.5m of savings required. The force has plans in place to achieve £17.0m of the £18.8m savings required in 2015/16 and will use reserves to meet the remaining £1.8m.

The force has taken a deliberate decision to use reserves to meet savings requirements. This is so that reductions in police staff numbers can be phased in order to reduce the impact on the provision of policing and without the need to use compulsory redundancy.

In 2008, the then police authority made a decision to reduce what it considered to be a high

level of reserves. It was agreed that an additional 110 police officers and 110 police staff would be recruited and financed by reserves. The officers and staff were deployed in roles to support improved performance. The intention was to continue with this approach until the reserves had been reduced and performance improved, at which point, overall officer and staff numbers would be reduced back to original numbers. When the spending review was announced, the force found itself in a position where the savings requirement was even more considerable due to the need to reduce this increased level of staffing. A conscious decision was made to use reserves throughout the spending review in order to smooth the impact of staff reductions.

While the continued use of reserves is not sustainable in the long term, the amounts are diminishing and an under spend in 2013/14 gives some confidence that the use of reserves will be minimal in the years ahead.

Outlook for 2016 and beyond

The force plans for 2016/17 and beyond are less well developed, but there is an agreed timeline for developing and refining these for 2016/17. The corporate risk register is used to manage risks such as the review of the police national funding formula, which could result in a further reduction of £20m for the force. Should this become confirmed, the current way the force provides policing will need to change considerably.

The force has plans to reduce the number of local policing areas from six to three by April 2015. These will share boundaries with local authorities and provide efficiencies through reductions in senior ranks. Other ranks will remain mostly untouched by these changes, with the current number of neighbourhood policing areas and shift patterns remaining the same.

Future changes in the way the force provides policing will depend on three programmes of work, including:

- a project that will free up resources as a result of improvements in technology;
- shared services across the force moving from local commands into centralised teams; and
- collaboration with partners.

The force has made some predictions about future savings that will be required through to 2016/17, based on prudent assumptions about likely grant reductions, cost increases and council tax precept increases. The next general election was confirmed as a major factor in determining how financial plans beyond 2016/17 will be informed.

Summary 

Good

- The force faces a particularly difficult challenge; in 2013/14 it reported receiving the highest level proportion of central funding and one of the lowest council tax precepts in England and Wales.
- Plans are in place to achieve all savings required, including the use of reserves to smooth the transition, meeting savings while reducing officer numbers.
- The plans for dealing with further austerity beyond 2016 are still developing, and there are risks to the current structures should extra funding be removed nationally.
- In light of the challenge faced, the force has made a robust response to the funding challenge and will achieve the savings.

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 force provides policing through geographically based teams, which are supported by specialists who cover the whole force area, but are deployed in the areas that need them most. In 2011/12, the force made considerable changes to the way it provides policing as part of its change programme. This has led to much improved alignment of resources with demand, including a central crime team that could provide more coverage over a 24-hour period. The changes also developed improvements in victim care such as a scheduled appointment system, which provides people reporting incidents or crimes with greater flexibility in what time an officer visits them.

Collaboration

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

The force currently collaborates mainly with police and public sector partners. It has a draft collaboration strategy; once this has been agreed, it will be developed in more detail as to how collaboration will work.

The force has existing regional arrangements in place for serious and organised crime. These arrangements have achieved improvements in service and are planned to achieve efficiency savings of 5 percent per year, every year, from 2015/16. Other areas currently being considered include fraud, technical support, professional standards, firearms, dogs and public order training.

In September 2013, the force entered into a five-year procurement contract with six other north-eastern forces and the Laboratory of the Government Chemist, which now provides forensic science services for all forces. The benefits include a single point of contact for the majority of forensic requirements, a company that invests in being at the forefront of research, and a consistent and performance-driven service.

The force intends to progress public-to-public collaboration and has invested in identifying opportunities to do so. Northumbria's area contains six local authorities and two fire services; this is further compounded by its large geographical area, making collaboration

across a wide range of organisations with differing objectives a considerable challenge. This was demonstrated through research conducted with one local authority to share back office teams (including human resources, finance and business services), which was not progressed. However, arrangements have gone ahead with Northumberland County Council, which provides IT support for the force and also for NEXUS, (the provider of the Tyne and Wear metro service), which works with the force to improve the safety of metro stations.

Private sector collaboration has been considered but is not currently being planned. The force previously conducted market testing for custody. However, the financial outcomes were not as attractive as first thought, and the force has since proceeded with internal plans to reduce costs by reducing detention centres from seven to five. The force has also looked for a private sector technology partner as it recognises that the current IT provision needs to improve. This was not followed up as the most cost effective solution was to modernise its core operational command and control system, implement a new information management platform and introduce mobile technology at the front line; fully integrating business and operational processes. This will be achieved through a blend of internal resource and local and national technology partners.

In 2014/15, the force expects to spend 3 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 7 percent of the force's savings requirement, which is below 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.

The force has a well-controlled change programme. This has clear methods linking the police and crime plan objectives into the chief constable's plan, then into department plans and individual objectives. The way change is managed has recently become much more integrated to help reflect that change is a continual process, as well as to reduce the costs of a central team.

The force demonstrated the use of change methodologies to provide rigour in the way it undertakes reviews to identify improvements and efficiency savings. This involves taking a particular issue or problem and providing a step-by-step approach to resolve it. An example of this is the shared services project that has moved back office tasks, such as human resources and finance, from local control to central management. This project has achieved savings of £4m.

All projects report on a regular basis, and where required, use the fortnightly business meetings chaired by the chief constable to raise any issues that require support from chief officers. External reviews of change have not been used so far, but there is an internal process in place to check that changes have realised the agreed benefits.

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

- business support;
- estate reduction;
- improving the way operational support is undertaken;
- using IT to make processes more efficient and reduce bureaucracy; and
- improved procurement and contract re-negotiation.

The force identifies that the main elements of its change programme in response to future financial pressures will include:

- development of mobile data applications;
- improved call management;
- using IT to make processes more efficient and reduce bureaucracy;
- better alignment of resources to demand; and
- introducing borderless deployment of resources in the force area.

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

The force demonstrated that understanding and developing the culture of the organisation is central to achieving business improvement, savings and organisational change. The force, and in particular the senior leadership, has invested considerable time in meeting staff across the force in open forums to discuss the savings requirements and change plans. This was confirmed by the staff with whom HMIC spoke during the inspection. Staff also can use chief constable bullteins and an intranet site to to find out information and answer queries.

The force also has focus groups that are used for discussing how change will be implemented and for gaining feedback; an example of this was improvements to the way CCTV is monitored. Staff have a good understanding of the savings requirement and the changes to be made; they value the open forums, and understand that questions could not always be answered. An example of culture being changed is a campaign that requires officers to remove less property from a crime scene (rather than as is traditional to take

more) and making sure that decisions are made as to how the property is to be used or disposed of within 35 days.

The force is beginning to invest more time in developing wellbeing, and a health, safety and wellbeing group was formed in March 2014, which meets monthly. The group is reviewing a recent stress survey, which was the first survey conducted since 2010. Sickness rates have reduced over the last two years, achieved through an understanding of why absence is being taken, a greater focus on resolving each individual case, working in partnership with occupational health, managing repeat absence and providing extra training for supervisors.

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 also expect forces to bear down on their other costs (non-pay) such as the equipment they buy, the accommodation and vehicles they use, and the contracts they enter for services (e.g., for cleaning). Northumbria plans to make 36 percent of its savings from non-pay, which is higher than for most other forces.

All non-pay budgets have been reviewed to confirm where reductions can be made without having an impact on the service to the public. One example is the budget used for forensics, which has been reduced from £4.25m in 2010/11 to £1.43m in 2013/14. This has been achieved through improved financial management, stringent criteria for the use of the budget, and taking advantage of increased competition in forensic suppliers. So far, savings of £2.5m have been made from contracts and a further £0.5m is planned.

The force is planning to reduce the estate and share accommodation with local public sector organisations. It has identified that there are police stations in each command that are no longer at the centre of the community, which cost on average £32,000 per station each year to maintain. To make sure the community can still access policing, no station will be closed until a suitable shared replacement has been found. Public consultation is scheduled to take place and once the replacements are made, the force aims to achieve savings of £3.3m per year.

Reducing the estate will also help the force to develop buildings to support policing now and in the future. An example of this is the use of custody hubs where the force has identified a set number of locations that have the greatest demand for processing offenders. This will rely on the release of funding from the disposal of police buildings, which is expected to provide up to £32m from the sale of police property.

The estates programme links to the IT programme to reduce the need for police stations, as officers will be able to undertake more work while out on patrol. The force is investing £2m over a three-year period into developing the main IT systems and increasing the use of mobile technology.

As with other forces, savings mostly come from reducing the workforce. Northumbria Police plans to make 64 percent of its spending review savings requirement from its pay budget. This is a lower proportion than for other forces.

The workforce plan for the next four years to 2017 accounts for staff reductions as a result of change, promotion, expected leavers and retirements. An assessment is carried out when a post is being removed to identify the skills of the current post holder and to confirm critical posts. For example, PCSOs are critical and any vacancies will be filled. Roles that are not critical are reviewed at a weekly resource management meeting chaired by the chief constable.

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. Northumbria plans to lose a greater proportion of their workforce in all categories than other forces in 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	4,187	3,539	-648	-15%	-11%
Police staff	2,096	1,333	-763	-36%	-17%
PCSOs	438	256	-182	-42%	-22%
Total	6,721	5,128	-1,593	-24%	-14%
Specials	178	350	172	97%	44%

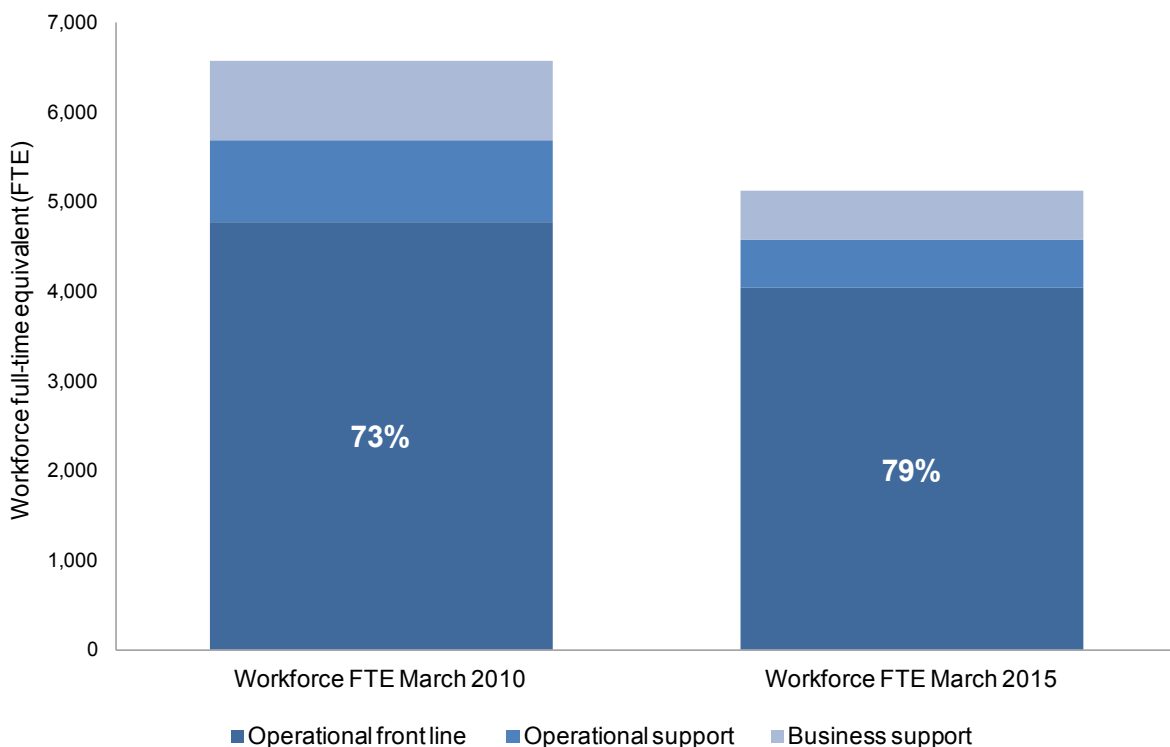
PCSOs see the greatest proportion reduction over the spending review. This follows a review of the roles previously categorised as PCSO and has led to a number being re-categorised as police staff. The roles affected were within the functions of offender management, custody investigation and intervention officers, together with customer enquiry clerks. However, Northumbria has maintained the number of PCSOs in visible roles (256 including eight coordination roles) over the spending review.

There are no plans to reduce these.

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 Northumbria 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.

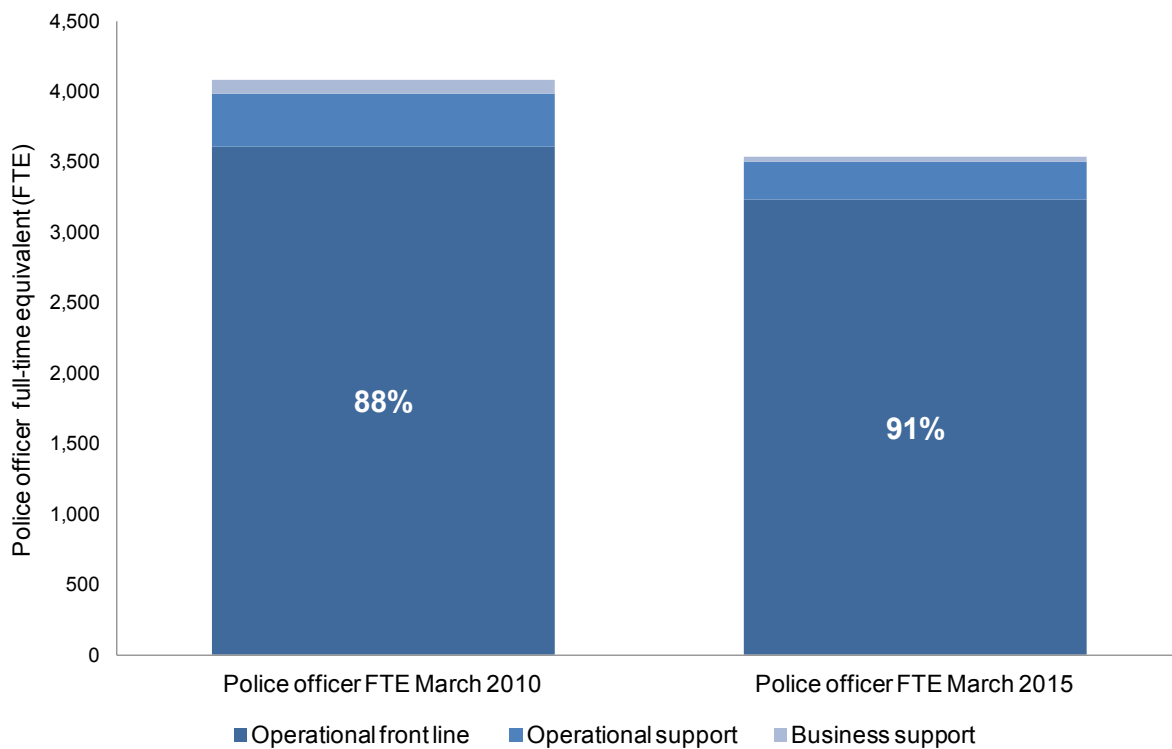
The number of officers, PCSOs and staff working on Northumbria’s front line is projected to reduce by 737 between March 2010 and March 2015 (from 4,771 to 4,034).

Over the same period, the proportion of Northumbria’s total workforce allocated to frontline roles is projected to increase from 73 percent to 79 percent. This compares with an overall increase across England and Wales from 74 percent to 78 percent.

The number of Northumbria’s police officers in frontline roles is planned to reduce by 384 from 3,611 in March 2010 to 3,227 by March 2015, as the following chart shows.

The proportion of those remaining on the front line is projected to increase from 88 percent to 91 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

- Considerable savings have been made from non-pay budgets with further reductions planned through the estates and technology programmes.
- The workforce plan through to 2017 accounts for staff reductions as a result of change, promotion, expected leavers and retirements.
- Police collaboration is evident with plans to increase this; public and private sector collaboration has been explored but not progressed.
- Business improvement and change processes are evident, the workforce is involved and there is a strong commitment from senior leaders.

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 conducted a review of its demand in 2010 and used this to decide the level of resources needed, based on activities that are regular and can be planned (e.g., volume, location and time of 999 calls). This assessment of demand is now being used to make decisions on police station locations as part of the estates programme.

The force carries out regular and comprehensive assessments of emerging threats. These assessments are refreshed and reviewed at the monthly strategic management board, which is chaired by the chief constable and attended by the police and crime commissioner. The assessments are used to make decisions about the deployment of resources to deal with issues such as emerging threats and changes in demand. The force runs focus groups with a range of partners, such as independent advisory groups and members of the public to inform these assessments. Regional and national requirements are also considered to assist in tackling issues such as serious and organised crime, or threats to other forces that require support. For example, an increase in supporting public order requirements has been identified as a result of forces reducing and/or removing mounted teams.

The force collates information on demand that is created from other organisations, such as the ambulance service and issues related to mental health. Some progress has been made in reducing this demand and improving the police response. For example, an initiative in the Sunderland area has police officers working alongside a mental health worker.

Officer availability, visibility and productivity can be accessed through an IT system that provides information such as time spent on patrol, time spent in a particular location, detection rate, arrest rate, etc. This information can be provided at force, district, team and individual levels, and it is used to inform the force's understanding of performance.

How efficiently does the force allocate its resources?

The force has a policy to attend all reports of crime, with clear criteria for grading incidents and deploying staff to make sure the most appropriate response is provided. For incidents not requiring an immediate or priority response, the force uses a scheduled appointment system. Regular and robust quality assurance processes are in place to check that staff within the two communication centres comply with the incident grading criteria.

The force has identified that, in order to build on efficiencies already made and to maintain its levels of performance, technology needs to improve. The force's IT plan is linked to its priorities and a programme will be achieved between 2014 and 2018. The major aims will be to make the best use of officer time and intelligence, improve visibility and productivity, reduce costs and improve service quality. The force has secured £425,000 of funding from a Home Office innovation fund to support implementation.

The force is running a mobile data pilot and has issued 300 smart phones to response and neighbourhood officers. The smart phones provide remote access to some of the force's IT systems and allow officers to carry out a number of tasks without having to return to a police station. For example, officers can view and update incidents and crimes, access intelligence information, and capture and store images relating to crimes and incidents.

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.

At the beginning of the spending review, the chief constable made a commitment that officer numbers working in local policing roles would be maintained to help the force continue its focus on the prevention of crime and antisocial behaviour.

Crime prevention is a consistent theme in various plans within the force, including the police and crime plan and the chief constable's plan. Forums such as the monthly operational performance review meetings encourage and support the provision of preventative policing at both a force and district level. The force is also piloting an initiative to prevent neighbourhood officers from being taken from their local policing role to answer calls for service.

A pilot scheme is taking place in North Tyneside, Sunderland and Washington where officers are using body-worn video cameras. This has improved the way officers capture evidence, particularly at incidents involving domestic abuse. It is clear that technology improvement will help to provide further reductions and improve services in the future.

The force has an in-depth performance management process to monitor and manage outcomes and performance, with a particular focus on reducing the number of vulnerable and repeat victims. The force reviews performance through a number of meetings, including the monthly strategic management board and operational performance meetings. HMIC found that staff interviewed during the inspection felt that performance was beginning to move away from traditional targets to focus much more on the quality of service.

Calls for service

HMIC examined whether Northumbria 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, Northumbria had maintained the same target response times of 10 minutes for calls classed as ‘emergency’ (also known as Grade 1) in an urban setting, and within 20 minutes for calls classed as ‘emergency’ in a rural setting. Over the same period, calls classed as a ‘priority’ (also known as Grade 2) had a target response time of within 60 minutes for both urban and rural areas.

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

Calls for service	2010/11	2013/14
Percentage of urban emergency calls on target	81.8	87.2
Percentage of rural emergency calls on target	86.3	90.5
Percentage of urban priority calls on target	90.7	95.0
Percentage of priority calls on target	91.7	95.5

Over the spending review, the percentage of emergency and priority calls met within target in both urban and rural areas 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 in order to protect the public, such as counter terrorism, serious and organised crime, and child protection (to name just three).

That said research shows that the public value seeing visible police officers on patrol in the streets, and that those who see police in uniform at least once a week are more likely to have confidence in their local force. HMIC therefore examined how far the changes being implemented by the force had affected the visibility of the police in the Northumbria area.

In 2014, Northumbria allocated 70 percent of its police officers to visible roles. This is 6.2 percentage points higher than the number allocated in 2010, and higher than the 56 percent figure for England and Wales.

Police visibility is further enhanced by PCSOs, who principally support community policing. Looking at the proportion of police officers and PCSOs, Northumbria police allocated 71 percent of these staff to visible roles. This is 4.5 percentage points higher than it allocated in 2010, and considerably 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 Northumbria, 14 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, 87 percent of respondents in Northumbria said they felt safe from crime where they lived, compared to 84 percent of respondents in England and Wales. Finally, 10 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), Northumbria reduced recorded crime (excluding fraud) by 14 percent, in line with a 14 percent reduction in England and Wales. Similarly over this period, victim-based crime (that is, crimes where there is a direct victim such as an individual, a group, or an organisation) reduced by 14 percent, in line with a 14 percent reduction in England and Wales.

Looking just at the last 12 months, recorded crime (excluding fraud) rose by 5 percent, compared with the figure for England and Wales (a reduction of 1 percent). The force has identified that in part this has been due to increases in confidence with reporting certain crime types (such as sexual offences) as a result of work completed with the police and crime commissioner.

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 Northumbria (per head of population) compared with the rest of England and Wales.

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.

12 months to March 2014	Rate per 1,000 population	England and Wales rate per 1,000 population
Crimes (excluding fraud)	49.2	61.1
Victim-based crime	42.8	54.3
Sexual offences	0.8	1.1
Burglary	5.9	7.8
Violence against the person	7.3	11.1
ASB incidents	53.6	37.2

It is important that crimes are effectively investigated and that the perpetrator is identified and brought to justice. When sufficient evidence is available to identify who has committed a crime, it can be described as detected. Northumbria’s detection rate (for crimes excluding fraud) for the 12 months to March 2014 was 42 percent. This is considerably higher than the England and Wales detection rate of 26 percent.

We have chosen these types of crime to give an indication of offending levels in the Northumbria 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, 90.3 percent (± 1.2 percent) of victims were satisfied with the overall service provided by Northumbria Police. This is considerably higher than the England and Wales figure of 85.2 percent (± 0.2 percent). Northumbria Police’s continued focus on meeting the needs of victims and maintaining one of the highest levels of satisfaction is commendable.

The force attributes high rates of satisfaction partly to the use of a victim contract, which sets out to address issues through a quality of service commitment. Strong emphasis is placed on relating to and understanding communities through community involvement.

Changes to how the public can access services

The force has a wide range of contact methods available to the public, which includes social media, such as Twitter, and the force’s website. The force also keeps the public updated about operations and crimes in their area through articles in the media, community

meetings, leaflet drops, and by using community watch schemes. New access methods are being introduced, including a web form for reporting crime, an SMS messaging system, and safe reporting centres for hate crime.

The force will open three access points shared with local organisations through the estates strategy. These include locations such as shops, fire stations and libraries. The force intends to retain the number of police stations, but will reduce the number of front counters from 27 to 26. This will be replaced by a shared access point with a front counter which will be open to the public at the same times.

Summary

Good

- The assessment of demand using historic data has been used to decide on resource levels, needs to be updated to reflect current levels of demand.
- The force attends all reports of crime, has a strong focus on crime prevention and has high levels of officers in visible roles.
- Technology needs to be improved and there is a comprehensive plan in place to progress this, for example, initiatives to pilot mobile data.

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 achievement of value for money is inadequate because it is considerably lower than is expected.