PEEL
Police effectiveness, efficiency and legitimacy 2018/19

An inspection of West Mercia Police
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What this report contains

This report is structured in four parts:
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 West Mercia Police against.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>IPA area</th>
<th>Inspected in 2018/19?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Preventing crime and anti-social behaviour</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Investigating crime</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protecting vulnerable people</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tackling serious and organised crime</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Firearms capability</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meeting current demands</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planning for the future</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Treating the public fairly</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethical and lawful workforce behaviour</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Treating the workforce fairly</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Force in context

**999 calls per 1,000 population**
12 months ending 31 March 2019

- West Mercia rate: 107
- England and Wales rate: 175
- Most Similar Forces rate: 62

**Recorded crime per 1,000 population**
12 months ending 30 September 2018

- West Mercia rate: 65
- England and Wales rate: 62

**West Mercia workforce**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>FTE in post on 31 March 2019</th>
<th>FTE in post on 31 March 2014</th>
<th>Percentage change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Police Officer</td>
<td>1,989</td>
<td>1,966</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Police Community Support Officer</td>
<td>227</td>
<td>237</td>
<td>-4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Police Staff</td>
<td>1,444</td>
<td>1,413</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Spend per head of population**
2018/19 projection

- West Mercia spend: £161
- England and Wales spend: £192
## Overall summary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Effectiveness</th>
<th>Requires improvement</th>
<th>Last inspected</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Preventing crime and tackling anti-social behaviour</td>
<td>Good</td>
<td>2018/19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Investigating crime</td>
<td>Requires improvement</td>
<td>2018/19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protecting vulnerable people</td>
<td>Requires improvement</td>
<td>2018/19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tackling serious and organised crime</td>
<td>Good</td>
<td>2018/19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Armed response capability</td>
<td>Ungraded</td>
<td>2018/19</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Efficiency</th>
<th>Requires improvement</th>
<th>Last inspected</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Meeting current demands and using resources</td>
<td>Requires improvement</td>
<td>2018/19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planning for the future</td>
<td>Inadequate</td>
<td>2018/19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legitimacy</td>
<td>Requires improvement</td>
<td>Last inspected</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------</td>
<td>----------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fair treatment of the public</td>
<td></td>
<td>2018/19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethical and lawful workforce behaviour</td>
<td>Good</td>
<td>2018/19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fair treatment of the workforce</td>
<td></td>
<td>2018/19</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
How does the force compare with similar forces?

We compare West Mercia Police’s performance with the forces in its most similar group (MSG). MSGs are groups of similar police forces, based on analysis of demographic, social and economic factors. For more information about MSGs, see our website.

West Mercia Police’s MSG forces are North Yorkshire Police, Warwickshire Police, Gloucestershire Constabulary, Suffolk Constabulary, Devon and Cornwall Police, Wiltshire Police and Norfolk Constabulary. We haven’t yet inspected Devon and Cornwall Police as part of IPA 2018/19, so use its graded judgments from our previous PEEL assessment for comparison.

Figure 1: Pillar judgments for West Mercia Police, compared with forces in its MSG
**HM Inspector’s observations**

I have concerns about some aspects of the performance of West Mercia Police in keeping people safe and reducing crime and, in particular, serious concerns about the force’s efficiency. In view of these findings, I have been in regular contact with the chief constable, because I do not underestimate the challenges ahead.

The force is good at preventing crime and tackling anti-social behaviour. But it needs to improve the way it investigates crime and how swiftly it brings offenders to justice. I am concerned that crimes are not always allocated to appropriately trained staff and that they are not investigated thoroughly enough or supervised effectively. The force also needs to improve how it protects vulnerable people. In particular, it needs to make sure that it responds to all reports of people at risk in a timely manner and works more closely with partners to ensure that such people are adequately safeguarded.

The force has demonstrated significant improvements in the way it deals with serious and organised crime (SOC). It is a force priority, and the force understands the threat it poses and has effective systems in place for managing it. The efforts made by the force in this respect are to be commended.

The force currently provides many of its services through an alliance with Warwickshire Police, an arrangement that it will end in October 2019. I am sure this will have been a difficult decision for the force to make, given that there were potentially significant implications for both forces. For this reason, I am concerned that the force’s decision to terminate the alliance does not appear to have been based on a well-evidenced business case, nor were the public or partners consulted beforehand. There is no certainty as to how it will provide these services in the future, and the costs and benefits of terminating the alliance are not yet fully known. The force understands its current demand, but it also needs to understand the capability and capacity of its workforce, and anticipate future pressures. It is vital that a clear plan for a new operating model is developed quickly to ensure that all policing services to its communities are maintained.

The force continues to uphold an ethical culture and promote standards of professional behaviour well. However, it needs to increase its engagement with the workforce and improve the confidence of the workforce that all staff are treated fairly. In addition, the force needs to do more to ensure the wellbeing of its officers and staff.

My overall assessment is that, notwithstanding the notable improvements in SOC, the force’s performance has declined since last year.

_Wendy Williams_

HM Inspector of Constabulary
Effectiveness
Force in context

Proportion of officers in a neighbourhood or response function in post on 31 March 2019

West Mercia proportion: 42%  
England and Wales proportion: 40%

Victim-based crime per 1,000 population
12 months ending 30 September 2018

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Crime Category</th>
<th>West Mercia rate</th>
<th>Most Similar Forces rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Violence against the person</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexual offences</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theft Offences / Robbery</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Criminal damage and arson</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Crime Outcomes

**12 months ending 30 September 2018**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>West Mercia proportion</th>
<th>England and Wales proportion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Proportion of crimes where action was taken</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proportion of crimes where suspect was identified</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proportion of crimes where victim did not support police action</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Outcomes for crimes flagged as domestic abuse

**12 months ending 31 March 2018**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>West Mercia proportion</th>
<th>England and Wales proportion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Charge/summonsed</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evidential difficulties: suspect identified; victim does not support</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>49%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
How effectively does the force reduce crime and keep people safe?

Requires improvement

Summary

West Mercia Police is good at preventing crime and tackling anti-social behaviour (ASB).

The force prioritises crime prevention. It focuses on problem solving and early intervention. It is developing a new neighbourhood policing strategy.

While the force is good at protecting the public from harm, it needs to clarify its approach to problem solving and risk management plans (RMPs).

The force needs to improve the ways in which it investigates crime. It does not have enough capacity and capability to cope with investigative demand. This is adversely affecting the service that it gives to the public: it is keeping victims waiting too long to see an officer, and it is sometimes taking too long to investigate crimes. This is a cause of concern. We note that more victims withdraw support for police action than in most other forces.

The force needs to improve its approach to catching criminals and resolving investigations. It needs to put processes in place so that it prioritises effectively those suspects who represent the most harm to the public.

The force needs to improve the way in which it protects vulnerable people. The workforce has a good understanding of vulnerability. This includes the importance of identifying and safeguarding vulnerable people. But the force is missing opportunities to make arrests in some domestic abuse cases. It needs to be sure that it is producing thorough domestic abuse, stalking and harassment (DASH) risk assessments. And it could use pre-charge bail more effectively.

The force is good at tackling SOC, which represents a significant improvement in its performance over the past year. It considers threats, harm and risks daily. It identifies new organised crime groups (OCGs), gangs and networks. And it proactively gains information from other forces to understand and tackle county lines criminality.
Preventing crime and tackling anti-social behaviour

Good

West Mercia Police is good at preventing crime and tackling ASB.

The force prioritises crime prevention, and its safer neighbourhood teams (SNTs) give good coverage across communities. In April 2018, the force launched its new approach to neighbourhood policing. This focuses on problem solving and early intervention. The force is now developing a new neighbourhood policing strategy too.

The force’s SNT officers are committed to solving problems and preventing crime. Sometimes, the force deploys them to non-emergency incidents that do not directly relate to their role. However, it does appropriately involve them in force-wide risks.

SNTs and officers vary in terms of consulting the public. We noted one team’s innovative use of Facebook Live, which more than tripled the number of participants in its community forum.

If the force had a strategic view of problem-solving performance, it could be more confident that these teams are supporting force priorities as effectively as possible.

The force is good at protecting the public from harm. Officers understand the threats that their communities face. And they have a good understanding of community needs from area beat profiles.

The force’s recruitment of partnership analysts should improve information sharing with partner organisations. The harm reduction units (HRUs) are an effective community safety resource.

Given the views of some officers, the force would benefit from clarifying its approach to problem solving and RMPs.

Areas for improvement
- The force should introduce a performance framework to hold officers and staff to account for effective crime prevention activity.

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

West Mercia Police prioritises crime prevention. It has 81 dedicated SNTs. These give good coverage across the force’s communities. In April 2018, the force launched a new approach to neighbourhood policing. It focuses on problem solving and early intervention in response to community needs. This revised approach aims to reduce the demand on resources and prevent repeat problems. The force is also developing a new neighbourhood policing strategy. But it is too early to say whether this will be effective at giving officers enough time to focus on problem-solving work.

The force has professionalised the role of SNTs. It appoints staff who are committed to problem solving and crime prevention, and who bring a range of skills and experience. The force aims to maintain staffing levels in its SNTs. At the time of our inspection, the force was actively recruiting officers to fill vacancies.

The force does not routinely deploy neighbourhood officers to non-emergency incidents that are not directly related to their community problem-solving role. However, it acknowledges that this does happen, particularly at times of peak demand and in rural locations. Neighbourhood officers are appropriately involved in responding to force-wide risks, such as SOC.

The force holds officers to account for their activity. It does this through managers and through local and force tasking and co-ordinating processes (for example, directing SNT activities to tackle cuckooing). Cuckooing is the process of establishing a base from which to deal drugs, as part of county lines criminality. The base is established in the home of a vulnerable person, or local drug users. Drug debt, threats and violence may be used as coercion. However, the force acknowledges that there are still gaps in its approach to problem solving.

Officers set neighbourhood priorities in conjunction with their sergeants. While community involvement plays a part, officers do not consistently consult with the public to inform local policing priorities. When officers do ask the public, the means of consultation can vary between individual officers. And consultation outcomes do not always influence local priorities. There is no strategic view of problem-solving performance across the force. Officers vary in their application of the approach, levels of abstraction and individual contributions. As a result, the force cannot consistently demonstrate that its SNTs support force priorities as effectively as possible.

Protecting the public from crime

The force is good at protecting the public from harm. Area beat profiles give the force a good understanding of community needs. The profiles include information about population, demographics and deprivation levels, together with crimes, intelligence, offenders and incidents. Officers check these profiles regularly to help them understand the threats facing their communities. Beat profiles also contain some partnership information, such as census data. However, the force acknowledges that it needs to do more to improve analysis and information sharing with its partners, including health services. The force has recruited three partnership analysts to the analytical team. The police and crime commissioner (PCC) funded these posts. They are helping to improve partnership data and information sharing.
The force’s HRUs are made up of police and partner agencies. They are co-located to improve collaborative working. The co-ordinators in each hub give advice and manage the force’s approach to problems such as ASB. They work in partnership with council and housing providers, administer warning letters and oversee interventions (such as acceptable behaviour contracts, warnings, notices and orders). Partners in the HRUs include local authority public protection officers and housing officers. This combination of skills and expertise helps to make the HRUs an effective community safety resource.

SNT officers also take part in a range of activities that inform their daily work. They attend partnership and community meetings, including joint action groups, working collaboratively to tackle problems. They also make good use of social media to increase communication with the public, although this use varies between officers and teams. One SNT’s use of Facebook Live widened the reach of the community forum from 40 to approximately 150 participants.

The force has adopted a proactive SARA problem-solving approach, and has recently trained many SNT officers and staff in SARA. It has also trained line managers to make sure that they are able to give suitable support and direction. Problem-solving activity is documented on problem-solving plans (PSPs). Problem-solving co-ordinators and problem-solving clinics help SNT officers to develop effective plans with partners. Problem-solving co-ordinators then keep these plans under regular review, as do supervisors through quarterly evaluations. Problem-solving co-ordinators also quality assure the plans and identify good practice. They, in turn, update a ‘good practice’ database on the force’s intranet. They also visit SNTs to broaden the understanding of problem solving across the workforce.

These factors contribute to an effective force-wide approach to problem solving. However, some officers feel that there are now too many PSPs, which is working to the detriment of other approaches, such as RMPs. The force should clarify its approach to problem solving and RMPs, so that officers and staff understand what is expected of them.

SNTs gave us many examples of working with partners to tackle problems. One example was the Multi Agency Targeted Enforcement Strategy (MATES) scheme, whereby a multi-agency team worked together to tackle illicit tobacco selling. Officers and staff from other agencies visited 80 premises. They secured multiple arrests, identified OCGs, safeguarded victims and deported offenders from the UK.

The force makes appropriate use of preventative tactics to tackle crime and ASB. SNTs use ASB warning letters as a precursor to applying for a Criminal Behaviour Order (CBO). Housing partners support this preventative approach. They write to tenants to tell them that ASBs committed by family members may affect their own tenancies. This shows that the force uses a range of appropriate tactics to tackle crime and ASBs.

West Mercia Police has invited peer reviews and used external consultants to assess and improve its approach to prevention and problem solving. This shows a commitment to continuous improvement.
**Investigating crime**

- Requires improvement

West Mercia Police requires improvement in the way in which it investigates crime.

At times, the force does not have enough capacity and capability to cope with investigative demand. This adversely affects the service that it gives to the public. The force keeps victims waiting too long to see an officer, and it takes too long to investigate some crimes. Sometimes, it tasks response officers with investigating more complex crimes. It needs to improve the quality of its investigations.

We found many supportive supervisors within the force. Some admitted that they cannot adequately supervise the high number of crimes that officers are responsible for in their teams. This view was borne out by our review of a sample of crime files: approximately half had ineffective or no supervision. The sample included more serious offences that detectives investigate.

The force needs to improve its approach to catching criminals and resolving investigations. The force has good processes relating to wanted suspects who are listed on the Police National Computer (PNC). It also manages foreign national offenders (FNOs) to minimise the risk of them re-offending. Among other measures, it needs to put processes in place so that it understands and prioritises effectively those suspects who represent the most harm to the public. It also needs a better understanding of its performance in relation to suspects who are released under investigation (RUI), and to comply better with its disclosure obligations.
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 acknowledges that its approach to investigation requires improvement. At times, it does not have enough capacity and capability to cope with demand. This is adversely affecting the service that the force gives to the public. The force keeps some victims waiting too long to see an officer. And the force is taking too long to investigate some crimes. A lack of consistent supervision has resulted in a high level of unsatisfactory outcomes. The force is reviewing its approach to investigation, with the support of external consultants. This review includes practitioner workshops and the development of an accurate ‘map’ of current processes.

**Cause of concern**

The force does not have the capacity or capability to investigate crime effectively and this is affecting the service being provided to the public. There are failings in the way that crimes are being investigated.

**Recommendations**

To address this cause of concern, we recommend that within six months the force should:

- improve how it responds to reports of crimes, how it then allocates them, ensuring it allocates investigations to appropriately trained and supported officers, and that it reviews this allocation appropriately throughout the investigation;
- ensure regular and active supervision of the quality and progress of investigations. This supervision should be properly recorded;
- improve its ability to retrieve digital evidence from mobile phones, computers and other electronic devices quickly enough to ensure investigations are not delayed;
- take steps to better understand the data relating to its crime outcomes and put actions in place to ensure that it is effectively pursuing justice on behalf of victims;
- improve its understanding of suspects released under investigation and the management of those released on bail;
- introduce consistent processes to effectively manage the risk posed by suspects who are under investigation but have not yet been arrested or circulated as wanted on PNC; and
- introduce effective arrangements to ensure it complies fully with its disclosure obligations.
The force’s intention is for response officers to attend all priority calls and all immediate calls for assistance from the public. But the same officers can also be responsible for investigating multiple crimes, particularly in busier areas, in addition to having to deal with some scheduled appointments. This reduces their capacity to respond to priority calls. As a result, the force is not attending some incidents within agreed time frames.

Recently, the force introduced incident progression teams (IPTs). The IPTs will help to manage appointments, improve the service to victims and ease the demand on response teams. However, at the time of our inspection, working practices in the IPTs were inconsistent. Also, staff spoke of both a push to clear crimes and a lack of performance scrutiny within the force.

Response officers do not have the training to investigate some of the crimes that are allocated to them. During our inspection, there were examples of officers investigating complex fraud and high-risk, serious domestic assault cases without the skills or support to do so.

Generally, the force allocates higher-risk and more serious crimes to the criminal investigation department (CID). However, the force has not successfully implemented its Pathfinder model of ‘omnicompetent’ investigators.

Some investigators lack the training and accreditation they need for specialist investigations. These include investigations involving children and serious sexual offences. Some staff without this specialist training are failing to manage higher-harm investigations involving vulnerable victims as well as they should. We noted higher rates of victim disengagement in those areas.

Other parts of the force have kept the more traditional ‘core’ and ‘specialist’ investigation models. Managers spoke of a need for clear strategic direction from the force about its approach to investigation.

Regardless of the model in place, the force has problems with its Athena case management system. These problems continue to make it challenging for investigators throughout the force to manage investigations effectively.

The force has a well-established telephone investigation unit. In most cases, the level of risk and seriousness of crimes that this unit manages is appropriate. Incidents are allocated to the unit through control room THRIVE risk assessment processes. (THRIVE stands for threat, harm, risk, investigation opportunities, vulnerability of the victim and the engagement level required to resolve the issue.) These processes are described in the next section of this report. However, staff within this department who have limited training are also investigating more serious crimes. Examples include an assault involving actual bodily harm, a high-value theft and a series of non-residential burglaries. We also found examples of telephone investigators managing priority response incidents. The force is introducing bespoke training courses to make sure that officers and staff in these roles have the right skills.
Investigators and response officers understand the importance of early evidence gathering. Both report good-quality investigation handovers from one department to another. The force has been encouraging positive action by response officers who attend reports of domestic abuse. Effective working between departments, and a proactive approach to promptly identify and arrest suspects, is also evident.

Specialist teams and partners, such as those working with victims of rape, give a good service to victims. But there are some shortages of trained staff. Insufficient levels of supervision and high officer workloads can undermine the quality of investigations. Our review of crime files and inspection fieldwork identified missed opportunities for call handlers to give the public practical advice about preserving evidence.

Also, the force cannot give data on voluntary attendance rates. Therefore, it cannot have confidence that its approach to arrest and voluntary attendance is effective. These factors, along with a lack of attendance at some priority crimes, mean that the force may be losing early evidence-gathering opportunities. In some cases, this may result in poorer outcomes for victims.

Our review of 60 crime files identified 16 where the force had not pursued reasonable lines of enquiry. Our review of crime investigations established that approximately half (29 out of 60) of these investigations had had ineffective supervision, or no supervision at all. Our review noted examples of ineffective or absent supervision across the range of investigations, including the more serious offences that detectives investigate.

We found many supportive supervisors. But some supervisors told us they could not adequately supervise the high numbers of crimes that officers carry on their teams. Recently, the force promoted 67 new sergeants. This number includes 24 new supervisor posts, which the force will use to strengthen local policing supervisory capacity. The force is also implementing a tailored training programme for sergeants, incorporating a ‘passport’ of 18 supervisory skills, to help address identified weaknesses.

Officers and staff are victim focused. They consider potential threat and harm when making decisions. And they care about the service they give to victims. Officers generally record agreements about victim contact. But they do not always update victims in line with those agreements. The introduction of Athena means that some officers are not recording victim contact in the right place on the system. This makes audit functions more challenging.

More victims decline to support police action in West Mercia than in most other forces. The force is working to increase the number of evidence-led prosecutions in cases where the victim does not support action. The force is reviewing this feature of its performance through management meetings and thematic audits. This work has led to some improvements. These include closer work between the Crown Prosecution Service and supervisors to scrutinise the reasons why victims do not support police action after an offender has been charged.
The force is increasing its mandatory use of body-worn cameras as an evidence-gathering tool. The force’s initial investigators’ course now includes a focus on vulnerable victims. However, trainee detectives do not always have enough support and mentoring. These inconsistencies mean that victims do not consistently receive a satisfactory level of service. In approximately one quarter of lower-risk cases, forensic backlogs exceed the six-month service level agreement, and cause lengthy investigative delays of up to 12 months in some cases.

These factors are likely to contribute to lowered victim confidence, increased disengagement and poor investigative outcomes.

**Catching criminals**

West Mercia Police’s approach to catching criminals and resolving investigations requires improvement.

The force has good processes for circulating wanted suspects on the PNC. It does this through daily management meetings (DMMs) and its intranet briefing tool, which is easy for officers and staff to access.

The force has among the lowest numbers of wanted people registered on the PNC in England and Wales.

Neighbourhood beat profiles include details of offenders who have been arrested in the past 72 hours. The profiles also give intelligence updates about those who represent the greatest harm to the public.

New local policing priorities teams (LPPTs) actively pursue wanted people and those breaching their bail conditions. The force tasks LPPTs to support different departments. It does this through a range of activities, including daily management processes. It is clear that officers and staff know who is wanted and they pursue suspects diligently.

The force has less understanding about suspects who are under investigation but who have not yet been arrested or circulated as wanted on the PNC. It has no consistent processes in place to make sure that it prioritises effectively those suspects who represent the most harm to the public. There is also no force-wide collation of wanted suspect information. This additional information could give useful indicators in other areas. It could show whether the force is progressing investigations expeditiously, or whether it is managing higher-risk suspects (such as those who are accused of rape and domestic abuse) effectively in all areas. The absence of such data means that the force does not pursue these suspects as effectively as it should.

The force has an effective process for managing FNOs. The crime system automatically populates the wanted foreign national referral process at the criminal records office. A member of the force intelligence bureau (FIB) is responsible for overseeing this work. However, the process depends on officers entering the correct data during the booking-in process. Although this does not always happen, the FIB point of contact takes corrective follow-up action. The force’s custody command team monitors FNO compliance data to track progress. The force has carried out multi-agency operations with immigration officers and other agencies. Operations have included the targeting of OCGs that use FNOs. Such operations
can prove effective. But local officers have limited knowledge about how to make immigration referrals that could result in the removal of dangerous criminals from the UK.

In serious and high-harm investigations, officers show a good understanding of both the powers available to them and the benefits of bail legislation. They make appropriate use of relevant conditions. However, the length of some complex investigations, combined with a lack of robust management of bail conditions by the force, can mean that bail is not a viable option for the protection of victims.

The force does not have a good understanding of its performance in terms of RUI suspects. Supervisors carry out manual reviews. But there are no automated processes to identify the number of people who are still under investigation. Manual methods of searching for this information have led to significant inaccuracies, so the force has no clear understanding of its performance in this area. It has introduced a temporary process until a technical solution can be found. Accurate information would help the force to better understand the number of cases where it has not met the charging threshold. This information would help the force to improve its management of victims’ expectations.

The force has introduced a three-day disclosure training course for specialist investigators. To date, it has trained 70 staff. It plans for another 60 to be trained in 2019.

The force has also introduced a disclosure champion, together with local disclosure single points of contact (SPOCs), who assist with general queries. And frontline officers are undertaking a disclosure digital learning package. However, most investigators and response officers report that they have not yet received training other than informal, ad hoc sessions. And some were not aware of the College of Policing’s training module on disclosure. Supervisors and staff told us that the force does not routinely scrutinise case work disclosure schedules. Also, it does not endorse forms as recommended. This means that the force is unlikely to be complying fully with its disclosure obligations.

The force is carrying out regular reviews to understand investigative outcomes, share learning and support improvements in crime performance. One example of improvement is the force’s refreshed use of THRIVE in the control room.

The force is aware of its investigation problems and is working to address them. It has appropriate governance in place to support these improvement activities.
Protecting vulnerable people

Requires improvement

The force needs to improve the way in which it protects vulnerable people.

The workforce has a good understanding of vulnerability, including the importance of identifying and safeguarding vulnerable people. Officers told us that they regularly look for hidden vulnerability. During our inspection, there was evidence of this.

However, during our inspection, we were told of a ‘drift’ in the culture of positive action at domestic abuse incidents within the force.

The force creates a greater proportion of domestic abuse reports as emergency or priority responses than the England and Wales rate. This demonstrates that these cases are being appropriately flagged, which is positive. However, according to our review of incidents, the force does not always give these incidents an appropriate or timely response. This potentially puts victims at risk.

The force needs to continue its efforts to improve the workforce’s understanding of the importance of thoroughly risk-assessing reports of domestic abuse. We note the lack of a force-wide analysis of DASH quality and completion rates.

The force does not always use pre-charge bail for high-risk domestic abuse cases.

Also, as a result of different approaches within the force to multi-agency risk assessment conferences (MARACs), the force may not be addressing risks most effectively.

We note that the force is planning to review the effectiveness of MARAC arrangements within its 2019 vulnerability review.

Areas for improvement

- The force should consistently enforce bail conditions to better safeguard vulnerable people.
- The force should implement effective measures to ensure that information is shared with schools promptly and effectively when children have been affected by domestic abuse incidents.
- The force should review the MARAC referral process and consider the need for greater partner involvement in the decision making process to ensure high risk victims of domestic abuse are not being placed at further risk as a result.
- The force should work with partners to introduce effective MASH arrangements in all parts of the force.
- The force should work with partners to implement the mental health crisis care concordat.
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 uses the College of Policing’s definition of vulnerability. The workforce has a good understanding of what makes people vulnerable and knows that vulnerability is a priority. Officers gave several examples of working with local partners to proactively identify and safeguard vulnerable people. They included visiting schools and businesses, such as hotels, to educate staff about recognising the signs of vulnerability, exploitation and hidden harms.

The force holds frequent meetings to review progress against its strategic priorities and to assign resources to them. These are known as tasking meetings. The force uses analysis both in tasking meetings and to understand specific risks (such as hate crime, SOC and child exploitation). Partnership strategic assessments and other research also help the force to understand the nature and scale of vulnerability.

The force shares information about vulnerable victims and groups with partners to support their assessments. Its recent recruitment of partnership analysts should improve data and information sharing. We also found some examples of problem profiles that the force prepared in response to specific risks, such as child sexual exploitation (CSE), to help it target its interventions.

The force has problems with retrieving high-quality data from some systems. This presents a barrier to further developing a force-wide understanding of vulnerability. Community officers have a good understanding of the threats that face communities through beat profiles. These profiles go some way in helping the force to address its technical weaknesses. This understanding has informed multi-agency safeguarding initiatives in places such as Telford.

The force discusses vulnerable victims and groups in its DMMs. This safeguard ensures that the force swiftly acts on all incidents involving vulnerable people. For example, we saw evidence of officers prioritising activity to find missing people, and outstanding domestic abuse suspects, at these meetings.

The force features hidden harms, such as CSE and modern slavery and human trafficking (MSHT), in its control strategy. It has given response officers additional mental health training. It has also hosted partnership events and promoted public and partner awareness of hidden harms. This promotion has contributed to increased reporting of honour-based abuse through referrals from partners. The force has given staff ‘look beyond the obvious’ training to help them to identify hidden vulnerability. A vulnerability handbook is available to officers on their personal devices, via the intranet. Officers told us that they regularly look for hidden vulnerability. During our inspection, there was evidence of this. For example, officers looked for signs of exploitation when dealing with vulnerable victims.

While repeat victims are not automatically identified by the command and control system, all calls from the public are subject to the THRIVE risk assessment process. During our inspection, most logs that we viewed had been endorsed by control room staff to show that a risk assessment had taken place. Call takers are generally asking the right questions to identify vulnerability. They can talk through the ‘stay safe’ advice
they give to victims. When appropriate, they may stay on the phone to a vulnerable caller until officers arrive.

Operators can use the command and control system to place information markers on the address records of vulnerable people. They can also use an intelligence system to check for the existence of RMPs to help them identify repeat victims. Operators can use the command and control system to view previous incidents at an address. The i24 intelligence team in the operations and communications centre (OCC) also supports operators in identifying all potential risk factors, particularly in dynamic, higher-risk incidents. Supervisors regularly review call and incident logs to check that staff have properly identified all risks. A quality monitoring process exists for call handlers. Supervisors and the quality monitoring officer give feedback to staff about their work, with a view to improving performance.

These systems, processes and checking mechanisms enable the force to effectively assess, record and manage the risk to victims at initial contact.

**Responding to incidents**

The force responds effectively to emergency incidents. And it carries out effective risk assessments. The force assesses the needs of callers based on threat, risk and harm. Rather than dealing with domestic abuse incidents by telephone, it always aims to attend such reports in person. The force creates a greater proportion of domestic abuse reports as emergency or priority responses than the England and Wales rate, which is positive. However, a review of incidents showed that not all had received an appropriate or timely response. This puts victims at risk of further harm.

Some incidents, initially graded in the OCC as requiring a prompt response (priority 2), were not attended within agreed timescales. Recently, the force has introduced a twice-daily demand review meeting. At this meeting, managers and supervisors reassess those calls that are awaiting attendance. The force also uses a scheduled appointments process to help manage its demand. But it does not reassess cases that are scheduled for appointment, including domestic abuse reports. Officers reported that the demand review meeting can lead to a doubling up of taskings from both the control room and the duty inspector.

When a call handler receives a report of domestic abuse, they can select a list of questions to assist their decision making. The list prompts them to ask, for example, if there are any children in the household. The more experienced call handlers tend to use this list less often. This creates potential for some risks to be missed.

The force has worked to improve officers’ understanding of the importance of thoroughly risk-assessing reports of domestic abuse. Officers use DASH risk assessments to help them with this process. Harm assessment units (HAUs) use these risk assessments to share information with partners. HAUs report that, sometimes, officers have not included the details of children in a DASH assessment. They also report that officers have not completed DASH forms for all reports of domestic abuse.

Non-completion can lead to failure to identify all relevant risks. The DASH form initiates support for victims from the police and other agencies. Delays in completing the risk assessment can result in delays in support being provided. It can also
increase the incidence of victim disengagement. Despite these potential risks, the control room plays no part in making sure that officers complete DASH forms. However, as a failsafe, the investigation management unit cannot file a report involving adults or children until the DASH form has been attached.

We spoke to HAU supervisors and reviewed their daily logs in two stations. Of these, officers had completed a DASH within the first 24 hours in around 85 percent of relevant cases. A further 5–10 percent of missing DASHs were addressed through the DMM (which monitors completion on a daily basis) and through enquiries with the attending officer. This sees officers completing some risk assessments with victims by telephone, rather than in person. The force is, however, completing DASH assessments for 95 percent of domestic-related crimes and incidents. Its continued focus on this area through DMMs will help secure further improvements in this area.

There is no force-wide analysis of, or performance data on, DASH quality or completion rates beyond basic daily and supervisor checks. Therefore, the force cannot identify and address DASH quality, analyse trends in completion rates, or focus its DASH improvement activities on those teams that might gain the most benefit.

HAUs carry out background checks on standard and medium-risk DASHs. Officers refer high-risk cases to the domestic abuse risk officer. Officers refer cases involving children to children’s services or education services, to raise awareness that a child has been involved in a domestic abuse incident. Notification to schools so they can help safeguard children involved in domestic abuse incidents is, however, inconsistent. Operation Encompass does not yet function in all parts of the force. ICT problems also mean that automatic reports to schools can be delayed while staff correct data inaccuracies. Some officers we spoke to also make a duplicate referral to children’s services.

Officers have a good knowledge and understanding of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act Code G 2012, which concerns statutory powers of arrest. They confirm that the force has reinforced the need for positive action at domestic abuse incidents. But senior officers told us that the culture of positive action at domestic abuse incidents had drifted. A force audit showed that, in a significant number of cases, the force was missing opportunities to make arrests.

Over the past six months, the force has worked to improve performance. And since early 2018, it has had a 12-point action plan in place. The deputy chief constable (DCC) has led the plan. Over the past two years, although the arrest rate has doubled, the charge/summons rate has halved. Both rates are slightly below the England and Wales rate. The force cannot provide data on the use of voluntary attendance for suspect interviews.

The force works with partners in a variety of ways to respond to incidents involving people with mental health problems. Despite a trial in Worcestershire, the force has not been able to secure funding for mental health practitioners to work in the control room. This is because of the number of local authorities that exist within the force area. Other forces have found mental health practitioner provision to be a helpful addition to control room functions.
Nevertheless, the force has a number of effective multi-agency arrangements for mental health. For example, a mental health triage car provides evening cover in Telford and Wrekin. During the week, a mental health support group, called Branches, is based at the police station in Telford. It offers access to services for people who are in crisis. The Telford After Care Team also holds mental health group intervention sessions. We have also previously reported on the emergency place of safety offered through the Shropshire Sanctuary Scheme. However, due to differing budgets and partnership arrangements, such services are not replicated in all counties. In other parts of the force, officers and staff can access mental health support and guidance for people by telephone. But they report an over-reliance on ambulance services. In Herefordshire, approved mental health professionals are available through a call-out system.

Officers told us that they have to transport to hospital people who have been detained under section 136 of the Mental Health Act 1983. This is because of delays in ambulance response. This can mean that officers have to wait for long periods of time with people who need specialist support. In some areas, a multi-agency meeting aims to co-ordinate the response to high-frequency service users. Where this arrangement exists, officers are prompted by police systems to take the person to a pre-agreed place of safety. The force has a strategic mental health lead. However, the force was in a transition between assistant chief constables (ACCs) at the time of inspection and inspectors found that the crisis care concordat was inactive. This means that partners cannot effectively co-ordinate their activities, nor can they share good practice. This situation creates variations in the service being offered across the force. The force intends to address these gaps as part of the vulnerability improvement work planned for 2019.

**Supporting vulnerable victims**

SNTs are responsible for the ongoing safeguarding of victims of medium-risk domestic abuse. SNTs use RMPs to organise this activity. Our review of RMPs has shown the system to be effective. SNTs also manage other types of vulnerability. They deliver integrated victim management, either as part of incident resolution teams or within harm hubs. Both units offer ‘wraparound’ partnership care to both vulnerable victims (for example, victims of hate crime or those who have poor mental health) and repeat callers. The units do this to signpost people to other services and sources of support, and to reduce the demand for policing services.

The force has given development sessions to more than 350 of its frontline staff, showing them how to effectively use domestic violence protection notices (DVPNs) and domestic violence protection orders (DVPOs). Once authorised, the force adds these orders onto the PNC to form a central repository.

Within teams, DVPN/O SPOCs give advice and support. They record both notices and orders on RMPs to make them accessible to officers and staff. The force has effective processes in place for the ‘right to ask’ and ‘right to know’ schemes, also known as Clare’s Law, with no backlogs in responding to such requests for information.

The force aims to use pre-charge bail for appropriate high-risk domestic abuse cases. However, officers and staff told us that they are unlikely to check pre-charge bail for compliance unless a victim alleges further substantive offences. This makes the
force’s use of pre-charge bail less effective than it could be in safeguarding victims of domestic abuse. The force is also likely to use RUI in some cases, particularly standard and medium-risk reports, when this is appropriate.

HAUs manage involvement with the multi-agency safeguarding hubs (MASHs). PIP2-trained detectives staff HAUs. Each part of the force has different models of HAU. This means that the force gives different levels of service to victims, depending on where offences take place. The most effective MASH arrangements involve the daily exchange of information through a joint dashboard, with a single manager responsible for overseeing the processes. None of the HAUs fully meet this standard, although some come close. Telford HAU is located in the Telford and Wrekin MASH. It enjoys close partner working and good information sharing.

In Worcestershire, partners have been co-located for approximately four years, but the unit still does not fully operate as a MASH. Staff report that the local safeguarding children board is aware of the shortcomings of these arrangements. But full MASH processes have not been put in place. Shropshire operates a similar model. In Herefordshire, the police are located separately from partner agencies. As a result, they often hold strategy meetings by telephone. The variations in MASH arrangements, and lack of progress towards more effective methods, fail to give vulnerable people the best support. The force began a review of the effectiveness of MASH arrangements in 2018 and will continue this within its 2019 vulnerability work.

The force refers most (but not all) high-risk domestic abuse cases to the MARACs. In Worcestershire, two MARACs take place every month, although the referral rate indicates the need for three. This restriction in MARAC availability means the force needs a secondary screening process to determine which high-risk cases it does (or does not) refer to the MARAC. For example, a high-risk case may not reach the MARAC if all partners know of the incident and if safeguarding is already in place. Despite the restrictions in availability, the force refers all repeat victims to the MARAC. It does the same with any new cases, irrespective of risk grading, if referral is appropriate.

In common with our observations about the variations in MASH arrangements, different approaches to the MARAC may fail to address the risk in some areas most effectively. The force intends to review the effectiveness of MARAC arrangements within the 2019 vulnerability review.

The force has introduced care home co-ordinators to share intelligence and assist in improving outcomes for ‘looked after’ children. The co-ordinators work with social services, the local authority missing co-ordinator, and care home managers and staff. They agree a package of support and produce an RMP for each child. Control room staff and SNT officers have access to these plans and can update them. Diversionary pathways (to divert these children away from committing crimes) are encouraged. The current offer includes cadets, training, sports clubs and community projects.

The force carries out an annual survey of victims. These include victims of domestic abuse, violence, hate crime and rape. An external company gives victims’ feedback to the force. The company also tracks changes in confidence levels, identifying high-performing areas and those where improvement is needed. Social services give feedback to the force through learning panels such as ‘the voice of the child’.
Interviews of people who have been missing also provide valuable feedback and help the force to understand the impact of adverse childhood experiences. Improvements within the force as a result of feedback have included reminders to officers of good and poor practice; links with other teams to avoid duplication; and changes to methods of working.

The force commissioned the Police Foundation to carry out a review of victim satisfaction survey responses. It did this to improve the effectiveness of feedback mechanisms. In December 2018, this work, which identified links between feedback and unconscious bias, was presented to approximately 90 officers and staff. The results were considered at the victim satisfaction strategic working group, and by chief officers.

The force’s management of sex offenders is effective. The ratio of offenders to offender managers results in achievable caseloads. The force risk-assesses offenders promptly. It uses the ARMS risk assessment process to do this. Officers visit offenders regularly. The force trains offender managers in risk assessment and investigation. But offender managers do not feel they have enough skills to deal with the assessment of devices that offenders use. Also, there is a backlog in probation service completion rates. This makes risk assessments less comprehensive.

Neighbourhood officers can access information about registered sex offenders through the force’s briefing system. During our inspection, they showed an appropriate awareness of registered sex offenders in their areas.

The force is effective in its approach to identifying those who share indecent images of children online. It also demonstrates a proactive approach to reducing this threat. The online CSE team has its own digital forensic capability for on-site triage and high-risk cases. More widely, there are backlogs of devices (mobile phones, computers and other electronic devices) that are awaiting digital examination. A business analyst is assessing both the workload and the risk contained in these backlogs, and is developing options to prioritise and address both. The force predicts that demand for this type of service will increase. Its future plans will need to take this into account.

The force makes appropriate use of ancillary orders and other powers to protect the public. Often, it seeks these through multi-agency public protection arrangements and manages them through integrated offender management processes.

Tackling serious and organised crime

Good

The force is good at tackling SOC, which represents a significant improvement in its performance since we last inspected this area of policing. It is a force priority, and the force understands the threat it poses. According to its own analysis, the threat posed by MSHT represents the force’s biggest intelligence gap.
The force considers threats, harms and risks daily. It consults relevant forces and intelligence units so that it can co-ordinate appropriate responses. The force also ensures an exchange of relevant information about county lines criminality.

The force’s local profiles for each area have created opportunities for it to commission analysis. For example, it is evaluating first-time entrants into the justice system and whether there is any connection with adverse childhood experiences they may have suffered.

The force has effective processes for managing OCGs. It is proactive in identifying new OCGs, gangs and networks. SNTs collect intelligence that helps the force to identify and tackle OCG activity.

The force does good work to prevent SOC, and to identify those who are at risk of being drawn into organised crime. For example, it works with partner organisations to protect those who are at risk of cuckooing. It has also used legislation to protect a child victim of county lines criminality.

The force does not yet measure or analyse the community impact or effect of its activities to tackle OCGs, urban street gangs (USGs) and county lines. But it does plan to do so.

Areas for improvement

- The force should continue to improve its understanding of the impact of its work on serious and organised crime across the four Ps. This will ensure that it learns from experience to maximise the disruptive effect on this type of criminal activity.

It should be noted that West Mercia Police has invested substantially in this area since our last inspection. It has also sought advice and support from colleagues in other areas of public safety and outside forces. Some of the initiatives implemented by the force to tackle SOC, while very new, are becoming worthy of notice.

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

Understanding threats

SOC is a force priority, and there is a good understanding of the threat it poses. The force uses MoRiLE (management of risk in law enforcement) every six months to assess the various types of organised crime that affect its communities. It has developed an intelligence requirement document, based on the level of threat presented by different types of SOC. According to this document, the threat posed by MSHT represents the biggest intelligence gap in the force. Local and force tasking processes focus on control strategy priorities, intelligence gaps and newer areas of risk. These include MSHT, county lines, CSE and USGs.
The force’s daily threat identification meeting (TIM) aligns to the control strategy. The TIM is the forum in which the force reviews the demand that has occurred during the previous 24 hours. It makes sure that it consults relevant forces and regional intelligence units in order to fully understand threat, harm and risk, and to co-ordinate an appropriate response.

The MATES scheme helps to proactively identify locations of interest, such as shops or businesses, and share intelligence, to instigate partnership activity. The force has moved partnership analysts to the analytical team, but information sharing remains a challenge.

Analysts have produced a local profile for each area. SOC joint action groups (SOCJAGs) both inform and use these profiles to help identify and manage OCGs in partnership, although even greater use could be made of local profiles to support action. The local profiles have created new opportunities for the force to commission analysis. For example, the force is evaluating first-time entrants into the justice system and whether there is any connection with adverse childhood experiences they may have suffered. This insight is helping to inform partnership tactics. The workforce’s awareness and use of local profiles are limited, even though they are available through beat profiles.

The force makes effective use of a range of sources to develop its understanding of threats. It reflects newer threats, such as cybercrime, in the control strategy and the police and crime plan. It carries out training and partnership work. But it has no analytical capability for cyber-dependent crime. Analysts use a variety of digital, technical and operational means to inform intelligence development and investigations. Within local intelligence units, the force trains officers in open source research and the conduct of debriefs.

The FIB is well connected with the regional organised crime unit (ROCU) and other surrounding forces. The force’s dedicated source unit is also represented at the daily TIM meeting, so that decision makers can use these capabilities to meet the force’s daily intelligence needs.

The force exchanges information and intelligence about county lines in the county lines intelligence collection matrix. It submits this data to the ROCU and the National County Lines Coordination Centre (NCLCC). The force makes good use of reports and data given by the NCLCC. There is good contact with the region, which helps the exchange of relevant intelligence. An analyst has been seconded from the force into the regional organised crime threat assessment team (ROCTA) to improve the understanding of available intelligence. These arrangements help the force and partners to understand SOC threats.

The force has effective OCG management processes. The organised crime group management unit (OCGMU) reviews all active OCGs and instigates activity according to national guidelines. The OCGMU acts as the point of contact with the ROCTA, which also approves the archiving of OCGs.
The force proactively identifies new OCGs, gangs and networks and this information informs tasking processes. The force promptly maps all OCGs. It has 17 mapped OCGs per million population. This is substantially lower than the England and Wales rate of 35 mapped OCGs per million population. The force manages a further eight USGs per million. Unlike some forces, West Mercia Police does not routinely count USGs within its OCG numbers. Most mapped OCGs are primarily involved in the supply of drugs. None are involved in MSHT. The number of OCGs that the force has mapped is relatively low. But it manages significant impact from OCGs that travel from other force areas and are involved in CSE, county lines and serious acquisitive crime.

The force identifies intelligence needs through organised crime group management (OCGM) meetings, and force and local tactical tasking and co-ordinating group (TTCG) meetings. The force then sends the needs to local officers for them to action.

The OCGMU gave good examples of intelligence collected by SNTs that helped the force to identify and tackle OCG activity. This included identifying new groups, leading to mapping, operations and arrests. Response officers also spoke of briefings about OCGs in their patrol areas, and of receiving taskings to obtain intelligence. Officers showed an awareness of the SOC risks associated with missing people, immigration and vulnerability. Again, they gave our inspectors operational examples. This indicates that all relevant local, regional and partner resources support efforts to tackle SOC.

West Mercia Police is predominantly impacted by county lines from other policing areas (known as ‘imported’ lines). Monthly NCLCC reports on OCGs and county lines can often paint a dated picture, relying on information that can be one month old or more. This necessitates the FIB making direct contact with other forces to get information about county lines. The force has started to use the drug harm matrix to score county lines and identify gaps. A county lines triage process has identified 11 priority lines from a total of 112 that have been identified for SNTs to manage locally. The ROCU reviews all high-threat groups. These processes help the force to better understand and tackle county lines.

Serious and organised crime prevention

There is evidence of the force doing good work to both prevent SOC and identify those locally who are at risk of being drawn into organised crime.

Operation Fearless is a PCC-funded schools initiative. It is designed to increase awareness of the risks relating to SOC through lived experience. The force also sends police cadets to visit schools and talk with peers. The force has identified locations of interest and worked locally to raise awareness of exploitation risks in those areas. This helps it to improve public understanding of its ‘Protect’ activities in those areas. (‘Protect’ is a force brand for communicating key messages.)

The force works with housing and mental health partners to protect vulnerable people who are at risk of cuckooing. It also works with fire and rescue partners, and homelessness charities. It has used MSHT legislation to protect a child victim of county lines.
The OCGMU has developed a database that captures all methods of diversionary activity, intervention and support recommended in national guidance. There are good examples of prevention activity across the force. The director of intelligence and problem-solving co-ordinators are exploring how to tailor ‘Prevent’ activities to address the SOC risks in specific areas. This tailoring will enable the force to better understand the effectiveness of prevention activities and the impact on SOC.

The FIB works with the regional prison intelligence team to disrupt OCG members in prison. One example of this is a recent prosecution of an inmate for drugs supply. The force has also been successful in securing a lifetime offender management order. At the time of our inspection, the force reported having 11 serious crime prevention orders (SCPOs) in place. Most of these subjects are currently in prison. The force reviews SCPOs in its monthly OCGM meeting. The OCG portal encourages local responsible officers (LROs) to consider a range of orders. There is evidence that the force uses orders to manage some OCGs.

Operation Zest has used a community protection warning and notice to tackle an OCG. This problem-solving tactic is more traditionally applied to ASB. The force is also considering a CBO for this group. The force cannot yet give an overview of all orders that it is using to prevent SOC. But it is working to produce this.

The force regularly communicates with the public about SOC. It does this through social and traditional media, and through community messaging. It has also hosted partnership events to raise awareness of SOC and to develop its ‘Protect’ brand.

The force communicates directly with victims. It also communicates through schools, community groups and other forums. This communication includes coverage of days of action (high-profile operations involving enforcement and prevention activities) and the results of successful prosecutions.

The force consults partner agencies on joint media strategies. For example, it is communicating MATES activity through joint messaging. Such communications help the public to be vigilant and prevent SOC.

**Disruption and investigation**

The force’s disruption and investigation of SOC are effective. The local policing ACC governs the SOC agenda, with support from the director of intelligence. The force identifies SOC as a control strategy priority. It has partnership arrangements at both strategic and tactical levels. However, partnership approaches are still developing across some areas of the force and need time to become fully established. But partners report that the frequent changes of police representatives make it difficult to build good relationships and to agree shared, long-term approaches. SOCJAGs and their work are also heavily police led. Nevertheless, SOCJAGs are active, well attended and increasingly give good direction and oversight of partnership activity to tackle SOC. The force wants to encourage partners to chair SOCJAG meetings in order to move away from the police-led agenda. The force intends to support and mentor partners through this process to help improve the effectiveness of SOCJAGs.

The force is good at managing OCGs. The TTCG and OCGMU offer effective forums for the management of OCG threats. The force prioritises and tasks OCGs through these forums. It does this using OCG scoring, MoRILE assessment and
professional judgment. The force prioritises county lines using similar methods, together with assessment against the drugs harm matrix. The force gives information to the NCLCC and creates a monthly county lines operational profile.

The force assigns detective chief inspectors as LROs. It gives them structured training, together with continuing professional development, to maintain their skills. Senior responsible officers (SROs) support LROs. SROs are also local policing commanders and tactical leads who carry out daily OCG management. LROs can access specialist advice, tactical options and OCG support from both the FIB and ROCU. The force holds LROs and SROs to account through the monthly TTCG and OCGM processes, where their work is scrutinised.

LROs use ‘Four P’ plans (pursue; prevent; protect; prepare) and a good range of tactics to manage the risks relating to SOC. They record these risks on the new OCG portal. The portal is based on the force risk management system. This makes it easy for officers to use with minimal instruction.

The Four P plans are good in terms of the ‘pursue’ strand. However, some of the ‘prevent’ and ‘protect’ actions are quite generic and could be equally applied to any OCG. But actions do include local policing priority teams carrying out operational activities to target and disrupt OCGs. SNTs also carry out activity to disrupt and tackle organised criminal activity. This includes working with trading standards to support operations targeting rebated gas oil (often called ‘red diesel’) and illicit tobacco sales, and collaborating with housing partners to carry out visits to cuckooing addresses.

The force has introduced a covert asset management meeting to discuss the allocation of force and regional resources to operations. LROs know how to access covert and overt tactical options. The force has given evidence of effective and successful financial activity to tackle OCGs. It has also tackled foreign national OCG offenders, in partnership with immigration services.

The force actively identifies county lines risks. It takes effective measures to reduce the impact on vulnerable people at local level. During our inspection, there was a lot of evidence to indicate that SNTs are involved in the effective management of county lines and OCGs. Threats to life also feature as a priority in TIM and DMMs. These arrangements ensure good co-ordination of activity to tackle SOC.

The force records 1.95 disruptions per OCG. This is lower than the England and Wales rate of 2.7 disruptions per OCG. The force scrutinises its disruption activities at OCGM meetings as well as in the ROCU. Work continues to improve the classification of disruptions.

The TTCG and OCGMU offer a forum in which to share learning. However, the forum is informal. Beyond the OCG portal and Four P plans, there is no corporate record of what works. The force does not yet measure or analyse the community impact or effect of its activities to tackle OCG, county lines and USGs. However, it has plans to do so. Recently, it recruited a new lead for organisational learning who will guide the force in the development of a range of learning opportunities. These will include lessons learned from what works in disrupting and tackling SOC.
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 OCGs 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

West Mercia Police operates joint arrangements with Warwickshire Police to provide armed policing as part of the strategic alliance. These arrangements are likely to terminate in October 2019 when the alliance between the two forces formally ends.

The force has an adequate understanding of the potential harm facing the public. The force’s APSTRA, which is jointly compiled with Warwickshire Police, 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 observations. The designated chief officer reviews the register frequently to maintain the right levels of armed capability and capacity.

However, previously we have identified an area where the APSTRA could be improved: namely, that it should include analysis of how promptly armed response vehicles (ARVs) respond to armed incidents. This information is important because it helps to determine whether or not the force has sufficient armed officers to meet operational demands. It is disappointing that the APSTRA still doesn’t contain this information. It is a shortcoming that we expect the force to address.

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 West Mercia are attended by officers trained to ARV standard. However, incidents sometimes occur that require the skills and specialist capabilities of more highly trained officers.

At the time of our inspection, we found that West Mercia Police has good arrangements in place to mobilise specialist officers should their skills and equipment be required. The force’s capabilities align well with threats set out in the APSTRA. These capabilities are based on its effective collaboration arrangements with Warwickshire Police. Furthermore, if, for any reason, specialist capabilities are not immediately available, agreements are in place to seek the assistance of specialist officers from the regional counter-terrorist unit.
Working with others

It is important that effective joint working arrangements are agreed between neighbouring forces. Armed criminals and terrorists are not restricted by 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.

The arrangements in place with Warwickshire Police mean that the standards of training, armed deployments and command of armed operations are consistent in both forces.

Armed officers can deploy rapidly and effectively in both forces. However, current arrangements are due to end with the termination of the strategic alliance. The force must ensure that it has sufficient armed policing capabilities, ARV officers and access to specialist officers to meet the threats set out in the APSTRA. It is essential that future plans continue to adequately safeguard the public from firearms threats.

The force is revising its APSTRA to make an accurate assessment of its future requirements. This includes how best to work with other forces in the region, and the counter-terrorist unit, in the future. We will monitor this carefully.

We also examined how well prepared forces are to respond to threats and risks. Armed officers in West Mercia Police 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 attack.

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

In addition to debriefing training exercises, we also found that West Mercia Police reviews the outcome of all firearms incidents that officers attend. This helps ensure that best practice or areas for improvement are identified. We found that this knowledge is used to improve training and operational procedures.

It is important that, at the start of each shift, ARV officers are provided with up-to-date information that is relevant to their role. They can then have a positive effect in disrupting the activity of OCGs and other armed criminals. We found that, on most occasions, ARV officers are provided with up-to-date information enabling them to use their patrols to good effect.
Efficiency
## Force in context

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Spend per head of population</th>
<th>West Mercia spend</th>
<th>England and Wales spend</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2018/19 projection</td>
<td>£161</td>
<td>£192</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Spend per head of population by category

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>West Mercia spend</th>
<th>England and Wales spend</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Visible frontline</td>
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<td>£65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-visible frontline</td>
<td>£46</td>
<td>£62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Business support</td>
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<td>£41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>£4</td>
<td>£8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
How efficiently does the force operate and how sustainable are its services?

Requires improvement

Summary

West Mercia Police requires improvement in how it meets demand and uses resources.

Currently, the force provides many services through the shared functions of its alliance with Warwickshire Police. But the imminent end of the alliance, in October 2019, is a cause of concern. It is not known how both forces will offer a full, uninterrupted range of public services by the time the alliance ends.

The force is working to gain a full understanding of the cost of services as it decides how best to operate post-alliance. But it must act swiftly if there is to be minimal disruption to the service it gives to the public, and its workforce, from October onwards.

A lack of detailed preparation in advance of the alliance termination announcement is a contributory factor to our judgment that West Mercia Police is inadequate in how it plans for the future.

The force has failed to provide evidence of the business case that led to the decision to terminate the alliance and therefore it is difficult to assess the force’s decision. And it is a cause of concern that the force did not consult the public or key partners before making its decision.

We expect both forces to work together, as they transition to new operating models, to ensure no adverse effects on the public or their workforces.

Meeting current demands and using resources

Requires improvement

West Mercia Police requires improvement at meeting current demands and using resources.
The force has a good understanding of the demands on its services. This is helped by its long-term working relationship with a commercial partner. However, the force is sometimes unable to meet demand for its services. And it has yet to identify the best investigative model to meet its needs. Some officers are investigating crimes for which they have not been trained.

Despite a complex partnership landscape, the force works well with a range of partner organisations to safeguard vulnerable people. These include looked after children who abscond from care.

The force is clear about the investments it is making, as well as the desired benefits. Its considerable investment in ICT over the next four years should prove beneficial.

To date, the force has worked well with Warwickshire Police in a strategic alliance that has saved £35m. The two forces share many services. But the imminent end of the alliance, in October 2019, is a cause of concern. It is not clear how both forces will offer a full, uninterrupted range of public services by the time the alliance ends.

Currently, the force is working to gain a full understanding of the cost of services as it decides how best to operate after the alliance ends. The force must act quickly to implement its plans so that there is minimal disruption to the public and its workforce from October onwards.

**Cause of concern**

The force does not have suitable arrangements in place to make sure it can maintain the full range of public services when its alliance with Warwickshire Police ends. There are gaps in its workforce skills assessment, and weaknesses in both its investigative approach and its approach to safeguarding vulnerable people.

**Recommendations**

To address this cause of concern, we recommend that the force should immediately:

- put in place plans to maintain the full range of public services by October 2019, particularly in the areas of highest risk;
- expand the skills project work to include an assessment of all skills, not only operational, including potential future skills requirements. This assessment should inform workforce plans;
- conduct a review of officers’ capabilities and capacity to manage their investigative workload, to better understand investigative demand and the pressures placed upon them; and
- conduct a review, involving its partners, of the approach to vulnerability to better safeguard vulnerable people.

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

West Mercia Police has a good understanding of the demands on its services. A long-standing relationship with a commercial partner means that the force has access to an accurate and up-to-date profile of demand on which to base its operation. This has helped it to continually refine its operating model. In April 2018, it made its latest adjustments. New features of the operating model include:

- revised shift patterns;
- the introduction of incident progression teams (IPTs) to take pressure off 999/101 responders; and
- the move of the force’s mobile support unit, known as the operational patrol unit (OPU), to local policing areas.

The IPTs now deal with reported incidents where there is no realistic chance of arresting offenders and no pressing need for officers to attend immediately. This means that response officers have more time to respond to callers who are in urgent need of police assistance. The OPU has a wider remit to respond to calls for service at times of heightened demand. According to an external review, the availability of officers is now more likely to meet service demands. Also, the IPTs now take responsibility for managing 10 percent of the force’s non-urgent workload. As a result, response officers are more available for emergency and priority calls.

Understanding factors that influence demand

Since the force last adjusted its operating model, improvements to service are becoming noticeable. But there are undoubtedly times when demand is placing a strain on the force. Sometimes, more incidents need to be completed than the force can deal with. For example, over summer 2018, the force had substantial demand increases that led to many incidents waiting too long to be attended by an officer. (However, this shortcoming should be considered within the context of the force receiving more than 137,000 999 calls and almost 483,000 non-emergency calls in 2018/19.)

Staff also spoke of delays in the processes involved in reassigning incidents to officers for investigation. There were delays in the quality assurance of cases in the investigation management unit. The situation was compounded by problems with the introduction of a new crime recording system. The force has since increased staffing levels and introduced new procedures. At the time of our most recent visit, the force had cleared the backlogs. It is applying increased scrutiny to maintain performance in this area.

The force’s understanding of the volume of calls it receives, and how best to respond to them, contrasts with some concerns we have about investigations.

Previously, the force has been innovative in developing its investigative capacity. In Worcestershire and Herefordshire, it has stopped the established practice of having specialist investigative teams. Typically, these include specialist child abuse or sexual offence investigators. Successful investigations of this nature depend on constructive working relationships with social care workers and other professionals who support
vulnerable victims. Specialist investigators developed these relationships well in the force.

In common with other forces, reported crimes of this nature have increased rapidly. In order to meet this increase, the force is training detectives to be ‘omnicompetent’ in some areas (known as ‘Pathfinder sites’). The force’s rationale is that omnicompetent investigators can handle a more diverse workload without being confined to a specialist area of expertise. Pathfinder is not in place in all areas, however. For instance, in Telford and Wrekin, and in Shropshire, specialist teams investigate child abuse, sexual offences and domestic abuse cases associated with the most vulnerable victims.

There are mixed views about the Pathfinder approach that range from a preference to retain specialisms to support for multi-skilled detectives. Some are supportive of the scheme but feel that the force has not committed enough staff to the Pathfinder teams. In Worcester, there were examples of officers investigating certain crimes for which they had not been trained. Also, staff do not always have access to experienced colleagues or supervisors.

What is clear is that the force has a good track record of recruiting and retaining detectives. This is positive. But it needs to determine the best investigative model to meet its needs. We understand that the force’s commercial partner is soon to begin analysing the force’s investigative workload to help inform this decision.

**Working with others to meet demand**

We have previously reported the benefits of West Mercia’s strategic alliance with Warwickshire Police. It is widely recognised that £35m of savings can be ascribed to the alliance arrangements, principally through the sharing of services. These include baseline savings (for example, on the vehicle fleet, a standardised use of vehicles and economies of scale have driven down suppliers’ costs).

At the time of our inspection, the two forces shared police support services. This arrangement delivers savings in mainstream business functions such as human resources (HR) and finance. It has strengthened critical business areas (such as homicide investigation) because, jointly, the two forces are better placed to manage surges in demands for their services. The forces also share services that are not geographically tied to a locality, such as armed policing, traffic patrols and dog support units.

The future of these services is now uncertain because the alliance is due to end in October 2019. This is a cause of concern. The principles of collaboration and joint venture in the interests of efficiency are well founded in both forces.

In July 2019, we revisited West Mercia Police to conduct a further inspection of its preparations for the termination of the alliance. Because of the evidence gathered during that visit, we are concerned that existing plans may not secure all necessary services by the relevant date. The executive team has considered eight business cases for their collaboration potential, but none will be progressed. Instead, between 90 percent and 92 percent of services will continue on a stand-alone basis. Additionally, several key personnel are due to transfer to Warwickshire Police and the
transition planning team will end in October, with the remainder of its work transferring to other teams.

Despite the force’s investment in transition planning, we are concerned that the full range of public services may be affected by the end of the alliance.

The future of strategic joint working arrangements is unclear. Still, the force works jointly with a range of local authorities and other partners to safeguard vulnerable people and more effectively manage demand in partnership. For example, more than 100 residential homes in the region are housing looked after children who are frequently at risk when away from adult supervision. In one year, more than 1,500 of these children absconded from care. This places significant demands on the force in terms of searching for them. The force’s close work with both children’s homes and social care has helped to reduce instances of children absconding and consequently to manage the risks they face.

In West Mercia, partnership arrangements are complex: they span multiple authorities and partnership agencies. This creates numerous challenges. For instance, MARACs draw together social care workers and other domestic abuse professionals to consider the long-term needs of domestic abuse victims. While effective in many areas, insufficient numbers of MARAC meetings in Worcester mean that some deserving cases cannot be considered at a panel.

The MASHs operate in different ways and some are more effective than others. These variations can mean that vulnerable people in some areas (such as Herefordshire) fail to receive the sort of support found in those parts of the force where there is closer working and better co-ordination (such as Telford). The effective multi-agency mental health aftercare support that is available in these areas is not, however, available everywhere. And there is little in the way of consistent force-wide multi-agency triage support for those who come to police attention because of mental health crises.

Despite these challenges, there is good evidence that local staff support domestic abuse victims. We spoke to police and community support officers who were aware of, and support, victims in their local areas. The force has a pivotal role in co-ordinating the activity of other organisations in support of victims.

The force is working hard to secure the support of local councils, adapting its practices according to regional differences. It is yet to accurately assess the demand that these adaptations place on its resources. This will form part of future evaluations planned in conjunction with the external business partner. The force recognises that investigations associated with vulnerable people can only be successful if victims are effectively safeguarded.

**Innovation and new opportunities**

The force has an established track record of investment in transformational change. Recently, the change team recruited new staff direct from the technology sector to improve the infrastructure on which the force’s future ICT developments will depend.
The force is committed to exploring opportunities and developing new ways of working. A good example is its expanding relationship with the fire and rescue service. Recently, Hereford and Worcester Fire and Rescue Service relocated its headquarters to Hindlip Hall to share facilities. Future plans include the integration of fire service command facilities into the force’s new control centre, which is due to be fully operational this year. This will enable the police, fire service and senior ambulance managers to work better together at major incidents. Joint working arrangements also make more sophisticated use of the resources of both organisations. These include responding to emergencies when people have been taken ill in their own homes. Usually, the police have taken the lead in responding to such incidents. In Hereford and Worcester, firefighters now attend these reports and are better equipped to resolve them. Another benefit is the use of drones. Until recently, the fire service and the force used drones separately. In the interests of reduced costs and efficiency, they have now agreed that the fire service will provide drones for both organisations.

**Investment and benefits**

The force is clear about its ambitions, its investments and the benefits it seeks through its transformation programme. For several years, the force’s vision to digitise the front line, modernise services and make the estate fit for the future has been central to its financial planning. For example, over the course of the current mid-term financial plan, the force has committed £42m to improving the estate. These improvements will include new police stations at Shrewsbury and Hereford.

However, not all change and improvement programmes are running smoothly. The force has experienced delays in realising the expected benefits from ICT transformation. And it has stopped work that was designed to integrate operating systems (telephony, communications and records management) across West Mercia and Warwickshire. The infrastructure on which the new crime and intelligence database rests has been found to be substandard. This infrastructure is being rebuilt as part of a capital funding programme planned over the next four years. Furthermore, there has been a change from the original plan to streamline call handling procedures and reduce overheads through a combined West Mercia and Warwickshire police control room. As a result, the force will not achieve the intended savings from this programme. Long-established shared call handling services will also end, because of the alliance terminating.

**Prioritising different types of demand**

The force decides its priorities, as part of an annual planning cycle, based on research into the threats and risks that it predicts. It produces this research in a nationally recognised format known as a strategic assessment. The risks are then subject to a secondary assessment using the MoRiLE risk matrix. This enables the force to assess threats against its available capacity and capability in order to address them.

The force has identified its 2018/19 priorities as:

- CSE and abuse;
- SOC.
organised acquisitive crime (this involves an element of theft – for example, burglary); domestic abuse; and people who are seriously injured or killed on roads.

The force holds frequent tasking meetings to review progress against its strategic priorities and to assign resources to them. The force organises strategic-level tasking meetings and replicates them in local policing areas to address community problems. In North Worcestershire, we observed effective tactical tasking. There, community safety partnerships make local assessments of crime and other problems. Their assessments include information from housing providers, social care workers, general practitioners and voluntary organisations. They are a useful reference point for identifying local problems, while local tasking meetings provide a joint response to resolve them.

Representatives of Redditch and Bromsgrove Council, Wyre Forest Council, and Hereford and Worcester Fire and Rescue Service attend the local meetings. They contribute to discussions and resourcing decisions. Similar arrangements exist in other parts of the force. We saw an example of the force working with housing authorities to support tenants who are at risk of cuckooing.

Assigning resources to demand and understanding their costs

West Mercia Police has made steady progress in calculating the benefits of both its investments and the alterations it makes to its services. For example, it can assess how much more efficiently frontline staff can work by accessing force databases on tablets and other mobile devices. By using these devices, officers no longer have to return to fixed work stations to enter data and retrieve information. The force acknowledges current difficulties with the ICT infrastructure and the problems of poor signal strength in some rural areas. Mobile solutions will become even more important as more applications become available on devices.

The services that the force shares within the alliance model are predicated on a financial division of investment of 69 percent (West Mercia) and 31 percent (Warwickshire). This division reflects a pro rata share of the total funding that is available to both forces. However, for several reasons, there is no accurate record of the additional costs incurred by one force in the support that it provides to the other. Recording the exact time that officers spend supporting the other force is difficult: the precise cost of that time and associated overheads is unknown and the forces have not made these calculations a priority over the history of the alliance.

The decision by West Mercia Police to terminate the alliance has highlighted the importance of understanding the cost of services when forces enter into collaborative arrangements. This is something the force is currently working on. Few forces are totally reliant on stand-alone services, and a full understanding of the cost of services will be important to both forces as they determine how best to operate after the alliance ends. The transition team has developed a wide range of models across all affected services to help inform future plans and collaboration options. Research from other programmes including the services to policing work is also being used. But available timescales for implementing these plans are dwindling.
Workforce capabilities

Recently, the force completed a skills project to obtain an accurate assessment of the make-up of the current workforce. The project referenced future demand that will help to inform recruitment programmes. (For example, an increasing amount of police training will be subject to nationally accredited standards. This will place additional demands on the force’s training unit.)

Primarily, the project focused on current operational skills. It did not include non-operational skills or future skills requirements (operational or otherwise). A full understanding of current and future demand requires an assessment of all skills, as well as potential future skills requirements.

We looked carefully at the force’s detective capacity because other forces have had difficulty recruiting into detective roles. Historically, the force has performed well in recruiting detectives. Following negotiations with the College of Policing, the force has compressed several detective training modules. Those who are interested in a detective career can now become accredited more quickly.

Recently, the force carried out a leadership audit. It cross-referenced its internal findings with the College of Policing Leadership Charter (Guiding Principles for Organisational Leadership, College of Policing, 2017). The audit has helped to inform a leadership development programme that the force is providing to all officers and staff from superintendent and equivalent upwards. Those taking part in the programme can access coaching support and attend career development events.

Throughout 2019, the force is carrying out a similar behaviour capability assessment as part of its adult safeguarding training. This will establish a behaviour profile for the organisation and inform learning and development priorities.

The force has also made progress in implementing programmes to identify its future leaders. The new talent management scheme, which is linked to the MAX programme (maximising contribution and potential) will enable a more structured approach to development force-wide. This is explained later in this report.

More efficient ways of working

The force has sophisticated change plans in place to make the best use of technology, collaboration and more efficient ways of working.

We have previously commented on how the force invests into, and prioritises, its transformation change programme. Over several years, the force has established six workstreams that focus on high-tech control rooms, the design of local policing, support services, ICT architecture and end-user technological devices.

The transformation change programme is structured. There is a clear focus on benefits, and a defined link between the change programme and the mid-term financial plan. The change programme is (and continues to be) critical to the force’s plan to achieve £16m of savings over the next three years. A good example is how the design of local policing has changed, first in line with budgetary restraint (following reductions in public sector spending) and now in terms of growth as more council tax revenue becomes available.
At the time of our initial inspection, the programme’s workstream relating to the future of support services was nearly ready to be implemented. This is known as the services to policing (STP) project. It has involved the force analysing 21 support services, including functions such as HR, legal and procurement services. In total, 347 of its activities have been analysed to find out how processes can be improved and savings made. The proposal included consolidating the services into a single business directorate, with potential alliance savings amounting to £12m over three years.

However, the termination of the alliance will affect the implementation of the proposal. Of more concern is the fact that West Mercia Police and Warwickshire Police will no longer share support services.

While the work will be beneficial to future planning, the alliance termination substantially changes the benefits anticipated by this joint venture. Now, each force must promptly implement its own support service arrangements by the date on which the alliance ends if it is to avoid disruption to the public and its workforce.

**Working with others**

The force has committed to investing in business change. It has productive relationships with external business consultants. The STP project identified potential savings. This is a good example of how professional expertise is helping the force operate efficiently and within financial constraints.

Successive PEEL inspections have reported on the alliance’s transformation as it has matured. This transformation has ranged from the early benefits of economies of scale (such as £100,000 annual savings from standardised fleet procurement) to digitising frontline services. Prior to the announcement of the termination, the alliance was implementing large-scale ICT replacement programmes. These programmes are now uncertain.

The alliance termination aside, West Mercia Police has many joint working arrangements. Collaboration is evident in operational policing and in how the force organises business support. There are good examples of the force’s commitment to working with local organisations to offer better services to the public and to protect vulnerable people, at all levels of the organisation.

For example, we found effective working practices in place in Worcester in support of people who are vulnerable in their own homes. Many forces have experienced vulnerable occupants being befriended by criminals, who then use the vulnerable person’s home to deal drugs or commit other types of crime. Officers have worked with social housing providers in the area to identify occupants who may be coerced into co-operating with criminals. Measures are then put in place to make occupants more secure in their homes, and less susceptible to this type of victimisation.

**Using technology**

As part of its alliance arrangements, West Mercia Police has had ambitious and transformative plans to make the best use of technology to modernise its services. Its vision has been to digitise frontline policing and integrate operating systems, with the aim of improving the force’s service to victims of crime and others who need its help.
The ICT transformation programme has suffered setbacks. In common with other forces, West Mercia Police has experienced problems with the introduction of the new crime and intelligence records management system. For example, frontline officers are having difficulty using an application that assembles prosecution case files. The force has had to revert to using a legacy file-builder system to prepare for an accused person’s first court appearance. Also, officers must enter some details onto the new records management system. This is proving to be time-consuming and inefficient.

Also, according to a recent assessment, force ICT architecture is insufficiently stable to support either the new operating system or other systems that the force wants to introduce.

A further complication is the termination of the alliance. Both forces were due to have a new ‘state-of-the-art’ command and control operating system implemented in their control rooms. The forces must now revise these plans.

Despite these setbacks, we recognise what the force has achieved in relation to technology improvement. For example, officers have access to force systems through mobile tablets. They also use body-worn video to help gather evidence. Both will soon be replaced with next-generation devices. And the force’s £17.2m ICT investment over the next four years is likely to deliver benefits in the future.

**Planning for the future**

**Inadequate**

West Mercia Police’s planning for the future is inadequate.

The force knows that it needs to better understand future demand. There is no information on the division of demand between the forces. We are concerned that necessary research on this matter may be interrupted by the termination of the alliance with Warwickshire Police.

Considering the imminent end of the alliance, the force needs to understand fully the demand for the services that it shares with Warwickshire Police. And it is of paramount and immediate importance that services to the public are maintained throughout the transition.

It is a cause of concern that the force neither consulted the public and partners about the end of the alliance, nor provided details of a well-evidenced business case for its decision to terminate.

Financially, the force has a good track record. To date, the alliance has enabled savings of £35m. It is not clear at the time of this report how the imminent end of the alliance will have an impact on future savings plans, however. It is difficult to assess the rationale supporting the decision to terminate the alliance.
We expect both forces to work together as they transition to new operating models, and to make sure that there are no adverse effects for either the public or the workforce.

Currently, West Mercia is growing its workforce. It is set to have its highest number of officers since 2012 and it has just a few detective vacancies at a time of a national shortage. It now needs to maintain its recruitment and training capability. It also needs to make sure that it provides sufficient support to newly qualified investigators.

The force is committed to developing a workforce that can meet future demands. Next, it needs to deepen its understanding of the skills of its workforce, so that it can make best use of its talents.

**Cause of concern**

The force has not yet defined how all of its services to the public will operate in the future, nor has it agreed a smooth transition to a future operating model. And it has not consulted with the public on these important matters.

**Recommendations**

To address this cause of concern, we recommend that the force should immediately:

- clearly define its new operating model, ensuring all operational and support services are affordable and fit to protect the communities of West Mercia;
- agree arrangements with Warwickshire Police to secure a smooth transition to its future operating model, ensuring no disruption to public services; and
- improve its arrangements both to consult with the public about business planning and to feed back on changes made to service delivery as a result of such consultation.

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**

West Mercia Police has assessed the future demands for its services. Supported by its commercial partner, it has calculated statistical projections of future crime trends and calls for service. These projections form part of the work of the transformation programme for both West Mercia Police and Warwickshire Police. The data is being used by both forces to redesign their operating models. This data is serving West Mercia Police well in the context of the impending end of its alliance with Warwickshire Police. As the force rebuilds a future operating model, it is important for it to maintain its understanding of current demand and develop an accurate understanding of future demand pressures.

The force recognises that its understanding of future demand is incomplete. Many operational pressures are the result of factors that are more complex than
simply the number of 999/101 calls the force receives, and the volume of crime that is committed. Many investigations of crime involve detailed work with other professionals (for example, children’s services or domestic abuse support workers), to safeguard vulnerable people. These commitments are difficult to quantify in terms of required staffing levels. But they are an essential feature of force services. The force has plans in place to complete this research. However, we have concerns that the research, currently commissioned by the alliance, may be interrupted as the force’s relationship with Warwickshire Police changes. The force must do more to understand and meet future demand.

It will be particularly important for West Mercia Police to fully understand the demands on services that it shares with Warwickshire Police. These principally include major crime investigations, business support services (including HR, finance, procurement, estates and fleet) and some specialist services (for example, armed policing, dog support units and motorway patrols).

In 2012, when the forces established the alliance, they agreed to share the workloads in these areas between them, rather than to apportion them separately. As both forces transition out of the alliance, it is not clear how these services are to be provided in the future. It is important for both forces to understand the consequences of the separation. It is of paramount and immediate importance to assure the continued and uninterrupted provision of these services to the public. Both forces have set up transition teams to address this problem. This could be helped by better communication between the two forces.

**Understanding public expectations**

In West Mercia, the PCC takes the lead in public consultation in the five local policing areas. Dialogue with the public takes place in a range of ways. These include scheduled meetings at community forums, online surveys and newsletters. The commissioner’s priorities are explicit in both the force’s own policing plans and the commissioner’s work with the force.

There is no evidence of West Mercia Police having consulted the public in advance of its decision to end the alliance. This is a cause of concern. Such a substantial change to its operating model should be informed by the public’s views.

The force has latterly consulted its staff, but there was little evidence of subsequent public consultation to inform post-alliance planning. However, the force has consulted the public about a council tax precept increase, which will support its recruitment aims.

At a local level, there are good examples of officers using Twitter and Facebook to interact with the public. The force’s press and publicity unit supports some of this work. We found a good example in Redditch. There, local officers used the neighbourhood policing team’s Facebook page to identify a concern for local people (drunkenness at the town centre’s bandstand).

Local consultation is largely the responsibility of neighbourhood police and community support officers. Officers told us that local consultation with the public does not always influence how local priorities are decided. Strategic governance of consultation activities might see better use made of the consultation conducted by both local staff and the PCC.
Prioritising

The force failed to provide us with a well-evidenced business case on which the force’s decision to terminate the alliance was based. This is a cause of concern. It represents a significant omission within the business planning process.

In all other respects, the force closely aligns business and financial planning. It relies on a nationally recognised model to assess threats and risks, and sets out priorities within a control strategy.

The control strategy includes reference to the PCC’s priorities. It features domestic abuse, the exploitation of children and acquisitive crime as primary objectives for frontline staff.

The force is structured in its approach to aligning resources to its priorities. At monthly, high-level tasking meetings, it considers its performance in relation to control strategy priorities. It assigns extra resources to areas of operational pressure.

The force replicates these meetings in local policing areas, providing appropriate analysis. In this way, the force monitors its priorities properly and redirects resources to address operational concerns. Locally identified priorities are also considered in these local meetings.

The force’s analytical department provides quarterly performance data to assist local commanders. The department also predicts trends in some areas of demand and crime over the forthcoming months. This enables the force to adjust its operations accordingly.

Future workforce

The force has flexible recruitment plans in place as it enters a period of workforce growth. The PCC has pledged to increase staffing levels in response to increasing residents’ council tax contributions.

The alliance has maintained its capacity to recruit and train officers and staff, even during the period of austerity. It can adapt this capacity effectively. The force’s current campaign – to recruit an additional 215 constables – will bring it to the highest number of officers it has had since 2012.

The force also recruits through national initiatives. The direct entry inspector programme has attracted high numbers of applicants. The Police Now scheme, which has been used for neighbourhood policing, has also attracted substantial numbers of detective applicants. Force plans must make sure that recruitment and training capability are maintained so that it can achieve its aims for the workforce.

In all forces, we have looked carefully at capacity among detectives. This is because there is a national shortage of investigators. This shortage affects the quality of service that forces can give to victims.
West Mercia Police has close to its budgeted number of detectives, with only a few positions vacant. Alongside Warwickshire Police, the force has worked with the College of Policing to streamline detective training, accreditation and development. This has involved the early identification of those who are interested in a detective career, and the compression of instruction modules to shorten the length of the training period. However, a lack of support to achieve accreditation hinders newly trained detectives in securing the full range of skills needed for their roles. The force should review this situation to make sure that it gives newly qualified investigators enough support.

**Finance plans**

Alongside Warwickshire Police, the force has established a good track record since the beginning of the government’s restraint on public sector spending in 2010. Since then, the alliance has made savings of £35m from the combined West Mercia and Warwickshire police forces’ revenue budget of circa £300m. The force’s current mid-term financial plan strikes a good balance between further savings and areas of investment. The PCC has secured support from the public to raise the council tax precept contribution, based on an increase in contribution of £15 per Band D household. This has been an important factor in reversing cuts and recruitment freezes. The force’s establishment is now scheduled to increase to record numbers compared with recent years. This brings a mood of optimism to the force. In line with his priorities, the PCC is carrying out a consultation process to establish how these additional officers will be distributed across the force area. Areas of growth will include rural crime, victim support and crime prevention.

Alongside this growth, the force has identified a savings requirement of £16m from a base budget of £211m. Current plans indicate that more than £9m of these savings will be secured from efficiencies identified through the transformation programme. But the force has yet to identify £2.9m of these savings. The force has scheduled a drawdown in the mid-term financial plan.

However, the scale of savings that the alliance has achieved is now overshadowed by its imminent conclusion, as are West Mercia Police’s future savings plans. This is a cause of concern. The force has not provided a clear, evidenced business case underpinning the decision to end the alliance. The forces have not explored the underlying causes constructively and they have not done enough to settle differences. This has caused relations to deteriorate between the forces.

Sections 22A and 23A of the Police Act 1996 set out the framework for police collaborations. These sections place a statutory duty on chief constables and PCCs to ‘collaborate in the interest of efficiencies and effectiveness of their own and other police force areas’ (*Statutory Guidance for Police Collaboration*, Home Office, 2012).

Home Office guidance states that forces should terminate a collaborative arrangement within an agreed notice period. (The notice period for Warwickshire Police and West Mercia Police was set at 12 months within which the forces must agree an exit strategy). The guidance sets out a presumption that the withdrawal from collaborative arrangements should be subject to negotiation.
Warwickshire Police indicated that it was not anticipating the decision by West Mercia Police to end the alliance. West Mercia Police has provided the following reasons for its decision:
- Disproportionate resourcing of policing services across the two forces.
- Unsatisfactory and inefficient governance arrangements.
- Disagreements over projects to streamline business support services and call handling between the two forces.

Both forces provided examples of unequal service provision. However, alliance arrangements do provide for the pooling of budgets between both forces. There is no agreement to apportion costs in accordance with the use of shared resources. Also, as mentioned earlier in this report, the exact costs of these services have never been calculated. And the forces have no established mechanism for cost recovery.

Arguably, disputes of this nature could have been better resolved through negotiation. For example, new procedures could have been put in place to identify the pro rata use of shared services so that costs could be settled accordingly.

The alliance’s governance arrangements are linked to cost sharing. Where the two forces share services, they do so on the basis of West Mercia Police providing 69 percent of funding and Warwickshire Police 31 percent. This is a pro rata share of the funding that is available to both forces. Despite this, in law, both chief constables and PCCs have autonomous authority and accountability for their own force area. For several years, the forces agreed on the provision of shared services, and the means by which the alliance transformation programme would drive reform in both forces. The forces no longer agree about some areas, with the result that important joint projects that were intended to bring improvements to both forces will no longer be implemented. For example, better ways of working and financial efficiencies are important features of the STP project, which aims to bring support services into a single business directorate. This directorate was established to serve both forces and the STP project offers much potential. It has been developed with a commercial partner, and the projected savings have been benchmarked against several public sector and commercial organisations. Neither force can agree arrangements for the joint delivery of these services and the project is now at risk.

A similar position exists for a programme that was intended to secure closer working between the control rooms in each force. This has been a long-standing project. Benefits include a ‘state-of-the-art’ joint operating system (which was scheduled for implementation later this year), as well as reduced supervisory overheads, integration with other force databases, better customer care facilities, and greater capacity to answer and respond to 999/101 calls. The forces must now substantially revise the benefits of these change programmes and arrange independent provision.

Where disputes have arisen, both forces can state why the joint arrangements no longer meet their needs. For example, with reference to the STP project, Warwickshire Police seeks to retain some support services in its own force. In relation to the control rooms, West Mercia Police believes the two control rooms (one situated in each force) should operate as a single ‘virtual’ facility. But Warwickshire Police believes that they should operate independently.
These are just a few examples of friction between the forces. However, we consider that none of these matters, either in isolation or collectively, should be beyond resolution.

Following the decision by West Mercia Police to terminate the alliance, it stated its intention to renegotiate terms rather than cease the arrangement altogether. It appears to us that recourse to such formal action, rather than renegotiating within the framework of the existing alliance agreement, may have been unnecessarily robust.

The decision by West Mercia Police to end the alliance will bring to an end many years of effective joint working. It has had the effect of destabilising projects that were due to introduce new and efficient ways of working. And it has left both forces, and their communities, facing uncertain futures. West Mercia Police has, however, indicated a desire to continue to offer services in collaboration with others, including Warwickshire Police.

Since serving notice to discontinue its alliance with Warwickshire Police, the force has assessed all its services in depth. It has evaluated whether they are better offered as stand-alone services, in collaboration with other organisations, or hosted by one organisation and shared with another.

Until both forces have detailed plans that explain how they will operate in future, it is not possible to assess how efficient and effective they are likely to be. Whatever the outcome of these negotiations, we expect both forces to maintain public services and economies of scale, to avoid increased costs and to keep overheads to a minimum. These factors are essential to ensure that both forces maintain optimal investment in frontline services.

We also expect both forces to work together effectively as they transition to their new operating models. In March 2019, local policing separated successfully out of the alliance structure. However, there is much uncertainty about how all the transition plans will improve the way the forces operate in the future. This uncertainty prevents the creation of joint solutions and may be to the detriment of the services that both forces provide to the public.

**Leadership and workforce development**

The people services directorate is committed to developing a workforce that is fit to meet the demands of the future. In the past, both forces progressed workforce development as part of their alliance arrangements. This is now an area where the investment in people should bring future benefits. The force has made progress since we last inspected this area.

Historically, the alliance has developed ‘top 40’ and ‘top 140’ programmes. These programmes developed senior officers and members of staff through workshops on topics such as organisational development and unconscious bias.

This year, the force has also introduced a personalised leadership development programme. This is modelled on the national assessment centre for senior officers and members of staff. It gives those taking part access to personality...
profiling techniques and coaching. It is for chief inspector, superintendent and chief superintendent ranks, and police staff equivalents.

At more junior levels, career development is less well advanced. But a suitable plan is in place: the force has introduced a talent management programme that is giving good insight. Line managers are using it to assess competence. It is helping to signpost staff to development opportunities (such as secondments). And it identifies those who have the potential to lead the force in the future. These initiatives are new and will need time to become fully embedded through 2019.

Despite these developments, the force has yet to develop a full understanding of workforce skills. It has a register of the current skills and competencies of its police officers. But this does not extend beyond the operational training that officers need for their role (such as driving skills). Officers and staff may have a range of other valuable skills and qualifications. The register also lacks an assessment of the skills that may be needed to meet future policing demands. This is an area the force should explore to make sure that it is making best use of the full range of talents within its workforce, and to ready itself for the future.

Ambition to improve

We recognise the progress that the force has made in modelling its services for the future. With some certainty, the force can set out the capacity it needs to meet the demand placed on its services by the public.

These planning certainties are due to both the force’s analysis of demand (which forms part of the transformation programme) and its ongoing assessments of staff workload. Also, the chief officer team has a clear vision for the operating model of the future. The force is committed to ‘being cost effective, working with external organisations, supporting national and regional policing priorities, as well as making the force a great place to work’.

However, the force’s substantial investment in readying itself for a post-alliance future shows the scale of work needed to put effective arrangements in place.

We will only be able to assess whether the force’s services are affordable, and fit to protect its communities, when the new operating model has been clearly defined. It is important for both forces to agree arrangements for a smooth transition to their future operating models, so that there is no disruption to public services. The lack of clarity in these areas, as we approach October 2019, is a cause of concern. This will be the subject of close monitoring and further reporting.
Legitimacy
### Force in context

#### Comparison of West Mercia workforce ethnicity with local population

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>West Mercia proportion</th>
<th>Local population proportion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Black, Asian and minority ethnic as % of those with stated ethnicity</td>
<td>2.6%</td>
<td>3.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White as % of those with stated ethnicity</td>
<td>97.4%</td>
<td>96.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Stated as % of total</td>
<td>2.7%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Proportion of female officers in post

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>West Mercia proportion</th>
<th>England and Wales proportion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Proportion of female officers in post as of 31st March 2019</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Proportion of workforce without up-to-date security clearance as of 1 April 2019

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Proportion</th>
<th>West Mercia proportion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0%</td>
<td></td>
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</table>

Stop and search by ethnicity 12 months ending 31 March 2018

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Proportion</th>
<th>West Mercia disproportionality</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Stop and Search likelihood of BAME individuals compared to white individuals | 15.1 |

| Stop and Search likelihood of Black or Black British individuals compared to white individuals | 15.1 |

Number of stops and searches per 1,000 population 12 months ending 31 March 2018

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rate</th>
<th>West Mercia rate</th>
<th>England and Wales rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3.5</td>
<td></td>
<td>4.7</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
How legitimately does the force treat the public and its workforce?

Requires improvement

Summary

The force needs to improve in terms of how legitimately it treats the public and its workforce.

The force decides its priorities without community-based consultation. We note that there is some evidence of dissatisfaction within the community about the force’s decision to end its alliance with Warwickshire Police.

The force is inconsistent in its approach to unconscious bias and effective communications skills training.

The force could do more to understand its stop and search data. It could also do more to address disparities in different search types, and to address disproportionality.

The force is good at maintaining an ethical culture. Recent changes to its practices include training for custody staff about the needs of transgender people. The force also has an effective approach to tackling corruption. And it has an effective and comprehensive plan in place to tackle abuse of position for a sexual purpose.

The force has some way to go in terms of improving potential unfairness at work. There is less confidence about the force in some respects at its junior levels.

The workforce speaks highly of wellbeing support services. But we found examples of a lack of basic support, including an absence of psychological screening and trauma risk management for those who need it.

The force needs to manage poor performance among its workforce better than it does. It is working to address some perceptions of unfairness.
Treating the public fairly

Requires improvement

During our inspection, there were good examples of the neighbourhood policing team working with communities.

However, the force decides its priorities without community-based consultation. Some members of independent advisory groups (IAGs) feel that the force could work more meaningfully with the community. The force decided to end its alliance with Warwickshire Police without community consultation. We note that there is dissatisfaction about this decision in some quarters.

The force is inconsistent in its approach to unconscious bias and effective communications skills training. Some officers would welcome training on giving difficult messages.

The force could do more to understand its stop and search data. It could also do more to address disparities in different search types, and to address disproportionality.

The force needs to make sure that officers use body-worn video to record all stop and searches. It has complied with only some of the stop and search-related recommendations of our 2017 legitimacy report for all forces.

Areas for improvement

- The force should review its approach to unconscious bias and effective communications skills training to help it better achieve its community engagement aims.
- The force should better understand its stop and search data, particularly relating to disproportionality, using this understanding to make improvements to the way it uses stop and search.

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

Treating people fairly and respectfully

The force’s current approach to community engagement has limited influence on its priorities and strategic decision making.

The force has a range of strategies that promote community engagement. Some of its policies also reference procedural justice principles, the European Court of Human Rights and the Code of Ethics.

During our inspection, we saw good examples of the neighbourhood policing team working with communities, as well as more formal survey work that the force does to understand community needs. We also found that the force uses a range of channels,
including social and traditional media. Local officers could show that they had taken steps to remove barriers to communicating and working with traveller communities and young Asian males. And cadets carry out work in schools to improve engagement with young people.

However, staff said that the force identifies priorities through tasking meetings and not as a result of community-based consultation or engagement. IAGs had mixed views about community involvement. Some spoke positively of the work the force is doing. Others felt the force could do more to work meaningfully with the community.

Notably, the force did not carry out any community or partnership engagement before it announced its decision to end its alliance with Warwickshire Police. There is some concern about the decision and this concern was also expressed by some members of the police and crime panel.

The force has an inconsistent approach to unconscious bias and effective communications skills training. Some training has been provided through officer safety sessions, stop and search inputs and other courses. The force calculates that, across a range of different training sessions, around 65 percent of its workforce have received this training.

While the force had not formally trained some officers and staff, many we spoke to understand the principles of unconscious bias. Officers spoke of applying this knowledge when completing DASH risk assessments. They spoke of keeping an open mind and looking beyond the obvious to understand all risks present. Few had received any specific communications skills training. Officers said they would welcome training on delivering difficult messages.

**Using force**

Every year, all frontline officers receive two days of classroom-based and practical officer safety training. Officers in CID and command roles receive this training every two years on the basis that they use these skills less often.

The force’s intranet guidance on the appropriate use of force is limited and dated. The force states that 20 percent of officers do not have up-to-date officer safety training. The force complies with the requirement to record use of force. But it may be under-recording some types, such as compliant handcuffing. It is addressing this potential under-recording through an awareness campaign that includes posters and guidance.

In March 2019, the force introduced the Chronicle ICT system. This system enables officers to report use of force via their mobile devices. The force is expecting compliance to improve.

A use of force group reviews tactical patterns and trends to identify learning. It could give several examples of learning that had resulted from such monitoring. These included changes to training and equipment, as well as learning for individual officers and staff.

IAGs, youth forums, and the publication of information and data, all serve to scrutinise officers and staff in their use of force. IAGs are independently chaired. They are
diverse in their membership and representative of the communities they serve. IAGs have also taken part in training to improve officers’ understanding of community diversity. IAG members attend each local command team’s use of force scrutiny group meeting, as do representatives of UNISON and the Police Federation. As a result of feedback, the force has made improvements. These include giving greater detail to IAGs. Other examples include allowing IAG members to view body-worn video footage and to observe officer safety training. The force promotes its ride-along scheme well. This scheme is popular with the public, bringing scrutiny to policing activities.

**Using stop and search powers**

The force makes appropriate use of stop and search powers. But it could do more to understand its stop and search data, and address disproportionality. A new stop and search recording system will help to improve data, audit and accountability. The new system replaces manual audit methods.

Currently, the force is implementing training on what constitutes reasonable grounds for officers to carry out a stop and search. This training responds to a self-assessment exercise carried out by the force. It found that not all officers felt confident in using their powers under stop and search legislation. The self-assessment also found that most officers had received no stop and search training in the preceding 12 months.

The force now includes stop and search as part of annual officer safety training. In this way, it ensures officers’ full attendance. Officers said that this inclusion makes the annual training more relevant to their work. The force uses an educational video in stop and search training. It shows an encounter with an autistic boy and his adverse experiences with the police.

Supervisors check and endorse each stop and search record, making sure that corrective action is taken when necessary. Some officers reported receiving feedback emails on their use of the power. Supervisors and officers we spoke to clearly understood their responsibilities.

During our inspection, we reviewed a representative sample of 221 stop and search records. We did this to assess the reasonableness of the recorded grounds. Of those records, 78 percent contained reasonable grounds. Our assessment is based on the grounds recorded by the searching officer, and not the grounds that existed at the time of the search.

The force has since introduced new procedures. Stop and search is now subject to scrutiny through suitable governance structures. Governance is provided through the quarterly strategic group, chaired by an ACC. A superintendent is responsible for leading on force policy. The group reviews a comprehensive set of data. The force publishes a redacted version of this data on its public website.

There are detailed minutes of group meetings, with many actions raised and good representation. Attendees include representatives from the local policing areas, the training department, the professional standards department (PSD) and IAGs, as well as analysts.
Every month, a dedicated supervisor also reviews a minimum of ten stop and search records for each of the force’s five command units. The supervisor manages the auditing and reporting arrangements to inform the work of the strategic group and IAGs.

Each local policing area has stop and search SPOCs. They also attend internal stop and search tactical delivery meetings. One improvement that the force has made as a result of IAG consultation is the successful promotion of its ride-along scheme.

According to the force’s policy, officers must use body-worn video when carrying out stop and search activity. But almost half of stop and searches are not yet recorded. These cases are returned to the officer to record their rationale for not using body-worn video.

IAGs scrutinise a sample of stop and search records. The force selects the records. However, there is no robust and defensible rigour evident in the manner in which the force selects these records. Also, the sample size is very small.

Recently, some IAG members have been invited to review body-worn video footage of searches. This is a new development. IAGs also take part in the ride-along scheme to improve their understanding of police activities and to enable more effective scrutiny of the force’s work. IAG members told the force that the stop and search data pack contained jargon and was difficult to understand in places. The force listened and improved the data pack to the satisfaction of members.

Recently, the force has introduced further initiatives to improve its understanding of stop and search. However, it is too soon for us to assess their effectiveness. Initiatives include an invitation to the Heart of Worcester College to help the force improve youth engagement, and its use of a WhatsApp group to engage young people in a study of disproportionality within stop and search procedures. The force has also approached the University of Worcester to help it better understand its stop and search data.

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 on those; and
- publish the analysis and the action by July 2018.

The force has complied with some elements of this recommendation. It identifies and monitors the extent to which searches where nothing was found differ between people from different ethnicities. But it does not specifically identify if the searched-for item was found. And it does not do this across different types of searches (including separate identification of find rates for drug possession and supply-type offences). Also, it 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 a clear explanation of the factors affecting the disproportionality rate. But there was no obvious mention of the analysis that the
Ethical and lawful workforce behaviour

Good

The force is good at maintaining an ethical culture. Officers and staff have signed to confirm their receipt and understanding of the Code of Ethics. The workforce readily takes part in discussions about ethical dilemmas. Changes to the force’s practices include training for custody staff about transgender people’s needs.

The force is up to date with most elements of the vetting of its personnel and there are no backlogs. It complies with the national Vetting Code of Practice and has achieved our 2016 vetting recommendation. However, enhanced vetting is not up to date for a very small percentage of the workforce working in some of the most specialist roles.

The force has an effective approach to tackling corruption, including a people intelligence board (PIB). This maintains force integrity, public legitimacy and confidence.

We note that, in the absence of technical solutions, the force is reliant on the limited analytical capacity available within the anti-corruption unit (ACU).

The force has an effective and comprehensive plan in place to tackle abuse of position for a sexual purpose.

Areas for improvement

- The force should ensure that its counter-corruption unit has enough capability and capacity to counter corruption effectively and proactively; and 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.

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

West Mercia Police is good at maintaining an ethical culture. It has circulated the Code of Ethics well. Officers and staff advised our inspectors that they had signed to confirm both their receipt and understanding of the code. In consultation with the workforce, West Mercia Police has recently refreshed its values to promote a service ethos and raise awareness of its policing priorities. The force makes appropriate use of the national decision model. The Code of Ethics is a core element of that model.
In line with national guidance, West Mercia Police holds a quarterly ethics panel, chaired by the DCC. The committee invites ethical dilemmas from the workforce. It discusses them and shares some more widely with the organisation to stimulate discussion and encourage learning. There is a high response rate to such circulations, and some people told us that supervisors and colleagues discuss ethical issues in team meetings. The chair of the ethics committee also attends an external trust, integrity and ethics committee. This committee includes independent members.

The force’s learning from these groups is reflected in its changes to working practices. One example is the training it now gives to custody staff about the needs of transgender people. The ethics of stop and search also now feature in the force’s annual officer safety training.

The force is working to promote a no-blame culture, although some staff we spoke with were doubtful that such a culture existed at all levels. Chief officers have redoubled their efforts following a critical College of Policing peer review into internal communications. This was received alongside disappointing staff survey results. Chief officer road shows, blogs and other methods of communication are now encouraging more open discussion.

The force has appointed continuous improvement officers to promote a learning culture. Recently, it appointed an organisational learning manager. It is also setting up a ‘lessons learned’ board. But these initiatives are in the early stages of implementation. Therefore, it is too early for us to be able to assess their results. The force often shares Independent Office for Police Conduct (IOPC) national lessons learned with the appropriate force lead. Maintaining and fully establishing these activities will help to promote a no-blame culture and encourage the growth of a learning mindset across the force.

The force is up to date with most personnel vetting and it has no backlogs. The force complies with the national Vetting Code of Practice. The number of officers and staff without the minimum security clearance for their roles is substantially lower, and therefore better, than elsewhere in England and Wales.

The force has achieved our 2016 vetting recommendation. However, enhanced vetting is not up to date for a very small percentage of the workforce who operate in the most specialist roles. Therefore, not all those who work in relevant departments have been the subject of enhanced vetting and associated aftercare. The force is addressing this shortcoming. It has allocated a dedicated team to complete aftercare. It plans to bring all officers and staff up to date by February 2020.

The force carries out vetting of its external contractors. It has also secured agreement to involve members of IAGs in the appeals process. This will bring increased scrutiny, transparency and diversity to this process. The force has changed its vetting systems to enable it to monitor the results of its vetting decisions to identify any disparities between groups. When recruitment staff identify potentially disproportionate failures, the PSD reviews the relevant files. To date, all decision making has been found to be in line with the College of Policing’s authorised professional practice guidance. Effective vetting helps the force to maintain the integrity of its workforce and its information.
The force clarifies and reinforces standards of behaviour through policies, training, workforce discussions and publications. It asks all officers and staff to sign an annual integrity health check. This has resulted in increases of 55 percent in business interest applications and 25 percent in reports of notifiable associations. The force has a review process for business interests. But it does no proactive monitoring unless this is triggered by specific intelligence. Reinforcing and keeping these standards help the force to maintain public legitimacy. They also encourage the public to work with the force to tackle crime and ASB.

**Tackling corruption**

West Mercia Police has an effective approach to tackling corruption. The force has a current PSD strategic threat assessment and a control strategy. It also has a PIB. The board reviews analysis and information about potential internal risks.

Due to ICT infrastructure problems, the force cannot yet fully monitor all its ICT systems. However, it has approved a business case and set aside funds to purchase such a system when infrastructure improvements allow. In the meantime, the PSD has completed a list of the auditing capability of the force.

The ACU has a good understanding of its auditing capability. An ACU analyst is developing a proactive approach to the analysis of ICT systems, so the force can identify officers and staff who may pose a risk of corruption. This means that currently the force is very reliant on limited ACU analytical capacity in the absence of other technical solutions.

Other abstractions, such as freedom of information requests and support to management meetings, further reduce analytical capacity. Despite these problems, the force’s approach to tackling corruption helps it to uncover (and deal effectively with) corruption risks. This maintains force integrity, public legitimacy and confidence.

The force views abuse of position for a sexual purpose as a serious corruption risk. It has an effective and comprehensive plan in place to tackle it. Activities include a ‘Don’t cross the line’ communications plan, supported by a range of internal and external materials. The IOPC confirms that the force refers allegations promptly.

In November 2018, the PSD hosted a ‘Tackling police corruption in partnership’ event. It was well attended by different agencies. The event promoted awareness of the problems caused by corruption and the importance of early reporting to tackle concerns, including the abuse of position for a sexual purpose. Delegates included adult safeguarding services, probation services, health trusts, a rape and sexual abuse support centre, Women’s Aid, a drug and alcohol service, and children’s services.

Most of the officers and staff we spoke to demonstrated an understanding of the risks of abuse of position for a sexual purpose. They were confident when talking about it. And they knew how to raise concerns. The force gives supervisors a presentation on warning signs and key indicators, together with a checklist. The force has also tested workforce understanding through its continuous service improvement teams. The monthly PSD bulletin covers notable cases of abuse of position for a sexual purpose. It also reinforces standards and reporting expectations.
These processes enable the force to identify and address the threat of abuse of position for a sexual purpose.

**Treating the workforce fairly**

Requires improvement

The force has some way to go in terms of improving potential unfairness at work. There is less confidence about the force at its junior levels.

According to our review, the force runs its grievance process well, but not all staff trust it. By contrast, the workforce spoke positively about initiatives such as ‘100 little things’.

There are concerns about the progression of women in the workforce and the fact that the force is not fully representative of the communities it serves. The force is working on both counts: for example, there are activities in place to advise black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) candidates about job applications. The chief constable has a vision of a representative workforce by 2025.

The force has much work to do during the nominated year of wellbeing. The workforce speaks highly of wellbeing support services, of their relationships with supervisors and of the peer support network. But we found examples of a lack of basic support, including an absence of psychological screening and trauma risk management for those who need it.

The force needs to manage poor performance among its workforce better than it does. It is working to address some perceptions of unfairness.

**Areas for improvement**

- The force should ensure it provides suitable training, support and capacity for its supervisors so that they have the necessary time to recognise the signs and provide the necessary early intervention response for managing wellbeing issues.
- The force should improve how it manages individual performance and identifies talent, ensuring reviews are consistently and fairly applied across the workforce and valued by all, and that poor performance is managed consistently.
- The force should ensure that it provides suitable training, support and capacity for its supervisors so that they are fully equipped and confident to manage the performance and development of their staff, including effectively managing poor performance and identifying talent.
- The force should ensure that its promotion and selection processes are accessible and transparent and are perceived by the workforce as fair.
We set out our detailed findings below. These are the basis for our judgment of the force’s performance in this area.

**Improving fairness at work**

West Mercia Police is committed to identifying and improving potential unfairness at work. But its efforts have yet to make a meaningful difference for the workforce.

The force uses a range of formal and informal methods for leaders to seek workforce feedback and challenge. These include surveys, roadshows, blogs and other forums. This activity supports the force’s confidence strategy, which aims to improve confidence both internally and externally. Staff associations and senior managers described positive relationships with chief officers. Some officers and staff said there had been a significant improvement in the visibility of chief officers, superintending ranks and chief inspectors. It is clear that the force is making efforts to improve workforce engagement.

However, these efforts are not yet universally valued and there is less confidence at more junior levels of the organisation. The workforce perceives that the force is conducting consultation after change, rather than beforehand, when their contributions could inform decision making. There is also a feeling that the force does not act on the results of surveys. Casual comments by managers can undermine engagement efforts.

Our grievance file review identified that the force runs its grievance process well. It gives appropriate support to those who access it. Recent changes to the process have made the procedure less bureaucratic. However, not all staff trust the process. Some are cautious of using it because of fears that they may be stigmatised. They were also doubtful that it would achieve meaningful outcomes. Officers at both junior and senior ranks said that early action to address issues was preferable to the more formal process. However, early action relies on effective and consistent line management, which is not always in place in all teams and departments.

The DCC chairs the workforce management group. It meets bi-monthly to identify fairness issues and trends from grievance processes. The PIB also offers an effective forum for scrutinising workforce information and data. The PIB has representation from the PSD and departments responsible for force resources and demand, health and wellbeing, and workforce diversity and inclusion. The PIB also reviews complaints from the public. The workforce spoke positively of initiatives such as ‘100 little things’. Clearly, the force makes changes as a direct result of suggestions made through that scheme.

The force recognises that it is not representative of the communities it serves. The strategic assessment identifies a need to improve data on faith, disability and sexual orientation. Yet staff are reluctant to declare these personal details. There are concerns about the progression of women in the workforce. Some staff also cite the challenges of force geography as a barrier to applying for posts that might result in them having to travel long distances each day. A series of chief officer roadshows sees senior leaders travelling around this large rural force to better engage the workforce. The roadshows are intended to build workplace trust and confidence in line with the force’s confidence strategy. The women’s network is supporting potential
candidates to help increase female representation across the workforce, and to improve the gender balance in roles such as firearms.

The chief constable has a vision of a representative workforce by 2025 and staff are members of the national Positive Action Practitioner Alliance.

The force analyses data to understand disparities in recruitment, retention and progression. Analysis has helped it to identify where BAME candidates are lost in recruitment processes. The analysis shows that, despite high levels of BAME applications in late 2018, no candidates were successfully appointed. Diversity and inclusion groups are offering suitable forums to improve diversity. And recruitment events, delivered with neighbourhood policing team support, are also focusing on specific population groups. These activities are particularly focused on providing BAME candidates with information about application processes so that candidates are better able to present relevant information.

Members of staff networks attend recruitment events. Chief officers consult them about retention and progression. Members feel that chief officers value these views.

The force has recruited certain staff roles (such as ICT) through a specialist recruitment agency. The force has appointed candidates on the basis of their understanding of diversity and inclusion. The PSD has also taken steps to understand and tackle disproportionality. These steps include reviews of both complaint cases and changes that have been made to HR systems, to identify causes of disparity.

**Supporting workforce wellbeing**

Support to workforce wellbeing requires improvement.

The introduction of the West Mercia Police health and wellbeing board, chaired by the DCC, is viewed positively. The force has embarked on a substantial wellbeing programme that has a dedicated co-ordinator. The board has carried out a ‘Blue Light’ assessment and developed an action plan.

There are signs that the workforce is beginning to value wellbeing efforts. But the force still has much work to do during the nominated year of wellbeing. Those who have accessed wellbeing support services spoke positively about them. Officers and staff could give examples of the wellbeing initiatives promoted by the force (couch to 5K; Blue Light; peer support network; gyms; PAM Assist). They also spoke positively of their relationships with supervisors. Line managers recognise their responsibilities for wellbeing. But some feel they lack the skills or time to carry out these responsibilities as effectively as they would like to.

Strategic boards monitor management information, including sickness, staff survey results and feedback from welfare officers. When it can, the force takes action to improve wellbeing. It has appointed a welfare officer, gives supervisor training and publishes support materials on the intranet. Staff regard the peer supporter network positively, although supporters themselves spoke of a lack of central co-ordination of their role. Poor mental health and psychological problems are the primary cause of absence in the workforce. Many we spoke to considered access to consistent supervision, and pressures of demand, as obstacles to better workplace wellbeing. These people view the force’s wellbeing campaigns with some scepticism.
Some officers who investigate serious sexual offences and child abuse cases are not given psychological health screening. Some teams do not have access to trained trauma risk management (or similar) practitioners who can help colleagues in the immediate aftermath of distressing incidents. We also found examples of a lack of basic support. These included no return to work interviews and no supervisor contact for staff during periods of absence. Support during longer-term absence is also lacking, including for those on maternity leave. Consistent supervision appears to be a key factor in the provision of effective wellbeing support to the workforce. This includes support to those who are subject to misconduct investigations and complaints.

Staff associations welcome the force’s commitment to keeping newly promoted sergeants in post for two years.

The quality of referrals that the force makes to occupational health (OH) is also dependent on the first-line manager. However, once referred, the force offers adequate occupational health support. A welfare lead works confidentially with staff who need support. Feedback from people who have used this service highlights concerns about OH waiting times. But, once seen, staff feel that the quality of service is good. The force has invested in additional staff and reviewed how the OH department functions. The range of preventative measures that is available to improve workforce wellbeing is yet to be fully established and valued by the workforce.

Managing performance and development of officers and staff

Arrangements for the assessment, development and management of the individual performance of officers and staff are inconsistent. The chief officer team has created momentum about the importance of annual performance reviews (PDRs). But many staff still believe they can opt out of the process. This is because the workforce considers the PDR to be a requirement only for those seeking promotion or development. However, it is clear that the force has encouraged PDR use in the recent sergeant promotion process. The force monitors and publishes PDR completion rates on its intranet. The workforce management group encourages senior leadership teams to promote compliance. But PDR completion rates on the HR system are only at 60 percent.

The force does not manage poor performance among its workforce as well as it could. It often escalates problems to an inappropriate level, instead of managing them effectively at a local level. There is a view that some first-line managers lack the confidence to deal with staff positively but fairly. Some supervisors are concerned that they may be subject to complaints if they try to manage poor performance. Supervisors also spoke of not having enough time to manage poor performance effectively. The workforce said that high workloads and frequent changes in supervisor and supervisor capacity are barriers to managing performance. During our inspection, we saw examples of good supervision and performance management. But, force-wide, these were inconsistent.

From April 2019, the force planned to adopt the competency and values framework as part of its promotion and development arrangements. This focus should help the force to ensure that appraisal processes are completed, and that officers and staff record appropriate evidence of competence.
A document for line managers gives a step-by-step guide on recording annual appraisals and conducting one-to-one meetings. It also covers the new MAX programme. The force expects managers to meet their staff more regularly, and to record those meetings and their outcomes. The workforce views the introduction of mentoring schemes, talent management and the MAX programme positively. But these initiatives are yet to be fully embedded. Without an established, effective and consistent performance management process, the force will not be able to maximise the potential of its workforce.

The force makes decisions about temporary promotions locally. This has led to perceptions of unfairness. The central workforce management group is scrutinising these decisions to address the problem, and to improve communication about temporary promotion opportunities and decisions.

The workforce also perceives as inconsistent the opportunity for short-term secondments. It will take some time for the force to reinvigorate and fully implement its new MAX programme, performance management and talent management arrangements. We will revisit their progress during our next inspection.

The workforce perceives substantive promotion processes as fair and transparent. However, the force has not invited representatives from support networks to sit as independent members on promotion boards. Despite this, representatives for the staff associations reported a good mix of successful candidates.
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.

**Most similar groups**

We compare each force’s crime rate with the average rate for forces in its most similar group (MSG). MSGs are groups of similar police forces, based on analysis of demographic, social and economic factors which relate to crime. We could not identify any forces similar to City of London Police. Every other force has its own group of up to seven other forces which it is most similar to.

An MSG’s crime rate is the sum of the recorded crimes in all the group’s forces divided by its total population. All of the most similar forces (including the force being compared) are included in calculating the MSG average.
More information about MSGs can be found on our website.

Population

For all uses of population as a denominator in our calculations, unless otherwise noted, we use ONS mid-2018 population estimates.

Survey of police workforce

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 0 and 920. 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 May and 31 July 2018 and assessed them against several criteria. We reviewed 60 case files in each force, except for the Metropolitan Police Service 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 July 2019 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 HMICFRS inspection. Therefore, 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 2019*.

**Domestic abuse outcomes**

In England and Wales, 29 police forces provide domestic abuse outcomes data through the Home Office data hub (HODH) every month. We collected this data directly from the remaining 14 forces.

Domestic abuse outcome proportions show the percentage of crimes recorded in the 12 months ending 31 March 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.

**Workforce figures (including ethnicity and gender)**

This data was obtained 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.