

PEEL 2021/22

Police effectiveness, efficiency and legitimacy

An inspection of Merseyside Police

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Overall summary

Our judgments

Our inspection assessed how good Merseyside Police is in 13 areas of policing. We make graded judgments in 11 of these 13 as follows:

Outstanding	Good	Adequate	Requires improvement	Inadequate
Disrupting serious organised crime	Investigating crime	Supporting victims		
	Preventing crime			
	Recording data about crime			
	Treatment of the public			
	Responding to the public			
	Protecting vulnerable people			
	Managing offenders			
	Developing a positive workplace			
	Good use of resources			

We also inspected how well Merseyside Police meets its obligations under the [Strategic Policing Requirement](#), and how well it protects the public from armed threats. We do not make graded judgments in these areas.

We set out our detailed findings on the things the force is doing well and where it should improve in the rest of this report.

Three forces volunteered to pilot our new approach to PEEL. These forces were:

- Dyfed-Powys Police;
- Suffolk Constabulary; and
- Merseyside Police.

Because these forces had volunteered to pilot our new approach to our PEEL inspections, we offered them a revisit during which we reviewed any new evidence that might alter one of our judgments. We didn't fully inspect the force again; we just focused on the areas that we had assessed the force as needing to improve on during our initial inspection.

We made our initial judgments in May 2021 and our revisit judgments in May 2022.

Data in this report

For more information, please [view this report on our website](#) and select the 'About the data' section.

Important changes to PEEL

In 2014, we introduced our police effectiveness, efficiency and legitimacy (PEEL) inspections, which assess the performance of all 43 police forces in England and Wales. Since then, we have been continuously adapting our approach and this year has seen the most significant changes yet.

We are moving to a more intelligence-led, continual assessment approach, rather than the annual [PEEL inspections](#) we used in previous years. For instance, we have integrated our rolling crime data integrity inspections into these PEEL assessments. Our PEEL victim service assessment will now include a crime data integrity element in at least every other assessment. We have also changed our approach to graded judgments. We now assess forces against the characteristics of good performance, set out in the [PEEL Assessment Framework 2021/22](#), and we more clearly link our judgments to [causes of concern](#) and areas for improvement. We have also expanded our previous four-tier system of judgments to five tiers. As a result, we can state more precisely where we consider improvement is needed and highlight more effectively the best ways of doing things.

However, these changes mean that it isn't possible to make direct comparisons between the grades awarded this year with those from previous PEEL inspections. A reduction in grade, particularly from good to adequate, doesn't necessarily mean that there has been a reduction in performance, unless we say so in the report.

HM Inspector's observations

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

These are the main findings I consider most important from our assessments of the force over the last year.

The force's performance in dealing with serious and organised crime is outstanding

The force has made this a priority and understands threats well. It works with others throughout Merseyside to reduce the impact of crime. It disrupts gangs bringing in drugs from other areas in innovative ways and consults the public on how to use the money it seizes to benefit the community.

The force is good at protecting vulnerable people and preventing crime

Merseyside Police has a pioneering way of identifying signs that children might be at risk of exploitation, and the force is also able to identify adults who might pose a risk through violence, alcohol or drugs.

The force provides expert support to officers that arrive first at an incident

I would like to highlight the real-time specialist advice offered to officers and paramedics who arrive first at the scene. This good practice helps officers gather evidence. Call handlers understand when people are vulnerable.

The force investigates crimes effectively

Investigations are allocated to officers with the right skills and most are effective. It has an innovative facility to examine and classify firearms, component parts and ammunition that supports its own and other forces' investigations.

The force is efficiently run and supports its workforce well

Merseyside Police manages its finances well and understands and plans for the demands it faces. It supports and protects its workforce and has an inclusive culture. Leaders have a clear focus on wellbeing.

The force could give a better service to victims by improving its records

Merseyside Police's service to victims of crime is adequate. It can do more to improve officers' understanding of victims' needs during investigations. The force can also improve how it records the reasons why a victim withdraws their support for an investigation and whether it has considered pursuing a prosecution despite this.

The force could respond quicker to priority calls for service

The force does not respond quickly enough to all of its priority calls and needs to take steps to improve this so the public receives an appropriate timely service when they call for help.



Matt Parr

HM Inspector of Constabulary

Reducing crime assessment

We have identified seven themes underpinning a force's ability to reduce crime effectively which, taken together, allow us to assess the extent to which the force is doing all it can to reduce crime. This is a narrative assessment. Police-recorded crime figures can be affected by variations and changes in recording policy and practice, making it difficult to make comparisons over time.

The force has a focus on crime prevention. We found good examples of problem solving and officers working with partner agencies to prevent crime and [safeguard](#) vulnerable people. Other factors contributing to the force's ability to reduce crime are:

- Call handlers accurately use [THRIVE](#) to identify vulnerability, repeat victims and accurately record crime.
- Live-time advice from subject matter experts and supervisors is given to response and resolution officers to help them at incidents.
- A central problem-solving team and problem-solving advisors in local policing areas for advice and local direction. Problem-solving also takes place in teams outside local policing.
- Officers and [staff](#) working with partner agencies take early action to address root causes and reduce demand, while protecting the individual from further harm.
- Vulnerability and safeguarding needs are identified and mitigated in most investigations.
- Most investigations proceed on time and are proportionate and effective.
- The force records crime well and has improved how it records rapes. Outcomes are mostly used well and are right for the victim.
- [Integrated offender management](#) arrangements reduce re-offending through a real focus on rehabilitation of offenders.

We are pleased that the force is addressing the right areas of policing to reduce crime. But there are some areas that may negatively affect the force's ability to reduce crime. These are:

- not always attending priority calls for service in agreed timescales; and
- not completing victim needs assessments in all cases, which could lead to victims withdrawing support for prosecutions.

Providing a service to the victims of crime

Adequate

Merseyside Police is adequate at providing a service to victims of crime.

Good

Merseyside Police is good at recording crime.

Areas for improvement

The force needs to improve its consideration of enhanced services to vulnerable victims and how it records victim needs assessments in investigations

The victim needs assessment is an established way to understand and document a person's requirements. It also shows that the force has considered using enhanced services to support people, such as those who are vulnerable, intimidated or persistently targeted, or are victims of serious crime. In our fieldwork we found that in more than half of cases we reviewed such assessments and considerations weren't recorded. Not considering victims' needs consistently could lead to vulnerable people not supporting prosecutions, or losing faith in the criminal justice process. The force has taken steps to educate its workforce about the importance of complying with the rights in the [Victims' Code of Practice](#) and gives some practical support to officers so that they can do this. But it can still do more to make sure that they routinely ask victims about the support they need and record it effectively.

The force should improve how it records victim decisions and their reasons for withdrawing support for investigations, and make sure it documents whether evidence-led prosecutions have been considered in all such cases

Records don't consistently show victim decisions to withdraw support for investigations, and their reasons. [Domestic abuse](#) is still a priority for the force, and it has focused on increasing officers' understanding of evidence-led prosecutions. This is positive, but more could be done to make sure it translates into recording the reasons behind the withdrawal of support and to show where evidence-led prosecutions have been considered. Recording this is important. It helps the force know why victims don't support police action and lets them make sure the service provided to the victim doesn't contribute to their decision. Documenting whether or not a prosecution can proceed without such support means the force is taking all steps to pursue offenders when victims disengage and it can protect vulnerable people from further harm.

Main findings

In this section we set out our main findings that relate to how well the force provides a service to victims of crime.

The force is improving its response to emergency and 101 calls

On 31 May 2022, the Home Office published data on 999 call answering times. Call answering time is the time taken for a call to be transferred to a force, and the time taken by that force to answer it. In England and Wales, forces should aim to answer 90 percent of these calls within 10 seconds.

Since the Home Office hadn't published this data at the time we made our judgment, we have used data provided by forces to assess how quickly they answer 999 calls. In the future, we will use the data supplied by the Home Office.

The force has seen an increase in demand for both emergency and non-emergency calls since our last inspection. It told us that in the year ending 31 March 2022 it saw an 18 percent increase in emergency calls and an 8 percent increase in non-emergency calls, compared to the previous year. The force isn't consistently meeting the national target of answering 90 percent of emergency calls within 10 seconds. It told us it achieved an average of 86.4 percent in the year ending 31 March 2022. This is an improvement compared to the year ending 31 March 2020, when it answered 82.1 percent within 10 seconds. It is also improving the number of [101](#) calls it answers in 60 seconds. This is monitored by the force per its own service-level agreement. It answered 74.9 percent in the year ending 31 March 2022 compared to 25.1 percent in the year ending 31 March 2020.

Call handlers treat the public well and offer good advice to victims of crime

Call handlers are polite, professional and show empathy on most occasions. They give good advice, including on preventing crime and the preserving evidence where needed. We found some very good examples of call handlers displaying professionalism and support for vulnerable victims.

Merseyside Police is good at recording reported crime

We estimate that the force is recording 93.8 percent (with a confidence interval of +/- 2.3 percent) of all reported crime (excluding fraud). It records sexual offences very well, with an estimated 98.0 percent (with a confidence interval of +/- 2.5 percent) of sexual offences being recorded. It also records domestic abuse crime very well, with 130 offences of 140 recorded from the samples we examined in our fieldwork. It also recorded all (44) reports of rape we reviewed, which is excellent.

The force isn't as good at recording violent crime (an estimated 91.3 percent with a confidence interval of +/- 3.8 percent). We found not all behavioural crimes, such as [harassment](#), [stalking](#) and [coercive and controlling behaviour](#), are recorded. Some officers believe that a course of conduct for harassment needs to occur within a three-month period. The force may wish to make sure officers have a better understanding of the wider history of offences in these cases.

The force records personal anti-social behaviour crimes well

Our audit examined 50 personal [anti-social behaviour](#) (ASB-P) incidents dated October 2020. Where 28 crimes should have been recorded, only four were. At that time, there appeared to be little understanding of the difference between ASB-P and targeted personal and behavioural crime such as harassment and stalking, where incidents can occur over long periods of time. We saw examples where some victims explained to police that they were frightened, living in fear and anxious but these concerns were not investigated further.

Since the audit, the force has taken rapid steps to improve workforce understanding and accurate recording of ASB-P crimes. It has developed and provided training, and supported call handlers with a question set designed for these incidents. Every incident log that is opened or closed with the ASB-P code is reviewed to make sure crimes are recorded. Performance is tracked at the crime data integrity meeting. The force told us that performance improvement has been maintained, with very few errors identified. Data we have seen mostly showed only one or no errors per dip sample. This is excellent news and means victims are better protected.

The force can improve how quickly it records crime

In our crime data integrity audit we examined how soon crimes are recorded. Our findings showed 245 of 288 (85 percent) of violent and sexual offences we reviewed were recorded in the required 24 hours. Of rape offences we reviewed, 30 of 44 (68 percent) were recorded in one day; for other offences this was 69 percent (72 of 105). Most crimes could have been recorded at first report to the [control room](#), but were left for attending officers to complete. It is important that the force records crime at the earliest opportunity as it shows belief in the victim's view that a crime has occurred in the first instance.

The force provides a good level of governance and audit scrutiny for crimes

Crime data integrity features in important strategic governance meetings with visible [chief officer](#) leadership and engagement. The force also has an active and regular audit function to review according to risk and emerging issues. Domestic abuse and sexual offences are audited daily, which is positive and reflects the risk in these crime categories. All audit results are aggregated in an action plan which drives continuous improvement. This makes sure learning can be embedded across the force.

Decisions to finalise investigations using cautions and community resolution don't always consider or record the victim's views

Our audit shows that not all victims are consulted before cautions are administered. Where there is consultation, there is no auditable record endorsed by the victim confirming their views or expectations. It is a similar picture for investigations resulting in a [community resolution](#). This is an alternative way of dealing with less serious crimes and allows officers to use their professional judgement when dealing with offenders for low-level offences such as minor public order, criminal damage and theft, where the victim has agreed that they do not want the police to take formal action. Only half of offences involving a victim show that the victim was consulted before the outcome in these cases, and a similar number have an auditable record. All victims should have an opportunity to be consulted and have their views recorded. A victim's views should be responded to and they should get the chance to influence the outcome of investigations.

Engaging with and treating the public with fairness and respect

Good

Merseyside Police is good at treating people fairly and with respect.

Main findings

In this section we set out our main findings that relate to treating people fairly and with respect.

The force is good at engaging with communities and seeks their views to understand what is important to them

The force has a central community engagement unit that coordinates its approach to engagement tailored to diverse communities. There are good links with the Merseyside [Independent Advisory Group](#) and a network of local community advisory groups, which help the force to understand community concerns. It also uses social media well; for example, sending out surveys to the public and using feedback received set community priorities. This is supported by the engagement strategy and officers and staff have a toolkit which helps them engage effectively. Local policing teams also visit schools and care homes and use pop-up surgeries and mobile police stations to meet the public.

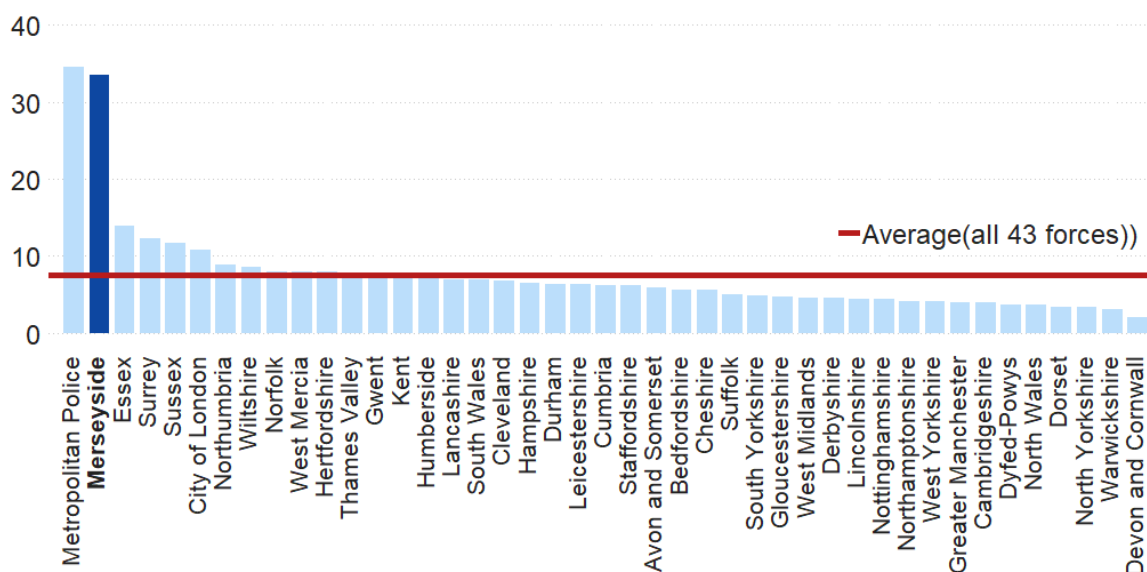
The force is enhancing workforce communication skills through its leadership framework programme

Officers should be fair and respectful when dealing with the public. Officers get training in [unconscious bias](#), mostly through e-learning. But training in softer skills, like active listening, negotiating, empathy and being able to explain their actions in a clear way, is also important. The force has worked with a local university to design a course for student officers to develop effective communications skills. This is part of initial training. It has also developed training to improve communication within its newly developed leadership framework programme. Work has started with first-line supervisors and the force will expand training to other staff during 2022. This is positive and officers will be able to apply these skills in their interactions with the public.

The force is improving its fair use of [stop search powers](#)

Merseyside Police provides stop search training to student officers and tells officers about changes in legislation or practice. Most of the officers we contacted told us they feel well trained. The force is the second highest user of stop search in England and Wales. It recorded 47,977 person stop searches in the year ending 31 March 2021.

Number of person stop searches per 1,000 population across forces in the year ending 31 March 2021



During our inspection, we reviewed a sample of 292 stop search records from 1 January 2020 to 31 December 2020. On the basis of this sample, we estimate that 89 percent (with a confidence interval of +/- 3.6 percent) of all stop searches by the force during this period had reasonable grounds recorded. This is broadly similar to the findings from our 2019 review. Of the records we reviewed for stop searches on people from ethnic minorities, 14 of 17 had reasonable grounds recorded. We also looked at some [body-worn video](#) recordings of stop search encounters which show how the officer interacted with the person searched. These show that most interactions are of a good standard.

The force monitors the use of stop search and use of force well

The force holds a regular public encounters group meeting. It is chaired by the force lead for the legitimate use of these powers and attended by other force representatives. The meeting monitors a comprehensive data set for stop search and use of force. It has reviewed differences between searches for the possession of drugs and searches for supply offences to build its understanding of search types. And it has considered how the use of stop search overlays with where crime happens. It also shares [organisational learning](#) from quality assurance and its external scrutiny processes. It has increased the data it monitors for use of force to understand how different tactics are used on people from minority ethnic groups. We know the force is also refreshing its processes for the completion of use of force forms, to help supervisors quality assure them more easily.

The force has effective external scrutiny in place for stop search and use of force

There are regular meetings which are independently chaired, with a mix of appropriately vetted independent advisory group members and some community representatives at each meeting. This brings a diverse group of people together and adds value to the external scrutiny that takes place. Several stop search and use of force encounters are reviewed by watching redacted body-worn video and examining records. These meetings work well. There is active discussion about the encounters, and members share their opinions openly in the meeting. They also complete an anonymous online survey which gives them further confidence that their honest views can be safely given. This information is used to give feedback to officers and their supervisors about the use of these powers. Trends are also discussed at the force's internal monitoring board for force-wide learning.

The force has taken steps to understand disproportionality in the use of stop search powers, but more analysis could be done

Data for the year ending 31 March 2021 shows that in Merseyside black people were twice as likely to be stopped and searched than white people. This is lower than the overall England and Wales rate of seven times as likely. The force monitors this disproportionality, identifying where rates of stop search differ according to ethnicity. It has published this data on its external website in its annual stop search report. But we found that more analysis could take place so that the force fully understands the reasons behind this apparent disproportionality. This analysis could also be published, which would build public confidence in the legitimacy of the use of stop search powers.

More can be done to improve supervisor monitoring of the use of stop search powers

Electronic stop search forms completed by officers are stored without being seen by a supervisor due to the direct submission from officers' handheld devices. This means that sergeants are not able to offer remedial advice and guidance to their teams at the point of submission. The force has taken steps to build quality assurance by dip sampling, reviewing completed records and viewing body-worn video, but this is not yet embedded practice for all sergeants. Supervisor review is critical to support fair and appropriate use of stop search powers and to help officers improve use.

The force monitors the number of supervisor quality assurance reviews, and it has told us that numbers are increasing. These reviews also identify learning, which is shared across the organisation. Examples include increasing how often officers ask people how they define their ethnicity, and being clear that the person is being detained for a search to take place.

Preventing crime and anti-social behaviour

Good

Merseyside Police is good at prevention and deterrence.

Main findings

In this section we set out our main findings that relate to prevention and deterrence.

The force's local policing model supports the prevention of crime and anti-social behaviour

The force has re-developed its structure for local policing since our last inspection and is investing in resources, which demonstrates the importance the force places on this area of policing. It has enhanced its approach with dedicated community, preventive policing and targeted teams. There is strategic governance in place through a board chaired by an assistant chief constable which means problem-solving and community priority setting are considered at force level. There has been recent support for a further increase in resources, including bringing an additional four sergeants and 53 constables into local policing. Some of these will form a new city centre team. The force has a clear prevention strategy that aligns with the force strategy. Preventing crime and anti-social behaviour is a main objective, meaning the workforce focuses on it in their daily activity and supports crime prevention well through problem-solving.

The force works well with partners to reduce demand and safeguard those vulnerable people who cause unnecessary demand for services

The force has some police community support officers (PCSOs) working in local authority-based early help hubs, a dedicated [missing persons](#) unit and a mental health triage care service. These approaches mean that officers work with partners to identify vulnerable people who make several calls to agencies, including the police, and to reduce harm. Working together, they address the cause early and reduce demand, while protecting the individual from further harm. We were given some positive examples of this approach, including where there was a reduction in calls by 95 percent from three people who generated high demand for services. This means people get the support they need and the police and partners can respond effectively to demand.

The force uses problem-solving well to address community concerns

The force has a central problem-solving team to direct the workforce. Each local policing area also has dedicated problem-solving advisors for advice and local direction. We know that the problem-solving teams are trialling problem-solving meetings with other organisations in some local authority areas. These meetings focus on current and emerging community problems, and put plans in place to address them. This is a positive development and will be extended to take place throughout Merseyside. The force uses the [OSARA](#) (which stands for objective, scanning, analysis, response and assessment) problem-solving model across local policing. Officers understand how to use it in their work, which we saw in the problem-solving plans we examined.

Problem-solving also takes place in other areas of work, and the force plans to extend training across the force. In-force training has been delayed understandably by the pandemic, but is a positive move to widen force understanding. It is evident that problem-solving is used to address community concerns as well as bespoke plans for specific needs. This means that the force can reduce harm and demand for its services, and achieve positive outcomes for the community.

More can be done to make all officers and staff aware of what works well when using problem-solving to address community problems

Merseyside's problem-solving plans contain basic evaluation of the lessons learned from policing activity to address a community concern. The coordinator in the central problem-solving team reviews all plans once activity is complete and there is some cost-benefit analysis to assess how successful work has been. Completed plans are stored on the force intranet and are accessible by all staff. But we found that not all community officers know they can find information on what works well and learn from others' experiences of problem-solving. We know that problem-solving teams do meet to discuss common themes, and this learning is shared. Further work is also being done to improve the intranet site, to help make examples of good practice easier to find, but this isn't yet in place. Making all officers and staff aware of their access to this information will allow the workforce to choose the most suitable approaches to problem-solving, which will get the best results for communities.

Force leaders recognise the effect of problem-solving and reward those who perform well

The force values the community and problem-solving work undertaken by its local policing teams and volunteers. The force Community First Awards, most recently held in April 2021, include awards for those performing well and others have been nominated for national awards for good work. This enables staff to remain engaged, feel valued and understand that the work they do is appreciated by their line managers. It also means that the workforce remains committed to problem-solving and to reducing the effect of crime and anti-social behaviour in its communities.

The force is investing in local policing to improve its response to demand

The force uses data to understand demand in its communities. It shows where the main demands for local policing are and has helped the force decide where to invest resources. The force is using uplift funding – national funds provided to increase police officer numbers across England and Wales - to enhance local policing. It has put more constables in the missing persons unit, which helps them manage the demands of enquiries. It has also invested in training, asset mapping and financial queries. The force has also increased the size of one of its local policing teams (Knowsley) in response to the demands the team faces there. And it has used funding to create 24 Safer Schools posts.

These investments show the importance of good local policing to the force and enable it to respond effectively to the public. The force needs more PCSOs. Constable recruitment affects PCSO numbers, but the force is now actively recruiting to reduce the gaps and will be back to establishment by early 2022. This is positive and means neighbourhood engagement can continue.

Responding to the public

Good

Merseyside Police is good at responding to the public.

Area for improvement

The force should improve its response to priority calls so that victims receive an appropriate service and investigative opportunities aren't missed

Merseyside Police routinely uses fewer call grades than some other forces. Most calls received from the public are graded either emergency or priority. The force does schedule some domestic abuse calls for appointments. Not separating all calls suitable for appointments from priority calls, when first assessed, means that some lower threat and risk incidents move to the bottom of the queue when new emergency or priority calls are received, and this can affect response times. We found the force doesn't meet its response target for attendance at priority calls more than half of the time.

The force monitors the continuing risk posed by delayed incidents. This can be seen through documented reviews of risk on incident logs. Dispatch supervisors, log managers in the control room and response supervisors can all leave a footprint to show that the risk is reviewed and understood. We found this is done in most circumstances. The force appropriately prioritises outstanding incidents by risk and not just by the length of time.

The force has identified some barriers to its ability to respond to priority calls within an hour. For example, approximately a quarter of priority calls could be dealt with in another way. It told us that it is now progressing a review of its response function, based on some of its early findings for demand management, and that some changes have been agreed. These will take time to implement. In the meantime the force needs to make sure it is exploring all opportunities to improve its response to priority calls, so that victims receive a prompt response when they need help and investigative opportunities aren't missed.

Main findings

In this section we set out our main findings that relate to how well the force responds to the public.

The force understands risk and vulnerability in calls from the public

During the last PEEL inspection of Merseyside Police we found that THRIVE was recorded for only a few high-risk incident types. We identified this as an area for improvement (AFI) so that the force might more consistently use and record the risk assessment and reassess risks when there are delays in deployment. This year our findings show the force has improved. It has extended the use of THRIVE to all incidents except for emergency calls and missing persons calls, which have a separate risk assessment process. Risk assessments are more consistently used and recorded in the incident.

The force has also added a standard question to check whether a caller is a repeat victim. It monitors this through its performance data. This is important as it helps the force understand whether it is providing the appropriate service or response for people's needs. This development is positive news and gives us confidence that call handlers can consistently identify repeat victims and determine the right response to incidents.

The force works in partnership with mental health services effectively, to support the vulnerable and protect them from further harm

In partnership with health trusts, the force offers a mental health triage service which sees mental health practitioners attending calls with officers. These services operate across the force area mainly covering peak demand times of the day. Having practitioners working with officers enables them to consider how best to deal with calls involving mental health concerns. They have access to health records, provide professional advice and support police action. The response and resolution team monitors incidents, the response provided and use of mental health powers such as [section 136 of the Mental Health Act 1983](#). We saw a positive example of how this expert advice and support has reduced the excessive demands on the force by one person. This means that people with mental health problems get an appropriate service when they call.

Responding to calls to support people in mental health crisis and transport them to appropriate facilities for assessment means response officers are often waiting for specialists to release detainees from officer care. This places additional demand on response and resolution teams in Merseyside. The force is involved in a six-month pilot with NHS England to use an appropriately skilled private company to help monitor some people who need a mental health assessment while in a place of safety. This is still in the early stages, but the force told us it is already seeing a positive impact on response demand, as officers are released back to patrol more quickly.

Force experts and supervisors offer live-time advice to first responders supporting the early gathering of evidence at scenes, and this is good practice

Response and resolution officers are the first responders to calls for service requiring attendance. During our inspection, we found that specialist officers and supervisors actively monitor radio transmissions and document advice for attending officers on the command and control system incident log. This means that attending officers know what action to consider at scenes so that early evidence is gathered effectively. This is seen as good practice and supports victims and effective investigations.

Officers attending incidents understand and assess vulnerability well

The force uses its own risk assessment (MERIT) to assess and understand risk and vulnerability when attending domestic abuse incidents. It also uses VPRF1 forms for referrals for other vulnerable adults and children at all incidents. Officers understand vulnerability and most referral forms and domestic abuse risk assessments are completed well. We also saw positive feedback from specialist officers who receive those referrals, which suggests that referrals and understanding of vulnerability are good. Officers are also clear about their safeguarding responsibilities when attending incidents. This is positive, and vulnerable people can be assured about the measures being taken to prevent further harm.

Officer and staff wellbeing in the control room and response and resolution is understood and prioritised

During our inspection we visited and spoke to control room staff. Most told us that their workload and working hours are manageable. The change to a 12-hour shift pattern is popular, and offers a balance between meeting demands and wellbeing. The force has also created a wellbeing room that staff can use to take time away from their desks and to have private wellbeing conversations with supervisors. Officers and staff are aware of the [TRiM](#) process and some control room staff are trained to provide support after a traumatic incident. We had feedback that having more TRiM-trained staff would further support control room staff and we told the force this. But, in general, we saw a positive picture of how workforce wellbeing is managed in the control room and response and resolution. Supporting those officers and staff well enables them to stay in work and provide essential service to the public.

Comprehensive training is in place for call handlers and supervisors and more is being considered through the response and resolution review

The force provides a comprehensive training programme for its call handlers. It is also developing a programme for a cohort of control room supervisors to build an accreditation portfolio and support their development. And as part of the review into the service model for response and resolution the force intends to professionalise the function and offer continuous professional development for the future by providing regular continuous professional development for its teams.

Investigating crime

Good

Merseyside Police is good at investigating crime.

Innovative practice

Merseyside Police is accredited for examining and classifying firearms, their component parts and ammunition

The force has a dedicated facility for examining and legally classifying firearms, their component parts and ammunition. It also provides test firing to understand how weapons and ammunition perform.

The Firearms Examination Unit is the only force-provided service in England and Wales to achieve national accreditation to ISO BS EN ISO/IEC 17025, as well as the Forensic Science Regulators Codes of Practice and Conduct.

The force extends the use of these facilities to other police services, so that investigations into gun-enabled crime are timely and thorough.

Main findings

In this section we set out our main findings that relate to how well the force investigates crime.

Merseyside Police has a comprehensive view of its current crime demand

The force uses Delphi, its performance dashboard, to give leaders and the workforce an overview of crime and anti-social behaviour patterns, and trends over time. It is an important tool in understanding current demand across the force and to support continuous improvement in investigations and performance. It also helps officers to see where they can improve, shows them their current workload and enables their supervisors to have an overview of the demands on their team. The system also shows the number of investigations that are open and allocated to teams, where there are named suspects in an investigation and helps identify those cases where suspects are released on [bail](#) or [under investigation](#). Having a comprehensive view of all crime in this way means that investigations are progressed and victims should get justice.

The force has robust governance in place to achieve quality investigations

The force seeks to continuously improve the quality of investigations and the Investigations department places pride, quality and wellbeing at the centre of its work. There are quality objectives to drive investigation improvement, to make sure supervisor reviews are effective and to get appropriate outcomes for victims of crime. Other areas such as response and resolution and local policing also have their own performance meetings, which results in prompt and good investigations. The force has focused on the number of crimes that are investigated for longer than one year. The force told us that the level has reduced from over 800 to 285. This is good news, and supports justice for those victims who have been awaiting a result in their case.

Most investigations are allocated to people with the right skills and are effective

We examined a sample of investigations to understand how well they are conducted and whether satisfactory outcomes are reached for victims. Our findings show almost all (23 of 24) of the investigations we reviewed were allocated to teams with the right skills to investigate them and most were effective, with positive outcomes for victims. This is an improvement since our previous inspection. Review processes by detective inspectors and above help to build and maintain standards, helping staff learn what is needed to close investigative gaps. The monthly crime scrutiny process reviews over 150 investigations each month. This brings further understanding of what good investigations look like and where some can improve.

The force has improved the quality of supervision for its investigations

The force has also improved the quality of supervision since our last inspection. Most investigations reviewed (10 of 17) had appropriate and effective supervision, including the creation of investigation plans to provide investigative support in 10 of 12 relevant cases. But there are still gaps. Some stalking and harassment cases had investigative opportunities that weren't taken, and we found a common link of ineffective supervision. We referred one of the cases back to the force during our fieldwork. The force should examine these cases so that investigations can improve and vulnerable people are better protected from harm.

The force is addressing the gaps in its number of detectives

In 2017, we issued a national recommendation to forces to address the shortfall in detective numbers. The force has made progress and told us it has reduced vacancies to 183 full time posts. It has an action plan in place with necessary detail to track progress. It is also addressing gaps in capability by using experienced skilled police staff investigators in 118 of the vacancies – most of whom are retired detectives. The plan also maps the force approach to build the capacity and skills of the workforce over the next few years. The force has a detective trainee programme and this has attracted a further 59 officers into these roles. It has also designed a degree-holder entry programme for direct entry as a detective, with the first cohort of 40 officers starting in May 2022. We know the force has had some difficulty in attracting officers who want to be detectives and it is now taking different approaches to enhance their offer. It offers a bonus payment to support officers with the expense of business attire. It gives officers the flexibility to pass the national investigators examination while in a trainee investigator role. It also maps its training needs every year so that it can plan for future demand for training in terms of skills and capability requirements.

The force tracks the evidence-led prosecutions it takes forward and understands outcomes well

Since our last inspection the force has provided further focus on domestic abuse cases and enhanced officer understanding on evidence-led prosecutions. The force told us that between April 2020 and February 2022 it tracked 220 cases, and it knows how many resulted in a charge, a caution or no further action being taken on the advice of the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS), as well as how many are awaiting a CPS decision. In these cases, 39 percent (85 of 220) offenders were charged and went to court, and a further 28 percent (62 of 220) resulted in no further action. Thirty-one percent (68 of 220) cases are awaiting a CPS decision. The force also dip-samples cases where an evidence-led prosecution hasn't gone ahead and asks the CPS to test the decision-making process. Key themes are identified and shared for learning, to support victims and protect them from further harm. But we have commented on the importance of making sure that the victim's decision and the reasons behind it are recorded, and that there is a clearly evidenced consideration of evidence-led prosecutions where victims don't support the prosecution.

The force is improving its understanding of why some vulnerable victims don't support prosecutions

As a result of our last PEEL inspection Merseyside Police received an AFI to improve its understanding of [outcome 16](#) – cases where victims either withdraw or don't support a prosecution where the suspect is identified. Since then, the force has changed its strategy to improve and discharge this AFI. It routinely surveys domestic abuse victims to gather their perspectives on the service they receive. The force uses this information and satisfaction data to learn. The force is engaged with the strategic domestic violence advisory group with other agencies and this also provides the force with victim feedback. We know from our victim service assessment fieldwork that most outcome 16 disposals are appropriate.

Wellbeing is a priority in Investigations teams

Wellbeing is a core consideration in Investigations. Supportive leadership is offered to the workforce and a superintendent leads on the overall wellbeing approach. Investigation hubs have champions who meet regularly to discuss health and wellbeing matters. Most of the workforce told us supervisors take welfare seriously and view their workload commitments. Most staff told us that workloads are appropriate – some officers in specialist roles have higher numbers of cases, but most told us this is manageable and are supported. The use of no-email Friday is just one example of how line managers try to reduce demand on their staff. Supervisors are also using their discretion to promote a healthy work-life balance and encourage time away from desks for physical activity and reflection. This is positive and helps support a healthy work environment for staff.

Protecting vulnerable people

Good

Merseyside Police is good at protecting vulnerable people.

Innovative practice

The force uses a child exploitation risk index (CERI) and relationship risk index (RRI) to identify and assess hidden risks for vulnerable people

The CERI identifies several risk indicators, including missing reports, firearms, weapons, social care markers, drugs use and domestic abuse involvement among others, to consider how vulnerable to exploitation children and young people are. Delphi brings this information together and uses a specifically designed algorithm to determine an overall risk evaluation. This enables the force to understand where children and young people may, through their complex circumstances, be more vulnerable to criminal exploitation.

The RRI takes a similar approach to consider the impact of factors on relationships and how these risks together affect vulnerability. Factors considered include drugs and alcohol misuse, coercion and controlling behaviour, stalking, physical violence and other issues. It apportions a risk score to victims of abuse as well as perpetrators based on these factors and the algorithm highlights risk in support of vulnerable people.

Main findings

In this section we set out our main findings that relate to how well the force protects vulnerable people.

The force governs the protection of vulnerable people well

The force has an identified chief officer lead and action plans in place for important strands of vulnerability. It also has a dedicated team, Operation Sanctuary, to tackle modern slavery and human trafficking issues, scanning [intelligence](#) to identify offending and safeguard the vulnerable. Governance is in place through its protecting vulnerable people (PVP) performance meetings, which examine each area with data to support performance understanding. The force also holds a PVP meeting that brings together representatives from other force teams, including response and resolution and local policing. This broadens the understanding of vulnerability priorities and bringing focus to continuous improvement activity. These meetings work well and, with the Delphi system in place to examine performance information, measure progress against the force's performance framework and vulnerability priorities.

The force works well with partners to enhance its vulnerability understanding

Merseyside Police uses data from partners to enhance its understanding and partners we spoke to during inspections said relationships are positive. At a strategic level, the force meets to discuss and share data about [looked after children](#). We also saw other examples of how risks around vulnerable children are discussed outside of specialist vulnerability teams. For example, in Sefton safeguarding partners share information and work together with police to identify children at risk of hidden harm and prevent children who do not qualify for a multi-agency child exploitation plan (MACE) from needing that formal intervention. The mental health triage arrangements give ready access to health data and give a holistic approach to interventions with people in crisis, reducing demand and safeguarding the vulnerable.

The force has improved the way in which it manages referrals to the [domestic violence disclosure scheme \(DVDS\)](#)

At our last PEEL inspection, the force was issued an area for improvement to review its DVDS procedures, continuing casework, applications and disclosures so that they were efficient, followed national guidance and reduced preventable risk. This review has taken place. The force now triages initial risk assessments against the thresholds for disclosure in support of those most vulnerable to future harm. Extra questions about the victim's interest in a perpetrator's offending history and the scheme are included in the referral form completed by officers. Merseyside Police deals with most referrals promptly, reducing the number of outstanding applications, and is better at managing risk and harm prevention. An internal audit in November 2020 found that the DVDS process gives substantial assurance. We are satisfied with the improvement in this service.

Domestic Violence Protection Orders (DVPOs) are used well by the force

Merseyside Police uses DVPOs to protect vulnerable victims of domestic abuse. Data shows the force has the sixth highest number of applications as a proportion of domestic abuse crimes when compared to other England and Wales forces. The force monitors the numbers issued at court every month. Investigators we spoke to are confident in applying for these orders and once granted at court they are passed to local policing. A lead officer is appointed and can do spot-checks to monitor compliance. This activity supports the safety of those victims needing protection and shows that onward safeguarding is not just the responsibility of specialist officers investigating domestic abuse. The [public protection unit](#) has two members of staff who present DVPO applications at court. This makes their approach consistent and clear.

Multi-agency safeguarding hub (MASH) arrangements work well across the force area

Merseyside Police works effectively with partners to safeguard vulnerable people. There are five MASH hubs co-located in partnership buildings across Merseyside and the force is invested in these partnership arrangements. Each has a governance board and steering group, providing support and direction across the partnership. We visited three locations during our inspection and found the partnerships work well, allowing for quick sharing of information and joint decision-making. We know that Knowsley and Wirral have child and adult arrangements, with the others child-only, but our fieldwork around vulnerable persons referral unit relationships gives confidence that adult concerns are also flagged and dealt with.

Merseyside Police effectively supports [multi-agency risk assessment conference \(MARAC\)](#) processes

At our last PEEL inspection we found some diversion away from national [SafeLives](#) guidance for MARAC processes and issued an area for improvement to the force to review them so they comply with national guidance, are consistent with partners and ensure high risk cases aren't filtered out. We are pleased to see improvement in this area. It has conducted the review and enhanced its own capacity with an increase of one detective sergeant and two detective constables. At Wirral, to support the management of increased demand an interim daily multi-agency domestic abuse triage meeting is being held. All joint decisions are documented and the approach is working well, enabling safety planning for victims. The force now seeks to widen this approach with partners elsewhere.

The vulnerable persons referral unit benefits safeguarding, but there are sometimes delays in providing support to vulnerable people

Partners told us they see benefits from centralising the vulnerable persons referral unit. These include better information gathering and sharing, effective contributions to MASH arrangements, consistency in referrals and quality assurance of activity. This is good news and shows the importance of supporting vulnerable people. But on inspection this year we saw a backlog in referrals being actioned. Force data shows most are dealt with quickly throughout the year, but it is evident that numbers in the queue for action rise after bank holiday weekends. Data shows backlogs at Christmas and New Year and following Easter. The force closely scrutinises these cases and has governance arrangements in place to monitor and manage demand. It knows how many referrals are received each day and how many are actioned. We are satisfied that the force identifies and priorities risk within the queue and deals with high-risk cases as a priority and there were none awaiting action when we visited.

Since our inspection the force has agreed additional resources for the team, which is good news. One person is now in place, with two to follow by the end of May 2022. The force believes this will help reduce the lengths of any queues in the future.

Wellbeing is important to the force, but further support to those in higher risk roles will benefit their long-term health

Our reality testing with the workforce shows several initiatives and arrangements are in place to support the workforce, including [TRiM](#) for addressing care after traumatic incidents, use of [Oscar Kilo](#) vans to aid wellbeing and access to health information. The force is clear that many roles dealing with vulnerability pose a higher risk to workforce wellbeing and it told us it provides an enhanced wellbeing service to those in such roles. It wants to reduce workloads in some traditionally high areas, and is using uplift funding to increase resources.

At the time of our inspection we found that not all staff in these roles have routine psychological assessments to understand the effect their role has on their health. The force had gaps in occupational health capacity, but resources are now in place to enhance the service. In February 2022, a clinical psychologist was appointed to support those in high-risk roles.

Managing offenders and suspects

Good

Merseyside Police is good at managing offenders and suspects.

Main findings

In this section we set out our main findings that relate to how well the force manages offenders and suspects.

The force effectively pursues offenders and manages outstanding suspects

The force pursues outstanding suspects and offenders. It has a dedicated fugitive team that works seven days a week under the banner of Operation Hunted. Outstanding warrants and prison recalls are monitored and prioritised within local policing teams and response and resolution also monitors crimes under investigation with named suspects to understand which are ready to be arrested. We also found crime investigation workloads in these teams are manageable, meaning it is realistic to set aside time for proactive arrests. Outstanding suspects are visible on Delphi and line managers can see the numbers for their teams via the My Team dashboard. At St Helens, student officers help with enquiries and reduce the number of outstanding wanted persons. The approach being taken in Merseyside makes sure that named suspects and wanted people are prioritised and opportunities for re-offending reduced.

Merseyside Police is improving its quality assurance measures for pre-charge bail and released under investigation (RUI) decisions

At our last inspection we issued an area for improvement to the force to improve quality assurance of bail and RUI decisions to safeguard victims of domestic abuse and other vulnerable victims. This year we are satisfied with the quality assurance taking place.

The criminal justice performance meeting oversees bail and RUI, including how well the force manages cases where an offender is RUI. It also features in other performance meetings. Bail and RUI are visible on Delphi. Regular reviews are prescribed in policy and Delphi shows when supervisor reviews are needed. We conducted a dip sample exercise of records for bail and RUI. We looked for quality assurance and supervision for offences including domestic assaults, violence against the person and stalking and harassment cases. All ten reports show sound management including quality assurance. Supervisory management is evident and

where there is a change from bail to RUI we found clear rationale recorded as well as assessment of risk to support the decision.

The force has adequate arrangements in place to manage multi-agency public protection arrangements (MAPPA) commitments

Our inspection also considers the force's engagement with MAPPA, a national multi-agency approach managing the risks posed to the public by violent and sexual offenders. While Merseyside police deviates from guidance about offender managers attending MAPPA case discussions, force policy directs that senior officers who are suitably qualified and have decision-making authority attend. The offender manager provides a full brief before the meeting so that information can be shared supporting effective risk management and enabling offender managers to focus their time on working with those risky offenders.

The force's integrated offender management (IOM) arrangements are effective

The force has a dedicated IOM unit. This has recently been reviewed to align it with the refreshed national policy and to integrate a youth offending cohort to those offenders being managed this way. Rehabilitation of offenders is a real focus. Current cohorts include people involved in serious organised and serious acquisitive crime and violence. There is also a domestic abuse cohort at Wirral. This is new to the force and its effect isn't yet known, but the force will keep this under review to establish the best way forward.

It also uses a scoring tool to assess information and intelligence relating to offender activity and this brings together data from partners as well to make decisions about whether offenders are managed by the IOM scheme. Where offenders don't meet the threshold for intervention they are referred to local policing hubs for monitoring or targeting activity. This is good and means those offenders are still subject to police attention. Management of current and potential cohorts is also overseen by a joint integrated partnership panel ensuring joined up activity which works well.

The force understands and responds to the demands in managing suspects and offenders

The force sees the importance of managing offenders and suspects, as shown in its investment in Operation Hunted. And IOM staff we spoke to were united in the view that IOM activity reduces re-offending, shown through weekly reviews of IOM offender scores. The force undertakes some benefit analysis for IOM interventions using a College of Policing cost benefit analysis tool to support this. This is positive and makes sure the force can show how investment leads to reduced offending. The force is also invested in the Violence Reduction Partnership. Here it takes a multi-agency approach to identify root causes of serious violent offending with its partners. The partnership is strong, with good use made of police and partnership data including from local health trusts, local authorities and educational bodies to reduce violent crime and improve life chances for people.

The force has effective governance in place to manage and prioritise demand and suspect welfare

The [digital forensic](#) unit grades the seriousness of images on all devices for the sex offender unit and is qualified to do so. The service level agreement is currently around 12–16 weeks. At the time of our inspection there were no undue delays in the service being provided. Assessment can take time and the force has weekly and monthly meetings to review intelligence development, assess the risks and prioritise its cases accordingly. And processes are robust. At the time of our inspection there were 67 intelligence packages and 16 low-risk warrants to be progressed. This can present a risk as delayed action in these cases may put people in harm's way. But we found these have been subject to risk assessments to prioritise them. They are regularly discussed during governance meetings and there is planned activity to address them quickly, which is positive and will reduce any risks of further offending and harm. We also found the welfare of suspects involved in such cases is understood. Suspects in these investigations are more likely to self-harm and commit suicide and the force has arrangements in place to support suspects during investigations.

The force has improved its policy for the [management of registered sex offenders and violent offenders \(MOSOVO\)](#)

The force has refreshed its MOSOVO policy. We reviewed this and found that it mostly reflects national [Authorised Professional Practice \(APP\)](#). This is good news, as it gives better guidance to officers in the management of offenders. There are still some areas which differ from APP, such as the practice of allowing some low-risk registered sex offenders to be [managed reactively](#) when they have court orders. Reactively managed offenders have less contact with police and aren't subject to routine home visits. This means compliance with orders isn't regularly checked. The policy also allows officers to visit offenders alone, based on appropriate risk assessment. This means that officers might be less effective in their scrutiny of home environments, and might not identify some risk.

Local policing teams are aware of registered sex offenders in their area

The force uses Delphi to show where registered sex offenders who are subject to reactive management live. Offenders managed in this way don't routinely have contact with police based on the low risk they pose. Making sure that officers are aware of where they live is positive and enables officers to identify risky behaviour if seen, or submit intelligence about those individuals. We spoke to the workforce during our fieldwork and found they know where to find the information they need. And the force provides briefings about those offenders leaving prison to live in communities.

The quality and supervision of [ViSOR](#) records for registered sex offenders can improve

We reviewed 24 ViSOR records in two separate reviews to assess how well the force manages registered sex offenders. We found some improvement in the completion of the 12 records in our second review, in response to feedback given to the force. Ten of these were cases led by police and two by probation. We found one was good, one was adequate, seven required improvement and three were inadequate. Most records showed that intelligence checks are conducted before visits take place, and officers effectively use markers on force systems to highlight where an individual is a registered sex offender. But we found that seven cases didn't have a clearly articulated rationale for the scheduling of home visits and three didn't have a visit schedule recorded. Six records had limited supervisor reviews. The force should make sure that supervisors give records due consideration so they can direct appropriate action.

Sex offender managers consider sexual harm prevention orders but more can be done to check devices where orders aren't in place

Staff are aware of [sexual harm prevention orders](#) and routinely consider them to manage offenders and reduce further offending. This includes on conviction at court for an offence relating to indecent images of children. Staff report there is a good relationship with Legal Services to support applications to court. We found that where orders are in place sex offender managers check devices when doing home visits. But this doesn't routinely happen without an order. Not checking devices means that some risk may be missed and offences may not be identified.

Disrupting serious organised crime

Outstanding

Merseyside Police is outstanding at managing serious and organised crime.

Innovative practice

The force consults communities about allocation of seized money for community projects, building community resilience and diverting people from crime

In March 2019 a consultation event was held in Speke to give the community a say about how police funding should be spent in the area. The 'Speke Up' event saw community groups bidding for a £26,000 pot of funding seized from criminals using the Proceeds of Crime Act 2002 (POCA). The consultation event was attended by residents and offered the chance to share opinions and decide how best to spend the money on community projects. A further event followed in December 2019. This consultative approach has supported sustainable outcomes for the community – including a 63 percent reduction in anti-social behaviour incidents and a 43 percent reduction in the number of section 18 assaults, as well as enabling community resilience. This approach continues. In 2020/21 nearly £500,000 was allocated to community projects across the force area from the newly created Community Cashback scheme, with a Dragon's Den approach to selecting successful bids for projects that support crime prevention or promote diversionary activities.

The force uses legislation in innovative ways to target and disrupt county lines offenders

The force is using drug dealing telephone restriction orders (DDTROs) legislation innovatively to tackle [county lines](#) offenders and disrupt their drug dealing activities. It uses this important legislation to apply for telephone restriction orders in specific geographic areas. This means certain communication devices can't be used and are disconnected, which directly affects drug dealing activity. This is positively affecting the force area and means gangs are less able to operate in spaces where restriction orders are in place.

Main findings

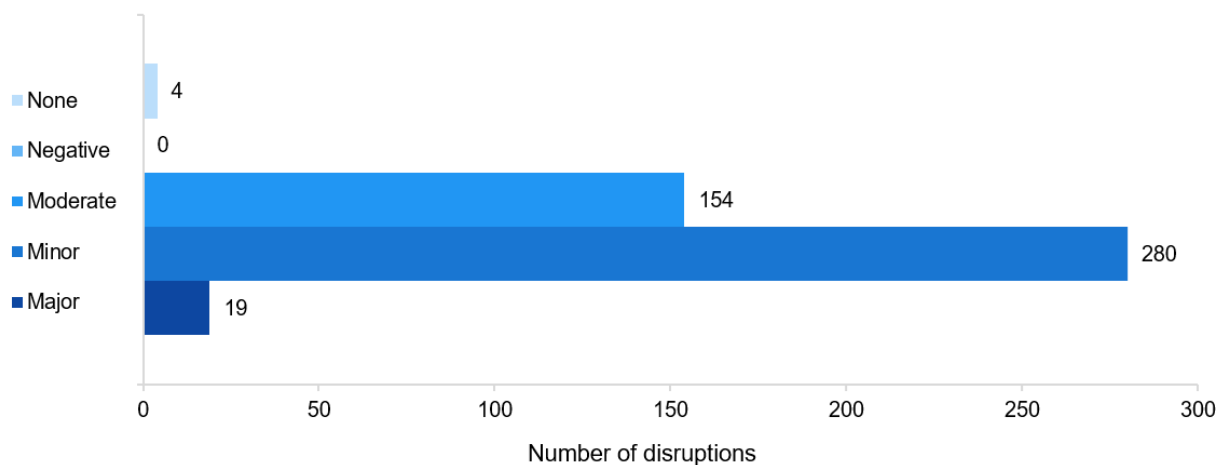
In this section we set out our main findings that relate to how well the force manages serious and organised crime.

Merseyside Police uses intelligence well to identify and prioritise serious and organised crime (SOC)

The force uses strategic analysis well to understand the significant threats to the force. It uses MoRiLE2020 to understand risk and comply with a new national process to support decision making and prioritisation. Main areas include firearms distribution and discharge along with drugs, county lines and burglary as some of its major threats and it understands the investigative risks. There is significant governance around these operational priorities. The force and partners use regular reporting and threat assessments to drive business through meetings that partners attend. 134 active organised crime groups (OCGs) were identified by Merseyside Police as at 31 March 2021.

The force conducted 457 disruptions of OCG activity in the year ending 31 March 2021. Of these, 19 were major and 154 moderate in the impact they had on criminals. This means that 38 percent of all police activity had a noticeable effect on serious and organised crime.

OCG disruptions by Merseyside Police in the year ending 31 March 2021 by level of disruption



Partners are well connected and involved in developing intelligence and tasking for county lines

The force works exceptionally well with its partners. It has received extra funds to enhance its approach to county lines. This is a significant focus and the team is connected well with surrounding forces and the county lines coordination centre to identify new offenders and those people vulnerable to becoming involved in this type of crime. The force uses its tasking meetings for intelligence collection against identified threats. Weekly local meetings are also attended by suitably vetted partners to include them in wider intelligence collection.

Frontline officers understand SOC and contribute to tasking activity

The force uses an electronic briefing system to task response and resolution and local policing officers. It promotes a 'one team' ethos in providing a service to the public. There is a strong link between FIB and local policing areas. Almost all frontline staff we spoke to told us FIB is their point of contact concerning OCGs and SOC. SOC is understood by officers and there is clear emphasis on effectively dealing with this a force priority with its 'one team' approach.

The force has robust strategic arrangements in place to manage SOC demand

The force manages a SOC strategic plan. It also uses the national disruptions framework to record impact on SOC. This is exported to the national system used by [regional organised crime units \(ROCUs\)](#), most forces and the NCA. Actions are allocated to key leads. This works well to drive force business at a strategic and tactical level against SOC. The senior responsible officer (SRO) is an assistant chief constable and has enhanced governance processes to make sure that SOC focus remains active. There is also an SRO-led performance regime to understand the impact of police efforts and this adds further direction to this critical performance area for the force. The SRO challenges each SOC lead to consider risk, threat and harm and to identify where changes and investment need to be made. There is additional scrutiny to this process by the deputy chief constable who considers investment and financial plans in the annual review process.

The force works well with the National Crime Agency and ROCU to address key threats

To respond to the continuing and changing risk of SOC threats the force has an enhanced partnership with the NCA known as the Organised Crime Partnership. This commenced in April 2021. It is increasing its capacity to tackle SOC across Merseyside and nationally. The force and NCA provide staff and technology so that staff can easily access information. It is in its early days, but the force expects this to bring benefits to itself as well as partners and the community. The force receives a high number of referrals and need for investigations through Operation Venetic which brings demand in investigations. The force has governance meetings with the ROCU and NCA to maintain access to capability. Where some capability can't be provided, regional tasking provides transparency in those decisions.

The force uses debriefs to learn from the covert operations it runs

Covert operations are effectively debriefed at their conclusion. This is undertaken by the [senior investigating officer](#), with closing reports written and filed by FIB. It would benefit the force to formalise the debrief process. There isn't a formal policy or procedure to decide what should be subject to review, how external [peer reviews](#) could be commissioned or when and how learning can be shared more widely, or learning adopted from others.

The force is highly effective in reducing the threat from the criminal use of firearms

The force has seen a significant reduction in firearms discharges and an improved outcome rate for investigations. The creation of a dedicated firearms investigation team brings a skilled ability to improve investigation quality and manage the demand these offences create for the force. This is supported with intelligence products that exploit information to identify opportunities to remove firearms from the streets of Merseyside. The force monitors the reduction in firearm discharges and clearly takes pride in the joint partnership working and the success of its plan to tackle this. This is seen as a significant achievement for the force and the partnership and it impacts well upon this area of SOC.

The force has established routes to allocate OCG to lead responsible officers (LROs)

The force allocates all OCGs to LROs. LROs tend to be local policing inspectors, some have previous experience, and some are new in post. Some complex, high-harm OCGs are allocated to specialist SOC investigators. Plans are created to deal with the threats posed by OCGs. LROs and SIOs are held to account at frequent tasking meetings to check on progress and delivery against these plans. The force is aware of competing demands and tasking meetings press for appropriate progress against objectives.

The force makes good use of legislation to identify and remove illicit finance from OCGs

The force acts positively to identify and remove illicit finance. There is good knowledge of POCA legislation. A business change programme is in place to build on capacity in this area. Opportunities to improve from intelligence shared via suspicious activity reports will be considered as part of this review. SIOs told us that financial investigators are assigned to their proactive covert operations but they don't have regular access to any trained financial intelligence officers. This is worth considering to further enhance support.

The force's use of gang injunctions to prevent organised crime activity is good practice

The force uses gang injunctions to prevent and prohibit people from engaging in gang and organised criminal activity well. Use can be seen in several local policing areas. Local officers take responsibility for identifying the subjects and conditions of these orders, working with the legal team to get them approved and granted by the courts and then monitoring the orders to identify any breaches. The force also uses juvenile gang injunctions to prevent youth offending. Use of these powers is positive and helps reduce criminal activities in communities.

The force works well with partners to divert vulnerable people from SOC

Partner agencies are engaged in strategic threat plans and in the operational plans against SOC. There is a Prevent lead for the force providing good focus and pace on Prevent initiatives. And a community co-ordinator works across the partnership on Prevent initiatives, developing Prevent capability and capacity. The good work in the partnership and force to tackle county lines has developed the links to other support networks to ensure that services can be provided to divert and support potential victims.

It works well with local schools with programmes on SOC and offending. This partnership working is an excellent intervention and support model to tackle SOC and build resilient communities. The work of the community safety partnership is well developed and Prevent initiatives with partners are used effectively to support those vulnerable to exploitation. The force is engaged with high profile local football teams and they play a part in supporting the local community with programmes that support inclusion and diversion. The work in this area has seen excellent results with examples of offenders being supported into training and work, rejecting organised crime.

The force understands Prevent services offered through partners. The community co-ordinator is instrumental in developing and mapping these services, which include prison mentoring, training and other sports diversion activity. Evaluations are completed to assess inclusivity and coverage. Home Office funding for this role has ended, but it is now incorporated under the Project Medusa [county lines](#) programme. This sees an expansion of the role to community and Prevent co-ordinator and Prevent tactical advisor. The force has seen benefits from this approach and has been asked to help the Home Office with this nationally.

The force uses its IOM programmes effectively for SOC offender diversion

The force uses IOM and other analysis to identify appropriate prevention schemes for any Prevent cohort members. Over two thirds of the IOM cohort are SOC offenders which shows the effective assessment of threat, risk and harm. of the force works with several outreach programmes.

The force is able to identify at-risk offenders using [MoRiLE](#) and the developed services of the IOM unit. It also uses tasking and coordination meetings to maintain the current active list of at-risk offenders in prison and monitor their release. They allocate offenders to officers in the process, be it prison staff, IOM staff or neighbourhoods. The force has a plan for identified risk OCGs and uses intelligence to identify peripheral members of groups and gangs to refer to community programmes and offer diversion support. The force uses ancillary orders to disrupt and divert where appropriate. This means that opportunities to divert offenders are actively explored and offending is effectively addressed.

Meeting the Strategic Policing Requirement

We don't grade forces on this question.

Main findings

In this section we set out our main findings that relate to how well the force meets the [Strategic Policing Requirement \(SPR\)](#).

The force has clear understanding of SPR threats and plans well to meet demands

Most of the SPR threats are explicitly referenced in the [police and crime commissioner \(PCC\)](#)'s police and crime plan as well as the force plan. Merseyside Police's strategy aligns the threats with other objectives, and they are included as investment priorities in the FMS. A nationally recognised risk tool (known as MoRiLE) periodically reappraises each threat and a project tracking system monitors the force's progress in respect of each.

The force works well with partners in the [local resilience forum](#)

Merseyside Police chairs the Merseyside Resilience Forum and is an integral part of the response to emergencies. An executive group of senior leaders from several organisations oversees the coordination of the response to identified and emerging civil emergency threats. Since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, the deputy chief constable leads the executive. In support, a [senior officer](#) has been assigned to work with Liverpool City Council and a newly established blue-light group makes sure that emergency services work effectively together.

The force takes an active role in compiling its community risk register alongside its partners and other multi-agency organisations

Merseyside Police has lead responsibility for compiling and updating entries in the register. These include the impact of serious and organised crime, disruption to telecommunication networks, industrial action in prisons, interruption to fuel supplies, public disorder and the response to unexploded wartime bombs. The force also maintains 44 contingency plans, which are reviewed regularly. The plans form part of the Merseyside emergency response manual which comprehensively sets out the roles and responsibilities of all Merseyside Resilience Forum organisations.

Merseyside Police is investing to improve its response to policing protests and public safety

The force scans future threats and builds capacity and capability to manage them. An example is the change in tactics used by some protest groups, such as Extinction Rebellion, and the skills officers need to remove protestors safely from tall buildings. This has been the subject of an exercise to test how well the force's response works. Further opportunities to improve the mobilisation of force resources have been incorporated into the annual programme of work. This shows how the force is learning and changing its response with public safety in mind.

Merseyside Police is well placed to respond to civil emergencies locally, and supports other forces in the north west region

The force has effective plans to mobilise large numbers of officers. Systems are in place to identify available officers for rapid deployment to disorder both in Merseyside and in neighbouring forces should the need arise. Merseyside Police also learns from joint training with other forces. A training exercise in 2020 identified difficulties with communication between forces and a shortfall in first-line supervisors. This led to positive change and improvement which have been successfully tested in subsequent exercises.

The force has a training programme with partner organisations, but some plans were affected by COVID-19

Merseyside Police has a schedule to test and exercise its plans for responding to emergencies with external organisations and other blue light responders. The schedule was interrupted by COVID-19, but priority events still took place. This included a joint exercise to test learning points identified in the aftermath of the Manchester Arena attack. The training schedule has now resumed.

The force is an active participant in multi-agency plans to manage the pandemic. This includes the return of British nationals from Wuhan to Arrowe Park hospital, Operation Georgia, the force response to the pandemic, and a joint agency mass testing programme. It also remains committed to testing its response to emergencies at the Grand National Festival.

In Merseyside, debriefing procedures are thorough and demonstrate a commitment to adapt and change to evolving circumstances. The force also has tried and tested procedures to work with the Ministry of Defence should incidents escalate and extra resources be needed from the army.

Protecting the public against armed threats

We don't grade forces on this question.

Innovative practice

Merseyside Police has introduced new measures to control dangerous animals

The force issues armed officers with tranquilisers darts to humanely control dangerous animals. This means that the danger they pose can be dealt with more proportionately than destroying them when these situations happen.

Main findings

In this section we set out our main findings that relate to how well the force protects communities from armed threats.

The force's understanding of armed threats is improving but there is still work to be done

The threats are set out in its [armed policing strategic threat and risk assessment \(APSTRA\)](#) which is published annually. The force has responded positively to comments we made in our last inspection. For example, it now considers how quickly armed officers respond to incidents to determine the required level of armed response. But the APSTRA still falls short of the [National Police Chiefs' Council \(NPCC\)](#)'s standards in some areas. For example, it doesn't include a forecast of demand over the next four years, nor does it include data on using and deploying [conducted energy devices](#) commonly referred to as Taser, which would help its understanding.

Merseyside Police responds to armed threats effectively

The inspection considered the force's capacity and capability to address armed threats. This focused on the immediate response to incidents by officers trained to an [armed response vehicle \(ARV\)](#) standard, and incidents that require the skills and capabilities of more highly trained specialist firearms officers. In Merseyside, most armed incidents are attended by ARV officers. We are satisfied with the standards of training, deployment and command of armed operations. We found the force's ability to respond to armed incidents to be rapid and dependable.

In Merseyside, specialist armed capabilities are provided both by local and regionally based officers

The force maintains specialist capabilities should incidents escalate. We are assured that the force is well placed to respond to the range of threats identified in its APSTRA. Merseyside Police also has a service level agreement with the regional counter terrorist hub. This joint working means that specialist capabilities can be provided both in Merseyside and other forces in the north west should they be needed.

Merseyside Police has enough trained firearms commanders

Strategic and tactical firearms commanders must be both occupationally and operationally competent. After examining governance procedures and interviewing firearms commanders, we were assured that commanders in Merseyside are properly trained, their performance is monitored, and they are fit to discharge their responsibilities effectively.

Firearms commanders are familiar with the use of specialist munitions

As part of firearms operations, firearms commanders are responsible for the authorisation and tactical deployment of specialist munitions. It is important that they are familiar with the benefits, risks and physical affects that such devices have on individuals. Authorising and using such devices forms part of strategic and tactical firearms commanders' training and development. Firearms commanders in Merseyside are confident in authorising specialist munitions and in contributing to successfully ending armed operations.

The force supports national approval procedures for acquiring weapons and specialist munitions

We reviewed the force's procedures for considering acquiring new weapon systems or specialist munitions. The force has a good understanding of how to document any such consideration and the [designated chief officer](#) is responsible for reviewing it. It is also familiar with its responsibilities to the NPCC armed policing lead and the Home Office. The force hasn't considered acquiring new weapons systems since revised national procedures were introduced late in 2019.

Merseyside Police has plans in place to address foreseeable threats but more could be done to test their effectiveness

In Merseyside, operational plans have been developed to respond to shopping malls, sports stadia and [heritage sites](#) that may be the target of terrorist attacks. However, the force could do more to assess the effectiveness of these plans. More frequent testing and exercising involving the army, the counter terrorism unit and other emergency services is needed.

Training for unarmed staff responding to terrorist attacks was interrupted by COVID-19

Guidance for unarmed officers responding to terrorist attacks is provided by the National Counter Terrorism Police headquarters. It instructs them on their main responsibilities recognising they are likely to be the first to respond to incidents of this nature. All training in the force was interrupted by the pandemic. Training is now in place for all unarmed responders, supervisors, commanders and control room staff, as well as joint training with [Joint Emergency Services Interoperability Principles](#) partners. This will be expanded over the next training year, 2022/23.

The force routinely debriefs armed operations to identify areas for improvement

Merseyside Police reviews the outcome of all firearms incidents that officers attend. This helps make sure that best practice or areas for improvement are identified. The force will soon introduce new technology to track organisational learning, improve training and refine operational procedures. The force is clearly committed to the professional development of its operations. The force will be introducing a system used by Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service to improve its debriefing procedures. The system is effective at recording and tracking learning identified in armed operations.

Building, supporting and protecting the workforce

Good

Merseyside Police is good at building and developing its workforce.

Main findings

In this section we set out our main findings that relate to how well the force builds and develops its workforce.

The force has an ethical culture with clear and supportive leadership

The force's approach, 'Community First', puts the public at the centre of its service. It has a 'one team' attitude to service provision and its values and standards in the force strategy - Just think, Just listen, Just talk, Just lead, support this. The workforce understands these principles. The Chief Constable chairs the leadership, people and trust board quarterly and this provides strategic governance and direction. It sets the standards and values expected from the workforce for effective performance and continuous improvement. It also gives direction for recruitment, and provides the framework for personal development to identify future leaders and support progression. Most of the workforce told us they feel supported, valued and included. There is a pride in working for Merseyside Police that reflects well on the organisation.

The force is investing in the leadership development of the workforce

The force has developed a leadership framework designed to support workforce understanding of leadership behaviour, help provide better service to the public and treat colleagues with respect. Chief officers lead by example, demonstrating consistency and clarity in this approach for the workforce. The force is now training first-line managers to improve leadership behaviour and build effective management practice. Four hundred and twenty people have received this training, and it will be further extended this year. This is a tangible investment to improve leadership skills within the force.

The force recognises the challenges it faces to reflect the communities it serves and is taking positive action to address this

The force holds a strategic diversity, equality and inclusion board led by a chief officer. This shows a commitment to drive forward improvements and to improve the attraction and retention of a diverse workforce. It monitors data to understand the diversity of its workforce and has a robust governance process. The number of officers and staff from ethnic minority backgrounds is seen as a critical concern by the force and it understands the importance of reflecting its communities. As a result, the force is introducing fresh initiatives and gathering data to monitor success. The force is looking to maximise success for candidates by tracking their route through the recruitment process. It has also reduced the time needed to wait before re-applying when unsuccessful from six to three months and has held webinars for under-represented groups.

The force also offers support to candidates with neurodiversity issues – extra time for tests and helping those already in the workforce through reasonable adjustments. The force now has a neurodiversity trainer to help shape improvement in training and support for staff.

All staff from chief inspector and above, and police staff equivalents, have an e-PDR action plan showing how they will assist under-represented staff and encourage retention and progression to make the organisation more inclusive. The force offers reverse-mentoring with mentors and mentees identified in the senior leadership team to promote understanding. We received feedback that the workforce has more confidence in the promotion processes because of changes to selection procedures and many staff believe that their line manager understands their development needs and supports their continued professional development.

The workforce has several ways to raise ethical dilemmas for action

In our last PEEL inspection, the force received an area for improvement in relation to making sure the workforce understands how to raise ethical issues and that learning outcomes are shared. We know that the [professional standards department \(PSD\)](#) now includes ethical dilemmas on the agenda for its tactical ethics meeting, but it is early days and the effect of that addition isn't yet known. Most staff told us they would raise a concern through their line manager, via the confidential reporting app or PSD. We are confident that staff are able to raise matters for consideration when needed.

The force has a good understanding of workforce wellbeing

The force takes wellbeing seriously and the chief constable has added wellbeing as a priority for the force. It is active in understanding the culture and views of its workforce. It also understands wellbeing concerns through surveys, for example COVID-19. This sought to understand the impact of the pandemic and the lessons that could be learned. Completed by more than 2000 staff, it covered areas such as health and safety, social distancing, PPE provision and wellbeing. It also led to tangible outcomes, such as improvements in custody where a lack of protective screens was resolved. Most staff feel that results from surveys are communicated and told us wellbeing is seen as a genuine priority by force leadership. Most staff felt that their line managers cared and offered support and understanding to their teams and they felt confident in raising concerns if needed. This is positive and shows the force is listening.

The force takes action to improve workforce wellbeing

The force participates in wellbeing events and campaigns. The Oscar Kilo wellbeing mobile vans visit locations in the force to help workforce wellbeing and occupational health and welfare representatives also give advice. The force runs mindfulness sessions via Skype and these are well-received. 'One team' resilience training events enable the workforce to consider their own energy management, resilience in the workplace and self-awareness. The introduction of the wellbeing passport in October 2020 is a positive development. This enables staff to have a record of their needs and any reasonable adjustments without having to repeatedly explain or renegotiate conditions when they change role. It also enables line managers to know what to do or who to contact if people become unwell at work. We also found local examples of supervisors using their discretion to allow team members to have time to go to the gym, use the wellbeing room and take a break where feasible.

The force understands the challenges it faces with occupational health capacity and has plans in place to improve the service

The force monitors sickness data and understands what the nature of the main absence trends are – for instance the level of psychological absences and impact of the pandemic on absence figures and those individuals having to self-isolate. To try to better meet an increasing demand for occupational health services during COVID-19, more telephone appointments were introduced via a single contact route. The force is making changes to its occupational health services, bringing them to one core location and increasing resources to better meet demands. This is important action to take as more can be done to support those in high risk roles with regular health assessments.

Merseyside Police understands its recruitment needs and is addressing them

The force has allocated funding to recruit 665 more constables through the Police Uplift Programme by 31 March 2023, and has already taken on over 500. This has had an impact on the number of special constables and recruitment of 'career' specials is an avenue being explored. The force is also open to recruit re-joiners and transferees, bringing in people with policing experience. And it is also actively recruiting an extra 80 police community support officers and seeking to go over establishment in areas such as contact management, which has high leaver rates. The force tracks predicted attrition to identify themes. This has brought change, including a review of bonus payments and temporary promotions. Responding in this way encourages inclusion and shows that the force is listening. It has an established relationship with a local university and is training staff to be qualified to deliver the police education qualifications framework. This enables staff who don't hold a degree to work towards one, which is a requirement of the police education qualifications framework process.

The force manages its vetting processes well

The force is good at vetting its workforce. At the time of our inspection only eight police officers and 13 police staff were awaiting vetting and these were either long-term absent, on maternity leave or a career break. Some members of the workforce need a higher level of checks depending on their role. This is known as management vetting. We found some had only been vetted to the standards for new recruits – meaning there were some designated posts without a correctly vetted person in place. The force is aware that vetting is a continuous demand on resources as new recruits arrive and other staff change roles, particularly with the need to prioritise the national increase in numbers of police officers. The force is committed to ensuring all staff are vetted to the appropriate level, and tracks this on its risk register.

The force protects its information technology well

At our last PEEL inspection, the force received an area for improvement in relation to its ability to monitor its information technology to effectively protect its information. This year we found the force has taken steps to improve this and we are satisfied that it has been discharged. This is good news as the force can be confident that it is able to protect people and its data.

There is wide workforce understanding of abuse of position for a sexual purpose

During our last PEEL inspection the force also received an area for improvement to take steps to improve workforce knowledge and understanding of the [abuse of position for a sexual purpose](#), including supervisors. We are pleased to report officers and staff now show understanding of this critical concern and most of the workforce feel confident in recognising the signs, and can report such conduct if seen. The force can now have confidence that the workforce is alive to this problem to protect vulnerable people from this behaviour.

Strategic planning, organisational management and value for money

Good

Merseyside Police is good at operating efficiently.

Innovative practice

The force uses subject matter experts to provide support its joint force and OPCC audit committee to provide assurance on key risks

Force subject matter experts act as audit committee champions, supporting the committee. This gives focus on important risks identified by both the PCC and chief constable, including the adequacy of governance and risk management frameworks and financial reporting. We have seen this used to give substantial assurance through its audit review and confirmation of the improvement in the domestic violence disclosure scheme as discussed above, in the [chapter about protecting vulnerable people](#).

Main findings

In this section we set out our main findings that relate to how well the force operates efficiently.

The force has good, mature strategic planning processes in place, supported by rigorous governance arrangements

There are systematic processes to better understand the main community threats and risks, as well as public expectations. High level planning links into public consultation, which is supplemented by the force's information gathering and partnership data. Risk assessment supports the annual strategic assessment and informs annual planning. And there is a good approach to the oversight and management of risk.

Force priorities are clear and align with the PCC's police and crime plan priorities. There is a joint leadership group with the PCC which meets quarterly. Oversight of force performance is through a continuous improvement board (CIB), chaired by the deputy chief constable. This routinely reviews performance reports. And there are deputy chief constable reviews, to test departments use their resources appropriately.

The force understands current demand well

The force is taking steps to integrate the development of its annual [force management statement \(FMS\)](#) with its business planning cycle. The FMS is valued as a useful tool. Delphi enables demand and performance to be monitored and measured. The resulting dashboards of information are used in planning as well as tasking. There is common agreement between areas identified for growth in demand in the FMS and how the force is workforce planning. The force has also looked at different scenarios and what this would mean in terms of demand. Workforce modelling happens quarterly. It predicts where there will be a gap, enabling forecasting as to where officers should be placed. Historic data is used to predict how many officers are likely to leave or retire and where the gaps will be. And learning and development needs are monitored and planned for. An example is driver training where the academy has been tasked to provide driver training to meet predicted demand.

The force is working with private sector to improve its understanding of likely future demand

The force has done a systematic assessment of its main demand areas by theme and crime type. It identifies the harm and risk linked to each crime type or theme to understand the capacity and capability to deal with it. The force is also working with a private sector consultant to develop a data insight model to provide a ten-year prediction of demand. And has developed two new data dashboards which give analysts ready access to statistical information. This is positive and will strengthen the force's understanding of where it needs to invest in resources for the future.

The force has reviewed some elements of its operating model

The operating model hasn't recently been fully reviewed, but various elements of the model have been looked at as part of the continuous improvement approach. For example, the review of the investigative process from end to end, tracing the victims' journey. This is in stage one, initial contact to allocation. The second phase is the investigation itself and the third phase is the final criminal justice processes. The review was prompted by limited resources leading to high workloads as well as a realisation that cases that shouldn't have were going through to level one. This has already reduced what has gone through to level one. The force has also changed its approach to local policing since our last PEEL inspection and recently has commissioned a comprehensive review of response and resolution.

The force considers advances in technology to manage future demand

The digital strategy, known as 'Curve', is raising the levels of ambition in the force to make better use of new technology to understand and meet future needs. An example is using artificial intelligence to allocate calls and make better use of resources. The force has a senior officer to map out what the vision of the future will be. This is progressive work and will make sure the force keeps up with technology and maximises its benefits.

The force manages its finances and well

The force has a good grip on its financial management and resource planning. It continues to drive out savings and make efficiencies wherever possible. Financial management and responsibility for meeting future challenges is owned by all senior leaders. Financial planning is aligned with other corporate planning and there is strong governance in place to oversee the use of resources across the force's operations. Funding allocation clearly matches the PCC and force priorities. Investments also follow priorities. The [medium term financial plan](#) shows a £6m savings target by the end of its term. There will be some use of [reserves](#) to bridge the gap, but the force is confident it can achieve this level of savings and balance its budget over each year of the plan and it makes reasonable financial assumptions. The force also has a sustainability policy, aiming to improve the performance and efficiency in a long-term way. It gives a clear view of the force's sustainability objectives and direction for the development of sustainability in other force policies and approaches.

The force is engaged in meaningful collaborations

The force is leading ambitious, purposeful work with the regional forensic collaboration. And it continues to engage in its well-established North West Police collaborations. The West Coast Collaboration for [Niche](#), the force record management system, is one such example. Here there is clear accountability for performance and resources in place within each force to work effectively together. The force has recognised some drift in the blue light collaboration, mainly through partner support. But the approach is being re-invigorated, with new terms of reference being developed, and new short-term and medium-term goals for collaboration over the next four years.

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