

PEEL: Police effectiveness 2017

An inspection of Thames Valley Police



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Force in numbers



Calls for assistance

Incidents per 1,000 population 12 months to 30 June 2017

Thames Valley Police

England and Wales

209

282



Anti-social behaviour

Anti-social behaviour (ASB) incidents per 1,000 population 12 months to 31 March 2017

Thames Valley Police

England and Wales

15

31

Change in ASB incidents 12 months to 31 March 2016 against 12 months to 31 March 2017

Thames Valley Police

England and Wales

+4%

-0.05%



Crime (excluding fraud)

Crimes recorded per 1,000 population 12 months to 30 June 2017

Thames Valley Police

England and Wales

60

77

Change in recorded crime 12 months to 30 June 2016 against 12 months to 30 June 2017

Thames Valley Police

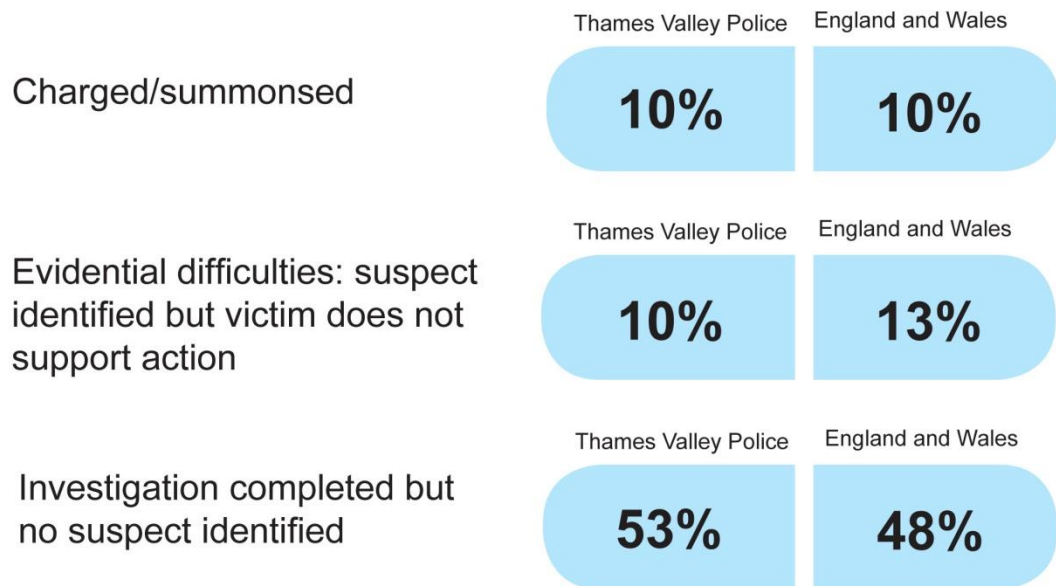
England and Wales

+9%

+14%



Crime outcomes*



Domestic abuse



Organised crime groups



*Figures are shown as proportions of outcomes assigned to offences recorded in the 12 months to 30 June 2017. For further information about the data in this graphic please see annex A.

Risk-based inspection

HMICFRS adopted an interim risk-based approach to inspection in 2017 in order to focus more closely on areas of policing where risk to the public is most acute.¹ Under this approach, not all forces are assessed against every part of the PEEL effectiveness programme every year. Thames Valley Police was assessed against the following areas in 2017:

- Preventing crime and tackling anti-social behaviour;
- Investigating crime and reducing re-offending;
- Protecting vulnerable people; and
- Specialist capabilities.

Judgments from 2016² remain in place for areas which were not re-inspected in 2017. HMICFRS will continue to monitor areas for improvement identified in previous inspections and will assess how well each force has responded in future reports.





¹ Full details of the interim risk-based approach are available from the HMICFRS website: www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmicfrs/peel-assessments/how-we-inspect/2017-peel-assessment/#risk-based

² The 2016 effectiveness report for Thames Valley Police can be found on the HMICFRS website: www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmicfrs/publications/peel-police-effectiveness-2016-thames-valley

Effectiveness overview

Judgments

Overall effectiveness 2017  Good

Question	Grade	Last inspected
Preventing crime and tackling anti-social behaviour	 Good	2017
Investigating crime and reducing re-offending	 Requires improvement	2017
Protecting vulnerable people	 Good	2017
Tackling serious and organised crime	 Good	2016
Specialist capabilities	Ungraded	2017

Summary

Thames Valley Police is good at keeping people safe and reducing crime. Our findings this year are consistent with those from 2016 and the force's overall progress is positive despite some deterioration in the quality of its investigations.

The force works well to prevent crime, tackle anti-social behaviour and keep people safe. Neighbourhood policing teams work with local communities and identify what matters most to them. The force works proactively with other organisations such as local councils, using joint problem-solving techniques and evidence-based practice to address the underlying causes of crime. It could take further steps to make the whole force aware about what works well.

The force has improved retrieval of evidence from digital devices such as mobile phones and laptops. It generally provides a good service to victims of fraud and cyber-crime. However, the way that it investigates crime requires improvement: it investigates serious crimes well, but in other cases the quality of investigation, supervision and victim updates varies. Response officers also need to ensure that their initial investigations are complete.

The force is committed to protecting the public from dangerous offenders and quickly arresting suspects and those who are unlawfully at large. It is developing a new IT tool that will support this. The way the force protects vulnerable people from harm and supports victims is good. Officers and staff understand how to recognise and support vulnerable people when they contact the police, and the force has increased resilience in teams responsible for investigating complex cases involving vulnerable victims. It also provides appropriate support to people with mental health conditions. The force generally works well with partner organisations such as local councils and charities to safeguard vulnerable victims, although we found some inconsistencies in risk-assessments for children in domestic abuse incidents and delays in some referrals to other organisations responsible for safeguarding victims.

Thames Valley Police has effective specialist capabilities and is generally well prepared to deal with the threats identified in *The Strategic Policing Requirement*, such as terrorism and civil emergencies.

Preventing crime and tackling anti-social behaviour



Good

Prioritising prevention

Thames Valley Police is good at prioritising the prevention of crime and tackling anti-social behaviour. The force has produced a crime-prevention strategy to ensure that the activity of its workforce focuses on this area. The strategy includes an emphasis on neighbourhood policing, and is aligned with the National Policing Crime Prevention Strategy³ and the Home Office's Modern Crime Prevention Strategy.⁴

A well-communicated plan has made sure that this strategy is implemented effectively. Officers and staff fully understand the force's overall approach to neighbourhood policing and most neighbourhood teams have the necessary skills and training to carry out crime prevention activity effectively. Leaders hold neighbourhood officers and staff to account for outcomes and performance is routinely monitored to ensure that objectives are met.

In June 2017 the force reorganised its response and local investigation functions. Its new operating model separates community policing, response and investigation into functions based in each local policing area, with specialist force-wide investigation teams for more serious and complex crimes. The new policing model ensures that dedicated neighbourhood officers and staff are responsible for specific areas. This works well. Neighbourhood officers and staff have a good awareness of vulnerable victims of domestic abuse, and people who are involved in serious and organised crime in their assigned areas. There are also dedicated problem-solving officers (supported by neighbourhood teams) who focus on the long-term problems that matter most to communities.

Since our effectiveness inspection in 2016, the force has ensured that neighbourhood officers spend a greater proportion of their time working in their specific area. This means that they have more time to work with communities and partner agencies, such as the local authority and housing associations, to solve problems effectively.

³ *National Policing Crime Prevention Strategy*, NPCC, 2015. Available at: www.npcc.police.uk/documents/crime/2016/Final%20A4%20National%20Policing%20Crime%20Prevention%20Strategy.pdf

⁴ *Modern Crime Prevention Strategy*, Home Office, 2016. Available from: www.gov.uk/government/publications/modern-crime-prevention-strategy

Understanding communities

Overall, Thames Valley Police has an adequate understanding of the threats facing its local communities and it responds well. However, it does not have a systematic way to collect and analyse information about the communities which make up the force area. This limits how well it can understand community tensions and how different communities are affected by different threats and harm.

The force is developing engagement plans, which will provide a more structured approach to developing an understanding of different communities and the people living and working in them. At the time of our inspection, the force used a local analysis of crime trends and problem offenders to help neighbourhood teams identify locations and victims experiencing high levels of crime and anti-social behaviour. A demand and vulnerabilities matrix tool⁵ is used to target preventative work and local briefing systems provide a good understanding of the people, including organised crime group members, who cause most harm to communities.

Thames Valley Police is increasing its use of digital and social media to provide the public with preventative messages, and continues to build strong, locally-based methods of communication with the people in the communities it serves. We found several good examples of neighbourhood teams carrying out public engagement to identify local concerns which then inform police activity. These include community forums, such as 'world cafes', which help the police and other agencies to explore problems with members of the local community, and 'have your say' leaflet drops in which the force publicises the priorities that it has identified with the community and the action that it is taking.

The force directs officers and staff to support community policing when increased reassurance and community cohesion is needed. For example, after a murder in Oxford in June 2017, a more obvious police presence was deployed to help reassure the public.

Tackling crime and anti-social behaviour

Thames Valley Police is good at tackling crime and anti-social behaviour. In our 2016 effectiveness inspection we determined that the force did not have a structured and consistent approach to problem-solving. The force has made good progress to address this. Dedicated neighbourhood problem-solving officers now use a structured, long-term collaborative problem-solving approach to prevent and reduce crime and anti-social behaviour.

⁵ The demand and vulnerabilities matrix tool is an IT-based system that combines police data and data from partners such as the fire and rescue and ambulance services to show what sort of demand and problems exist in a local area.

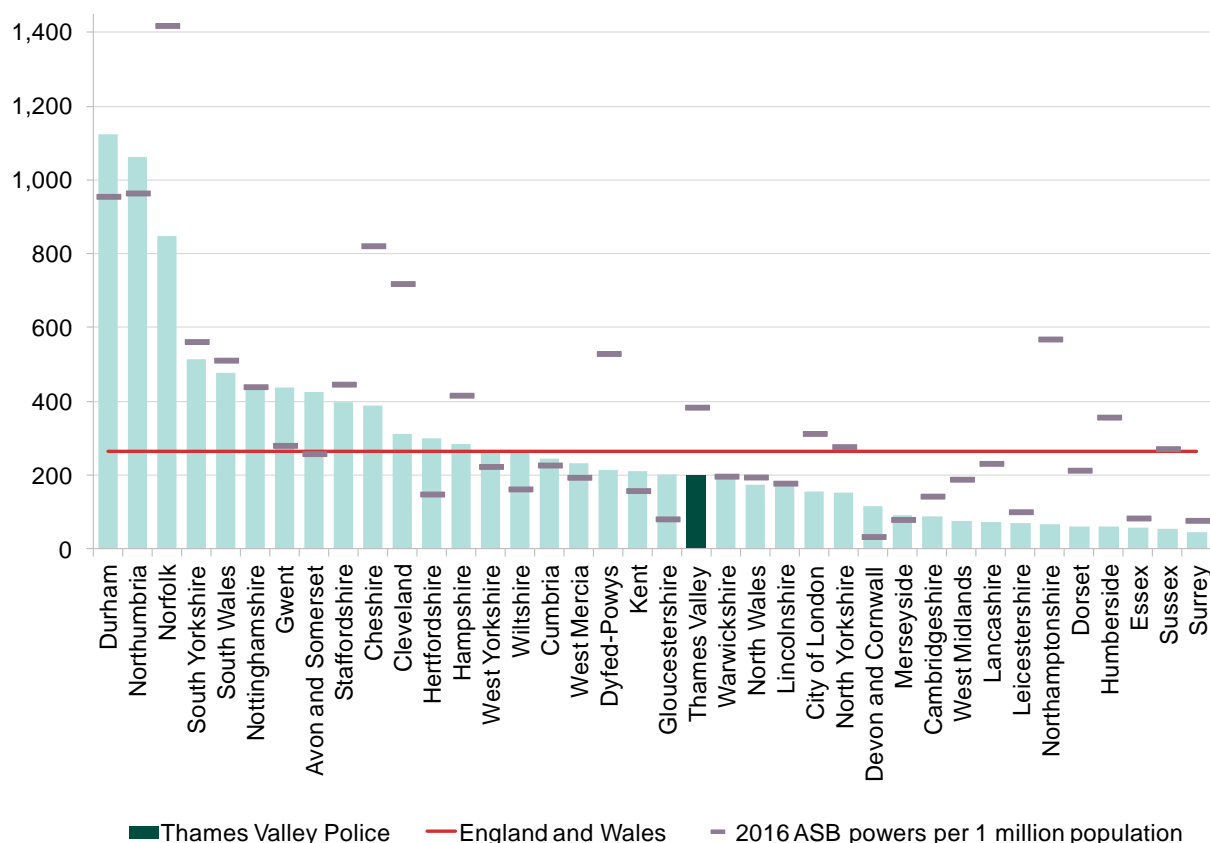
Neighbourhood officers and staff display good knowledge of problem-solving techniques. This is evident in the way Thames Valley Police is working jointly with partner agencies, for example in community safety partnerships, to address the underlying causes of problems like begging and criminal activity such as illegal drug supply. The force makes and regularly disseminates plans, such as those to tackle begging, to local authority representatives. In some areas the force holds multi-agency problem-solving meetings to monitor progress, and brings expertise to solve the problem. There is good supervision, provided through the multi-agency meetings and local neighbourhood team supervisors. Local briefing systems mean that the work of officers and police community support officers is also better focused on the underlying causes of crime.

Local volunteers are involved in some preventative measures. For example, farmers conduct night-time patrols which support the force to cover a greater geographical area, and police cadets provide crime-prevention advice on cyber-crime and telephone fraud to elderly residents in the community. The force also uses dispersal powers⁶ and we found several good examples of closure orders⁷ being used to help reduce the harm caused by organised criminal activity and to protect vulnerable people from being exploited.

⁶ The Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014 gives the police dispersal powers to direct people who have committed or are likely to commit anti-social behaviour to leave a specified area.

⁷ Closure orders are legal powers that can be used to close premises associated with persistent anti-social behaviour.

Figure 1: Rate of anti-social behaviour (ASB) powers per 1 million population, by force, in the 12 months to 30 June 2017⁸



Source: 2016 and 2017 HMICFRS data return
For further information about this data, please see annex A

The force uses an evidence-based approach to crime prevention and tactics which, through research, have been found to be both effective and good value for money. The case management system containing problem-solving plans now allows cases to be recorded in a more systematic way than we found during our effectiveness inspection in 2016. However, it does not easily allow examples of good practice of ‘what works’ to be disseminated throughout the force and means that awareness of good practice depends on the knowledge of individual officers, which limits how problem-solving can bring wider benefits for the force.

⁸ Bedfordshire, Derbyshire, Greater Manchester, the Metropolitan Police and Suffolk forces were unable to provide any 2017 ASB use of powers data. Gloucestershire, Hertfordshire, Humberside and Merseyside forces were only able to provide partial 2017 ASB use of powers data. Greater Manchester Police was unable to provide any 2016 ASB use of powers data.

Area for improvement

- The force should evaluate and share effective practice routinely, both internally and with partners, continually to improve its approach to the prevention of crime and anti-social behaviour.

Investigating crime and reducing re-offending



Requires improvement

Initial investigation

Thames Valley Police's approach to initial investigation and reducing re-offending requires improvement. Officers generally attend incidents promptly. Attendance is based on the risk to victims, which is assessed using the THOR⁹ model. All officers we spoke to are aware of their responsibilities at the scene of an incident. They are trained to obtain and preserve evidence and conduct enquiries at the scene, and use handheld devices and laptops to submit intelligence. Officers use body-worn video cameras to record evidence. However, we found that the use of these cameras is inconsistent; in our review of crime investigations there was an absence of video camera evidence in the majority of cases. In addition we found that on occasions response officers did not complete all initial enquiries, meaning that these enquiries were then delayed, and evidence such as CCTV footage could be lost.

The force has restructured and introduced investigation teams, known as i-hubs, on each local policing area. Each team consists of uniformed officers and detectives working together to investigate more straightforward crimes such as assault and burglary as well as dealing with missing person enquiries.

When Thames Valley Police receives reports of crime over the telephone, and the likelihood of tracing an offender is remote, or enquiries are likely to be unproductive, these crimes are allocated to a central office-based research team or a local telephone investigation team. Both teams investigate lower level crimes and reduce demand on the i-hubs. As a result Thames Valley Police investigates 34.7 percent (12 months to 30 June 2017) of incidents on the phone or in the station; this compares with an England and Wales rate of 30.3 percent. In some instances this is appropriate and is the most efficient way of resolving less serious crimes.

In our 2016 effectiveness inspection we found delays in enquiries which were being dealt with over the telephone by the office-based research team. However, this year our examination of a sample of investigations during inspections (in the office based research team) shows that these crimes are generally investigated properly and in a timely manner. In addition, HMICFRS found that more serious and complex crimes are allocated appropriately to the force criminal investigation department.

⁹ THOR stands for threat, harm, opportunity and risk. Thames Valley Police uses this model to assess situations against each of these four elements to decide on a course of action.

The force deals well with the initial investigation of fraud. In the 12 months to 30 June 2017, the National Fraud Intelligence Bureau referred 1,187 cases to the force for further investigation. All of these received a proper examination, including an assessment of the vulnerability of the victim, to determine whether further investigation was necessary. This is a good response compared with other forces. The force uses information from Action Fraud as well as its own analysis to understand the types of people who are more vulnerable to this type of crime and puts effective preventative measures in place.

Investigation quality

The quality of Thames Valley Police's investigations and victim updates is inconsistent. Before our inspection, HMICFRS reviewed investigations into 60 crimes reported between January and March 2017, which established that more serious crimes were generally investigated and supervised well. However, in the actual bodily harm (ABH), common assault and stalking and harassment cases we reviewed we found less evidence of quality investigations and supervision. In 13 of the 30 cases of these types of crime we examined, the investigations were considered ineffective. Officers had not pursued clear lines of enquiry, and supervisors had wrongly authorised the filing of the cases.

During fieldwork the inspection team identified similar concerns, particularly in relation to investigations conducted by uniform i-hub officers. To test this, a further, brief review was conducted on crimes reported more recently than the original file review. These were; ten reports of ABH; eleven common assault crimes; ten stalking or harassment reports and ten lower level sexual offence investigations. The crime reports were selected as a random sample of investigations from three local policing areas we visited where i-hub officers appeared to be operating under pressure (Reading, Milton Keynes and Aylesbury). We found in almost half of the crimes we examined that there was unsatisfactory victim care (either updates or safeguarding), ineffective investigations or ineffective supervision. One investigation was referred back to the force for immediate remedial action to be taken.

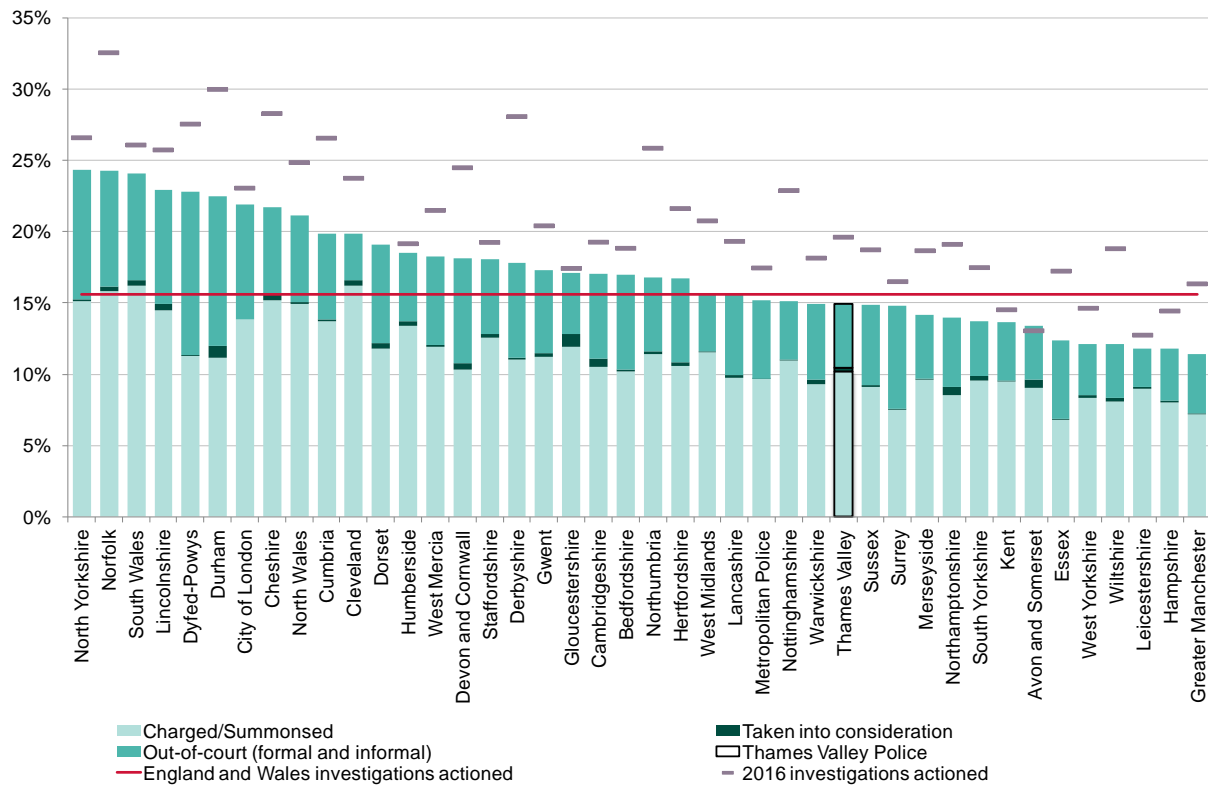
HMICFRS notes that since the restructure of the force, there have been a considerable number of investigator vacancies in some i-hub teams. This has meant that the force's investigative capacity and capability has not always been sufficient to cope with demand. The force recognises this problem and the particular i-hubs in the force area that are most affected. The very recent recruitment of 89 police staff investigators appears to have had a positive effect on workloads and resilience in those teams where they have been deployed. This is a positive step and some officers in the investigation hubs reported that the presence of the additional investigators is making a positive difference. The force maintains an overview of the

effect of these changes through force-level quality-assurance processes to improve the standard of investigations and it is important that it tracks how well the new way of working is being established in each local policing area.

After our 2016 effectiveness inspection, we said the force should ensure that it is fully compliant with the code of practice for victims of crime. Although there have been improvements in the quality and timeliness of victim updates in more serious and complex cases, including those involving victims who are vulnerable, we found that this is still unsatisfactory in other crimes reported.

We also said that the force should review its capacity to retrieve digital evidence from mobile phones, computers and other electronic devices to ensure that investigations are not delayed. The force has made considerable progress and there is now a clear triage process at local and force level to improve turnaround times for the technical examination of digital devices. The high-tech crime unit has streamlined its processes and introduced quality checks, although it continues to rely on external service providers to support some areas of work.

Figure 2: Proportion of investigations where action was taken, by force, for offences recorded in the 12 months to 30 June 2017^{10, 11}



Source: 2016 and 2017 Home Office Outcomes Data

For further information about this data, please see annex A

The force generally achieves good investigative outcomes (such as charge or no further action) when compared with other similar forces, and the proportion of offenders it takes to court is in line with the rate for other police forces in England and Wales. However, a large proportion of crimes are concluded as ‘no further action’. In the crime files we examined, we found several instances where supervisors seemed content to sign-off investigations as completed when there were reasonable lines of enquiry still to pursue, or to authorise crimes for filing if victims or witnesses were hard to find or contact.

¹⁰ Investigations where action was taken includes the outcome categories of Charged/Summoned, Taken into consideration and Out-of-court (formal and informal).

¹¹ Suffolk Constabulary was unable to provide 2017 crime outcomes data. Dorset Police was unable to provide 2016 crime outcomes data. Therefore figures for England and Wales will differ from those published by the Home Office. For further information about this data, please see annex A.

Reducing re-offending

Thames Valley Police takes a positive approach to apprehending people who pose a risk to the public. However, it needs to improve its understanding at a local senior management level about what actions are being taken to catch outstanding offenders who are not arrested immediately, or who breach police and court bail conditions.

The force recognises the importance of catching people who pose a risk to the public. It makes determined and continuous efforts to arrest as soon as possible those people who are wanted for offences and who present the highest risk to victims. This is managed effectively through daily tasking processes. The number of outstanding wanted offenders per 10,000 population in the Thames Valley Police area recorded on the police national computer is 8.3 as of 1 July 2017, putting it broadly in line with the England and Wales rate. In addition, through the force performance meeting, senior leaders hold local police commanders to account for the number of offenders at large in their areas. However, we found a lack of awareness in some local policing areas of offenders wanted for lower-level offences, which results in a lack of concentrated activity to bring those offenders to justice. The force is creating an IT-based outstanding offender toolkit which will give local police commanders up-to-date information about outstanding offenders in their areas. Until the toolkit is in place, there are no systems or processes which effectively identify outstanding offenders, assess the risk they pose and track the work which is being done to bring them to justice. This includes offenders who breach court or police bail conditions.

In addition, the number of referrals the force makes to Immigration Enforcement teams when foreign national offenders are arrested has fallen. Figures provided by the force during our fieldwork show a fall of 26 percent for the first quarter of 2017 compared with the same period in 2016. This means that some checks of arrested foreign nationals to determine their current immigration status might be not carried out and that people who are not entitled to be in the UK (including those who have previously been deported) are not identified and detained. The force should take steps to understand what is behind this reduction in referrals.

Thames Valley Police makes good use of integrated offender management (IOM) arrangements and works well with probation, housing, drug services and other organisations to reduce offending behaviour. Knowledge of current high-risk offenders on the IOM programme is good among operational police officers and staff and briefing materials are routinely available to inform officers about the offenders who are most active in their local areas. In our 2016 effectiveness inspection we highlighted the need for Thames Valley Police to widen its IOM programme to include a broader range of offenders. The force has made good progress. The programme now includes domestic abuse perpetrators as well as chaotic volume crime offenders, and there is a clear plan of action in place for managing these offenders.

The rate of re-offending by the IOM group in Thames Valley is 33 percent. It is clear that the force is beginning to develop data and information to improve its understanding and assessment of reducing re-offending. Arrangements to manage the risk posed by dangerous and sexual offenders are also good. The force is aware that the ratio of registered sex offenders to officers and staff dedicated to protecting the public from dangerous and sexual offenders is higher than national guidelines and the force is increasing the number of officers in the team to manage this workload more effectively.

Areas for improvement

- The force should ensure that all evidence, including body-worn video camera footage, is secured at the first opportunity to maximise the likelihood of investigations being concluded successfully.
- The force should ensure that it is fully compliant with the Code of Practice for Victims of Crime.
- The force should ensure that there is regular and active supervision of investigations to improve quality and progress.
- The force should take steps to improve the provision of management information to local police area commanders about the numbers of people who are wanted for arrest and the risk that they pose, to ensure that they are effectively managed.
- The force should ensure that checks are routinely conducted to verify the identity, nationality and overseas convictions of arrested foreign nationals.

Protecting vulnerable people and supporting victims



Good

Identifying vulnerability

Thames Valley Police is good at protecting vulnerable people and supporting victims. The force takes all types of vulnerability seriously and has senior officers with responsibility for each of the vulnerability strands defined by the College of Policing, with action plans and working groups for each strand.

The force continues to improve its understanding of the nature and scale of vulnerability, which it enhances by joint work with partner agencies such as children's services and social care. A good example is the force's analysis of child sexual exploitation, which combines police and partner information to provide a deeper understanding, and leads to better plans and more concentrated work to tackle the crime and reduce risk. The force has a clear definition of vulnerability which it communicates effectively to all officers and staff, who have a clear understanding of the force's approach to vulnerable people and who understand how to identify and protect vulnerable people. Daily management meetings focus on vulnerability, discussing and directing operational activity in relation to domestic abuse cases. The daily meetings also provide a focus on hidden crimes, such as human trafficking, which affect some of the most vulnerable victims. Cases involving victims who are vulnerable are generally investigated to a high standard by competent and well-trained officers and staff.

The force has invested in training and mentoring for call handlers, who use the THOR method to help them identify vulnerable people. Thames Valley Police demonstrates a good understanding of how to identify and protect those who are the most vulnerable. Force computer systems automatically identify and flag callers who may be vulnerable or repeat victims, although in order to get full details about the caller it is sometimes necessary for call handlers to carry out secondary searches of more than one system. This situation will be rectified when the new force command and control system is introduced in early 2018.

Initial response

Overall, Thames Valley Police provides a satisfactory initial response to protect vulnerable people. The force has provided training for officers and staff so they can recognise when a person might be vulnerable. The training included understanding domestic abuse in all its forms, for example coercive and controlling behaviour, and the principles of professional curiosity.¹² The force uses structured risk-assessment tools when dealing with victims of anti-social behaviour, domestic abuse and so-called honour-based violence to establish the level of risk and provide necessary information for specialist officers and partner agencies. For example, at incidents which involve domestic abuse, frontline officers must complete a risk-assessment to determine a victim's level of risk. During our fieldwork, HMICFRS reviewed a sample of these assessments. Although we found many which were completed to a good standard and had appropriate supervision, this was not consistently the case and we found some poorly completed or incomplete assessments, and supervisors had not always conducted quality-assurance checks. Officers need to be more consistent when they speak to children who are involved in, or present at, these incidents. Officers also need to be more consistent when they record what they see and hear. Although this is generally satisfactory and we saw good processes to allow this information to be communicated, the inconsistency means that children who witness these incidents are not always being heard.

The force is effective at protecting victims of domestic abuse. It is clear who is responsible for immediate victim safeguarding. Members of the workforce with this responsibility have received appropriate training to identify when a person is vulnerable and undertake the initial risk-assessment. This assessment sets out the initial safeguarding measures that have been put in place, and is then sent to the multi-agency safeguarding hub (MASH)¹³ for further assessment by specialists who conduct a further risk-assessment. These specialists provide further support, such as putting victims in touch with independent domestic violent advocates who provide additional and continuing support to victims of domestic abuse. However, the arrest rate for domestic abuse-related crimes has deteriorated over the last three years. For every 100 domestic abuse-related offences recorded by the force in the 12 months to 30 June 2017, there were 52.9 arrests made per 100 domestic abuse-related offences. This is a decrease from the previous year, when 58.4 arrests

¹² Professional curiosity refers to an approach in which professionals look beyond the immediate incident that they are dealing with to understand the wider issues and how vulnerable people and others may be affected.

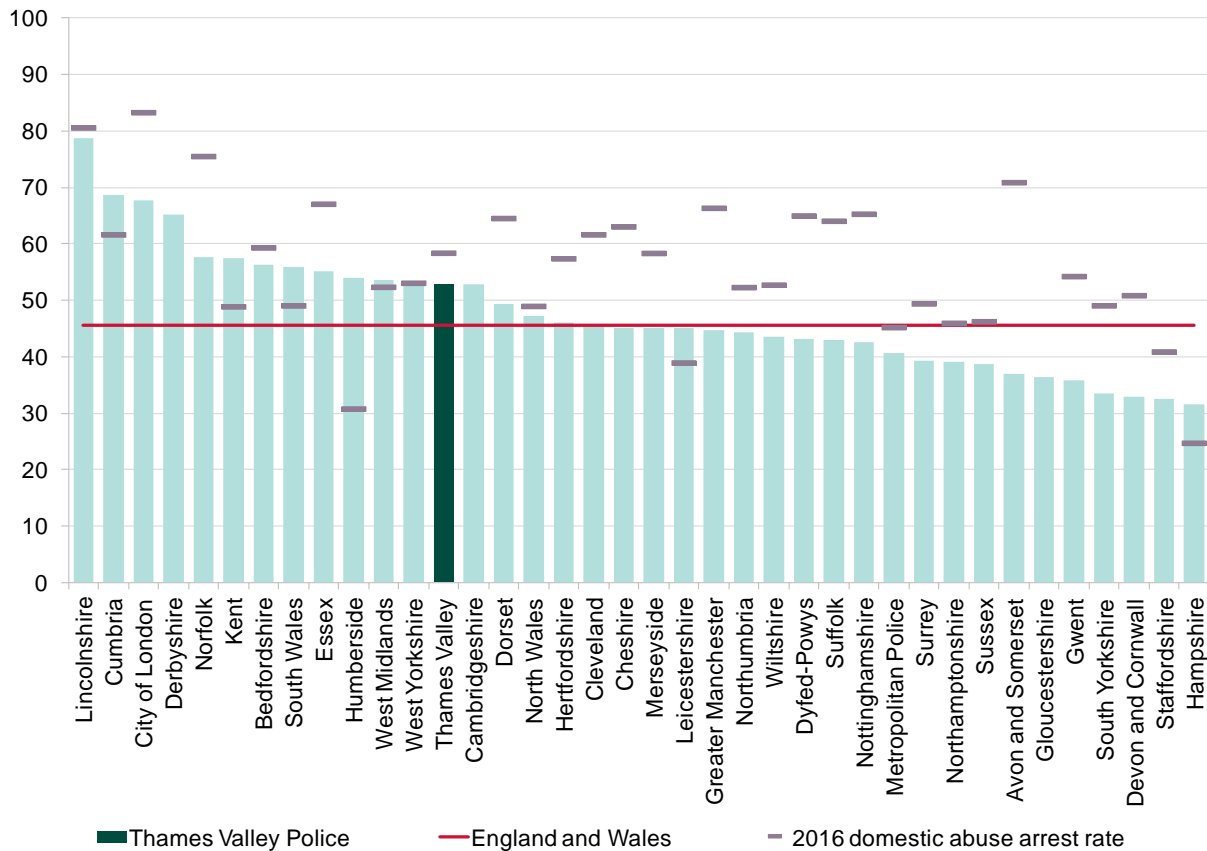
¹³ A MASH brings together into a single location principal safeguarding agencies to better identify risks to children (and in some areas, vulnerable adults), and improve decision-making, interventions and outcomes. The MASH enables the multi-agency team to exchange all appropriate information in a secure environment, and ensure that the most appropriate response is provided to safeguard and protect the individual effectively.

were made for every 100 domestic abuse-related offences. However, the overall arrest rate is in line with the England and Wales rate over the same period. Thames Valley Police is unable to provide data for the number of domestic abuse suspects dealt with by means of voluntary attendance,¹⁴ so it is not clear if the falling arrest rate is linked to an increase in the voluntary attendance for interview of a suspect at a police station. The force should make sure that it fully understands the reasons for this decrease in arrests.

The rate of arrest for domestic abuse offences can provide an indication of a force's approach to handling domestic abuse offenders. Although for the purpose of this calculation arrests are not linked directly to offences, a high arrest rate may suggest that a force prioritises arrests for domestic abuse offenders over other potential forms of action (for further information, please see annex A). HMICFRS has evaluated the arrest rate alongside other measures during our inspection process to understand how each force deals with domestic abuse overall.

¹⁴ A voluntary attendance is a police station interview when the 'volunteer' attends to assist the police with an investigation and they are not under arrest. Volunteers have the right to access independent legal advice and are free to leave the police station at any time unless and until they are arrested.

Figure 3: Domestic abuse arrest rate (per 100 domestic abuse-related offences), by force, in the 12 months to 30 June 2017^{15, 16}



Source: 2016 and 2017 HMICFRS data return, 2016 and 2017 Home Office domestic abuse crime data¹⁷

For further information about this data, please see annex A

¹⁵ Durham, Lancashire, Warwickshire and West Mercia forces were unable to provide 2017 domestic abuse arrest data. Cambridgeshire, Derbyshire, Durham and Gloucestershire forces were unable to provide 2016 domestic abuse arrest data.

¹⁶ North Yorkshire Police was unable to provide comparable domestic abuse arrest data. Therefore, it has been removed from the graph. For further information, please see annex A.

¹⁷ The Home Office has provided HMICFRS with data on domestic abuse-related offences recorded in the 12 months to 30 June 2017. These data are more recent than those published by the Office for National Statistics.

Mental health

Thames Valley Police's response to dealing with people with mental health problems is good. It undertakes extensive work both within the force and with partner agencies, in particular the local mental health trusts. Frontline officers and staff generally have a good awareness of mental health problems. They understand the importance of acting immediately when this is necessary in order to protect people who have mental health problems. Although the force command and control system that logs calls does not enable call handlers easily to identify incidents where the caller (or the person on whose behalf the call is made) has a mental health problem, their training and awareness in this area helps them to make effective decisions about how to support people with mental health problems.

There is clear policy and guidance for frontline officers and staff when responding to people with mental health problems, and there are effective links in the force control room with mental health professionals. Each county has a mental health triage car. This is staffed by a police officer and a mental health professional who gives advice to colleagues. This provides an effective response to vulnerable people with mental health problems. Although the triage cars are only available during afternoons and evenings, outside these hours there are good links to health professionals who officers can contact for immediate advice. In addition, each policing area has a mental health lead who has enhanced expertise in managing incidents which involve someone who has a mental health problem.

The force has good governance and oversight processes in place to make sure that it responds effectively to people with mental health problems. The force has mental health crisis concordats¹⁸ with the four mental health trusts in the Thames Valley area, which are working well. Partners provided good examples of working together and spoke highly of the improvements they had seen in how well officers and staff from Thames Valley Police identify and respond to people who have mental health needs. In addition, the mental health professionals that the force works with made positive comments about the reduction in the use of police powers under section 136

¹⁸ The mental health crisis care concordat is a national agreement between services and agencies involved in the care and support of people in crisis. It sets out how organisations will work together better to make sure that people get the help they need when they are having a mental health crisis. For more information see: www.crisiscareconcordat.org.uk/national-concordat/

of the Mental Health Act,¹⁹ which have reduced from about 40 to fewer than ten occasions per month. The officer leading the force's response to mental health co-ordinates the efforts and skills of different partners. Regular meetings between partners assess how well the agreements between them are working, and identify how the service given to people who have mental health problems can be improved. The force has made good progress in understanding and managing the demand on its time from supporting people with mental health problems as well as in improving how, with its partners, it protects people who are vulnerable because of mental ill-health.

Investigating crimes involving vulnerable people

Thames Valley Police investigates to a good standard crimes involving vulnerable victims. On all occasions, these crimes are allocated to public protection officers who receive appropriate levels of training and supervision from more senior investigators and have regular opportunities for continuing professional development. Following a recent restructure of the department, there is now greater resilience within the team, and workloads are manageable, although they are still high for some investigators. Supervisors hold investigators to account for the quality of their work, but the recording of this supervision is variable. Investigations are well planned, and progress in a timely way, and victims are provided with updates. Supervisors take the wellbeing and welfare of the workforce seriously and give support if necessary.

The force pursues prosecutions where appropriate, even when the victim does not support police action. In the 12 months to June 2017, Thames Valley Police charged or reported for summonses 21.9 times in every 100 domestic abuse offences compared to a rate of 18.6 for England and Wales over the same period. The force reviews investigative outcomes to improve its approach. The most recent review examined rape cases. This identified that the initial contact between the victim and the first police officer that they meet or talk to is an important element in influencing whether or not the victim continues to cooperate with the evidential process. The force will now use these findings to provide training to officers to improve the initial service to such victims, and raise officers' awareness of the importance of their initial contact with victims.

¹⁹ Section 136 of the Mental Health Act 1983 enables a police officer to remove, from a place other than where they live, someone who they believe to be suffering from a mental disorder and in need of immediate care and control, and take them to a place of safety – for example, a health or social care facility, or the home of a relative or friend. In exceptional circumstances (for example, if the person's behaviour would pose an unmanageably high risk to others), the place of safety may be police custody. Section 136 also states that the purpose of detention is to enable the person to be assessed by a doctor and an approved mental health professional (for example, a specially trained social worker or nurse), and for the making of any necessary arrangements for treatment or care.

HMICFRS examined the force's use of its wider legal powers to protect victims. In the 12 months to 30 June 2016, it applied for 62 domestic violence protection orders (DVPOs); in the 12 months to 30 June 2017 it applied for 61 DVPOs.²⁰ The force is unable to provide data on the use of Clare's Law²¹ or to indicate whether its use is increasing. It is important that victims should be afforded appropriate protection. The force is continuing to undertake work to improve officers' awareness of these legal powers.

Partnership working

Thames Valley Police works well with partner agencies to provide tailored, continuing specialist safeguarding arrangements for vulnerable people. It disseminates information about children to external organisations and agencies through MASHs. A single point of contact in the hub means that those victims who live outside the Thames Valley Police area have their cases transferred to the appropriate force area. Generally, good processes are in place throughout the MASHs, but we found a backlog of 556 standard and medium-risk referrals within the force area awaiting a secondary assessment. In most cases this backlog is dealt with quickly, but in one MASH, which covers Buckinghamshire, this backlog is persistent and accounts for nearly half of all force referrals awaiting assessment. This means that there is a delay in both conducting the secondary assessment, and in passing information about vulnerable victims to partner agencies. The extent of the risk may remain hidden until full assessments are undertaken. The force is aware of the backlog and there are plans for additional staff to provide resilience to busier areas, but this problem will continue until the plans are in place.

The force has effective multi-agency risk-assessment conferences (MARACs) to support victims of domestic abuse. Officers and staff who work with victims of domestic abuse are generally good at identifying whether a victim is at high risk of further harm. All such cases are referred to a MARAC; the actual number of referrals has increased over the past 12 months. However, the rate of referral is still comparatively low compared with other forces. Referrals to a MARAC are made by both the force and partner agencies, such as health trusts and adult safeguarding services. The referrals are mainly police-led, but referrals from partner agencies are increasing.

²⁰ Initially a domestic violence protection notice (DVPN) may be issued by an authorised police officer to prevent a suspected perpetrator from returning to a victim's home and/or contacting the victim. Following the issue of the DVPN, the police must apply to the magistrates for a DVPO. The DVPO will be granted for a period of up to 28 days.

²¹ Clare's Law increases protection for domestic abuse victims and enables the police to better identify domestic abuse perpetrators.

Areas for improvement

- The force should ensure that frontline officers become more proficient in completing DASH risk-assessments at initial response and there is sufficient supervisory oversight to ensure opportunities to safeguard vulnerable victims are not missed, and staff in the MASH should validate the risk and disseminate information to partner agencies effectively.
- The force should ensure that officers and staff understand how children can be affected by domestic abuse and that the behaviour and demeanour of any children, and what they say, are routinely recorded.
- The force should improve the way it works to share information and safeguard vulnerable victims, specifically in relation to addressing the backlog in cases that require further assessment and referral to other organisations via the MASH.

Specialist capabilities

Ungraded

National policing responsibilities

*The Strategic Policing Requirement (SPR)*²² specifies six national threats: terrorism, cyber-crime, public order, civil emergencies, child sexual abuse and serious and organised crime.

Thames Valley Police has the necessary arrangements in place to ensure that it can fulfil its national policing responsibilities. The force routinely assesses its capability to respond to the six national threats included in the SPR. This forms part of an annual cycle to set force priorities and allocate resources to them.

To build the capability to address the threats, chief officers have been assigned to each of them as part of a development programme. We found the programme to be an effective means of engaging the workforce and developing the skills and experience it requires.

The force has established a comprehensive training programme. Recent training exercises have been completed with other organisations to examine the joint response to civil disorder, firearms attacks and other emergencies.

Firearms capability

In our 2016 effectiveness inspections HMICFRS inspected how well forces were prepared to manage firearms attacks. Subsequent terrorist attacks in the UK and Europe have meant that the police service maintains a firm focus on armed capability in England and Wales.

It is not just terrorist attacks that place operational demands on armed officers. The threat can include the activity of organised crime groups or armed street gangs and all other crime involving guns. The *Code of Practice on Police use of Firearms and Less Lethal Weapons*²³ makes forces responsible for implementing national standards of armed policing. The code stipulates that a chief officer be designated to

²² The SPR is issued annually by the Home Secretary. It sets out the latest national threats and appropriate national policing capabilities required to counter them. National threats require a co-ordinated or aggregated response from police forces, national agencies or other partners. *The Strategic Policing Requirement*, Home Office, March 2015. Available from: www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/417116/The_Strategic_Policing_Requirement.pdf

²³ *Code of Practice on Police use of Firearms and Less Lethal Weapons*, Home Office, 2003.

oversee these standards. This requires the chief officer to set out the firearms threat in an armed policing strategic threat and risk-assessment (APSTRA). The chief officer must also set out clear rationales for the number of armed officers (armed capacity) and the level to which they are trained (armed capability).

Thames Valley Police operates joint arrangements with Hampshire Constabulary to provide armed policing. The force has a good understanding of the potential harm facing the public; its APSTRA conforms to the requirements of the code and the College of Policing guidance. The force last reviewed its APSTRA on 13 September 2017.

In Thames Valley Police, we found that the designated chief officer scrutinised the APSTRA closely. He formally approved its content, which includes the levels of armed capability and capacity that the threats require. His decisions and the rationale on which they are based are clearly auditable.

The force has recently completed a programme to increase the number of armed response vehicle officers. HMICFRS found that a clear justification for this decision had been set out in the force APSTRA.

Annex A – About the data

The information presented in this report comes from a range of sources, including data published by the Home Office, the Office for National Statistics, inspection fieldwork and data collected directly from all 43 geographic police forces in England and Wales.

Where HMICFRS collected data directly from police forces, we took reasonable steps to agree the design of the data collection with forces and with other interested parties such as the Home Office. We gave forces several opportunities to quality assure and validate the data they provided us, to ensure the accuracy of the evidence presented. For instance:

- Data that forces submitted were checked and queried with those forces where data were notably different from other forces or were internally inconsistent.
- All forces were asked to check the final data used in the report and correct any errors identified.

The source of the data is presented with each figure in the report, and is set out in more detail within this annex. The source of Force in numbers data is also set out below.

Methodology

Data in the report

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

Where other forces have been unable to supply data, this is mentioned under the relevant sections below.

Population

For all uses of population as a denominator in our calculations, unless otherwise noted, we use Office for National Statistics (ONS) mid-2016 population estimates. These were the most recent data available at the time of the inspection.

For the specific case of City of London Police, we include both resident and transient population within our calculations. This is to account for the unique nature and demographics of this force's responsibility.

Survey of police staff

HMICFRS surveyed the police workforce across forces in England and Wales, to understand their views on workloads, redeployment and the suitability of assigned tasks. This survey was a non-statistical, voluntary sample which means that results may not be representative of the workforce population. The number of responses varied between 16 and 1,678 across forces. Therefore, we treated results with caution and used them for identifying themes that could be explored further during fieldwork rather than to assess individual force performance.

Ipsos MORI survey of public attitudes towards policing

HMICFRS commissioned Ipsos MORI to survey attitudes towards policing between 21 July and 15 August 2017. Respondents were drawn from an online panel and results were weighted by age, gender and work status to match the population profile of the force area. The sampling method used is not a statistical random sample and the sample size was small, varying between 300 and 321 individuals in each force area. Therefore, any results provided are only an indication of satisfaction rather than an absolute.

The findings of this survey are available on our website:

www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmicfrs/data/peel-assessments

Review of crime files

HMICFRS reviewed 2,700²⁴ police case files across crime types for:

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

Our file review was designed to provide a broad overview of the identification of vulnerability, the effectiveness of investigations and to understand how victims are treated through police processes. We randomly selected files from crimes recorded between 1 January 2017 and 31 March 2017 and assessed them against several

²⁴ 60 case files were reviewed in each force, with the exception of the Metropolitan Police Service, West Midlands Police and West Yorkshire Police where 90 case files were reviewed.

criteria. Due to the small sample size of cases selected per force, we did not use results from the file review as the sole basis for assessing individual force performance, but alongside other evidence gathered.

Force in numbers

A dash in this graphic indicates that a force was not able to supply HMICFRS with data or the data supplied by the forces were not comparable.

Calls for assistance (including those for domestic abuse)

These data were collected directly from all 43 geographic police forces in England and Wales. In 2017, the data requested from forces contained a different breakdown of occurrences where the police were called to an incident.

Recorded crime and crime outcomes

These data are obtained from Home Office police recorded crime and outcomes data tables for the 12 months to 30 June 2017 and are taken from the October 2017 Home Office data release, which is available from:

www.gov.uk/government/statistics/police-recorded-crime-open-data-tables

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

Data referring to police-recorded crime should be treated with care, as recent increases may be attributed to the renewed focus on the quality and compliance of crime recording since HMICFRS' national inspection of crime data in 2014.

Suffolk Constabulary was unable to submit 2017 outcomes data to the Home Office due to data quality issues, relating to the changing of its crime recording system to Athena. Therefore Suffolk Constabulary has been excluded from the England and Wales figure.

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

- Crime outcome proportions show the percentage of crimes recorded in the 12 months to 30 June 2017 that have been assigned each outcome. This means that each crime is tracked or linked to its outcome. Therefore these data are subject to change, as more crimes are assigned outcomes over time.
- Under the new framework, 37 police forces in England and Wales provide outcomes data through the Home Office data hub (HODH) on a monthly

basis. All other forces provide these data via a manual return also occurring on a monthly basis.

- Leicestershire, Staffordshire and West Yorkshire forces participated in the Ministry of Justice's out of court disposals pilot. This means they no longer issued simple cautions or cannabis/khat warnings and they restrict their use of penalty notices for disorder as disposal options for adult offenders, as part of the pilot. These three pilot forces continued to operate in accordance with the pilot conditions since the pilot ended in November 2015. Other forces subsequently also limited their use of some out of court disposals. Therefore, the outcomes data should be viewed with this in mind.
- Direct comparisons should not be made between general crime outcomes and domestic abuse-related outcomes. Domestic abuse-related outcomes are based on the number of outcomes for domestic-abuse related offences recorded in the 12 months to 30 June 2017, irrespective of when the crime was recorded. Therefore, the domestic abuse-related crimes and outcomes recorded in the reporting year are not tracked, whereas the general outcomes are tracked.
- For a full commentary and explanation of outcome types please see Crime Outcomes in England and Wales: year ending March 2017, Home Office, July 2017. Available from:
www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/633048/crime-outcomes-hosb0917.pdf

Anti-social behaviour

These data are obtained from Office for National Statistics data tables (year ending 31 March 2017), available from:

www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/crimeandjustice/datasets/policeforcesareadatatables

All police forces record incidents of anti-social behaviour (ASB) reported to them in accordance with the provisions of the National Standard for Incident Recording (NSIR). Forces record incidents under NSIR in accordance with the same victim-focused approach that applies for recorded crime, although these data are not subject to the same quality assurance as the main recorded crime collection. Incident counts should be interpreted as incidents recorded by the police, rather than reflecting the true level of victimisation. Other agencies also deal with ASB incidents (for example, local authorities and social landlords), but incidents reported to these agencies will not generally be included in police data.

When viewing this data the reader should be aware that Warwickshire Police had a problem with its incident recording. For a small percentage of all incidents reported during 2015-16 the force could not identify whether these were ASB or other types of

incident. These incidents have been distributed pro rata for Warwickshire, so that two percent of ASB incidents in the reporting year for 2015-16 is estimated.

Domestic abuse

Data relating to domestic abuse-flagged offences is obtained through the Home Office for the 12 months to 30 June 2017. These are more recent data than those previously published by Office for National Statistics. The Home Office collects these data regularly and requires all forces to record accurately and flag domestic abuse crimes. Domestic abuse flags should be applied in accordance with the Home Office Counting Rules²⁵ to ensure consistency across forces, and within published data sets.

Data relating to domestic abuse arrests and outcomes were collected directly from all 43 geographic police forces in England and Wales.

Further information about the domestic abuse statistics and recent releases is available from:

www.ons.gov.uk/releases/domesticabuseinenglandandwalesyearendingmarch2017

When viewing this data the reader should be aware that North Yorkshire Police was unable to give the Home Office comparable data on domestic abuse-flagged crimes. The force extracted data for HMICFRS on the powers and outcomes used to deal with these offences by using an enhanced search. This search examined additional factors (such as the victim / suspect relationship) and included a keyword search to identify additional domestic abuse crimes which may not have been flagged. The force used a simpler search, which identified domestic abuse crimes by flagging alone, to extract data it supplied to the Home Office. As North Yorkshire Police's data on domestic abuse are not comparable with other forces, we have excluded the data.

Organised crime groups (OCGs)

These data were collected directly from all 43 geographic police forces in England and Wales. City of London Police is excluded from the England and Wales rate as its OCG data are not comparable with other forces due to size and its wider national remit.

²⁵ Home Office Counting Rules are rules in accordance with which crime data – required to be submitted to the Home Secretary under sections 44 and 45 of the Police Act 1996 – must be collected. They set down how the police service in England and Wales must record crime, how crimes must be classified according to crime type and categories, whether and when to record crime, how many crimes to record in respect of a single incident and the regime for the re-classification of crimes as no-crimes.

As at 1 July 2017 City of London Police had recorded 46 OCGs. However during the inspection we found that only six OCGs were within the force's geographical area and the remaining 40 were part of the National Fraud Intelligence Bureau's remit.

Figures in the report

Not all forces' reports will contain all the figures we mention in the sections below. This is because some forces' data was incomplete or not comparable with England and Wales data, and in 2017 HMICFRS undertook risk-based inspections. More details about our risk-based approach can be found here:

www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmicfrs/peel-assessments/how-we-inspect/2017-peel-assessment/#risk-based

Rate of anti-social behaviour (ASB) powers per 1 million population, by force, in the 12 months to 30 June 2017

These data were collected directly from all 43 geographic police forces in England and Wales. HMICFRS collected data on anti-social behaviour powers, including:

- criminal behaviour orders;
- community protection notices;
- civil injunctions;
- dispersal orders.

Together these powers form the anti-social behaviour (ASB) powers considered in this report.

The Crime and Policing Act 2014 introduced ASB powers which can be applied by both local authorities and the police. The ASB powers data provided in this report covers police data. Therefore, results should be treated with caution as they may not include instances where local authorities exercised these powers.

When viewing this data the reader should be aware of the following:

- Bedfordshire Police, Greater Manchester Police and the Metropolitan Police Service were unable to provide data on anti-social behaviour powers as the data are not held centrally within each force.
- Greater Manchester Police was unable to provide any 2016 ASB use of powers data. Greater Manchester Police intends for its new integrated operational policing system to incorporate recording of ASB powers.
- Suffolk Constabulary was only able to provide data for the southern area of the force in 2017. Therefore its data are excluded.

The forces highlighted above are not included in the figure or in the calculation of the England and Wales rate.

Gloucestershire, Hertfordshire, Humberside and Merseyside forces were only able to provide partial 2017 ASB use of powers data.

- Gloucestershire Constabulary and Hertfordshire Constabulary were unable to obtain data regarding the number of civil injunctions as their local authorities lead the application of these.
- Humberside Police was unable to provide data on community protection notices and civil injunction notices as its local authorities lead the application of these. The force does not collect data on criminal behaviour orders and dispersal orders.
- Merseyside Police was unable to provide data on dispersal orders as these orders are attached to individual crime files.

Proportion of investigations where action was taken, by force, for offences recorded in the 12 months to 30 June 2017

Please see 'Recorded Crime and Crime Outcomes' above.

Suffolk Constabulary was unable to provide 2017 crime outcomes data. Dorset Police was unable to provide 2016 crime outcomes data. Therefore, these forces' data are not included in the figure.

Dorset Police was unable to provide 2016 crimes outcome data, because it had difficulty with the recording of crime outcomes for the 12 months to 30 June 2016. This was due to the force introducing the Niche records management system in spring 2015. Problems with the implementation of Niche meant that crime outcomes were not reliably recorded.

Domestic abuse arrest rate (per 100 domestic abuse-related offences), by force, in the 12 months to 30 June 2017

Please see 'Domestic abuse' above.

- The arrest rate is calculated using a common time period for arrests and offences. It is important to note that each arrest is not necessarily directly linked to its specific domestic abuse offence recorded in the 12 months to 30 June 2017 in this calculation. It is also possible to have more than one arrest per offence. In addition, the reader should note the increase in police-recorded crime which affected the majority of forces over the last year. This may mean arrest rates are higher than the figures suggest. Despite this, the calculation still indicates whether the force prioritises arrests for domestic abuse offenders over other potential forms of action. HMICFRS evaluated the arrest rate alongside other measures (such as use of voluntary attendance or

body-worn video cameras) during our inspection process to understand how each force deals with domestic abuse overall.

When viewing this data the reader should be aware of the following:

- Durham, Lancashire, Warwickshire and West Mercia forces were unable to provide domestic abuse arrest data. North Yorkshire Police was unable to provide comparable domestic abuse crime and arrest data, so a rate could not be calculated. Therefore, these forces are not included in the figure.
- Cambridgeshire Derbyshire, Durham and Gloucestershire forces were unable to provide 2016 domestic abuse arrest data. Therefore, these forces do not have 2016 data included in the figure.

When viewing domestic abuse arrest data for 2016, the reader should be aware of the following:

- Cambridgeshire Constabulary was unable to provide 2016 domestic abuse arrest data due to a recording problem that meant it could only obtain accurate data from a manual audit of its custody records.
- Lancashire Constabulary had difficulty in identifying all domestic abuse-flagged arrests. This affected 23 days in the 12 months to 30 June 2016. The force investigated this and confirmed that the impact on the 2016 data provided to HMICFRS would be marginal and that these are the most reliable data it can provide.

Rate of organised crime groups (OCGs) per 1 million population, by force, as at 1 July 2017

Please see 'Organised crime groups' above.

Organised crime group data from City of London Police are not comparable with other forces. Therefore, its data are not included in the figure.

For data relating to 2016 the number of OCGs in Warwickshire Police and West Mercia Police force areas is a combined total of OCGs for the two force areas. The OCGs per 1 million population rate is based upon their areas' combined population. For the 2017 data Warwickshire Police and West Mercia Police force split their OCGs into two separate force areas.