

PEEL

Police effectiveness, efficiency and legitimacy 2018/19

An inspection of Essex Police



Contents

What this report contains	1
Force in context	3
Overall summary	4
Effectiveness	7
Force in context	8
How effectively does the force reduce crime and keep people safe?	10
Summary	10
Preventing crime and tackling anti-social behaviour	10
Investigating crime	11
Protecting vulnerable people	15
Tackling serious and organised crime	19
Armed policing	19
Efficiency	22
Force in context	23
How efficiently does the force operate and how sustainable are its services?	24
Summary	24
Meeting current demands and using resources	24
Planning for the future	32
Legitimacy	37
Force in context	38
How legitimately does the force treat the public and its workforce?	40
Summary	40
Treating the public fairly	40
Ethical and lawful workforce behaviour	41
Treating the workforce fairly	44
Annex A – About the data	45

What this report contains

This report is structured in four parts:

1. Our overall assessment of the force's 2018/19 performance.
2. Our judgments and summaries of how effectively, efficiently and legitimately the force keeps people safe and reduces crime.
3. Our judgments and any areas for improvement and causes of concern for each component of our inspection.
4. Our detailed findings for each component.

Our inspection approach

In 2018/19, we adopted an [integrated PEEL assessment](#) (IPA) approach to our existing PEEL (police effectiveness, efficiency and legitimacy) inspections. IPA combines into a single inspection the effectiveness, efficiency and legitimacy areas of PEEL. These areas had previously been inspected separately each year.

As well as our inspection findings, our assessment is informed by our analysis of:

- force data and management statements;
- risks to the public;
- progress since previous inspections;
- findings from our non-PEEL inspections;
- how forces tackle serious and organised crime locally and regionally; and
- our regular monitoring work.

We inspected all forces in four areas:

- protecting vulnerable people;
- firearms capability;
- planning for the future; and
- ethical and lawful workforce behaviour.

We consider the risk to the public in these areas important enough to inspect all forces every year.

We extended the risk-based approach that we used in our 2017 effectiveness inspection to the efficiency and legitimacy parts of our IPA inspections. This means that in 2018/19 we didn't inspect all forces against all areas. The table below shows the areas we inspected Essex Police against.

IPA area	Inspected in 2018/19?
Preventing crime and anti-social behaviour	No
Investigating crime	Yes
Protecting vulnerable people	Yes
Tackling serious and organised crime	No
Firearms capability	Yes
Meeting current demands	Yes
Planning for the future	Yes
Treating the public fairly	No
Ethical and lawful workforce behaviour	Yes
Treating the workforce fairly	No

Our 2017 judgments are still in place for the areas we didn't inspect in 2018/19.

Force in context

	Essex rate	England and Wales rate
999 calls per 1,000 population 12 months ending 30 September 2018	168	171

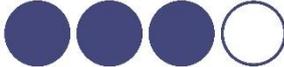
	Essex rate	Most Similar Forces rate
Recorded crime per 1,000 population 12 months ending 30 September 2018	79	75

Essex workforce

	FTE in post on 31 March 2018	FTE in post on 31 March 2014	Percentage change
Police Officer	2,958	3,196	-7%
Police Community Support Officer	92	298	-69%
Police Staff	1,712	1,677	2%

	Essex spend	England and Wales spend
Spend per head of population 2018/19 projection	£148	£192

Overall summary

	Effectiveness		Last inspected
Preventing crime and tackling anti-social behaviour	Good		2017
Investigating crime	Good		2018/19
Protecting vulnerable people	Good		2018/19
Tackling serious and organised crime	Good		2017
Armed response capability	Ungraded		2018/19
	Efficiency		Last inspected
Meeting current demands and using resources	Good		2018/19
Planning for the future	Good		2018/19

	Legitimacy	 Good	Last inspected
Fair treatment of the public	 Good	2017	
Ethical and lawful workforce behaviour	 Requires improvement	2018/19	
Fair treatment of the workforce	 Good	2017	

HM Inspector's observations

I am pleased with the performance of Essex Police in keeping people safe and reducing crime.

The force is good at preventing crime and [anti-social behaviour](#). It is good at investigating crime and has continued to improve how it identifies and protects [vulnerable people](#). It does this through more effective joint working with partners and greater use of protective powers.

Essex Police is ambitious in its planning for the future and wants to be at the forefront of innovative practice. The force understands its demand well. It uses this information to develop robust financial and workforce plans to make sure it uses its resources as efficiently as possible.

The force continues to uphold an ethical culture and promote standards of professional behaviour well. But it has more to do to assure itself that it has the capacity and capability to root out corruption.

Overall, I commend Essex Police for sustaining its positive performance over the past year. I am confident that it is well equipped for this to continue.



Zoë Billingham

HM Inspector of Constabulary

Effectiveness



Force in context

	Essex proportion	England and Wales proportion
Proportion of officers in a neighbourhood or response function in post on 31 March 2018	33%	40%

Victim-based crime per 1,000 population

12 months ending 30 September 2018

	Essex rate	Most Similar Forces rate
Violence against the person	26	24
Sexual offences	2	2
Theft Offences / Robbery	31	29
Criminal damage and arson	9	9

Crime Outcomes

12 months ending 30 September 2018

	Essex proportion	England and Wales proportion
Proportion of crimes where action was taken	14%	12%
Proportion of crimes where suspect was identified	42%	41%
Proportion of crimes where victim did not support police action	26%	21%

How effectively does the force reduce crime and keep people safe?



Good

Summary

Essex Police is good at reducing crime and keeping people safe.

The force is good at investigating crime. Its investigations give satisfactory results. In 2017, we found the force should supervise investigations better. Its specialist departments have got better at guiding and supervising investigations. But investigations by uniformed response officers could be improved with better guidance.

Essex Police is good at protecting vulnerable people. It identifies vulnerability when people first contact the police. It actively looks for hidden harm. Increasing demand has stretched the force's ability to respond to emergency and non-emergency calls. But it is working to rectify this by increasing capacity and improving efficiency.

In 2017, we assessed the force as good at:

- preventing crime and tackling anti-social behaviour; and
- tackling [serious and organised crime](#).

Preventing crime and tackling anti-social behaviour



Good

This question was not subject to detailed inspection in 2018/19, and our judgment from the 2017 effectiveness inspection has been carried over.

However, Essex Police had an area for improvement in our 2017 effectiveness inspection. This was that the force should evaluate and share effective practice routinely, both internally and with partner organisations, to continually improve its approach to preventing crime and anti-social behaviour.

We assessed progress on how well the force evaluates and shares effective practice. We found that the force is still waiting the release of its preferred fix on the IT system – the Athena Partnership Problem Solving Solution (PPSS). The force has in the interim developed its own internal database, Go2, which was released shortly before our inspection. This database does allow for the evaluation and sharing of effective practice, and the force was actively promoting Go2 among staff. At the time of our inspection, Essex Police was due to pilot the PPSS fix during autumn 2018.

We will assess the PPSS fix and its use in future inspections. Externally, the force has an extremely strong partnership structure where it regularly shares issues and developments with other organisations and agencies.

Investigating crime



Good

Victims get satisfactory results from Essex Police's investigations. But in our 2017 report we said it should supervise investigations more closely. This is still inconsistent across the force. But, the force is training uniformed response officers in crime supervision, so it is likely to get better at supervising investigations.

The force is closing many investigations that are not supported by the victim. It often does this without contacting the suspect. It should review this to make sure it is assessing risk and protecting victims. But the number of cases where the suspect is charged or summoned has increased, which means more victims get a good outcome.

The force should ensure it allocates investigations to the right officer for the job. Some crimes are assigned to officers who are going on rest days. This means the victim won't hear from the investigating officer for several days. This isn't appropriate.

Essex Police actively pursues and manages offenders. Since our last inspection it has got better at using [bail](#), so it is doing better at protecting victims. The force has not circulated on the Police National Computer (PNC) all the people it has listed as wanted for an offence. This means other forces cannot help find these people. Essex Police knows about this and is correcting it.

Areas for improvement

- The force should improve how it allocates crime, ensuring it allocates investigations to appropriately trained and supported officers, and that it reviews this allocation appropriately throughout the investigation.
- The force should review how it closes investigations where the victim is reluctant to engage, to reassure itself that it is addressing risk and undertaking proportionate investigation and safeguarding activity.

We set out our detailed findings below. These are the basis for our judgment of the force's performance in this area.

Investigation quality

The force conducts good investigations that lead to satisfactory results for victims. As part of this inspection, we reviewed 60 files from recent investigations and found 52 to be of a good standard. In our 2017 effectiveness inspection report, we said the force should ensure that there is regular and active supervision of investigations to improve quality and progress. In this inspection, we found that the quality of supervision and guidance is still mixed across the force, although it is better in the specialist departments.

Investigations by uniformed response officers still need to be improved. Importantly, the force has been giving crime supervision training to uniformed sergeants, including the ones who undertake acting sergeant duties. Officers who have had this training are more positive about their ability to supervise investigations. This means that the force is likely to improve how it supervises investigations in the future.

The force has recorded a 11.2 percent increase in crime over the 12 months to March 2018. This increase is partly due to improved crime recording processes and is most evident in offences of violence against the person. But the force is closing many investigations early when officers state that the victim does not support the investigation (this is part of outcomes 14 and 16 under the Home Office outcomes framework). The force closed 32,439 investigations using outcomes 14 and 16 in the 12 months to 31 March 2018. This is more than in 2016/17, when the force closed 24,400 investigations in this way. We found that officers across the force are likely to close investigations down if the victim does not support the investigation. In some of these instances, the force closes crimes without any further investigation and without making contact with the suspect.

Some officers think that evidence-led prosecutions – where the victim has not been willing to engage in the investigation and court process – are too difficult. They told us that they believe the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) is unwilling to let cases progress without exceptionally strong supporting evidence. Experienced senior detectives, rather than uniformed officers, are more likely to be able to convince the CPS to take such cases. Despite these problems, there are now more cases where a suspect has been charged or summoned. In the 12 months to 31 March 2018, these cases increased by around 20 percent, up by almost 2,000 cases on the same period the year before. This means that more offenders are being brought to justice and more victims are getting a positive outcome to their cases.

Senior leaders in Essex Police have worked hard to increase the numbers of skilled detective [staff](#). The numbers of accredited detective officers have also continued to improve. However, they remain below the overall rate for England and Wales, which is 86 percent. Of the force's detective posts, accredited detectives hold 67 percent (418) of posts and over 200 officers are in training to get their accreditation. The force provides excellent support to candidates entering the detective career pathway.

The force is also consistent about compliance with national detective guidelines, posting any candidate who fails to pass the mandatory exam after two attempts to a non-detective role. This means that officers recognise the detective role as something to aspire to. This is important. Detectives in Essex Police earn around £1,200 a year

less than their uniformed colleagues (of a similar length of service), due to the shift patterns, national allowances and regulations.

The type of crime allocated to uniformed officers is inconsistent across the force. Most crimes are allocated to officers who have the right investigative skills and abilities, but this is not always the case. We saw evidence of arbitrary allocation criteria in some stations. For example, in one station, the criterion for allocating a grievous bodily harm (GBH) offence to a detective is the number of stitches needed (11). This meant that a uniformed officer with three years' service had to investigate a GBH case involving seven stitches. Decisions on crime allocation would be better if they considered factors such as the risk to the victim or the complexity of the case.

In our 2017 effectiveness inspection, we found evidence of the force allocating crimes to officers who were about to start their rest days. This means the officers can take no action until they return and the victim is likely to have no contact with the officer investigating their crime for several days. This is not appropriate. In this inspection we found that while this is still occurring, there are far fewer incidents compared with what we found in 2017.

Members of the force's crime bureau undertake telephone investigations of crimes that have limited investigative opportunities. We assessed several of the investigations the force does by telephone. We found them to have been appropriate for this type of investigation and the investigations themselves were of a good quality. The call handler asks the victim a series of questions and uses their responses to assess whether to allocate the crime to an officer for investigation or close it without any further action. The force has designed the screening process to ensure the victim receives effective support. It also allows the call handler to 'flag' if the victim is vulnerable, which means that the case will be allocated to an officer to attend.

Staff in the crime bureau also receive guidance on other factors that would mean that an officer would be allocated to attend. This would include where a victim who is not vulnerable is a repeat victim. However, we found that some staff are not aware of the guidance. This means that crimes that they should allocate for further investigation might not be. For example, one question asks the victim if they are prepared to support the investigation. If the victim replies 'no' – and if there are no supporting factors or vulnerabilities highlighted – the investigation will be closed. The quality assurance process in the crime bureau is not effective, which means that the force cannot be sure that investigations and processes are of a good standard. Despite this, we found that crime bureau investigations are largely effective and appropriately managed.

In 2017, we also found that the force could not ensure it was always compliant with the Code of Practice for Victims of Crime. We are pleased to note that the force is now compliant with the code, as the Athena crime system automatically supports compliance. This is important, as current data shows a fall in the number of referrals to [Victim Support](#) from 93 percent to 74 percent this year, due to the introduction of the General Data Protection Regulation requirements. These give people more rights to control how their personal data is used.

Catching criminals

The force actively pursues and manages offenders who are a risk to the public. It also understands and effectively uses post and pre-charge bail. It has introduced regular offender management meetings in all three local policing areas, which are effective and well managed. At these meetings, [senior officers](#) review any action to arrest outstanding suspects, together with the force's use of police bail and the [released under investigation](#) (RUI) process. When the bail legislation changed the way police bail is applied, the force initially overused the RUI option. Since then, the force has raised awareness of how to use the legislation, to improve officers' knowledge and expertise. As a result, there has been a major improvement in using bail conditions and a reduction in using RUI. This means the force is [safeguarding](#) victims more effectively.

Essex Police has 2,868 records of people wanted for one or more offences or who they wish to trace for other reasons not related to them being offenders, but who are not circulated on the PNC. This means the suspects may not be brought to justice as quickly as they might otherwise be. The force is aware of this problem, which happens because old wanted files are not automatically uploaded on to their new IT platform (Athena). They are working through the cases and circulating details of the suspects manually on the PNC, if appropriate. This means that other police forces can help find or arrest these people, and thereby reduce the risk to the public.

The force is good at identifying and managing arrested foreign nationals. It manages [ACRO](#) checks well. The process is automated on Athena and custody sergeants take responsibility for completing the checks. The force works closely with Immigration Enforcement to check identities and nationalities and consider options to remove or deport people who have committed serious crimes or pose a threat to communities.

The force is a participant in the regional disclosure board, which is where forces in the Eastern region meet to discuss progress against the national guidelines and regional plan. The [disclosure](#) process in criminal prosecutions provides a crucial safeguard to ensure fairness within the system. Police investigations must follow all reasonable lines of enquiry, even if they point away from the suspect. Prosecutors must be in a position to provide the defence with any material that undermines the case for the prosecution or assists the case for the accused. Proper disclosure is vital for there to be a fair trial.

The force has invested in disclosure training for staff. This includes the National Centre for Applied Learning Technologies (NCALT) package, which most staff have completed, and additional face-to-face training. The force has worked with the rape and serious sexual offence unit (RASSO) to provide clear guidance for officers on how to manage third party material. This is relevant material in the possession of a third party. The force has identified several officers as disclosure champions. Their task is to offer advice and guidance to officers across the force. The force is aware it needs to get this difficult area of policing right, and their activity means they should be able to provide an improving service to the public.

Protecting vulnerable people



Good

The force can identify and understand vulnerability. It seeks out people with hidden vulnerability, such as those who have been trafficked. It identifies vulnerable people when they first contact the police.

The force knows that demand for its services has gone up. It has recruited 150 new frontline officer posts to deal with this. Our 2017 report said the force should reduce the number of abandoned calls to its non-emergency 101 line. It has tried to do this. But the rate is still too high. The force continues to work on this area. The force shares information well with its colleagues working in mental health services, even though Essex's mental health service provision is complex.

Since our 2017 inspection, the force has improved the way it uses legal powers to safeguard domestic abuse victims. It works well with other organisations to keep vulnerable victims safe. And it asks vulnerable victims what they think about its service. It uses their views to improve its services. It is no longer visiting all low-risk registered sex offenders (RSOs) unless it gets intelligence that changes their assessment. This means it can better manage high-risk RSOs. Essex Police is increasing its use of specialist software to identify offenders who view indecent images of children online.

Area for improvement

- The force should review its processes for assessing risk in the crime bureau to make sure it takes opportunities to safeguard vulnerable victims in cases that it closed without officer attendance.

We set out our detailed findings below. These are the basis for our judgment of the force's performance in this area.

Understanding and identifying vulnerability

The force has a clear definition of vulnerability, and a strategy for protecting vulnerable people. The force communicates this strategy effectively, and officers and staff's understanding is good. There is a very good understanding of the nature and scale of vulnerability, which the force is developing in conjunction with other organisations such as local authorities and mental health professionals.

Officers and police staff take proactive steps to uncover 'hidden' forms of harm, such as vulnerable people being trafficked or subjected to forced labour. The force works closely with partner organisations to prevent and solve cases involving the criminal exploitation of children. The 2018 [joint targeted area inspection of the multi-agency response to abuse and neglect in Southend-on-Sea](#) reported that work to tackle child sexual and criminal exploitation, gangs, and the risks arising from people going missing from home, care or school was underpinned by strong working relationships

across the agencies. This includes the police, unitary authority, health and education services.

The force is good at identifying vulnerable people on first contact, including repeat victims, victims of domestic abuse and people with mental health conditions. The incident management IT system and crime management IT system both have markers to identify a victim as vulnerable. We found that staff are consistently using these. Staff within the control room have used the [THRIVE](#) model of risk assessment for several years and they understand and accept the process very well.

Responding to incidents

Recent increases in the volume and complexity of 999 and 101 calls have stretched the force's capacity to answer all calls and respond within the target time. The force's own review found that the demand it faces is becoming increasingly complex, with new types of crime such as cyber-crime. It found that high priority demand is also increasing because the force's understanding of vulnerability has improved and it is assessing more incidents as high risk. Uniformed officers within local policing areas are dealing with a lot of this increase in demand. To help deal with these difficulties, the force is recruiting an additional 150 new frontline officers.

In our 2017 effectiveness inspection, we identified that the force needed to improve its efforts to reduce the number of abandoned 101 calls. During this latest inspection, we found the force has worked hard to reduce the levels of abandoned 101 calls over the past 12 months. Its efforts have included promoting the online crime-reporting tool more to reduce the demands on call takers. The force has seen the numbers of people accessing this route increase from around 1,100 to over 2,200 per month. But despite the force's work, the 101-abandonment rate is still too high, with around 20 percent of all 101 callers hanging up before the call is answered. The force recognises that this is not an acceptable service for the public and so they commissioned a private company to conduct a review.

The result of this review is a plan to remodel the force control room (FCR) over the next 12 to 16 months. The new model aims to reduce the work within the FCR and move responsibility for dealing with the lowest grade of incident (grade 4) from the FCR to a centrally-based resolution centre serving the local policing areas. This means that it will be clearer who is responsible for grade 4 incidents. This is important as, on this inspection, we found that of the 753 open incidents the force was managing, 505 were grade 4. The local policing areas were responsible for managing those 505 incidents but it was unclear whether this was effective. We reviewed the grade 4 incidents and found that they were low-risk incidents with little or no vulnerability issues.

Frontline officers and staff follow a clear process when assessing risk and addressing the nature of a victim's vulnerability. Officers identify safeguarding needs using either the [domestic abuse, stalking and harassment \(DASH\) risk-assessment](#) process – completed for all domestic abuse incidents – or a form PP57 for other types of incidents that include vulnerable victims. Officers know they need to record the details of children within the household and whether they are present at the scene to help consider and safeguard their needs. The force supervises and scrutinises DASH forms to ensure accuracy. We found that officers had completed a few DASH forms

over the phone, due to difficulties in arranging face-to-face meetings with the victims. While this approach is not ideal, in these few cases it is clear that the force was aiming to activate safeguarding and referral processes despite the victim's unwillingness or inability to engage fully.

Staff within the crime bureau do not complete PP57 forms and this creates a risk. The crimes the crime bureau records and closes without an officer attending will not be considered for a PP57 referral. It is unclear how the force assesses and addresses the risks to victims in these cases.

The force has a [mental health triage scheme](#) that the police and the local NHS trust fund jointly. Under this scheme, mental health nurses accompany police officers to help them identify and support people who have mental health conditions. A review of the triage scheme took place in spring 2018, leading to some minor amendments. Partner organisations are supportive of the force's approach to mental health and the triage scheme. There is no defined [section 136](#) protocol in place, because the complexity of service provision in the county means a single protocol would not be able to cover all eventualities. Difficulties include hospitals in Essex being in joint-working arrangements with hospitals in other counties. Despite this, agencies share effectively.

The force makes appropriate use of arrest and [voluntary attendance](#) to protect victims, including victims of domestic abuse. Attendance at domestic abuse incidents remains a priority. Essex Police attended almost two thirds of domestic abuse incidents as an emergency or priority call. The force makes an arrest at around 40 percent of domestic abuse incidents. The average for England and Wales is 35.3 percent. The force uses voluntary attendance at 2.14 percent of all incidents. This is broadly in line with the average for England and Wales.

Supporting vulnerable victims

The force has been reducing its use of released under investigation (RUI) in domestic abuse cases (down from 11.9 percent in the first quarter of 2017/18 to 7.3 percent in the fourth quarter) in favour of pre-charge bail (up from 15 percent in the first quarter of 2017/18 to 24.7 percent by the fourth quarter). This means that the force is likely to be more effectively reducing the risk to victims.

Neighbourhood officers take part in continuously safeguarding vulnerable victims. This includes the elderly, people with mental health conditions and repeat victims of domestic abuse. Officers work with partners to combat [cuckooing](#) and in Basildon, officers have worked with partner organisations to provide people who are homeless with lockers where they can leave their property.

In our 2017 effectiveness inspection, we found that the force needed to review its use of [domestic violence protection orders](#) to ensure it is making best use of these powers to safeguard victims of domestic abuse. The force is now making more effective use of these protective powers and measures to safeguard vulnerable victims. The number of domestic violence protection orders has increased slightly from 196 in 2017 to 212 in 2018. Importantly, officers understand the benefit of these orders and how to apply for them. The level of 'right to know' and 'right to ask' ([Clare's Law](#)) disclosures

remains reasonably constant, which means the force continues to offer victims and potential victims information to keep them safe.

The force works with a range of partner organisations to ensure specialist safeguarding arrangements are in place for vulnerable people. There are two [multi-agency safeguarding hubs](#) (MASHs), one at Southend-on-Sea and one at Thurrock. The operations unit, which the police leads, covers the rest of the county. The intention is to move the officers within this unit into Essex County Council offices in Chelmsford later this year, to enable more effective work with partner organisations. This will represent an important step forward in working together to safeguard the public in Essex.

The [multi-agency risk assessment conference](#) (MARAC) arrangements have changed and are now provided centrally from locations across the county. This gives better coverage and allows for improved assistance from statutory and voluntary agencies, including those that deal with housing and children's social care services. A MARAC steering group has brought benefits that include improved police attendance at the meetings. The force passes cases to a MARAC within 48 hours and the meeting discusses these within 10–14 days, which is good. MARAC referrals from external agencies have gone up noticeably and police referrals, particularly from Harlow, have gone down. The MARAC manager plans to review potential causes for this change to understand the changing nature of demand. The caseload of work remains in line with the average of the past few years despite the numbers of domestic abuse cases going up. It would be good if the force had a better understanding of why this is the case.

The force regularly seeks and uses feedback from vulnerable victims and service users to improve services. It has a comprehensive engagement strategy, and conducts a public survey of 7,700 people every year. It surveyed 1,058 victims in the 12 months to March 2018. The process of surveying the views of victims of domestic abuse is well advanced and the police, fire and crime commissioner (PFCC) has commissioned work to improve how the independent charity Victim Support works with the force.

All victim surveys are conducted by an independent expert company whose staff are all trained and vetted. The force has worked with trained intermediaries to design a set of ten questions they use to seek feedback from child victims aged between ten and 17 years, and their parents and/or carer, about their experience with the police. As part of this work, a young victim has recorded a video telling of her experiences of being a vulnerable victim and how the investigation process felt to her. The force uses this impressive and powerful video to improve officers' understanding of how their actions and behaviours affect the most vulnerable victims. The force's engagement lead officer presents the findings from the victim surveys at the crime board so the force can improve service provision.

Essex Police manages the risk of registered sex offenders (RSOs) actively, making sure the risk to the public is as low as possible. We closely scrutinised the force's approach to managing RSOs during this inspection. The force remains outside the national guidelines, but recent amendments to these guidelines mean that the force is now in almost full compliance. The force's area of non-compliance is linked to how it removed 299 low-risk RSOs from active engagement after a full risk-assessment process. These RSOs will not have any direct engagement unless

the force receives intelligence that might change the assessment. If this happens, the RSO will immediately be subject to an intervention. The changes in the force's RSO process have enabled it to reduce the considerable backlog of visits to higher-risk RSOs to just over 60. This is a significant improvement. The force aims to inform its neighbourhood officers regarding those low-risk RSOs living in their areas, as they have little or no knowledge of RSOs at present. This will make the force even more compliant. A low risk remains, as the force is still outside the national guidelines by not actively engaging with low-risk RSOs, but the benefit is that it manages visits and assesses high-risk individuals better.

The force is proactive in its approach to identifying those who share indecent images of children online. But the police online investigation team (POLIT) that completes this work is currently experiencing increased demand. This has affected team members' ability to manage their workloads and has created backlogs in the cases awaiting action. The force is aware of POLIT's capacity problems and has plans to increase the number of staff in the unit to meet demand.

The force routinely uses preventative or ancillary orders to protect the public from dangerous and sexual offenders. It actively manages breaches of such orders. The force reports that it dealt with 64 breaches of [sexual harm prevention orders](#) in the year to 31 March 2018. This includes low-level breaches such as reporting late to a police station.

Tackling serious and organised crime



Good

This question was not subject to inspection in 2018/19, and our judgment from the 2017 effectiveness inspection has been carried over.

Armed policing

We have previously inspected how well forces provide armed policing. This formed part of our 2016 and 2017 effectiveness inspections. Subsequent terrorist attacks in the UK and Europe have meant that the police service maintains a focus on armed capability in England and Wales.

It is not just terrorist attacks that place operational demands on armed officers. The threat can include the activity of organised crime groups or armed street gangs and all other crime involving guns. The [Code of Practice on the Police Use of Firearms and Less Lethal Weapons](#) makes forces responsible for implementing national standards of armed policing. The code stipulates that a [chief officer](#) be designated to oversee these standards. This requires the chief officer to set out the firearms threat in an [armed policing strategic threat and risk assessment](#) (APSTRA). The chief officer must also set out clear rationales for the number of armed officers (armed capacity) and the level to which they are trained (armed capability).

Understanding the threat and responding to it

The force has a good understanding of the potential harm facing the public. Its APSTRA conforms to the requirements of the code and the [College of Policing guidance](#). The APSTRA is published annually and is accompanied by a register of risks and other matters of interest. The [designated chief officer](#) reviews the register frequently to maintain the right levels of armed capability and capacity.

Essex Police also has a good understanding of the armed criminals who operate in its communities, the likelihood of terrorist attacks and the venues that may require additional protection in times of heightened threat. There is one area where the APSTRA could be improved; it would benefit from stronger analysis of incidents and intelligence about armed criminals who present risks in neighbouring forces. The force recognises this and has plans to develop this understanding with other forces in the region.

All armed officers in England and Wales are trained to national standards. There are different standards for each role that armed officers perform. The majority of armed incidents in Essex are attended by officers trained to an [armed response vehicle \(ARV\)](#) standard. Essex Police has sufficient ARV capability. However, we noted that, as an interim measure, the force is adjusting shift patterns and paying overtime to ensure it has sufficient armed officers available. The force has plans in place to rectify this through recruitment programmes.

Incidents sometimes occur that require the skills and specialist capabilities of more highly trained officers. We found that Essex Police has good arrangements in place to mobilise specialist officers should their skills be required. The force has sufficient specialist capabilities in line with the threats and risks identified in its APSTRA. If, for any reason, specialist capabilities are not immediately available, agreements are in place to seek the assistance of specialist officers in other forces.

Working with others

It is important that effective joint working arrangements are in place between neighbouring forces. Armed criminals and terrorists have no respect for county boundaries. As a consequence, armed officers must be prepared to deploy flexibly in the knowledge that they can work seamlessly with officers in other forces. It is also important that any one force can call on support from surrounding forces in times of heightened threat.

This is an area where Essex Police performs well. Close working between Essex Police and neighbouring forces means armed officers can deploy quickly and efficiently in the region. Essex Police, together with other forces in the east of England, are planning to strengthen collaborative arrangements. As well as making savings, these plans will standardise training and improve the availability of firearms officers throughout the region.

We also examined how well prepared forces are to respond to threats and risks. Armed officers in Essex are trained in tactics that take account of the types of recent terrorist attacks. Also, the force has an important role in designing training exercises with other organisations that simulate these types of attacks. We found that these

training exercises are reviewed carefully so that learning points are identified and improvements are made for the future.

We found that Essex Police regularly debriefs incidents attended by armed officers. However, the standard of debriefing is variable and opportunities to identify best practice or areas for improvement are sometimes overlooked. We recommend that the force reviews these procedures.

Efficiency



Force in context

	Essex spend	England and Wales spend
Spend per head of population 2018/19 projection	£148	£192

Spend per head of population by category

2018/19 projection

	Essex spend	England and Wales spend
Visible frontline	£46	£65
Non-visible frontline	£56	£62
Frontline Support	£10	£17
Business support	£33	£41
Other	£3	£8

How efficiently does the force operate and how sustainable are its services?



Good

Summary

Essex Police is good at operating efficiently and providing a sustainable service to the public.

It is good at meeting current demands and using resources. It analyses demand routinely. The high levels of demand put pressure on officers and some internal procedures make this worse. The force's improvement programme is seeking better ways of working, including more joint working that will reduce demand.

The force is good at planning for the future. The demand forecasts it made in the past have proved accurate. It invests in 'spend to save' projects. These will help it free up capacity and funds that can be used in other priority areas. The force tells the public about its work and understands their expectations.

Meeting current demands and using resources



Good

Essex Police uses various methods to understand demand, including hidden demand. It is improving communications with the public generally and with hard-to-reach groups. Sometimes, Essex Police does not have enough officers to attend emergencies. Poor internal procedures add to pressure on officers and create extra work.

The force knows that improving efficiency can reduce demand. Its improvement programme results in changes that save thousands of hours and millions of pounds a year. But we found a weakness in its response to lower-grade incidents. It does not assign responsibility for their conclusion to a particular department. This can delay the process.

Essex Police has strong evidence of the benefits of its investments. These include improvements that make it easier for officers to collect and upload data. It records

resulting improvements. The force funds these investments from [reserves](#) and they are linked to its efficiency plans.

Essex Police analyses priorities and the skills it needs constantly and allocates accordingly. When demand is overwhelming, the force appropriately downgrades some incidents under the supervision of a senior officer. The force is aware of pressure on the control room and is addressing this. This pressure makes solving these problems less likely.

We set out our detailed findings below. These are the basis for our judgment of the force's performance in this area.

Assessing current demand

The force has a satisfactory understanding of the demand it faces. Its [force management statement](#) (FMS) includes detailed forecasts of crime levels and other demands on the police in future years. Information from local communities and other organisations contributes to these calculations.

In 2017, the force commissioned an independent review of its demand and worked in partnership with the reviewers to establish a rigorous methodology. The FMS work compliments this previous research. The force works with local authorities, voluntary organisations and victims' groups to understand demand that is less obvious or hard-to-quantify. This includes offences such as domestic abuse, child sexual exploitation and female genital mutilation. Hate crime is a priority and the force is improving how officers identify and report this type of offending. Crime analysts publish monthly bulletins that include information about repeat victims, persistent offenders and trends in hate crime. This helps the force focus on finding offenders and provides a better service to victims of hate crime.

The force is using innovative methods to understand communities better and improve communications with them. It is making comprehensive use of both Google and Facebook analytics to determine how members of the public access and use online services. To connect with people who are less likely to use social media, the force has access to vast data sets provided by YouGov. This will help the force target information to certain community groups and assess the needs of all parts of Essex's communities.

The force can redeploy officers to any part of the county in times of high demand or other operational pressures. But there are still times when demand outstrips capacity. Sometimes, not enough officers are available to attend to emergencies. Many officers told us about the constantly high levels of demand and how hard it is to prioritise equally important areas of work. For example, having to respond to emergencies as well as investigate crime. However, while demand is clearly challenging for the force, poor internal practices and procedures cause some of the pressures. For example, at the time of our inspection, the force had 4,123 investigations awaiting closure from a supervisor. These investigations are assigned to officers, even when there are no remaining enquiries to complete. They remain on an officer's allocated workload and continue to generate automated tasks, while waiting for a supervisor to finalise them. This creates unnecessary work that is time-consuming.

Understanding factors that influence demand

The force understands that efficient working practices can reduce demand. It has introduced best practice from industry – for example marginal gains and the Black Box methodology – to improve its systems and procedures. Essex Police’s chief officer team is fully committed to getting rid of processes that are not effective. An assistant chief constable leads this programme of work with the support of a business improvement adviser.

The programme aims to:

- find better ways of working;
- avoid duplication;
- remove waste;
- reduce unnecessary costs;
- improve efficiency; and
- lead to continuous improvement.

The force asks frontline workers to contribute their own ideas and suggestions. Improvements so far have included:

- streamlining vetting procedures (which the force estimates saves 2,000 hours of staff time per year);
- reducing the time taken to manage the reception of prisoners who are taken to custody centres (an estimated opportunity cost saving of £2.4m per year); and
- better use of staff in the force’s control room to focus on the force’s priorities.

We identified a weakness in how the force manages demand overall. This relates to how it responds to lower-grade incidents. It was not clear to us who is responsible and accountable for lower-priority, less-urgent grade 4 incidents. The force routinely schedules these incidents for a delayed response. But it is not clear whether the FCR or local officers are responsible for concluding them.

This is another area where the force does not fully understand its capacity to deal with the volume of work. We recognise that officers are prioritising grade 4 incidents that include an element of domestic abuse. The chief officer team is aware of these problems and plans to address them are advancing but have yet to make a difference to this area.

Working with others to meet demand

The force’s FMS recognises that problem-solving and working with partners is crucial to managing demand, particularly to respond to issues and cases that require a strong partnership approach. Essex Police therefore has good arrangements in place to manage demand with other organisations.

Its work with Kent Police has a proven track record of success. These arrangements have improved the service in both forces across a range of areas, including major crime investigations and business support. The force is part of the seven-force strategic alliance in the east of England. This alliance seeks to bring further joint

working between forces in the region in the interests of efficiency and financial savings. Areas for inclusion in future joint working include training and deploying armed officers, criminal justice services (including preparing case files and concluding cases that do not lead to a prosecution), forensics, vetting, and covert policing.

The force has also improved how it works with other organisations to meet the public's demands. In several places in the county, frontline staff work alongside other service providers, such as local authorities, in community hubs. This means that when people contact the police for help, the force makes a better all-round assessment of their needs and a joint service is on hand to support them.

There are other examples of how working with other organisations improves the service to the public. These involve the fire and rescue service and the county council. The PFCC was the first commissioner to use the legislative provisions of the Policing and Crime Act 2017 to take responsibility for running the fire and rescue service as well as the police. This has provided the opportunity to streamline assets across both services and includes plans to implement the same telephony and incident management system as the force. Plans to combine call-handling facilities in 2021 are also at an advanced stage. The force has long sought to improve working practices with Essex County Council to support abused or neglected children. The force is exploring opportunities to co-locate its staff with children's social care workers to provide an integrated child protection service.

The force understands the effect of increased demand, financial constraints and reduced resources on other organisations. The force and its partner organisations have set up community safety hubs to make services sustainable and more cost-effective. The force is also recruiting volunteers to help offset the effect of austerity. The police and crime plan sets out an objective to double the size of the [county's Special Constabulary](#) by the end of March 2019: an increase of 350 to 700 officers. The force has since reduced this target to 540 officers, as many special constables have joined the full-time service. However, the skills staff are developing in the Special Constabulary are impressive. Special constables now form an important part of domestic abuse teams, the CID, airport and marine policing and digital investigations, as well as more traditional areas of uniformed policing.

The force's volunteer programme (called 'citizens in policing') has consistently grown and now has 1,140 volunteers. These volunteers have a wide range of skills, including cyber security. Essex Police has put effective measures in place to help reduce the negative consequences of financial restraint and greater demand across all sectors of the public services.

Innovation and new opportunities

The force is good at seeking out new ways of working and cost-effective systems to help balance the budget. It welcomes ideas from frontline officers and staff and encourages them to use Idea Drop, a web-based forum where they can post suggested improvements. The force is currently proceeding with suggestions of how it can make better use of police community support officers (PCSOs) and how recruitment can be more effective. Senior officers have commended staff for their contributions to this scheme.

The force uses drones and their imaging capabilities effectively. It has used drones to:

- map crime scenes;
- assist officers searching open terrain and water;
- record images of individuals involved in hare coursing; and
- manage the risks associated with firearms operations.

It has used still photographs in conjunction with social media to publicise why it is necessary to close roads following serious collisions. The force has trained over 80 people to pilot the force's drones, including many special constables. It has used drones on 149 occasions and estimates that this technology has saved the force £90,000.

Investment and benefits

The force can demonstrate the benefits of its investments and has strong evidence to support its investment decisions. An example of a good investment decision is replacing its [body-worn video](#) system with state-of-the-art video technology. The new body-worn video system has reduced the time it takes for officers to download images from several hours to a few minutes. The force is keeping a record of these improvements. It expects more prosecutions to result in guilty pleas because of good video evidence. This will avoid lengthy court proceedings and time-consuming case file preparation. It also expects the faster download facility will save unnecessary overtime expenditure.

Another example is investment in mobile data tablets as part of the force's 'mobile first' programme. Mobile working enables officers to complete much more work while on patrol; it avoids the need for officers to return to police stations and input data. 'mobile first' and other components of the force's ICT programme are fundamental to the force's future. These investments, funded from reserve allocations, link directly to the force's efficiency plans.

Prioritising different types of demand

Essex Police prioritises its activity based on:

- a detailed understanding of demand;
- local priorities;
- its commitment to national policing; and
- public expectations.

The force supports this with frequent assessments of the skills and capabilities it needs from its current and future workforce. This is based on an annual cycle of research, which produces a strategic assessment of the greatest threats from crime that its communities face. The research is thorough and draws together a wealth of data. This includes crime analysis, demand projections, operational pressures within other organisations, and the levels of harm that different crime types cause. This helps the force identify priorities and allocate resources to them.

The force's people and learning strategy 2017–20 ensures that workforce development is in line with the future requirements of the force. It sets out the recruitment programmes, skills requirement and training curriculum, along with plans to improve staff retention for critical posts. In addition to this, the force commissions periodic capacity reviews of critical parts of the organisation. The force control room is a recent example of this.

To ensure the force can respond to periods of high demand, the force designates a senior officer to assess demand and operational pressures on a 24-hour basis. This supervisor can redeploy officers to any part of the county to manage high-profile incidents or exceptional demand. This happens regularly and during these times, other incidents can be downgraded to manage the workload.

It was clear to us that the force still prioritises certain types of crime, for example domestic abuse, during these times of peak demand. It was also clear that control room staff do their very best to keep victims safe. However, it was not clear to us how the force escalates such operational pressures to chief officers. In the absence of procedures for doing this, the force is less likely to find solutions to the problem. Additionally, this could affect the force's reputation.

Assigning resources to demand and understanding their costs

Essex Police is one of the lowest funded forces per head of population in England and Wales. According to its 2018 Value for Money profile, it receives £144.6 per 1,000 head of population which is lowest in the country. The force has a good understanding of the costs of its service and has built up this knowledge over time. The chief officer team has had to make some difficult decisions in recent years to meet the increasing demand for service. This includes the major reduction in PCSO numbers in 2016 from 258 to 102, and moving around 20 percent of the workforce to the public protection command. The public protection command is an investigative unit that manages allegations of crime involving vulnerable victims, such as rape, sexual offences and child abuse. In common with other forces, investigations of this nature have increased markedly in recent years.

The chief constable was very clear that a direct consequence of these decisions would be additional pressures on uniformed frontline policing. This has proved to be the case. There are occasions when frontline officers and staff struggle to respond to incidents and manage day-to-day investigative responsibilities effectively. When making these decisions, the chief constable made a public commitment to reinvest in frontline uniform policing as soon as enough funds became available. Additional income from an increase in the council tax precept has now provided this opportunity. The force is now recruiting an additional 150 officers to boost frontline policing.

The force has good procedures in place to allocate officers and staff to the parts of the county where they are most needed. The director of human resources manages a resourcing panel where chief officers consider operational demands and agree where to post new recruits and officers who are transferring from other forces.

The force has also introduced new procedures to assist with the growth in recorded crime and the demand this places on the workforce. It recorded an 11.2 percent

increase in recorded crime in the 12 months to March 2018. The force now manages crimes with few investigative leads, and a low likelihood of identifying an offender, differently. They are now the responsibility of telephone investigators. They account for 29 percent of all crime committed in Essex.

The force uses an algorithm known as the crime allocation rational assessment tool (CARA2) to decide how to allocate crimes for investigation. CARA2 is designed to make sure that only crimes that meet certain criteria are assigned to telephone investigators. The remainder are allocated to investigators for more detailed investigation in line with their severity, complexity and the needs of the victim. This allows the force to focus its limited resources on those crimes that will benefit from a more detailed investigation. We examined several crimes that had been allocated to telephone investigators. The investigations were of a good standard and met the force's allocation criteria.

Workforce capabilities

The force has a good understanding of the skills and capabilities its workforce needs. It is also clear about its expectations of the service's future leaders. The force has completed a thorough skills audit, which it updates regularly. This shapes its recruitment and training and development requirements. For example, a current priority is to boost its capacity to combat cyber-crime and recruit specialists in financial investigations.

Essex Police works well with Essex University. Academics are helping the force develop the capacity and capabilities of its workforce. This includes:

- a joint programme to recruit and train crime analysts;
- a scientist helping the force make better use of its data; and
- academics using role profiling to understand more about the qualities the force's future leaders will require.

With this new information, the force is using alternative methods to appoint individuals to senior leadership positions. This includes taking part in the [College of Policing's direct entry](#) programme. This programme provides a gateway for talented individuals who are new to the police. The force appoints them to senior management positions, to bring a different set of skills and create more diverse leadership teams.

More efficient ways of working

The force makes good use of digital policing solutions. Introducing simple-to-use portable devices has meant frontline officers and staff now have instant access to the force's main databases. This supports operational policing and provides direct access to support services. The other important part of the ICT programme has been to unify record management systems by implementing Athena. In future, this will include innovations such as a customer relationship management system.

Financial planning is a strength for Essex Police. The force has a good track record of meeting its savings requirements. Current savings requirements over the period of the [mid-term financial plan](#) (MTFP) are relatively modest when compared with previous years. The force expects to meet its current budget gap of £3.5m mainly by better managing overtime, making savings in the force's serious crime directorate

(SCD) and savings in support service costs. Essex Police and Kent Police share the SCD, which is responsible for investigating murder and other serious crimes.

Essex Police has good procedures in place with Kent Police to monitor the progress of savings plans and their effect on frontline operations. The deputy chief constable chairs the efficiency and savings board, which holds regular meetings to oversee the development of savings plans for future years, checks on progress and holds chief officers to account for savings. Similar arrangements exist in Commands, which have major savings requirements, such as the joint support services and the serious crime directorate. The force has also trained senior managers in how to develop effective business cases to implement change effectively.

Essex Police has good procedures in place to identify savings for the coming financial year, but less so for subsequent years. Other forces determine how to address budget deficits over the duration of the MTFP. This helps forces to plan and respond to future savings requirements by developing options. Essex Police should consider savings in the longer term, even if this is in an outline format. This should include an element of scenario planning to address anticipated changes in the precept revenue, the PFCC's requirement for the force to make efficiency savings, and other assumptions the force makes about its future finances.

Working with others

The force is committed to working with others. Its collaborative work with Kent Police is extensive and well developed, and it continues to expand. The force continues to work with the Eastern region in all specialist capabilities, which include joint training and governance. The force is also a member of the seven-force strategic collaboration programme. This has a broad scope that includes almost every element of operational and support services. The seven-force programmes that are in advanced stages include a single procurement service, vetting, and services that support covert policing.

Essex Police is also committed to working with other organisations to provide a better service to the public. MASHs in Southend-on-Sea and Thurrock provide a better service to vulnerable victims. Although the Essex County area does not have a MASH, the force has worked with county council colleagues to introduce an alternative facility for victims. Later this year, officers from the force will move into Essex County Council offices. This will streamline procedures for providing support to vulnerable people including children.

The force works alongside mental health practitioners when responding to people who have mental health problems. This provides better pathways into care for individuals in crisis. Also, an evaluation has shown that these arrangements are placing fewer demands on police officers in terms of supporting people who have mental health conditions.

Using technology

Essex Police has a good understanding of how technology can benefit policing in terms of improving efficiency and tackling criminal activity. It is using this knowledge to inform its plans and investments in technology. Investments to date have improved productivity and enhanced services to the public. The force led the way in implementing the Athena IT platform, which allows for sharing intelligence across the nine forces that use the platform. At a local level, the 'mobile first' programme has developed a culture of digital working, with frontline staff having immediate access to the force's databases.

The force's ICT strategy is innovative and transformational. It forms a major part of the force's change plans and £19m of funding will support it as part of the five-year capital programme. The force's focus and investment in ICT has allowed it to replace out-of-date systems and has brought digital policing to frontline staff. This improves the service for the public.

Essex Police plays an important role in developing the national ICT infrastructure. Until recently, the chief constable represented the [National Police Chiefs' Council](#) (NPCC) as the lead for digital policing. The force has seconded staff to national programmes that will bring solutions to the increasing demands on the police service. Projects include Operation Crystallise, which will digitise crime scene examination and forensic evidence collection. A vehicle-telematics project will improve how the police uses its service fleet. It is both impressive and encouraging that the force is leading digital transformation in the police service nationally.

Planning for the future



Good

The force understands trends in demand through a variety of methods. Its past demand forecasts have been accurate. In response to its understanding, it has adjusted staffing levels.

Essex Police understands the public's expectations and what they are likely to be in future. It asks the public for its views on the service. It then responds by altering its service or by developing new skills and capabilities.

The force has analysed its future workforce needs. Its workforce plan addresses changing capacity and expertise needs. It helps officers and staff move forward in their careers. And it can identify future leaders.

The force bases its realistic finance plans on sound assumptions. Experts review these plans, which align with the force's change programme. It knows how much it needs to save this year and in the medium term. Its ambitious plans for its capital involve some risk. But these plans will save money and improve service.

The force expects its future plans to improve the services it provides. It will invest in infrastructure. And it will improve capacity by working with other forces and by recruiting more officers and staff. It will also save money through joint working.

We set out our detailed findings below. These are the basis for our judgment of the force's performance in this area.

Assessing future demand for services

The force uses technology and a wide range of data effectively to understand trends in demand. It can predict likely future demand and past forecasts have been accurate. An assistant chief constable, supported by business consultants, is responsible for ensuring that demand assessments are up to date and relevant. This has helped the force project the likely 999 and 101 call demand and crime levels to 2021. This assessment identifies geographical areas where demand is likely to grow and plots the times of day when the force's resources are most likely to be needed. In response to this, the force is intending to adjust staffing levels in some areas. This will include:

- altering control room staffing levels;
- more uniformed officers and domestic abuse investigators; and
- new teams to investigate modern day slavery and child sexual exploitation.

The force invests in 'spend to save' projects as part of its change programme. A good example is a project to implement digital case file preparation. Preparing prosecution case files and sharing them with HM Courts & Tribunals Service has historically been very bureaucratic. If successful, this programme is likely to free up officer and staff time to reinvest into other priority areas.

We noted that not all projects in the force's change programme have identified the scale of cashable or non-cashable savings (although the programme does envisage them). The force would benefit from greater detail of these anticipated savings. This would help confirm these benefits are being realised and show that the force is reinvesting them in priority areas.

Understanding public expectations

The force communicates well with the public. It understands their expectations and how they are changing. The force has a comprehensive programme of community engagement. This includes a public survey of over 7,000 residents every year. The PFCC also conducts public surveys as part of his yearly planning cycle.

We found that Essex Police responds positively to the findings of public consultation. For example, in response to survey feedback, the portal to access online reporting procedures is now easier to find on the force's website. Not surprisingly, the levels of online reporting have increased from around 1,100 to around 2,200 per month.

The force also understands the skills and capabilities it needs to respond to the needs of the public. This has included the recruitment of staff to work in the quality of service team which introduced a live chat facility from August 2018. The quality of service team of five is currently dealing with over 8,000 public contacts

every month. This shows that the force is willing and able to change its service to meet public demand and needs.

Prioritising

The priorities in the police and crime plan 2016–20 are clear. They reflect an understanding of the force’s future demand as well as changing public expectations. The priorities are:

- [more local, visible and accessible policing](#);
- reducing anti-social behaviour;
- breaking the cycle of domestic abuse;
- reducing serious violence;
- protecting children and vulnerable people;
- improving road safety; and
- tackling [gangs and organised crime](#).

The plans make it clear how the force’s resources support these priorities. For example, having joint teams working in community hubs to address anti-social behaviour. Other examples include implementing workforce plans to boost the domestic abuse teams and establishing new teams to investigate modern day slavery and child sexual exploitation.

Future workforce

Essex Police has assessed its changing demands and future workforce needs thoroughly. Workforce plans address both the capacity the force needs to respond to projected demands and the expertise it will require in the future. Recruiting more police officers is an immediate priority. In response to the PFCC’s decision to increase the council tax precept for policing, the force plans to recruit 150 constables before the end of March 2019. This will boost the overall number of officers in the force. In addition to this, Essex Police needs a further 240 officers to replace those leaving through retirement. The force provides a range of opportunities for police officers and members of staff to make progress with their careers. Online tools known as the ‘develop you’ and ‘develop me’ schemes provide access to career development opportunities. For example, if officers wish to explore becoming a detective, they can start on the detective career pathway.

The force is good at identifying gifted and talented individuals who will lead the force into the future. The force participates in the [Police Now](#) graduate entry programme. This allows it to appoint talented people to work in local policing teams. Essex Police has employed an apprenticeship manager and the force is currently scoping several apprenticeship programmes to start in 2019. This includes the senior leaders’ master’s degree apprenticeship in Applied Criminology and Leadership, from Cambridge University. The force has started a detective fast-track programme known as ‘investigate first’. This is to help address some of the difficulties in recruiting and retaining detectives. Some 33 new recruits have joined the organisation on this scheme. The force is also developing a reserve bank of retired detectives, known as ‘success factors’, to boost investigative capacity at times of peak workload.

Operational officers say this additional resource is useful to call on in times of high demand or other operational pressures.

Finance plans

Following its 2010 consultation about revaluing public sector pensions, the government announced, in 2016 and 2018, reductions in the discount rate it uses to set contribution rates for the unfunded public service pension schemes. These include the police service pension scheme. A lower discount rate will result in higher contribution rates for the employer.

The official notification of a lower rate in September 2018 did not allow [police and crime commissioners](#) (PCCs) time to include the impact in their financial planning. In December 2018, the government announced a pension grant for 2019/20 for each PCC. It allocated funding to each force to specifically help the police pay for these increased costs in the next year. PCCs must now plan for how they will finance the increased costs in the following years, assessing the impact on their officer numbers and their ability to provide effective and efficient services.

Essex Police is good at financial planning. The force has a good track record of robust financial management. The force's financial plans are realistic, built on sound assumptions and reviewed by experts. The change programme and financial planning are in clear agreement. The force divides the responsibilities for change management between project teams, an assurance unit that validates new ways of working with frontline operational staff, and an oversight team that ensures planned savings are in line with the MTFP.

The force has identified savings to address the budget gap of £3.5m for the current year. It needs to identify further savings of £18m over the course of the MTFP. The size of these savings is in part due to the PFCC's financial accountability arrangements. The forecast assumes no further precept increase over the period of the MTFP but does include anticipated inflationary increases such as pay rises. In this respect, the saving requirement is a worst-case scenario. The PFCC takes this approach as he expects the force to make a 2.25 percent efficiency (cashable and non-cashable) saving before he will consider the case for a precept increase. If the PFCC allows the maximum precept increases over the lifetime of the MTFP this would mean the required savings would reduce to £9m.

The force's capital programme is ambitious and transformative. It has plans to reduce its 61-building estate and replace under-utilised, outdated buildings with a smaller property portfolio of 30 buildings. This will be challenging. The opening capital balance for 2018/19 was only £0.63m. Although this is likely to rise substantially to £31m because of capital receipts – including the £18m expected from the sale of part of the headquarters site – this will not be enough to fund the £36m of investment over the course of the MTFP. Therefore, the force intends to borrow money in the short term to cover the gap in funding.

The estates and ICT capital programme is bold. It contains risk but stands to serve the force well into the future. It will form the foundation of savings, provide the joint community hubs that will define local policing, and digitise policing services in the county.

Leadership and workforce development

The Essex Police and Kent Police leadership strategy includes comprehensive plans to recruit and develop the workforce to face the challenges of the future. The force benefits from national talent management and fast-track schemes as well as a local scheme to help individuals achieve their potential. In addition to the 'develop you' and 'develop me' programmes, we are pleased to see that the force offers similar opportunities to members of staff. The police staff leadership pathway (PSLP) scheme is widely available. Its aim is to help aspiring leaders with the right skills and experience to progress to senior leadership roles in Essex Police. This is in comparison with many forces we visit, where police staff are frequently overlooked regarding career opportunities.

The force is willing to recruit externally. For many of its senior posts it advertises vacancies nationally. This includes chief inspector and superintendent positions. The force has also developed a talent matrix to help identify and develop officers with leadership potential. This is part of a scheme to help officers progress rapidly from the rank of inspector to senior positions as superintendents.

The force is committed to the development of its workforce and to helping the best to reach the top of the organisation.

Ambition to improve

Essex Police's plans are ambitious and transformative. It expects that, if successfully implemented, they will bring about major improvements in how the force provides its services to the public. The plans are realistic, they are built on sound assumptions and experts have reviewed them. The change programme aims to invest in infrastructure to make savings in the future. It strikes a good balance between recruiting additional officers and building capacity by strengthening joint working. The change programme is well resourced and brings pace and rigour to achieving its objectives.

The force understands clearly the benefits of working with others. Since 2010, the combined directorates with Kent Police have provided support services and the force's major crime function. The force estimates that it saves £1.5m every year through the joint provision of support services. The recent establishment of a joint business centre for both forces in Great Dunmow will release an additional £0.6m of savings.

There are even more plans in place to work with Kent Police in the interests of efficiency. These focus on closer working relationships through a joint digital investigation service for cyber-crime, fraud and child abuse cases. The seven-force strategic alliance is also examining the future prospects for more efficiencies through closer working with all forces in the East of England.

Legitimacy



Force in context

Comparison of Essex workforce ethnicity with local population

as of 31 March 2018

	Essex proportion	Local population proportion
Black, Asian and minority ethnic as % of those with stated ethnicity	2.8%	6.8%
White as % of those with stated ethnicity	97.2%	93.2%
Not Stated as % of total	1.6%	

	Essex proportion	England and Wales proportion
Proportion of female officers in post as of 31st March 2018	30%	30%

Stop and search by ethnicity

12 months ending 31 March 2018

Essex
disproportionality

**Stop and Search likelihood of
BAME individuals compared to
white individuals**

4.0

**Stop and Search likelihood of
Black or Black British individuals
compared to white individuals**

8.8

Essex
rate

England and Wales
rate

**Number of stops and searches
per 1,000 population**

1.8

4.8

12 months ending 31 March 2018

How legitimately does the force treat the public and its workforce?



Good

Summary

Essex Police is good at treating the public and its workforce legitimately.

The force's counter-corruption strategy is effective. In tackling [abuse of position for a sexual purpose](#), it is improving links with organisations that support vulnerable victims of crime.

Less positively, the force needs to improve how it ensures its workforce behaves ethically and lawfully. We saw the force has an ethical culture. But it failed to vet its workforce before the national deadline, despite hard work by the vetting unit. It says it will be up to date by late spring 2019.

In 2017, we assessed the force as good at treating the public and its workforce fairly.

Treating the public fairly



Good

This question was not subject to inspection in 2018/19, and our judgment from the 2017 legitimacy inspection has been carried over. However, we reviewed a representative sample of 317 stop and search records to assess the reasonableness of the recorded grounds. We found that 84 percent had reasonable grounds recorded. Our assessment is based on the grounds the searching officer recorded on the record and not the grounds that existed at the time of the search.

In our 2017 legitimacy report, we recommended that all forces should:

- monitor and analyse comprehensive stop and search data to understand reasons for disparities;
- take action to reduce those disparities; and
- publish the analysis and the action by July 2018.

We found that the force has complied with some of this recommendation. But it doesn't identify the extent to which [find rates](#) differ between people from different ethnicities and across different types of searches (including separate identification of find rates for drug possession and supply-type offences). It also isn't clear that the force monitors enough data to identify the prevalence of possession-only drug searches or the extent to which these align with local or force-level priorities.

We reviewed the force's website and found that the force publishes stop and search data and a partial explanation of the disproportionality rate. But it does not publish any analysis carried out to understand the reasons for disparities or any subsequent action taken.

Ethical and lawful workforce behaviour



Requires improvement

Force leaders reinforce the [Code of Ethics](#) that governs the policing profession. The workforce can refer ethical issues of all levels to the ethics board. The resulting discussions are available to the workforce. Officers discuss minor dilemmas with colleagues and supervisors. This means the force maintains an ethical culture and the public will continue to benefit from this.

Essex Police worked hard to meet the national deadline for vetting its workforce, but failed to do so. The force has assured itself that officers and staff who are not yet vetted can't access sensitive material and are not a corruption risk. The force told us it will have dealt with the backlog by late spring 2019.

The force knows its counter-corruption needs. It has improved the way it identifies corruption risks. It cannot yet monitor all its IT systems. But, with new equipment, it will soon be able to do this. This will increase the workload, but the force is increasing the number of staff in its [anti-corruption intelligence unit](#).

To tackle the problem of abuse of position for a sexual purpose, the force needs good links with organisations that support vulnerable victims of crime. Essex Police recognises that it has done little work in this area since 2017. It is working on these links.

Areas for improvement

- The force should ensure all officers and staff have at least the lowest level of vetting clearance for their roles and clear any backlogs, so it complies fully with the national vetting guidelines.
- The force should ensure that its counter-corruption unit:
 - has enough capability and capacity to counter corruption effectively and proactively;
 - can fully monitor all of its computer systems, including mobile data, to proactively identify data breaches, protect the force's data and identify computer misuse; and
 - builds effective relationships with individuals and organisations that support and work with vulnerable people.

We set out our detailed findings below. These are the basis for our judgment of the force's performance in this area.

Maintaining an ethical culture

Leaders in the force continue to promote and reinforce the [Code of Ethics](#) and the expected standards of professional behaviour. They regularly send round advice and guidance. This includes warning officers against engaging in inappropriate relationships with members of the public they have had previous professional contact with.

There are established and well-used processes for the workforce to refer difficult ethical issues to. The ethics board deals with higher-level issues relating to corruption, and the [ethics committee](#) deals with lower-level issues relating to unfairness. The force makes the detail of the discussions and decisions from these meetings available to the workforce. But many officers told us that they still prefer to discuss minor ethical dilemmas with their colleagues and immediate supervisors. All policies and procedures take account of the code and are subject to an equality impact assessment. This means that the force is likely to be successful in further developing and maintaining an ethical culture that will benefit the public.

By 8 December 2018, all members of the police workforce should have received at least the lowest level of vetting clearance for their roles. Even though the vetting unit worked hard to achieve this, the force did not meet the national deadline. It has not yet vetted 875 (16.48 percent) members of its workforce to the required level for their role. The force has assessed that those officers and staff whose vetting is outstanding are at very low risk of corruption or have no access to sensitive materials. Nonetheless, the force must ensure that it is compliant with the national standard as soon as possible. Currently, the force is forecasting that it will be compliant by late spring 2019.

We are pleased to see that the force monitors the results of its vetting decision-making to identify any disparities between groups. It generates a report for the head of human resources that details the reasons for rejections, including for black, Asian, and minority ethnic (BAME) candidates. It then undertakes work to remove the cause of

the rejection if appropriate and will contact the applicant to offer support and guidance in any future application. This area has become easier to monitor as the force has replaced the 17 forms previously used with a single master vetting form. It has also introduced a template and log detailing adverse findings and any rationale for them.

We highlighted two areas for improvement in our [2017 legitimacy inspection](#). The first of these was that the force should ensure it refers all allegations that meet the mandatory criteria to the [Independent Office for Police Conduct](#) (IOPC). Our assessment is that the force is now complying with the mandatory referral criteria, including for cases of abuse of position for a sexual purpose.

The second area for improvement was that the force should improve the way in which it keeps complainants updated on the progress of their complaints, in line with IOPC statutory guidance. We found in this inspection that the force has provided training to supervisors and has brought in a quality assurance process. An internal communication campaign has helped reiterate to officers the need for compliance. We will revisit this area in future inspections to assess the effect of these changes.

The force complies with its obligations to provide details to the College of Policing for the barred and advisory lists. These lists prevent people who have left the service under investigation, or have been dismissed, from re-joining or working in law enforcement.

The force has effective ways of clarifying and reinforcing acceptable and unacceptable behaviours. Senior officers hold regular discussion forums with its workforce, including face-to-face discussions and, more recently, via an online instant messaging group. The ethics committee has a dedicated webpage and the learning the lessons board brings together representatives from across the force to discuss ethical issues and concerns.

Some parts of the workforce are confused and unsettled about perceived unfairness in the outcomes of discipline cases, and some officers were unclear how to make use of the confidential reporting line to the [professional standards department](#). Some officers and staff feel that the professional standards department is remote. If not addressed, this could lead to the workforce developing a culture of mistrust towards department. The force is aware of these problems and activity to resolve them has already begun. The head of the professional standards department has been holding face-to-face sessions across the force, talking to the workforce to remove any misconceptions about the department.

Chief officers have engaged with staff associations in workshops that focused on the outcomes of discipline cases. One early result of these discussions is that the force's intranet will now publish all discipline case outcomes and not just the cases that result in dismissal, as had been the case. This could help dispel any concept of unfairness among the workforce.

Tackling corruption

The force has an effective anti-corruption strategic assessment and control strategy. These are subject to satisfactory governance and updated processes. The integrity and anti-corruption board oversees activities for managing identified internal risks. The force has made improvements in how it can identify such risks by acquiring new protective monitoring software. This is providing the force with the ability to assess, develop and deal with corruption-related intelligence. We are concerned that despite being able to audit some of its IT applications, the force is currently unable to monitor all its IT systems. However, the force is confident that it will soon be able to do so as it has recently purchased equipment to that end. We will revisit this area in future inspections.

At the time of our inspection, the anti-corruption intelligence unit (ACIU) did not have enough staff. However, the force has approved recruiting four new staff. It expects them to be in place before the end of 2018. This means that the ACIU should have enough capacity to meet the projected increase in work that the protective monitoring software generates.

The force has not yet developed effective links with external agencies such as hostels and voluntary groups that support vulnerable victims of crime. Engagement with partner organisations is one of the main principles in the NPCC's strategy to tackle abuse of position for a sexual purpose. The force has done very little since it gave presentations to these agencies in 2017. The relationships that we hoped the force would form – whereby individuals from outside organisations can directly speak with the ACIU team about concerns – have yet to develop. The force recognises this and has started building these essential relationships.

The force complies with the national strategy on the problem of officers abusing their position for a sexual purpose. We found that the workforce understands that this type of abuse of authority is unacceptable. This, coupled with the knowledge of how to report such types of behaviour, means the force is doing well in this area. The force made ten referrals to the IOPC regarding individuals abusing their authority for sexual gain. Of these, the IOPC investigated one and asked the force to investigate the other nine and report back.

Treating the workforce fairly



Good

This question was not subject to inspection in 2018/19, and our judgment from the 2017 legitimacy inspection has been carried over.

Annex A – About the data

Data in this report is from a range of sources, including:

- Home Office;
- Office for National Statistics (ONS);
- our inspection fieldwork; and
- data we collected directly from all 43 police forces in England and Wales.

When we collected data directly from police forces, we took reasonable steps to agree the design of the data collection with forces and with other interested parties such as the Home Office. We gave forces several opportunities to quality assure and validate the data they gave us, to make sure it was accurate. For instance:

- We shared the submitted data with forces, so they could review their own and other forces' data. This allowed them to analyse where data was notably different from other forces or internally inconsistent.
- We asked all forces to check the final data used in the report and correct any errors.

We set out the source of this report's data below.

Methodology

Data in the report

British Transport Police was outside the scope of inspection. Any aggregated totals for England and Wales exclude British Transport Police data, so will differ from those published by the Home Office.

When other forces were unable to supply data, we mention this under the relevant sections below.

Population

For all uses of population as a denominator in our calculations, unless otherwise noted, we use ONS mid-2017 population estimates. This was the most recent data available at the time of inspection.

Survey of police staff

We surveyed the police workforce across England and Wales, to understand their views on workloads, redeployment and how suitable their assigned tasks were. This survey was a non-statistical, voluntary sample so the results may not be representative of the workforce population. The number of responses per force varied between 32 and 365. So we treated results with caution and didn't use them to assess individual force performance. Instead, we identified themes that we could explore further during fieldwork.

BMG survey of public attitudes towards policing (2018)

We commissioned BMG to survey public attitudes towards policing in 2018. Ipsos MORI conducted a similar version of the survey in 2015–2017.

The survey consisted of about 400 respondents for each of the 43 forces. Most surveys were completed online, by members of online research panels. However, a minority of the surveys (around 750) were conducted face-to-face. These face-to-face surveys were specifically targeted to groups that are traditionally under-represented on online panels. This aimed to make sure the survey respondents were as representative as possible of the total adult population of England and Wales. A small number of respondents were also surveyed online via postal invites to the survey.

Results were weighted by age, gender, ethnicity and indices of multiple deprivation to match population profiles. The sampling method used is not a statistical random sample and the sample size was small, which may be more problematic for larger force areas compared to small ones. So any results provided are only an indication of satisfaction rather than an absolute.

[The findings of this survey, and previous surveys, are available on our website.](#)

Review of crime files

We reviewed police case files for these crime types:

- theft from person;
- rape (including attempts);
- stalking;
- harassment;
- common assault;
- grievous bodily harm (wounding); and
- actual bodily harm.

Our file review was designed to provide a broad overview of how well the police:

- identify vulnerability;
- conduct investigations; and
- treat victims.

We randomly selected files from crimes recorded between 1 January and 31 March 2018 and assessed them against several criteria. We reviewed 60 case files in each force, except for West Midlands Police and Greater Manchester Police where we reviewed 90.

For our file review, we only selected a small sample size of cases per force. So we didn't use results from as the only basis for assessing individual force performance, but alongside other evidence.

Force in context

999 calls

We collected this data directly from all 43 police forces in England and Wales.

Recorded crime and crime outcomes

We took this data from the December 2018 release of the Home Office [police recorded crime and outcomes data tables](#).

Total police-recorded crime includes all crime (except fraud) recorded by all forces in England and Wales (except BTP). Home Office publications on the overall volumes and rates of recorded crime and outcomes include British Transport Police, which is outside the scope of this inspection. So England and Wales rates in this report will differ from those published by the Home Office.

Police-recorded crime data should be treated with care. Recent increases may be due to forces' renewed focus on accurate crime recording since our 2014 national crime data inspection.

Other notable points to consider when interpreting outcomes data are listed below.

- Crime outcome proportions show the percentage of crimes recorded in the 12 months ending 30 September 2018 that have been assigned each outcome. This means that each crime is tracked or linked to its outcome. So this data is subject to change, as more crimes are assigned outcomes over time.
- Under the new framework, 37 police forces in England and Wales provide outcomes data through the HODH every month. All other forces provide this data via a monthly manual return.
- Leicestershire, Staffordshire and West Yorkshire forces participated in the Ministry of Justice's out of court disposals pilot. As part of the pilot, they stopped issuing simple cautions or cannabis/khat warnings and restricted their use of penalty notices for disorder for adult offenders. These three forces continued to follow these procedures since the pilot ended in November 2015. Later, other forces also limited their use of some out of court disposals. So the outcomes data should be viewed with this in mind.

For a full commentary and explanation of outcome types please see the Home Office statistics, [Crime outcomes in England and Wales: year ending March 2018](#).

Workforce figures (including ethnicity and gender)

We took this data from the Home Office annual data return 502. The data is available from the Home Office's published [police workforce England and Wales statistics](#) or the [police workforce open data tables](#). The Home Office may have updated these figures since we obtained them for this report.

The data gives the full-time equivalent workforce figures as at 31 March. The figures include section 38-designated investigation, detention or escort officers, but not section 39-designated detention or escort staff. They include officers on career breaks and other types of long-term absence but exclude those seconded to other forces.

Spend per head of population

We took this data from the [HMICFRS value for money profiles](#).

These profiles are based on data collected by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy, through the Police Objective Analysis. The spend over time figures are adjusted for inflation. The population figures are ONS mid-year estimates, with the 2018/19 value calculated by assessing the trend for the last five years.

[More details on this data can be found on our website.](#)

Stop and search

We took this data from the Home Office publication, [Police powers and procedures, England and Wales, year ending 31 March 2018](#). Stop and search totals exclude vehicle only searches and searches where the subject's ethnicity was not stated.

Vetting data (workforce without up-to-date security clearance)

We collected this data directly from all 43 police forces in England and Wales.

May 2019 | © HMICFRS 2019 | ISBN: 978-1-78655-797-1

www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmicfrs