



Observations on the third generation of force management statements

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Foreword by Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Constabulary

The policy behind force management statements has been shown to have been successful.

Every well-managed enterprise requires and has a sound understanding of:

- (a) the demand it expects to have to meet in the foreseeable future;
- (b) the quality of its asset stewardship; this means the condition, capacity, capability, performance, efficiency and security of supply of its assets; and
- (c) the financial income it will need to use those assets efficiently to meet that demand.

Force management statements are modelled on network management statements in other safety-critical, asset-intensive, monopoly, essential public services. The case for the adaptation and application of that policy in and to the most essential public service of all – law and order – has now been shown to be unanswerable.

This document explains overall how far the police service has come in meeting the obligations of every chief constable to demonstrate efficiency in the discharge of his or her functions. Police forces have some considerable way to go, as explained here; the journey is far from over. But in most cases and in many respects, progress has been good. Only a few forces are failing; regrettably, some are failing badly.

There is much that the College of Policing can do to enable forces to improve how they measure and assess demand, asset stewardship and performance.

Force management statements also contribute materially to the quality of democratic accountability of forces, and show how far elected representatives (national and local) can have confidence in these self-assessments which chief constables make.

Sir Thomas P Winsor

Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Constabulary

Foreword by Chief Constable Shaun Sawyer QPM

I commend this observations document to Chief Officers and practitioners. The introduction of force management statements has provided opportunity for improvement and clarity across the service. As the Chair of the NPCC Performance Management Coordinating Committee, I am encouraged by the way that forces have adopted and adapted their FMS processes to maximise the benefits to executive decision making and planning.

As a tool to develop business planning skills across the service they have had a significant positive impact. They provide a systematic approach to identifying challenges at force level and a robust evidence base to support planning and mitigate organisational risk.

The collective body of FMSs contain a wealth of contextual information to support conversations about trends in the data monitored against the National Crime and Policing measures. The content is considered and referred to with the Minister for Crime and Policing, Kit Malthouse MP, who chairs the Crime and Policing Board.

Whilst progress has been made, police forces and HMICFRS must continue to work together in its development. This will enable forces to use the FMS as part of force planning and corporate risk management in their approaches to planning. The FMS steering group members are actively involved in shaping the next FMS. The PMCC and its members look forward to working with HMICFRS and supporting forces with responses to the observations contained in this document as well as in improvements and innovation.

Chief Constable Shaun Sawyer QPM

Introduction

In 2012, the [Independent Review of Police Officer and Staff Remuneration and Conditions](#) recommended police forces produce an annual force management statement.

The recommendation was made because “too many police forces have incomplete or inadequate information” about their workforces and physical facilities. FMSs help forces to make sound management decisions about how they will adapt to meet expected future demand, and help those who assess the efficiency and effectiveness of police forces.

The inspectorate now requires forces to produce an FMS every year. The information FMSs contain is reasonably required for the purposes of inspection, and could be formally required by the inspectorate if a force were to be reluctant to produce one; fortunately, none has refused and formal notices have never been served.¹

FMSs contain information which forces should already have. They draw into a single document, certified by the chief constable, the essential information about demand, asset stewardship, efficiency and resources. With that information, verified as accurate and reliable, chief officers are far better able to make sound decisions on the deployment of their assets to meet demand. Since forces cannot meet all projected demand, FMSs enable deployment decisions to be made which tackle the demand that matters most: where threat, harm and risk are highest.

When we introduced FMSs, there was considerable resistance from some chief constables and local policing bodies. To make their introduction as smooth as possible, for the first-generation FMSs we allowed forces significant latitude in how they explained their assessments of future demand and asset stewardship. This inevitably meant that there was considerable variation in the quality of the first FMSs. However, that variation showed that a substantial proportion of forces had significantly weak means of assessing future demand, and in many cases quite inadequate understanding of the condition, capacity, capability, performance, efficiency, serviceability and security of supply of their assets, predominantly their people. It followed that some forces’ ability to make the best practicable decisions about how to use those assets to meet demand was compromised.

¹ Under Schedule 4A, Police Act 1996, the inspectorate may require any person to provide information of documents which the inspectorate reasonably requires for the purposes of an inspection under section 54 of that Act. The same applies to any evidence or other things so required. The inspectorate may specify the form and manner in which these things are to be provided. The exceptions are very limited. Sanctions for failure to comply with a formal notice requiring such material, and for recklessly providing information that is false in a material respect, are specified in paragraph 6C of Schedule 4A.

Since then, a great deal has changed. In the second and third generations of FMSs, we strengthened and tightened our requirements in relation to the specification of demand and asset stewardship. These have in turn facilitated our ability to compare FMSs, and so assess forces' efficiency and effectiveness, both over time and between comparable forces.

Chief officers, local policing bodies and others now realise the considerable advantages of FMSs. They are no longer seen as requirements of the inspectorate; rather, they are essential management tools which lead to far better decisions.

We aren't the only organisation involved in developing FMSs. The national FMS steering group comprises representatives from organisations throughout policing, including the National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC), the College of Policing, the Association of Police and Crime Commissioners (APCC) and the Home Office. As FMSs are of high value to all in policing, the group makes sure that FMSs are useful to everyone. This document is published on behalf of the steering group and includes contributions from those interested parties.

Forces have now produced at least three FMSs. After the first, we gave forces direct feedback about how they could improve their statements and what we had learned from them. After the second generation of FMSs, forces received further individual feedback, and the steering group published a [document with its observations on them](#).

How FMSs contribute to our inspections

FMSs have become integral to how we inspect forces. While police forces have some challenges and priorities in common, the structure of policing in England and Wales means each of the 43 police forces has its own problems and features. Some forces are predominantly urban; others are rural. Forces may police airports, royal residences, tourist destinations and major events. No two police forces are the same. Because of this, each force must balance the national priorities for policing with those established by its local policing body.

FMSs inform all of our work. They are an important part of our PEEL (police effectiveness, efficiency and legitimacy) inspections, especially in respect of efficiency. They also support our regular monitoring of police performance. And they help identify national themes and provide a national overview of policing. Over the past year, FMSs have informed our inspections of [policing during the pandemic](#), [the policing of protests](#), and the [police response to violence against women and girls](#).

How FMSs benefit policing

Most police forces now recognise the benefit of FMSs. Forces tell us that the process to produce an FMS is especially useful. Increasingly, forces are integrating FMSs into their planning processes.

The rules for producing FMSs require forces to assess all departments and resources equally. They require each force to examine frontline and back-office functions, and evaluate where the force can most efficiently and effectively spend its money. Developing the annual FMS brings rigour to corporate planning and sits

comfortably in the planning cycle alongside strategic risk assessments, control strategies, and financial and workforce planning processes.

Many forces have told us they would produce an FMS even if the inspectorate didn't require it. This was clear when we paused the requirement to produce FMSs in the early stages of the pandemic in spring 2020. Some forces continued to work on the FMSs. That work also helped forces plan their responses to the pandemic. For example, Norfolk Constabulary produced an interim FMS to understand how shifting and recovering demand would affect the force during and after the pandemic, and to explore the different ways policing might change in response to the pandemic.

FMSs also support national policing. The FMS steering group has used FMS data to inform programmes on the recruitment of 20,000 new officers and on recovering from the pandemic, as well as briefing the Crime and Policing Performance Board as part of the Government's Beating Crime Plan.

Forces have also told us how the FMS has changed where and when they invest or allocate resources, as the FMS rules require them to consider how performance in one area affects another. For example, one force brought forward a major investment in its control room because of problems it found in its response to the public – problems first identified in its work on the FMS.

Forces work with local policing bodies and other interested parties to produce their FMSs. This collaborative work helps forces and local policing bodies understand demand and the level of resources likely to be required in specific areas. For example, FMSs provide local policing bodies with objective evidence as to why forces may need extra funding, to be raised from precept. Some interested parties, such as those working on the national response to the pandemic or the recruitment of 20,000 new police officers, are bringing together FMS information to identify national themes and trends, and to assess how forces are responding.

How FMSs support local accountability

We are pleased to see that many FMSs include a foreword from the chief constable and the local policing body explaining the force's priorities and the rationale for force decisions about resources.

Because the FMS is about all aspects of the force, it is an essential document to help the local policing body scrutinise the actions and plans of the chief constable, to help the local policing body discharge its statutory obligations. The FMS details how the force will have regard to local and national priorities, and highlights any areas that might not have the necessary capacity or capability. Local policing bodies set out their priorities in their police and crime plans; their chief constables must have regard to them.² A good FMS will give a local policing body significant assistance in discharging its duty to secure that the police force is efficient and effective and holding the chief constable to account.³

² Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011, section 8(2).

³ Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011, section 1(6)(b) and 1(7).

FMSs should give a comprehensive assessment of demand

When we introduced FMSs, we recognised that it would take several years for forces to produce a comprehensive assessment of demand, the workforce and assets. We now expect forces to have substantially improved their means of assessing future demand and their asset stewardship.

For the third generation, we restated our requirement that each FMS must explain the chief constable's assessment of future demand and how policing should change to be ready to meet that demand. To do this to the required standard, forces must demonstrate awareness of local circumstances and explain how this affects their planning. They must focus on analysis rather than descriptive information, and make better use of data from local organisations where that information can reasonably be expected to provide worthwhile input. And forces should make use of national datasets, to compare their performance with similar forces.

We also reiterated the requirement for forces to explain the link between their operational decisions and financial planning. In previous FMSs, it wasn't always sufficiently clear how financial plans aligned with the decisions explained in the FMS.

Finally, we introduced additional requirements in the major events section, and guidance to facilitate forces' assessments of how they responded to the pandemic. This includes lessons learned and how it affects preparation for future civil emergencies.

FMS – the future

All forces have now produced several FMSs. Some forces produce a comprehensive assessment of demand, their asset stewardship and how they will change. But too many forces still produce weak assessments of demand, and incomplete assessments of their workforce and assets. After three years of FMSs, this is plainly unacceptable. Forces have had plenty of time.

The inspectorate will continue to work with forces and the FMS national steering group to improve the quality of FMSs. All forces must come up to the necessary standard, and do so quickly. If necessary, the inspectorate will issue statutory notices to the forces which have provided the weakest FMSs.⁴

⁴ Under paragraph 6A, Schedule 4A, Police Act 1996. Compliance is mandatory, and there is no statutory right of appeal.

Summary of observations

FMSs continue to improve

Our first published [observations document](#) commended forces for the improvements between their first and second FMSs. We are pleased that, in most cases, the third generation of FMSs are a significant improvement on the second.

They show us that forces understand demand better. More forces better explain the demand they expect in future and their plans to meet it. The best FMSs assessed well the status of the workforce and assets, and told us how the force needed and planned to change. Poorer FMSs showed an inadequate understanding of how the force planned to change to meet expected future demand, or how ready the workforce and assets were to deal with that demand.

While there is still no single FMS that is uniformly strong, the improvement in most FMSs is commendable. Some are good, and those forces have created a foundation to produce an outstanding FMS. Many forces have made the FMS the cornerstone of their planning processes. When a force has done this, it is evident in the quality of the statement.

FMSs deal with national themes and problems

The improvements in the quality of FMSs mean they now provide insight into national policing issues. The principal national themes from the third generation of FMSs are:

- Forces still have too few detectives, and it is taking longer than forces expected to make up the shortfall.
- The demands of offender management are increasing rapidly, and some forces don't yet have sufficient knowledge about how they will meet that demand.
- Operation Uplift, the recruitment of 20,000 new police officers, affects all areas of policing. But in too many respects the police service didn't or couldn't adequately explain how recruiting these officers will improve the service to the public.
- Some police forces are undoing work to modernise their workforces. They are placing warranted officers into roles currently filled by less expensive, and often more skilled and specialist, police staff.

Forces better understand demand and capacity

The FMSs show that forces better understand demand from the public and demand they generate themselves. In most FMSs there is better analysis of demand. But almost all forces need to improve understanding of less obvious demand in areas that are hard to measure, such as proactive neighbourhood policing and latent (hidden) demand in areas such as crimes against vulnerable people.

Forces have improved their understanding of the capacity of their workforces. Forces are also more aware of the need to support the physical and mental wellbeing of their workforces, and not just monitor sickness levels.

Forces need to improve understanding of workforce capabilities

Almost all forces need to show a deeper understanding of workforce skills and how they use and develop them.

Some FMSs explain how officers and staff are placed in roles that use their skills, and that meet the needs of the force as well as the workforce. This supports efficient and effective management of future demand. But too often FMSs focus on increasing the headcount of the workforce. They don't assess the changing skills and capabilities the force might need to recruit or develop to meet future demand which is of a character, volume or intensity different from the past, or where technology can lessen the demand on staff.

Forces should invest in the capabilities needed to produce an FMS

We are concerned that some forces still do not yet have sufficient capability or capacity to produce a comprehensive FMS.

Forces have improved their understanding of demand and, to an extent, resources. But many don't adequately use that information to provide well-rounded assessments of the problems they face. As a result, many forces don't produce an adequate evidence-based plan that can inform sound decision making.

To produce a good FMS, a force must understand its current demand across all areas of policing. It should state the level, nature and intensity of demand the force is planning for. It must understand the resources it has now and how those resources may need to change – in volume and nature - to keep pace with future demand. It requires an assessment of capacity, capability, condition, serviceability, performance, wellbeing and security of supply of both the workforce and non-workforce assets. Forces must also assess the quality of service they provide with existing resources. Each FMS must also explain the efficiency of the force and how the force will improve that efficiency over time.

FMSs have exposed a deficiency in the planning and assessment capability of some forces. During the decade of austerity, many forces cut their analytical back-office functions. Many FMSs describe analytical functions that are working beyond capacity. As the pressure for data, insight and knowledge has grown, these functions have come under increasing strain. Strategic planning requires high quality data and analysis, and specialist tools and skills.

Too many FMSs don't explain how the force prioritises funding to meet future demand. Each force receives many millions of pounds of public money and yet many are insufficiently able to describe how they use these funds to provide an efficient and effective service.

About this document

This document contains our observations on the third generation of FMSs from England and Wales and has been prepared through consultation between HMICFRS, College of Policing and the NPCC. Our observations are based on:

- what has changed since the introduction of FMSs;
- what the FMSs say about the demand and pressure on the police service;
- what the FMSs say about forces' understanding of their demand and resources;
- what the FMSs say about the quality of forces' planning to meet future demands; and
- what needs to change to improve FMSs.

These observations draw together common strands from the feedback we have given to individual forces. Inevitably, not all these comments are relevant to every force, and this is not a detailed analysis of each one. Where possible, we have provided examples to illustrate our analysis.

Purpose of an FMS

A force management statement is a self-assessment that each chief constable prepares and gives to the inspectorate each year.

It is the chief constable's statement and explanation of:

- the demand (crime and non-crime, latent and patent) the force expects to face in the foreseeable future;
- the performance, condition, capacity, capability, serviceability and security of supply of the force's human and inanimate assets, and the extent to which current force assets will be able to meet expected future demand;
- how the force will change and improve its workforce, policies, practices and other assets, and their efficiency, to cope with future demand;
- the effect the force expects those changes to have and the effect of any residual risk of service failure; and
- the money the force expects to have to do all this.

In each FMS, the inspectorate requires each force to provide no more information than an efficient force already has. An FMS draws into a single document, certified as complete and accurate by the chief constable, the essential information about demand, asset stewardship, efficiency and resources. With that information, chief officers are far better able to make sound decisions on the deployment of their assets. The FMS requires forces to assess how efficiently and effectively they use their money to keep the public safe, and how forces will change to ensure they do the best with what they expect to have. Each FMS should also explain how the chief constable is having due regard to the priorities in the police and crime plan of the local policing body.

We of course recognise that there are limits to forces' ability to precisely assess future demand and, in some respects, the sufficiency of their assets. But they should have sound and reliable methods of assessing a range of possible and likely future needs, and how they will efficiently meet them. In the FMS, the chief constable should explain how these needs influence the force's planning processes and decision making.

The FMS also helps establish which areas of a force's activities present the greatest risks to the efficiency, effectiveness and resilience of the service it provides.

We use the information in FMSs to inform our inspections and our monitoring of force performance. They provide us with information, used with other data, to inform our inspection activity and to help us use our own resources efficiently and effectively. They help identify where improvements need to be made in policing, what is working well, and areas of innovative practice.

FMSs also contain important information to facilitate improvements in policing, including:

- identifying emerging national trends in demand and the use of resources;
- identifying emerging national risks and potential problems;
- collecting examples of innovative practices;
- ensuring each local policing body has the chief constable's best assessment of the force and its ability efficiently to meet future demand; and
- briefing the National Policing Board and the Crime and Policing Performance Board.

Overarching themes

This section is about the overarching themes identified from our review of the third generation of FMSs. It is also informed by observations from our engagement with FMS practitioners. Subsequent sections of the report provide more detailed findings from each step in the FMS process.

Better FMSs are more embedded in planning

FMSs ask a simple question of forces: how will you change efficiently and effectively to meet the demand you expect to face in the future? Arriving at an answer is not simple. Police forces are large and complex organisations. They deal with the most critical public service: keeping the public safe.

Producing an FMS requires forces to go through a detailed process to understand the work they do and the status of their assets. For example, at the start of its FMS Cleveland Police set out the process it followed to write the statement. The force:

- worked with external consultants to improve its understanding of demand. As well as using data, this also involved facilitated workshops with managers of individual units;
- developed detailed demand analysis in its corporate services department;
- developed a series of proposals among senior leaders, for the force to decide which to adopt; and
- developed a three-year plan to prioritise the introduction of new roles.

Forces have limited budgets and face increasingly complex demands and growing public expectations. They must decide how they can effectively and efficiently keep the public safe with the money they have.

To do this, forces need to incorporate the FMS into their planning cycles. And senior leaders must answer the fundamental question the FMS asks; only they have the authority to decide how the force allocates money and resources. High-quality, accurate and timely data and information should inform these decisions. To produce this information, the force needs the support of skilled analysts and subject experts across the range of force operations and its workforce.

The FMS contains essential information about the strategic direction of the force, what its priorities are, where its greatest risks lie, where it will focus its efforts and, importantly, where it won't focus time, money and effort. These important decisions and their inherent risks sit solely with the chief officers of the force, and the FMS must reflect their views.

In the first forces we inspected in 2021 as part of our PEEL inspection programme, those that had an FMS embedded in their planning cycles, such as West Yorkshire Police, produced better FMSs.

Forces should invest in the capabilities needed to produce an FMS

Policing receives more than £15 billion in public funding each year, yet the quality of FMSs doesn't properly reflect this level of public spending.

We are concerned that not all forces have sufficient capability or capacity to produce a comprehensive FMS. In some forces, writing the FMS is a task delegated to the person whose primary role is to work with us. This person may not always have the knowledge, skills and authority to write a document as comprehensive as we require and the public expect, and which the chief constable needs. Nor will this approach allow the force to gain the wider benefits of systematically assessing itself, critically appraising risks and opportunities for change, and finding ways to manage demand and serve the public better.

As explained, FMSs are the chief constable's self-assessment, covering all principal aspects of the force. No single person has all the knowledge needed to produce a good FMS. It must be a collaborative effort, co-ordinated by someone with sufficient seniority and expertise.

We have found that the best FMSs are written by someone senior enough to direct others to provide reliable answers to the questions posed, and who has access to the specialist resources to address demand and resource questions. To produce an FMS, it is necessary to consult people with appropriate expertise including in demand management, business intelligence analysis, strategic analysis and scenario planning. The FMS needs to be prepared by one or more persons with authority to draw on these skills and who understands the decisions senior leaders have taken to meet future demand.

Oversight and scrutiny by the chief officer group is essential to the production of a good FMS. Some FMSs gave us a good understanding of demand and resources, but because they weren't embedded in the force's strategic planning, or didn't have good chief officer oversight, there was insufficient information on how the force was changing or what demand might be unmet.

Through our work with forces, we have learned that the more engaged the chief officers in the production of the final document, the better the FMS. When we met with West Yorkshire Police, it was clear that the involvement of the deputy chief constable had helped make its FMS one of the best. The force's leadership and oversight meant its FMS accurately reflected its expectations of future demand and how the force intended to change. Less engagement from chief officers tended to correlate with poorer-quality FMSs.

This is quite remarkable. Every FMS is signed by the chief constable (a function that cannot be delegated) under a formal declaration that the FMS is complete and accurate in all material respects, except as expressly stated otherwise. If in future

some chief constables do not take that declaration seriously, it will be necessary for their future FMSs to be mandated by statutory notices.⁵

While we have seen good FMSs – and across England and Wales the standard has improved – we have yet to see a universally strong FMS. Even the best FMSs didn't sufficiently specify:

- the demand the force expected to face;
- a comprehensive assessment of the force's resources and assets;
- clearly explained actions in relation to how and to what extent the force's allocation of resources would meet future expected demand; and
- what demand the force expected not to be able to meet in the future.

We recognise the complex nature of policing and that demand can be difficult to quantify. Policing doesn't fit into discrete boxes. Change in one area can have consequences in another. Forces use resources and equipment across different functions. To help with this, many forces are investing in technology to better understand demand and the suitability of their operating models.

Some forces have told us that their understanding of demand and how it ought best be met has increased markedly since their first FMSs. They use data tools such as Power BI or Qlik Sense to visualise data and identify patterns. Forces that use data and information effectively produce better FMSs, and the data and information support evidence-based planning.

Several forces have shown us how they use these tools. We were impressed by how forces such as Sussex Police used tools to break down their data, track demand through the force, and ensure they allocate resources appropriately.

For forces to benefit from the considerable value of FMSs, they need to invest in the capabilities needed to produce an FMS and ensure senior leader oversight, so that the chief constable's formal signed declaration is true.

FMS practitioners are committed to improving their FMSs

The commitment and dedication of many forces' FMS practitioners to improving the quality of their FMSs is commendable.

Practitioners welcome feedback from us and work with other forces to share knowledge and improve the processes and technical aspects of their statements. Their desire to make their FMSs important parts of their force's planning cycles is evident.

The NPCC, the College of Policing and the inspectorate will continue to facilitate events that disseminate knowledge among FMS practitioners and experts.

⁵ Under paragraph 6A, Schedule 4A, Police Act 1996. Compliance is mandatory, and there is no statutory right of appeal. The sanctions for non-compliance are stated in paragraph 6C.

Forces better understand demand and capacity

FMSs show us that forces have improved their understanding of demand with each iteration. Sussex Police told us:

“Each year, through the force management statement process, we consider existing and emerging trends, take into account the expected impacts of new systems, investments and efficiencies and work with the organisation’s senior thematic leads to forecast future demand. As the force makes ever-greater use of new capabilities, including advanced analytics, we continue to refine our approach.”

Almost all forces have a clear understanding of reactive demand such as 999 calls or emergency incidents. FMSs explain the increasing complexity of this demand. Some types of demand, such as 999 calls and investigations, are clearly visible and readily measurable. Other less obvious sources of demand are more difficult to measure but it is equally important that forces make sound assessments of them. Most forces clearly explain their ability to meet these demands too, such as proactively disrupting gangs, dealing with serious and organised crime, and safeguarding vulnerable people.

FMSs show that forces have increasing understandings of these demands, and how some particular types of crime may now place a greater demand on forces than they did in previous years. Forces told us about how demand has changed due to the complexity of crimes, increased digital evidence and calls linked to vulnerability, and from the revised [Attorney General’s guidance on disclosure](#). For example, Thames Valley Police told us:

“All units which hold complex investigations and crimes where the harm is high enough to justify exhausting all lines of enquiry are likely to be impacted by growing volumes and complexity of digital evidence. This type of evidence requires a large amount of an officer’s time to review for pertinent evidence including disclosure considerations. There has also been a significant rise in the use of mobile devices. This coupled with the need to effectively review content and comply with obligations under the Criminal Procedure and Investigations Act 1996, means that the vast and increasing data quantity is a new normality for investigative teams. The Major Crime Unit has also been experiencing greater numbers of offenders per investigation, who increasingly have multiple devices. This results in exponential increase of digital evidence demands.”

Demands that were generally covered less well in FMSs included duties the police discharge proactively, such as roads policing and policing the night-time economy, and the demand that comes from running a large organisation.

FMSs show that forces increasingly appreciate the need to uncover hidden, or patent, demand, such as modern slavery and online exploitation. These types of demand disproportionately affect the most vulnerable in our communities. All forces work with other organisations to increase their understanding of hidden demand.

Forces don’t have unlimited budgets to meet demand. They need to prioritise changes that keep the public safe and meet national and local priorities. In good FMSs, forces

say what they plan to change and why. The changes are based on analysis, and each force knows what it expects the change to achieve. The best FMSs provide assurance each force has costed changes and that the change provides value for money.

But forces need to do more. In respect of some areas of demand, such as neighbourhood policing, FMSs show forces have insufficient understanding of what they require of their workforces. The best FMSs explained the activities carried out by officers and staff that can't be measured in crime or incidents, such as problem solving, deployment of schools' officers, and working with local communities. Poorer FMSs only told us about the crime and incidents their officers dealt with.

If a force can't adequately explain what demand is placed on its officers and staff, or what that demand might be in the future, it cannot know if it has enough of the right resources to meet demand. If forces can't properly explain what they expect their officers to do, it is hard to justify an increased investment in that area of policing.

Better assessment of the future

Forces have improved their assessments of future demand.

Simple projections, coupled with expert opinion, have proved best for assessing future demand. This approach worked especially well during the pandemic because of unusual crime levels. However, in places, forces' projections of future demand in their FMSs didn't adequately consider expert opinion and seemed unrealistic. For example, one force projected anti-social behaviour incidents would reduce from more than 17,000 incidents a year to fewer than 2,500 a year over the next five years. Without adequate explanation of how this figure was arrived at – why such a sharp fall – we lack confidence that the force has any adequate means of evaluating the nature, intensity, seriousness or volume of future demand.

The most critical part of an FMS is future demand. As explained, an enterprise cannot be regarded as efficient – even sufficiently competent – when its means of assessing future demand are seriously weak, and when it makes little or no appreciable attempt to do this. Everything that follows the demand assessment depends on it. And yet some forces, three and four years after FMSs were required, fail badly in this basic test of competence. Such failures severely compromise a force's ability to make informed decisions about how it may need to change. Without an adequate assessment of current and future demand, forces will inevitably make some decisions that harm efforts to efficiently and effectively prepare for the future. This has to improve. The issue of statutory notices to provide appropriate impetus in this respect is dealt with later in this document.

Forces need to improve understanding of the performance of assets

At Step 2 in the statement, forces report on the status of their workforces and other assets. This means the condition, capability, capacity, serviceability, performance, efficiency and security of supply of the workforce and other assets. Forces need this evaluation to know if they are fit for the future and how they need to change.

By producing an FMS, the chief constable assesses and reports on the extent to which the force will meet future demand through the recruitment of more people and the skills they must have (which will probably be different from the workforce's current skills mix). What binds together this information is performance: is the workforce achieving what the chief constable needs it to achieve, given the condition, capability, capacity, wellbeing, serviceability and security of supply of its people and other assets?

Too many forces told us about performance simply as a reduction in crime or in terms of the end-results of investigated crimes.

A better approach was seen in the FMS from West Yorkshire Police. They told us their assessment of performance includes HMICFRS inspection judgments and recommendations, and that the force assessed itself against our PEEL criteria of what a rating of good amounts to. The force links performance to more than only numbers. At different points in its FMS, it explained how the force was assessing itself against national action plans, the results of internal audits, and strategic risks. This begins to turn performance from reporting reductions in crime or incidents into a more mature assessment.

Generally, forces are good at assessing the capacity and wellbeing of their workforces but are much poorer at assessing the stewardship of other assets.

We made a similar criticism in our last FMS observations document. We commented that:

“The workforce is the most important asset in any police force, but it needs premises, vehicles and equipment to do its work. Some forces completely excluded other assets from their responses. They need to understand and assess the condition, capacity, capability, serviceability, performance and security of supply of other assets, as well as their workforces.”

We are disappointed that there has still been insufficient improvement in this respect. For example, one force's assessment of the condition, capability, capacity, performance, wellbeing, serviceability and security of supply of its management of sexual and violent offender units was limited to:

“The management of sexual and violent offender (MOSOVO) units are territorially aligned and based in BCU multi-agency safeguarding hubs or public protection units. MOSOVO units are mixed economy teams consisting of police officers and members of police staff, who have designated police powers. All staff are trained in the active risk management system (ARMS) and the use of ViSOR. There are presently 31.6 full-time equivalent officers and 21 full-time equivalent staff based in MOSOVO units across the force with 1.2 officer and 1.23 full-time equivalent staff vacancies. At the end of March 2020, sickness absence for the MOSOVO teams stood at 4.2 percent with the main reasons for absence being musculoskeletal, which accounted for 1.9 percent of time lost. Mental ill health-related absences accounted for 1.3 percent of time lost.”

Without assessing the team's performance, supervision and equipment, the force cannot know whether the team has the right people and resources to keep the public safe. If a force only assesses the capacity and wellbeing of its workforce, it is

hard to understand how it can change to meet future demand other than by increasing the workforce or improving staff wellbeing. Such an inadequate assessment prevents the force making informed decisions about how it needs to change to meet future demand. This falls far below the standard required in every FMS.

Forces need to understand their stewardship of assets and resources to make sure they are changing in a way that means they can meet future demand. Devon and Cornwall Police presented this information as a table, making sure it covered stewardship of each asset.

Forces need to draw all this information into an assessment of performance. They should state the extent to which the chief constable is satisfied with performance, how that performance has been measured, and how that performance will be improved through increased efficiency and other measures. Each FMS should also contain the chief constable's reasons for this.

Forces remain concerned about a lack of detectives

An improvement in the quality of FMSs means we can draw out themes and use them to inform our inspections and national policing leads.

Every FMS referred to the national shortage of detectives and the force's own limited investigative capacity. Forces have plans in place to increase detective numbers, but many told us they were behind schedule with this.

One force told us about a shortfall of 150 detectives and investigators. The force had an objective to fill the gap by 2022 but hasn't achieved this. Across FMSs, forces told us they struggled to tackle the shortfall in detective and investigator posts because:

- force finances mean it is difficult to replace civilian investigators, with forces filling civilian posts with new officers whose expertise in the functions in question is often below, sometimes well below, those required;
- the age profile of detectives results in regular attrition because of retirements; and
- experienced detectives are being recruited to regional organised crime units.

Forces told us how they were having to resource investigative functions with inexperienced officers or those working towards their detective qualifications. But we were concerned that they didn't say what effect the shortfall in detectives or inexperienced workforce had on the results they achieved for victims of crime or the performance of the force.

The future of offender management is worrying

Forces told us about increasing demand from offender management. Forces are especially concerned about the increasing risk and demand from managing sexual and violent offenders through multi-agency public protection arrangements (MAPPAs).

These require probation, police, the prison service and other bodies to work together to manage offenders who pose a high risk of harm to others. The lead agency, which may be the police, has the main statutory authority and responsibility to manage a MAPPA offender in the community.

One force reported a tripling in the number of high-risk sex offenders it managed since April 2019. Many forces expect an increase of approximately 10 percent per year in offenders. Often, forces told us their offender managers dealt with more offenders than the force anticipated when resourcing the units.

We know from our inspection work that technology helps police forces manage demand, but that it also creates demand. Offenders are often under court orders that impose restrictions on their behaviour. Technology can identify a breach of conditions, but this also creates extra demand on offender management teams. It is vitally important that forces make good use of information and technology to keep the public safe and reduce reoffending. But the consequence of this is added demand.

It isn't clear from FMSs how forces will deal with the increasing demand of offender management. Some forces told us they may need to limit the types of offenders participating in offender management programmes. Others expect their offender managers to manage more offenders than the recognised safe management level. Our PEEL inspection work tells us that some forces are moving away from the College of Policing's authorised professional practice.

This may be understandable as a way of managing demand, but forces didn't use their FMSs to explain how they expected these changes to affect performance, or how they were managing the risk to the public and staff.

Forces didn't adequately explain how they will improve because of uplift

The uplift of 20,000 extra police officers affects all areas of policing. Forces are increasing their capacity in their learning and development teams. Estates are changing to make sure there is space for more officers. Almost every section of each force's FMS reflects on how the uplift will affect the work it does.

All forces told us they expected to recruit the number of officers they had uplift funding for. Many forces told us their local policing bodies had agreed funding to recruit officers above their uplift allocation.

Some forces told us where and when they plan to allocate the increase in officers. For example, Northumbria Police told us its yearly uplift target and the investment in 616 extra officers. Their FMS gave a detailed evaluation of how the uplift programme will affect its frontline and which additional posts it will create. But not all FMSs displayed this level of understanding. Some FMSs told us the force needed more officers to meet demand than it had been allocated as an uplift. But they didn't properly explain what the effect this shortfall in officers would have on the force's ability to meet demand, nor did they say where the force planned to allocate the extra officers it was recruiting.

The biggest omission from FMSs was an explanation of what the uplift programme would mean for the public. Forces didn't adequately tell us how service to the public would change, what would be better because of the extra police officers, and how they would know if the programme was a success. In too many respects, it appeared that forces' uplift programme goal was the recruitment of officers; there were few adequate

explanations of where, when, how and why these officers would make the public safer or improve service.

Uplift may lead to police officers undertaking civilian roles

Some forces told us they may need to replace civilian members of staff with officers. This is a worrying trend from an efficiency perspective. Many forces have made great strides in modernising their workforces over the past decade. This involved all forces examining posts filled by police officers in back-office roles that didn't require warranted powers and replacing them with more cost-effective, and in many cases more specialist, police staff.

Several forces' savings plans told us the force would 'decivilianise' posts, meaning that certain roles wouldn't be carried out by specialist police staff but by police officers. For many forces, this is a back-up option to cope with budget constraints, based on forces' assumptions about funding and other financial arrangements. If there is a shortfall in a force's financial settlement or higher-than-expected staffing costs materialise, several forces have contingency plans to fill police staff posts with officers. This is because they can use uplift funding to recruit police officers to fill the posts occupied by police staff, to manage their budgets better. But, in doing so, they aren't putting the extra police officers on the frontline as intended by the uplift programme.

One force told us:

“Constraints around the [PIP](#) mean that this may result in police officer numbers increasing and police staff numbers shrinking, with the potential in some areas for reverse civilianisation, where vacant police staff roles need to be filled.”

Police officers should be in roles that need their warranted powers and skills. Placing officers in roles that staff can do effectively is inefficient. There may be occasions when it is justified, such as if an officer's skills and experience make him or her the best choice for the role. But when it is done to transfer uplift funding to cover what should be lower-cost staff roles, it isn't acceptable because it is inefficient. It makes no sense to take a highly trained, warranted officer away from a frontline policing role and put him or her in a role that could be filled by a lower-cost member of police staff, often with greater specialist skills for that particular role.

Setting the scene for an FMS

At the start of every FMS, forces set out the context they operate in. We require forces to write a summary of each section of the FMS. Forces also complete risk assessments that helps us, and others (including their local policing bodies), understand their priorities. There are also finance and wellbeing summaries.

This section contains our observations from reviewing this aspect of the third generation of FMSs.

FMS summary

We require forces to write a summary covering every section of the FMS. While not every summary included information from every section, all forces included a summary that outlined the priorities for their forces. Most forces added the context in which they operated and their unique policing challenges. A summary from the chief constable setting out the force's objectives and priorities is helpful. It says where the chief constable will prioritise investment and where the force will make the most change. It also explains the extent to which the chief constable is satisfied with the performance of the force, and why.

Risk assessments

We require forces to risk assess each area covered by the FMS. This helps forces focus on where they spend their time, money and effort.

All FMSs included risk assessments. The best risk assessments are those where the results clearly influence how the force is prioritising work.

Risk assessments are also better when forces clearly explain what risk they are measuring. One force included a risk assessment presented as five indicators using infographics. Although prepared using a recognised risk assessment model, it was difficult to compare risks between each section, or to understand the level of risk. Understanding what risk is being assessed explains why some areas of the force might be prioritised for investment over others.

Some forces have asked the inspectorate to mandate a specific risk assessment technique. Our view is that the best risk assessments are those already embedded in the force and not designed solely for the FMS. The FMS steering group will continue to work with practitioners to see where grades, scores or other measures in risk assessments can be standardised, to allow forces to compare and monitor risks across the country.

The level of detail in FMSs should be proportionate to risk. We expect to see the greatest focus in high-risk areas of an FMS, and less in low-risk areas, especially if that area is likely to need minimal change to meet future demand. When forces write less because of their risk assessments, the best FMSs make it clear how forces have arrived at this decision.

Finance

The finance section requires forces to assess the financial implications of future demand and make an organisation-wide financial assessment. Forces' medium-term financial plans should give most of the information needed.

Almost all forces told us that single-year financial settlements, as has been the case from the Government for the past few years and often received late in the planning cycle, have been barriers to effective long-term planning. Forces need certainty, stability and predictability. The [2020 State of Policing report](#) states "short-term settlements are incompatible with efficient and effective long-term planning."

The Home Office announced the funding settlement for 2020/21 in January 2020, with the settlement for 2021/22 made in December 2020.

The FMS requires forces to assess their expected demand over the foreseeable future, but it is difficult for forces to make robust plans to meet that expected demand when they don't have certainty over their grant income more than one year ahead.

As in our last observations, we said we had found that forces were better at describing their current and future finances than analysing or assessing the financial implications of future demand. In this round of FMSs, we required forces to integrate their FMSs with their financial planning. All forces included a summary of their medium-term financial plans. This means forces told us how much they expected to spend in the next four years and the money they expected to receive from government grants and precept. The best FMSs included a summary of changes or decisions made by the force and the estimated cost implications.

One FMS that did link the financial information to the operational response well was the FMS produced by West Yorkshire Police. As well as looking at the service expenditure of local authorities in its force area, the force also included details of:

- financial savings;
- efficiency savings, including a description of reduced demand;
- change programmes, with details of the costs and savings the change programme will achieve;
- investment, including the impact the investment will achieve; and
- a summary of financial investments.

West Yorkshire Police's approach shows how it integrates its FMS, financial planning and operational decisions; it tells of the changes in the statement that are costed and that the force can afford them.

Some forces didn't include this information. The poorest FMSs included many bids for change or recruitment of officers, but the finance section didn't sufficiently explain

what change would be supported and funded. When an FMS included bids for change or investment that exceeded the force's capacity to achieve, we didn't have confidence that the force was planning effectively or providing an efficient service. FMSs are self-assessments; they are not bidding documents. Chief constables should understand that.

Wellbeing

The third generation of FMSs contained some information about what forces were doing to support and improve their staff and officers' wellbeing, both physical and mental. Almost every force told us improving the wellbeing of its people was a priority. Hampshire Constabulary told us that its wellbeing budget had increased by 289 percent since 2015/16.

Many forces explained that sickness absence reduced at the start of the pandemic. It is likely the actions forces took, including enabling working from home, implementing stricter cleaning regimes, and wearing facemasks, made a difference. Many forces also recognised the commitment of their people at the start of the pandemic to supporting the national response.

But it was disappointing that many forces didn't use Oscar Kilo and the Blue Light Wellbeing Framework to assess their responses to the wellbeing needs of their staff. The resource is an evidence-based standard against which forces can assess themselves. The stated strategies and interventions are based on evidence of need and what is proven to improve end results. Forces that had assessed themselves against Oscar Kilo, such as the Metropolitan Police Service, were better able to explain their assessments and plans for improving wellbeing.

Forces also assess the wellbeing of their people in each section of their FMSs. In this connection, we provide our observations in the ['Assessment of workforce and assets'](#) section of this report.

Understanding current and future demand

This section contains our observations on how well forces discharged their obligations in Step 1 of the process for producing their FMSs. At this step, forces assess their current demand and explain the demand the force expects to face in the next four years.

FMSs are better at explaining demand

Since the second generation of FMSs, there have been clear improvements in how forces consider and explain the demand they face. We are pleased that the quality of the explanation of demand has improved, although there is still some considerable way to go.

All forces explained the general demand they faced, although those that had a deeper understanding were better able to explain the scale and nature of the demand. Many forces are increasingly sophisticated in how they present and explain the demand they face.

But forces need to explain their demand more clearly with reference to its changing nature. We found forces generally understood the wide range of factors that affect demand, but the quality of assessment varied both by force and policing function.

Too many forces equate a count of crime with a measure of demand

Despite improvements, the explanation and assessment of demand is still based largely on numerical counts – calls, crimes, caseloads and wait times. Where there is a clear metric of demand, it is usually considered with detail and insight.

For example, Durham Constabulary examined a wide range of metrics in its FMS and presented a perceptive assessment alongside the data:

“The central line projection shows a 2.6 percent increase from 320,111 101 calls to end of 2019/20, to 328,530 calls to end of 2023/24, however, given the fluctuations of the historical data, confidence intervals around the central projection are substantial, making genuine forecasting difficult. Working assumption is an increase in line with the central projection.”

However, forces often don't adequately explain what they are asking of their workforces, especially in harder-to-measure areas such as a neighbourhood team's proactive problem solving. Forces are more likely to clearly explain demand in policing functions that are operationally reactive and tactically driven, such as force control rooms and response policing. Areas that aren't frontline or proactive, or that

deal with greater ambiguity, often lead to less well-defined assessments of the demand they face.

One force told us in its prevention and deterrence demand assessment that there were grey areas in how demand presents, which makes it unclear which team should respond. The force also said it needed to improve performance reporting to show impact and increase efficiency and effectiveness.

It is good that a force recognises this problem. It of course acknowledges that demand on the police doesn't fit into neat boxes. It also explains how the force needs to change, which the force explained in Step 3 of its FMS.

Better FMSs include assessments of workload

We were pleased to see some forces differentiating between demand, such as the number of calls they received, and the workload that resulted from it, such as longer calls resulting from enhanced and more thorough vulnerability assessments.

A few forces took this further and assessed workforce productivity. This is the force's ability to determine how the workload creates extra demand, diverts demand to other parts of the force, uncovers previously hidden demand, or reduces demand. For example, areas that create demand, such as domestic abuse or mental health problems, generate different demands and workloads on the police and have very different responses. We believe including this nuanced assessment will help forces in their efforts to understand how they need to change to meet future demand.

Forces need to do more to understand hidden demand

Hidden, or patent, demand, such as unreported domestic abuse, modern slavery and female genital mutilation, is a continuing problem for forces. It often involves vulnerable people being victimised and can manifest in further harm that could have been prevented. In [our observations on the second force management statements](#), we noted that forces struggled to recognise and understand hidden demand.

In their third FMS submissions, many forces said that protecting vulnerable people was a priority for them. It is disappointing, therefore, that we have seen little improvement in forces' ability to uncover and understand hidden demand. Some forces acknowledged this challenge and the work still to do to tackle it, while others wrongly dismissed it as unknowable.

West Yorkshire Police summarised the challenge for domestic abuse in these terms:

“Domestic abuse is now stabilising, but demand is still high with a continued increase in the number of crimes recorded meaning workload is increasing. Domestic abuse is still under reported; the [Crime Survey of England and Wales](#) indicates that 57 percent of victims do not report violent crime and there was a significant increase in calls to the third sector during the pandemic, not reflected in police recorded incidents.”

Forces should improve their understanding of hidden demand, through research and analysis and working with partner organisations. They also need to assess the likely effect on future demand as they increase victim confidence in reporting.

Some forces intend to incorporate their strategic assessments in their FMSs

Many forces now recognise the benefit of producing an FMS and either have, or intend to, incorporate their FMSs in their yearly planning cycles. This includes combining their strategic assessments with the FMS demand assessment process.

Leicestershire Police told us it has linked its FMS production with all its yearly planning processes:

“This activity forms part of an on-going cycle of understanding, planning, delivery and evaluation. This ensures demand is understood, informs decisions about prioritisation, and facilitates the linking of resources to activity, outcomes and value for money.”

We are encouraged to see forces integrate the FMS into their planning processes. Those forces that have already made this change typically have better assessments and are clearer about the FMS’s relevance to their plans. Such forces plan as strategically mature organisations.

Another example came from Merseyside Police:

“A key objective of Merseyside Police when embarking on the 2019 force management statement was to ensure that the largescale investment made for the completion of the FMS resulted in tangible efficiencies. This was achieved by establishing the FMS as a permanent feature into the strategic governance cycle.

“Once submitted, work commenced in utilising findings from the FMS process through the following methods:

- A *Key Findings & Cross Strand Demand* report was presented to chief officers, which highlighted core themes, demand that impacted multiple strands and internal departmental risks.
- Chief Officer Group meetings were conducted to evaluate the FMS process and provide feedback on opportunities for development for each department.
- Review of Business Cases in light of FMS findings on demand.
- Usage of FMS findings within the Deputy Chief Constable Reviews that were initiated the end of 2019.”

We encourage forces to make the FMS process their own and use it as an essential part of their planning and strategic assessment processes.

Projections should explain what demand the force expects in the foreseeable future

The third generation of FMSs show that forces still need considerably to improve their projections of future demand. Many forces continue to explore different ways to understand and assess their expected future demand, with varying degrees of success. But a small minority of forces still don't use forecasts of future demand to make effective and efficient planning decisions. The College of Policing has a significant role to play in this respect.

One common type of projection is numerical forecasting. When forecasting, many forces still use straight trend-line forecasts. Some forces use confidence intervals, banding and other techniques to try to show what they see as the level of demand over the next four years. To support this forecast, we encourage forces to qualify their predictions by subject-matter expertise and an assessment of what the force is preparing for.

Most forces didn't refer to the predictions they made in their second FMSs to see if their assessments were correct. Where there are differences, forces should explore why and how it informs their latest planning. When we introduced FMSs, we explained that each of these instruments of self-assessment had to be a four-year look forward and a one-year look back. It is disappointing that, so long after the introduction of the policy, most forces still aren't doing this.

In its FMS demand charts, West Yorkshire Police repeatedly referred to its 2019 FMS forecasts. Some were accurate, some less so, but by referring to them the force gave itself the opportunity to revise its thinking and make better predictions. The reasons for the difference between earlier projections and what came about, and its latest projections, were often well-explored. This was well done. One example was:

“Criminal damage is on a reducing trend and the predictions for this FMS of a 12.4 percent reduction in offences by March 2025 is in line with the predictions made in FMS2.”

Forces have tried other qualitative methods of projecting future demand. These include subject-matter expert predictions and futures-thinking techniques, such as trend scanning and scenario analysis.

Northamptonshire Police has used scenario analysis in several sections of its FMS. The examples are small but well considered and linked to the overall assessment. They allow the force to prepare for possible changes beyond those shown on a trend line. For example:

“Scenario testing has identified an increased integration of social technology into people's lives could lead to more opportunities for offending to occur in an online digital space.”

A few FMSs have combined forecasting with a qualitative technique.

West Yorkshire Police assesses future demand considering both its own forecasts and the relevant parts of the College of Policing's *Future Operating Environment 2040* report, which includes scenarios, trends and challenges framed for policing:

“Whilst the performance picture is positive with crime on a reducing trend, there are a number of economic and social challenges, which means that crime will remain higher in West Yorkshire and in particular in these high crime severity areas.

“One of the trends identified in the College of Policing's [Future Operating Environment 2040](#) is growing inequality and social fragmentation, with further socio-economic divisions leading to increased demand and crime in economically deprived areas. The disproportionate effect of the pandemic in such economically deprived areas is likely to exacerbate such social inequality.

“We therefore predict that our high crime areas will remain demand generators for a number of agencies for the medium to long term and therefore need to be the focus of multi-agency activity.”

But regardless of the method used, a significant flaw in many FMSs was a failure to evaluate projections in the FMS to assess what that future holds for the force. Few forces use their predictions to say what projected future demand means for them.

Over the past year, working with the NPCC and the College of Policing, we have continued to help forces develop in this area. We anticipate that the fourth FMS submissions will draw together many of the elements of that work and that forces will improve in this area.

Projecting crime is difficult because of the pandemic

Because of the timing of when forces completed their FMSs, not all of them reflect how forces operated during the pandemic. Of those that did, forces described how they responded to this significant change in their demand, the problems they faced, and the opportunities it created. They also showed how this unanticipated event may have changed the demand forces expect to face in the future.

Due to the pandemic, forces gave us their FMSs over an extended period. This gave us a view of a continuously changing policing landscape. Earlier FMSs made little mention of the pandemic, while others described in detail changes the force had made. The pandemic altered the demand forces faced in different stages of the response, and how forces thought it may change their anticipated demand over the next four years.

Avon & Somerset Police's FMS, provided to us after the first UK-wide lockdown, stated:

“Since the publication of this plan, the COVID-19 global pandemic has placed additional and unaccounted for stresses on the organisation. We recognise that this public health emergency is likely to have far-reaching consequences, the scale and impact of which are not yet fully understood. This impact will be in both our funding (consequences for council tax base and government grants) and our costs (responding to Covid-19, pension costs, future pay awards and inflation).

We anticipate a Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR) in the autumn, which may pose some challenging questions for us.

“As it is not possible to predict the impact at this stage, we will consider a range of scenarios, monitor the situation and appropriately flex our planned responses to external developments.”

Northamptonshire Police considered the effect of the pandemic on its demand, and how it might affect the force long-term:

“The impact of societal restrictions (via both national lockdowns and regional tiered systems) has resulted in fewer inter-personal contacts, lesser [sic] vehicles on the road network and a greater proportion of people spending time at home. This in turn resulted in a lesser ‘opportunity’ for incidents to have occurred; and a lesser requirement for emergency requests for service.

“Despite 2020 seeing a lower level of 999 telephone demand than was expected, yearly volumes were still in line with those experienced in 2018, which evidences the strong increasing trend in 999 demand prior to this year. As such, there remains the necessity for the force control room to resource the call handling function appropriately.”

Forces differed substantially in their approaches to projections when considering the pandemic. Because some forces sent us their FMSs throughout the pandemic, forecasts of future demand often reflected the uncertainties about how long the pandemic might last or how it would change policing.

We were disappointed that some made only limited attempts to predict the demands of a post-pandemic world. For example, one force told us that “due to COVID-19 it is difficult to anticipate demand more accurately”, and another that “the level of future rises is unclear and highly unpredictable”. Without a view of how demand might change, the force cannot make effective and efficient decisions on how it will meet future demand. This is not acceptable.

Others used a range of techniques to show qualitatively or quantitatively how the pandemic would continue to affect future demand. The best examples generally combined both.

For example, the Metropolitan Police Service used forecasting charts in its FMS that showed one projected demand trend line based on pre-pandemic demand levels, and another based on demand seen during the pandemic. It used these prediction parameters for demand. In some parts of the FMS, the force combined this information with a qualitative assessment of the likely continuing effects of the pandemic on demand. The summary focused on how the pandemic had affected crime. Charts showing the effects and predicted rate of resilience were also welcome, well-placed additions.

Northamptonshire Police's FMS included several examples of planning showing the possible future effect of pandemic-related demand:

“Impact of Covid-19 scenario planning if further restrictions are enforced:

- There is the potential for a rise in public disorder and hate crime, as people become frustrated. This could lead to tensions between those people who agree with strict restrictions and those that disagree.
- Personal Safety and Welfare (PSW) demand (particularly Concern for Safety) could further increase. A continued rise in mental health related issues will come to the fore.
- Traditional demand associated with the Night-Time Economy in Northamptonshire could be suppressed again.”

Assessment of workforce and assets

This section contains our observations from the second step of the process for producing an FMS. Step 2 requires forces to assess the status of their workforce and assets. This includes their condition, capacity, capability, serviceability, wellbeing and security of supply. Forces should also establish how well they are performing.

The most complex assets of a force, and of course the assets on which most money is spent, are its people. Understanding officers' and staff members' wellbeing – their condition, capacity and capability, what it takes to look after them, whether they are being worked too hard, and connected matters – is crucial. A chief constable with an inadequate understanding of these critical factors fails in his or her duty of care owed to the workforce, and almost certainly will fail to discharge the efficiency obligation in section 35 of the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011.

Forces have maintained focus on capacity and wellbeing

Most forces have a good understanding of the capacity of their workforces. They know how many people or resources they have and how available they are. But forces are still less able to describe the status of their workforce and assets. At Step 1, many forces told us about shifting rather than increasing demand. This can mean forces don't necessarily need more resources; rather they may need differently skilled resources. But if forces don't understand the skills of their workforce, it is difficult for them to understand how they need to change to meet this change in the nature of demand.

The wellbeing section states the steps forces are taking to make sure they have fit and healthy staff and officers. Forces showed a good understanding of the wellbeing of their workforces. They monitor sickness absences in staff and officers and are increasing the provision for mental as well as physical health. By bringing together this information in their FMSs, forces are identifying problems which would not be apparent when looked at in isolation.

One good example was in the Merseyside Police FMS, which explained how a shortage of Class 3 driver training (which enables officers to use emergency equipment to attend an incident) was affecting its attendance performance. An increase in officer recruitment meant the force also had younger and less experienced drivers. Merseyside Police explained how this correlated with higher involvement in adverse events (complaints, collisions and assaults) during the first eight years of an officer's service.

Assessing skills and other stewardship of assets needs to improve

Forces generally have a good understanding of the capacity and wellbeing of their staffs. But too many FMSs didn't show an adequate understanding of the condition, capability, serviceability or security of supply of the forces' people and other resources. These are vital for good performance.

Most FMSs contained inadequate assessments of a number of aspects of asset stewardship. Forces failed to report enough about the skills of their workforces, or how these skills need to change to meet shifting demand. Very few FMSs analysed the supervision of their officers and staff as part of their assessments of workforce performance, or how the workload of supervisors was changing. The intensity of the load carried by supervisors, particularly the superintending ranks, is a matter of significant concern.

The FMS is about the future. Some forces told us about highly skilled people with significant responsibilities. It wasn't clear what forces would do if these people were unavailable for an extended period, or how the force would maintain its performance without people who can't be readily replaced.

For example, one force told us about its one drug intervention co-ordinator. The force told us about the qualifications, experience and continuing professional development needed for role. It also told us the role relies on partners supporting the work of the drug intervention co-ordinator. But the force didn't explain or show it had considered how it would continue the work of this role if the postholder was unavailable or left the force. Nor did the force state what it had done to make sure it received continued support from public health organisations, or if the post-holder had the resources needed to do the job. As the FMS is about the future, it isn't enough to monitor performance today. It is also about future performance and how it will be maintained and improved.

Forces must make sure they also assess their assets, their staff and what they need to do their jobs, and how they will change with demand. For example, we require forces to assess the status of their fleet, estates and technology. Often, forces failed adequately to assess the status of these assets. Their FMSs did not explain enough about how technology and assets supported or hindered their performance, when and to what extent it would need replacing, or how the asset requirements might change as demand changed.

Understanding of performance is poor

When forces told us about their performance, often they gave us measurements of performance but didn't properly assess whether this was good or bad. Sometimes forces simply referred to our inspections. They didn't assess performance based on what the force knew of the status of their people and assets, or the results of recent change.

Step 2 requires a qualitative judgment. To simply measure performance as a count of the calls received or incidents attended within the set timeframe ignores the many external factors that affect daily policing.

One force told us about a faster average time to attend an incident. The force achieved this in 2020/21 after introducing a new response model. But there was little analysis of this performance or context. The change in operating model in this force coincided with the pandemic and a nationwide reduction in incidents. While an improvement in the time taken to attend incidents may be because of a change in the operating model of the force, it could reflect fewer incidents, less road traffic and other factors prevalent during 2020. Assessing performance isn't just reporting a change in data, it is understanding why the data changed and how the police influence it.

The question as to whether forces have the capability to produce and write an FMS is most clear at Step 2, in assessing performance. We saw little analysis of performance data in the statements. Some FMSs failed to explain the extent to which the force considered its performance to be adequate given the condition, capability, capacity, serviceability, wellbeing and security of supply of its workforce and other assets. Some forces failed adequately to state how they arrived at their assessments of performance. And where forces found shortfalls in capacity or capability, some failed sufficiently to explain how it might affect their performance.

Such failures to measure and evaluate performance, after three years of FMSs, is a deeply regrettable failure on the parts of the forces in question. The public, local policing bodies and others cannot have confidence in forces which still do not adequately understand how their performance measures up to their legitimate expectations.

Changes to meet future demand

This section contains our observations from the third step of FMSs. Step 3 is about how the force will change. Forces have established the demand they anticipate at Step 1 and the status of their workforces at Step 2. Step 3 should explain how the force will change to respond to increases in demand or shortfalls in assets.

Some forces can't clearly explain the effect of changes already made

Step 3 requires forces to explain the changes it will make to meet demand, given the assessments made in Steps 1 and 2. It then requires an assessment of recent changes the force has made to address problems it identified previously. Most FMSs focussed on one of these, but few on both.

Some forces didn't adequately explain the effects of the changes they had already made. They could generally describe what had changed but were less clear about the benefits they had achieved from the changes, or how much the changes had cost.

For example, one force told us about its prevention and deterrence work to reduce antisocial behaviour. Although there was a long list of projects, it wasn't clear what the effect of these had been. And because the force's antisocial behaviour demand had been declining since 2016, and the force predicted this would continue, it was unclear whether these projects were having any appreciable effect. Nor had the force assessed the influence of improvements in its crime recording accuracy. It may be that the projects were exactly the reason for the decrease, but without an assessment of the benefits realised, that was far from clear.

Forces can't always explain the cost and benefit of change

It is common for well-run projects to include an analysis of expected and actual costs and benefits. A cost-benefit analysis evaluates whether the change achieved is worth its cost (though this cost needn't always be financial).

Forces didn't always explain the cost-benefit of changes they had made. We understand that not every change is a full-scale project, and FMSs aren't the place to record in-depth analyses. And we understand that evaluations should be commensurate with the scale of the change. But it is reasonable to expect that sophisticated, modern multi-million-pound organisations like police forces should be evaluating whether the changes they make are effective and efficient.

Merseyside Police showed us how this analysis can be informative. The force told us about using a full cost-benefit analysis on working with care providers. The project was to reduce the demand generated by a family with mental health problems who made 18 calls to police in a seven-month period. The cost-benefit analysis established

that the intervention's net benefit was over £17,000 – or every £1 spent produced more than £8 of benefit.

Some forces can clearly explain what changes they are making and why

The first part of Step 3 is for a force to be able to explain the changes it is making and say why it's making them. This should link to the change in demand and any gaps the force has identified at the first two steps of the FMS process.

For example, the Metropolitan Police Service links the changes it is making to the demand it established earlier in the FMS. It stated that:

“Setting aside the Covid-19 period, demand coming in to the MPS has grown each year since 2016 and is forecast to continue this growth trajectory over the next years. The Next Generation 999 and Next Generation 101 programmes will diversify the channels for both emergency and non-emergency demand; therefore, this is not simply a linear growth in volume. We estimate that, if we do not transform, the gap between demand and our capacity to supply to that demand will be so great within two to three years, up to 50 percent of demand will go un-serviced.”

Some forces have done this well, though no force has yet been able to consistently do this throughout their FMSs.

Some FMSs don't link planned changes to identified problems

Some forces didn't adequately explain how the changes they planned to make were linked to problems identified earlier in their FMSs. This is critical for demonstrating that the force's planning is sound. The problems a force foresees or is experiencing should clearly align with its plans.

It is likely these are real problems the forces are trying to resolve, but without a strong connection to earlier steps of the FMS it isn't possible to understand the force's decision making or the efficiency and effectiveness of changes.

For example, one force had just a single short sentence explaining how its plan aims to drive down response demand but gave no details about how it would achieve this. Although this was responding to an identified shortfall in its workforce, the FMS didn't say if this was a new plan, a revision, or something else. There was no indication of the costs associated with the changes the force would make, or how the force was prioritising this change against other changes.

Demand forces won't be able to meet

This section contains our observations from the fourth step of FMSs. At Step 4, forces explain the extent of future demand that will remain unmet after the changes made at Step 3.

FMSs are failing to effectively address unmet demand

Step 4 requires forces to estimate the volume and nature of the demand which will be unmet, and what the consequence of not meeting it will be.

Very few FMSs answered this question sufficiently.

We know that this question is often the most difficult to answer. The nature of policing, and the characteristics of many who work in the police service, is to find a way to achieve all that is asked of them. But forces told us about increasing demand of greater complexity. At Step 2, they often told us about a shortage of resources or a lack of the right skills. But, too often, the changes specified at Step 3 didn't address this shortfall. And at Step 4, some FMSs failed to confront the likelihood of unmet demand or what it would mean for the force and the public. Failures of this kind frustrate one of the most important purposes of FMSs.

Police forces may be reluctant to write about Step 4 because they have an admirable mindset of finding a way. But this is not new territory. Over the years, the police have met demand differently. This means the service the public received years ago differs from the one they receive now.

In a perfect world, the police would have sufficient resources to manage every incident as they or the public wished. But the police have finite resources. They must choose where and how their staff and officers spend their time. For example, in recent years the police have chosen to reprioritise incident attendance based on threat, harm, risk and vulnerability, rather than on the type of incident. They now deal with some crimes and incidents remotely, which frees officers' time to deal with the other crimes in person. It is reasonable to expect that forces can explain these decisions and how this affects service to the public. The FMS is a way for them to do this and confront the risks that these choices may involve.

At Step 4, forces explained the demand that they are most at risk of not meeting. But FMSs generally failed properly to assess the likely consequences of not meeting that demand. The FMS should explain what the force expects to change because of unmet demand. For example, could dealing with crime or incidents by phone rather than in person lead to lower satisfaction or poorer end results?

Some of the better FMSs included a Step 4 that linked the potential for, and consequences of, unmet demand to risk assessments. Forces told us what demand they believed they must meet, and what demand might go unmet if overall demand were higher or funding lower than expected. That is what FMSs must do, and every force must answer this important question.

Forces need to explain how much their work costs and the choices they have made

Being able to complete Step 4 of an FMS requires a force to understand the cost and benefit of all that they do. How do the actions of the police affect end results for the public? What activities could a force stop that don't affect their ability to keep people safe? And where is time and money best spent to maintain a safe environment?

Policing is complex and understanding this information takes time and effort. Equally, understanding this information will lead to a better-informed police service and the most efficient use of public money. And, most importantly, it will lead to a police service that cuts crime, protects the public and swiftly brings offenders to justice. If forces improve their analysis at Step 4, they will show us and the public how they ensure they operate efficiently and effectively.

What the public want the police to do and are prepared for them not to do

The lack of a realistic appraisal of unmet demand at Step 4 means the police miss the opportunity for a frank conversation with the public about what they want from policing. In what respects, and to what extent, are the public prepared to accept a lower level of service so that the police will focus limited resources on higher priorities? A well written Step 4 will give the local policing body significant evidence about the extent to which it is discharging its duty to secure that the police force is efficient and effective.⁶

Policing ranges from patrolling neighbourhoods, protecting vulnerable people and policing events to dealing with serious and organised crime and terrorism. Forces must choose where they spend money, time and effort. Step 4 is where a force explains the consequences of its decisions, the shortfall of workforce capacity or skills, and the increasing complexity of its demands. Without a sound assessment at Step 4, forces can't make informed decisions or understand efficiency and effectiveness, and local policing bodies and the public may be hindered or frustrated in making the public policy decisions they are entitled to and must make about the level and quality of policing they will accept.

⁶ Under section 1(6)(b), Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011.

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