

PEEL: Police effectiveness 2017

An inspection of West Mercia Police



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Force in numbers



Calls for assistance

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

West Mercia Police

England and Wales

249

282



Anti-social behaviour

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

West Mercia Police

England and Wales

36

31

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

West Mercia Police

England and Wales

+4%

-0.05%



Crime (excluding fraud)

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

West Mercia Police

England and Wales

67

77

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

West Mercia Police

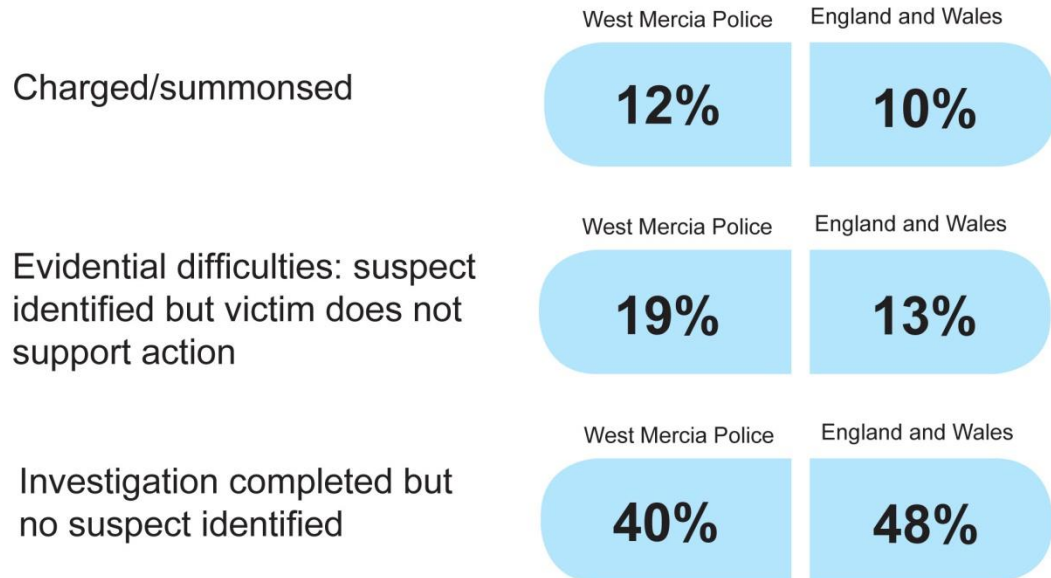
England and Wales

+14%

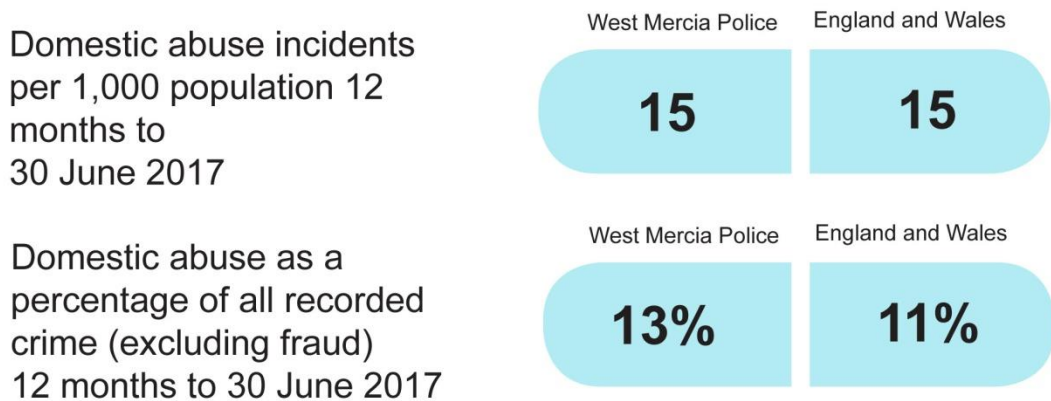
+14%



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. West Mercia Police was assessed against the following areas in 2017:

- Preventing crime and tackling anti-social behaviour;
- Protecting vulnerable people;
- Tackling serious and organised crime; 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 West Mercia Police can be found on the HMICFRS website: www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmicfrs/publications/peel-police-effectiveness-2016-west-mercia

Effectiveness overview

Judgments

Overall effectiveness 2017  Requires improvement

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

Summary

West Mercia Police has been assessed as requiring improvement in respect of how effective it is at keeping people safe and reducing crime. This contrasts with last year's assessment, when we judged the force to be good.

The workforce understands the force's vision to protect the most vulnerable and there are well-established channels of communication in place with different communities. However, the use of structured problem-solving techniques to prevent crime and anti-social behaviour is not widespread within neighbourhood teams and the force's understanding of its communities is insufficiently developed. This means its response to problems is not always based on local feedback and it does not

evaluate its use of tactics and interventions to improve its service to the public. In addition, response officers do not currently contribute to the community policing model and neighbourhood officers are sometimes reassigned to other duties; collectively this is likely to undermine the force's commitment to local people.

The workforce displays a strong understanding of the signs of vulnerability. However, the force needs to improve its initial response to incidents involving vulnerable people, particularly victims of domestic abuse. Although the force generally investigates crimes involving vulnerable people to a good standard, it needs to ensure that investigators' workloads are manageable and effectively supervised. The scheduled replacement of outdated ICT systems in the control room is anticipated to improve how the force recognises and responds to the needs of vulnerable people.

The force's approach to serious and organised crime is a cause of concern. There are weaknesses in the way it assesses the risks posed by organised crime groups (OCGs), and its processes for scrutinising the use of tactics and interventions are under development. It is failing to assess the impact of its efforts to disrupt OCG activities in accordance with national guidelines. The force needs to ensure that the prevention of serious and organised crime is based on a comprehensive understanding of the threats posed. It also needs to work more closely with its partner organisations (such as local authorities, or health and education services) to understand and prevent this type of criminality.

West Mercia Police has the necessary arrangements in place to ensure that it can fulfil its national policing responsibilities, and to respond to an attack requiring an armed response.

Preventing crime and tackling anti-social behaviour



Requires improvement

Prioritising prevention

West Mercia Police has entered into a strategic alliance with Warwickshire Police (in this report, we will refer to this strategic alliance simply as the alliance). Both forces share a single vision and set of values, and work to a harmonised set of policies. In this inspection, all references to the alliance can be read as applying equally to either force.

West Mercia Police's vision is to protect the public from death, injury, loss and distress, and it aspires to be great at protecting the most vulnerable. Our reality testing showed that the workforce understands this well; however, the use of structured problem-solving techniques to prevent crime and anti-social behaviour varies considerably and neighbourhood policing teams are not trained in their use. This area for improvement was highlighted in our last two effectiveness inspections and it is apparent that the force is yet to respond adequately. We did find examples of good practice: for example, we identified how the neighbourhood policing team in Shrewsbury works with local partner organisations to tackle problems; and the harm reduction unit in Telford takes action to prevent anti-social behaviour with the 'safeguarding families' team (a multi-disciplinary, joint service team that works with disadvantaged families). However, these approaches are not embedded across the wider force. This means that the public cannot yet be assured that West Mercia Police is effective at preventing crime and anti-social behaviour.

The force continues its commitment to local policing. Each area has a designated safer neighbourhood team (SNT), with police officers and police community support officers (PCSOs) assigned to defined geographical areas; this reflects the importance the alliance places on engagement, visibility and collaboration with the public and partner organisations in accordance with its service priorities.

HMICFRS examined whether officers assigned to duties responding to 999 and 101 calls contribute to the SNT community model. The officers reported that their commitment to responding to calls from the public precluded them from this activity. We also found that neighbourhood officers are sometimes reassigned to other duties; this represents a similar position to our findings in 2016. Taking local officers away from their communities is likely to undermine a force's commitment to local people. It would be useful for the alliance to determine how often neighbourhood officers are abstracted from their core roles, what the underlying causes are, and what effect it has on communities.

Understanding communities

West Mercia Police demonstrates an understanding of its communities, but this is largely based on the in-depth knowledge that individual officers have accumulated about the areas they police. While this knowledge is important, the force would benefit from a greater insight into local demographics; this is particularly important in respect of newly settled residents, communities that have less trust and confidence in the police and local people who are vulnerable. Many forces systematically research local populations to ensure that the service they are providing to people or communities who are less likely to complain or take part in traditional forms of engagement, so-called 'hidden communities', is adapted to their needs. The approach in the West Mercia force area lacks both consistency and the assurance that a professional service can be provided to all communities.

While more could be done to understand local communities, we nevertheless recognise that there are effective channels of communication in place with different communities. The alliance has a well-established independent advisory group (IAG) network which provides a dependable means of seeking feedback from communities. This network has influenced how the force manages significant incidents and events. IAG representation includes community leaders who provide a reference point to ensure that the service provided by the force reflects community interests and needs.

In an effort to improve services, the force seeks to understand what matters to local people and it provides opportunities for them to influence policing priorities: for example, the use of online voting and community forums. We found that officers and PCSOs were able to describe the different ways they engage with the public, including: Twitter and Facebook; pop-up stands at leisure centres; and attendance at community events and residents' meetings. Although this is encouraging, HMICFRS considers that a deeper understanding of communities would enable better interaction with local people. The alliance has an opportunity to put this right through the development of its community engagement strategy. This should be founded on detailed knowledge of established and more recently settled communities; it should set out clear expectations on the involvement of local commanders and it should make provision for digital and other facilities to be available to frontline staff to enable them to communicate effectively in their communities.

Tackling crime and anti-social behaviour

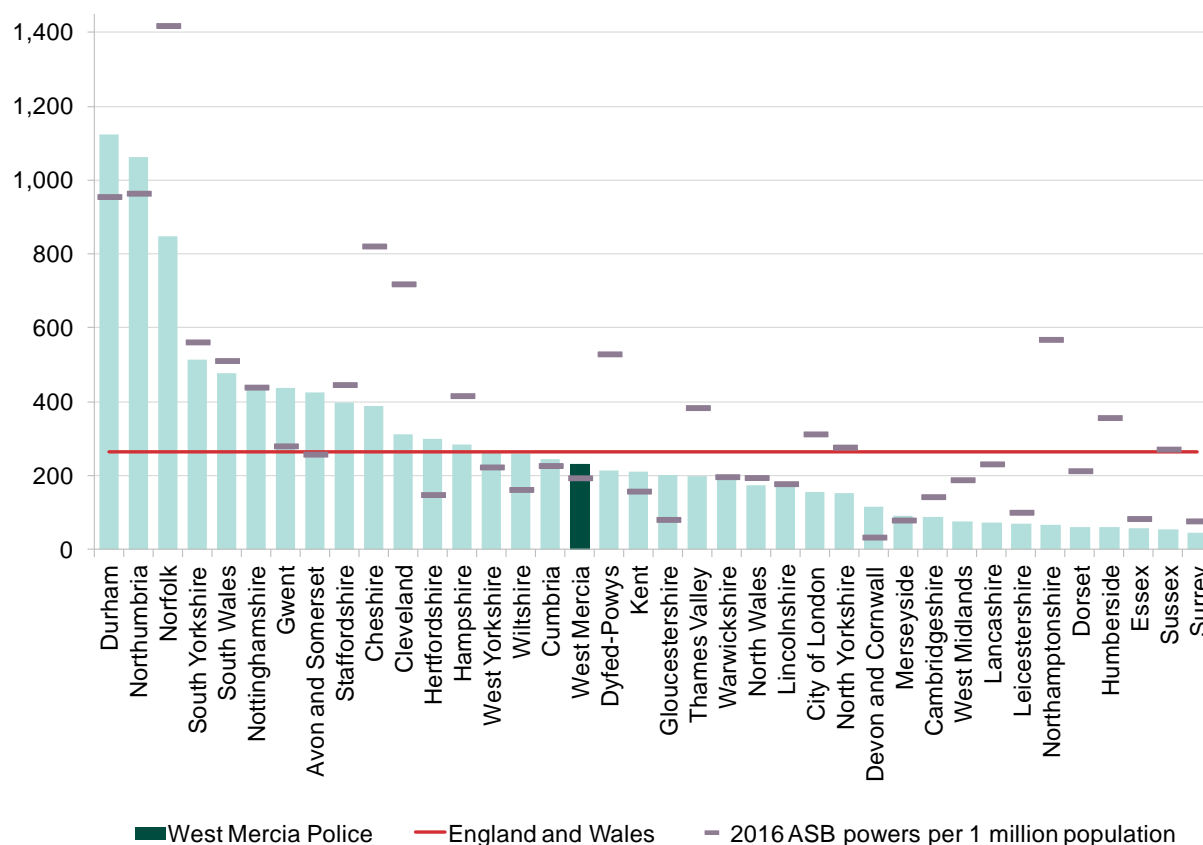
West Mercia Police requires improvement in how it tackles crime and anti-social behaviour. We found that the response to day-to-day policing demands is prioritised above longer-term problem solving. HMICFRS did find some good examples of joint working. For example, a number of organisations work closely with the force to support victims of anti-social behaviour and West Mercia Police is a valued member of the 'Team Shrewsbury' partnership which addresses the consequences of homelessness. However, we would expect a commitment to address the underlying causes of crime and disorder to be a more prominent characteristic of how West Mercia Police operates. This should include support, training and other facilities to promote joint working being made available to frontline workers to bring about lasting solutions to community problems.

We found that where joint programmes are in place they are working well; however, the extent to which they have been adopted is reliant on the active participation of well-motivated and talented local staff, rather than the expectations set by senior leaders. HMICFRS expects problem solving to be a priority among all frontline staff; they should be given the time and skills they need in order to work with other organisations to address issues that matter to local people.

HMICFRS also looked at whether the force made use of legislative powers and effective tactics in the fight against crime and anti-social behaviour. The use of legal powers has increased in the past 12 months and the frequency with which they are used is in line with other forces in England and Wales. Of particular note is the force's extensive use of criminal behaviour orders to curb the offending behaviour of persistent criminals. These orders are granted on application to a court when an offender is sentenced; they are designed to restrict the movement of individuals or place other conditions on their day-to-day living to reduce the likelihood of them being able to offend.

We also noted that the alliance has introduced three community problem-solving co-ordinators. The co-ordinators have expert knowledge of the legal powers available to prevent or reduce the likelihood of individuals breaking the law. They offer significant support to local neighbourhood teams and make sure that officers and PCSOs use the full range of tactics and interventions available to them. This is an important step in deepening the understanding of how best to resolve persistent problems in communities.

Figure 1: Rate of anti-social behaviour (ASB) powers per 1 million population, by force, in the 12 months to 30 June 2017³



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

Although the force makes good use of police powers and tactics to reduce offending, it does not have a good understanding of the true value of their effect. This is because the powers are not currently properly evaluated. West Mercia Police has an opportunity to put this right as its main information and communications technology (ICT) operating platform is due for replacement. The force views this as a way to enhance the capability of its neighbourhood teams to use preventative methods and improve the service they provide to the public. Currently, several different systems hold information about offenders, locations and vulnerable people, meaning that information might be missed when community problems are prioritised and action is taken to address them. The full integration of information systems will provide greater assurance that the force will be able to evaluate the effect of problem-solving activity.

³ 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.

Areas for improvement

- The force should ensure that local policing teams routinely engage with local communities and undertake structured problem solving with partner organisations to prevent crime and anti-social behaviour.
- The force should evaluate and share effective practice routinely, both internally and with partner organisations, to improve its approach to the prevention of crime and anti-social behaviour.
- The force should work with local people and partner organisations to improve its understanding of local communities, to understand their needs. It should supplement this with focused analysis to inform activity and prioritisation.

Protecting vulnerable people and supporting victims



Requires improvement

Identifying vulnerability

West Mercia Police's workforce displays a strong understanding of vulnerability, reflecting the force's ambition to be "great at protecting the most vulnerable". The force defines vulnerability as "a person is vulnerable if, as a result of their situation or circumstances, they are unable to take care of, or protect themselves or others from, harm or exploitation". The alliance urges its workforce to "see past the obvious" when considering whether an individual is vulnerable or exposed to harm. This guidance encourages frontline staff to be inquisitive about the circumstances that victims are facing. The majority of officers and members of staff we spoke to could relate to this guidance; furthermore they use it actively to identify whether individuals are vulnerable and to determine whether they need to be referred to other organisations for additional support.

We noted that, across the force, more vulnerable victims are being identified; this includes an increasing number of reported crimes being linked to domestic abuse and more incidents being identified as being concerned with mental health. This suggests that officers and staff are more vigilant about the signs of vulnerability, endorsing the force's investment in training in this important aspect of policing.

HMICFRS examined how personnel working in the alliance's control rooms identify vulnerable people when they first contact the police, in particular the victims of domestic abuse. The force uses a model known as THRIVE⁴ to evaluate the needs of callers and the harm to which they may be exposed. There are clear procedures in place for staff to follow and we observed the application of quality assurance processes that help to ensure call handlers and dispatchers (who deploy personnel to incidents) are competent in their roles. Control room staff described the way that training influences their decisions and we were provided with useful examples that demonstrate their appreciation of the needs of vulnerable people and how the force deploys its resources to help them. However, when reviewing a selection of incidents that were awaiting assignment we found some shortcomings. While vulnerable people are identified well when a caller first contacts the control room, calls awaiting allocation are not routinely re-assessed by supervisors, particularly at times of

⁴ The threat, harm, risk, investigation, vulnerability and engagement (THRIVE) model is used to assess the appropriate initial police response to a call for service. It allows a judgment to be made of the relative risk posed by the call and places the individual needs of the victim at the centre of that decision.

high demand. This means that vulnerable people, including victims of domestic abuse, may not always receive the right service for their needs. Should their circumstances change while awaiting a response from the police, then the urgency of that response should be re-assessed and re-prioritised if necessary. This is an area the alliance needs to review and one that we will re-examine in future inspections.

Initial response

West Mercia Police needs to improve its initial response to incidents involving vulnerable people, particularly victims of domestic abuse. In HMICFRS' 2016 effectiveness report, we identified several areas for improvement that related to the force's understanding of why a high proportion of crimes (including those related to domestic abuse) fell into the outcome category 'Evidential difficulties; victim does not support police action'. An outcome of this nature indicates that a victim, having reported a crime, no longer wishes to support the investigating officer in prosecuting the offender or successfully concluding the matter in some other way. Forces must take all reasonable steps to ensure that they are working constructively with victims to bring offenders to justice. In 2017, we re-visited this area to assess how the force was pursuing justice on behalf of victims.

In particular, we examined areas that might affect the willingness of victims to support investigations and the likelihood of investigations being successfully concluded. We found that domestic abuse risk assessment forms are available to officers, but they are not always completed properly, meaning that time is wasted correcting them after they are submitted rather than in safeguarding vulnerable people. The force indicated that the assessments are scrutinised by supervisors before submission. To check this, we visited one of the multi-agency safeguarding hubs (MASHs)⁵ that are in place across the force area. MASHs are staffed by a number of professionals who provide expert care to victims; they include social care and charity representatives as well as representation from the police. Our visit revealed that a large proportion of domestic abuse risk assessment forms are not submitted accurately or promptly, which could affect how quickly vulnerable victims receive the support they need.

The force has recently begun introducing body-worn video cameras. It is now in a position to exploit the opportunities video-recording equipment provides, particularly by gathering pertinent evidence and supporting victims. We were encouraged to find recent examples of footage obtained from body-worn video cameras being used to

⁵ A multi-agency safeguarding hub (MASH) is a location in which staff from the police, local authority and other safeguarding agencies share data, research and decision making about local children and adults who are vulnerable; the purpose is to ensure a timely and joined-up response for children and vulnerable adults who require protection.

support prosecutions in domestic abuse cases. Promoting examples of the successful use of body-worn video by referring to previous cases will help increase officers' understanding of good practice and encourage its use by frontline officers.

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). West Mercia Police was unable to provide us with the number of offenders arrested linked to a domestic abuse offence.

Overall, the alliance's response to our concerns about its support to victims who might be reluctant to support a prosecution still requires further progress. Its domestic abuse action plan is based on limited evidence or understanding of data that would enable the force to determine if performance is improving in this area. Neither West Mercia Police nor Warwickshire Police was able to provide HMICFRS with data to show that victims were being attended to promptly, that an increasing number of perpetrators were being brought to justice or that better evidence was being gathered to support prosecutions. As a consequence of this, we do not consider that the force is doing all that it should be to reduce the proportion of crime falling into the category of 'Evidential difficulties; victim does not support police action'. It is unclear how the alliance defines and monitors success in relation to domestic abuse. Furthermore, following discussions with managers, we have similar misgivings about the force's performance in other areas of activity that include vulnerable victims. The alliance told us that it is about to start an audit programme that will scrutinise how it supports vulnerable people; this is important, and we therefore look forward to reviewing this during 2018.

Mental health

West Mercia Police's workforce has a good understanding of the importance of taking immediate, appropriate action to protect people with mental health conditions. Officers and staff are able to describe what vulnerability is and the emphasis the force places on its response to vulnerable people, including those who have mental health conditions.

The force shares control room functions with Warwickshire Police. New ICT systems are being introduced and the force anticipates they will improve its response to incidents involving vulnerability, as they will enable it to identify individuals in need of support more accurately. Control room staff receive mentoring and support, and their competency levels are assessed regularly against national standards; this means they are more likely to make effective decisions about how to respond to and support vulnerable people.

The alliance has completed a trial with the NHS to evaluate the effects of joint working to help identify the nature of additional or specialist support needed by vulnerable callers who suffer from mental health problems. A psychiatric nurse has been working with the alliance forces in the control room. During our fieldwork, officers told us that they valued the ability to access the advice of mental health practitioners. Other benefits include the ability to secure immediate access to placement in psychiatric facilities should sufferers need residential care. Analysis of the trial means the alliance is in a strong position to take forward negotiations with the NHS to establish what the next steps will be. We were encouraged to find examples of the force working with organisations that assist people suffering from mental health problems. Facilities are provided for emergency places of safety in Shrewsbury and Telford if individuals need immediate care. These facilities represent an assured care pathway for sufferers; they also present officers with an alternative to using legal powers to detain individuals in police cells which are not appropriate for their condition.

Investigating crimes involving vulnerable people

People who are vulnerable often have complex and multiple needs that a police response alone cannot always meet. They may need support with housing for example, or access to mental health services. The police still have an important responsibility to keep victims safe and investigate crimes. These crimes can be serious and complex (such as rape or violent offences). Their victims may appear to be reluctant to support the work of the police, often because they are being controlled by their perpetrator.

West Mercia Police generally investigates crimes involving vulnerable victims to a good standard. When we scrutinised 18 cases that involved vulnerable victims, there was evidence of an effective investigation in 17 of them. Domestic abuse risk officers (DAROs) review cases, provide advice and support to repeat victims and suggest how persistent offenders are best managed. The force has effective procedures in place to ensure that victims receive a good service; these include regular updates to victims about the progress of their cases.

Despite these high standards, we spoke to some officers who were uncertain of their ability to investigate crime effectively. One such example included detectives working in Herefordshire and Worcestershire, where new working arrangements have been introduced. In these areas, the force has reduced its reliance on specialist teams and there is an expectation that staff will be assigned a wider range of crimes to investigate. The reasons for the new arrangements being implemented are twofold: firstly, it ensures that there is greater overall capacity to investigate the workload, particularly at times of peak demand; secondly, it means that all vulnerable victims will receive a priority service irrespective of the circumstances. Allegations of crime are reviewed at daily management meetings to ensure they are allocated to an

investigator with the skills and experience to manage the case effectively. However, some officers we spoke to believe they are not yet competent to investigate complex cases to a good standard. We also spoke to the supervisors of officers who are assigned to response duties. The main remit of these officers is to answer 999 and 101 calls but they are also allocated routine crimes to investigate. The supervisors mentioned to us that the active management of these crimes presents operational challenges because of the pressure of their workload.

More positively, the force has increased its use of legal powers to protect victims of domestic abuse. These include domestic violence protection notices (DVPNs).⁶ These powers are important to police forces because they provide an alternative means of curbing offending behaviour, particularly if a victim feels intimidated or is uncertain whether they want to support a prosecution or not. We were disappointed to note that the force was unable to provide data on arrests for domestic abuse prior to our inspection. We were unable to clarify how the force monitors the action officers and staff take when responding to domestic abuse incidents, and how the force assesses the effectiveness of its response. The alliance has indicated that the imminent introduction of new ICT systems will help improve its ability to interpret data relating to the action taken. We will return to this in future inspections.

Partnership working

West Mercia Police works well with partner organisations, enabling it to support vulnerable people and respond to the needs of victims. A number of partner organisations collaborate with the force in multi-agency safeguarding hubs (MASHs), which means that information sharing is more efficient and plans to safeguard victims and offenders who need support can be developed jointly.

There is also an established multi-agency risk assessment conference (MARAC)⁷ process in place. We reviewed the MARAC process and confirmed that high-risk cases were being referred to it. We also noted that the alliance has started to expand the use of its integrated victim management scheme, so that it extends across both forces. Its intention is to provide vulnerable victims with a higher level of safeguarding, including the allocation of a nominated officer and access to local support services; this is a positive development and we look forward to learning of its progress as it continues to develop.

⁶ Domestic violence protection notices (DVPNs) 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 magistrates for a domestic violence protection order (DVPO). The DVPO will be granted for a period of up to 28 days.

⁷ A multi-agency risk assessment conference (MARAC) is a meeting where information is shared on the highest-risk domestic abuse cases between representatives of local police, health, child protection, housing practitioners, independent domestic violence advisors, probation and other specialists from the statutory and voluntary sectors.

Areas for improvement

- The force should improve its service to vulnerable people, particularly domestic abuse victims, when officers have been unable to attend or attendance is delayed. This should include a re-assessment of the risks that victims face so that safeguarding support can be prioritised.
- 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.
- The force should take steps to understand the reasons why a high proportion of crimes related to domestic abuse fall into the category 'Evidential difficulties; victim does not support police action', and rectify this to ensure that it is pursuing justice on behalf of victims of domestic abuse.

Tackling serious and organised crime



Inadequate

Understanding threats

West Mercia Police's appreciation of the harm caused by serious and organised crime is based on a limited understanding of the threat posed by this type of criminality. Although the force has completed a local profile⁸ of serious and organised crime, it is not as comprehensive as it should be. For these profiles to be effective, a wide range of information and intelligence from other organisations should be considered. It is only at this point that a force can assess the true scale and pattern of offending and take effective action against it. For example, information from hospital accident and emergency departments can help a force's understanding of gang violence if individual assaults are not reported to the police; similarly, an exchange of information with drug treatment providers may give more insight into local drugs markets.

Serious and organised crime is considered jointly by the two alliance forces, which brings advantages in terms of a consistent approach. However, the force's understanding is inhibited because insufficient intelligence information relating to new and emerging threats is being submitted by local officers. This means that much of the alliance's activity is focused on nationally recognised threats as opposed to lesser-known offending that affects local communities, such as modern-day slavery. We found that the alliance is experiencing difficulties in processing the current volume of intelligence submissions. The alliance has made recent changes within its force intelligence bureau to improve its ability to assess significant threats to public safety and provide more support for local intelligence units.

The alliance forces have recently set out their expectations of the intelligence they need to fight organised crime. Each should ensure that the organisations it works with, and local officers and staff, contribute to information sharing and intelligence gathering. We recognise that the alliance has made recent changes to its intelligence unit; these changes are designed to build capacity to examine intelligence reports

⁸ A Local Profile is a report that outlines the threat from serious and organised crime within a specific local area. As a minimum, Local Profiles should be produced at force level but it may be decided that it would be most effective for them to cover even more localised areas (for example, in larger forces these might be at local authority, Borough Operational Command Unit, Basic Command Unit (BCU) or Community Safety Partnership (CSP) level).

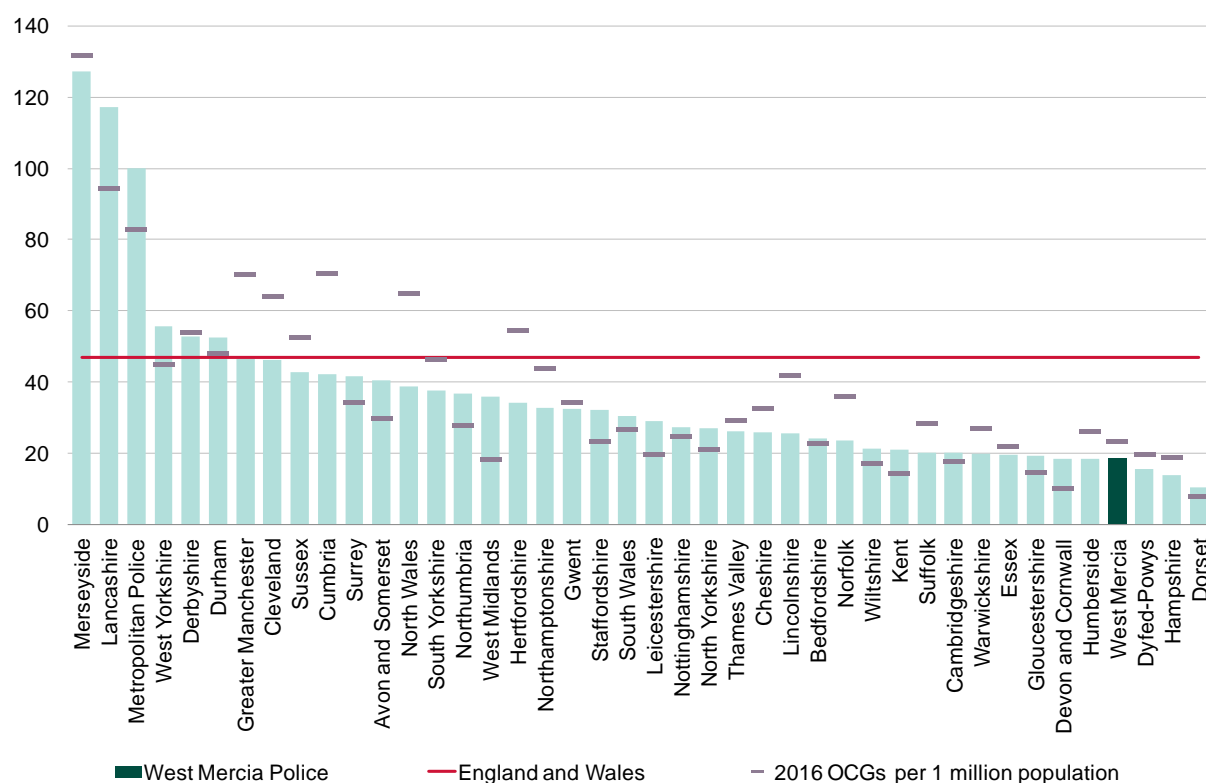
and provide better support to local policing. It is also intended that these changes will improve the understanding of significant threats to local people and encourage action to protect them.

Each force in England in Wales contributes officers and staff to regional organised crime units (ROCU)⁹ which have specialist capabilities, such as surveillance teams, and a wider operational jurisdiction to target organised crime groups (OCGs). The force has recently transferred resources into the local ROCU; this is both to improve the identification of criminals involved in organised crime and to boost the impact of law enforcement on those who exploit victims in their communities.

At present, once an OCG is identified, the force does not assess the harm it can cause (a process known as 'mapping'). Although we found that the number of OCGs which are mapped by the force is in line with other forces in England and Wales, there are shortcomings in this area. We found instances of long-term investigations involving OCGs that had not been mapped, and the force does not recognise the signs of organised criminal activity in a structured way.

⁹ Regional organised crime units (ROCU) provide police forces with access to a standardised range of 'capabilities' to help them tackle serious and organised crime. These capabilities encompass specialist areas such as undercover policing, surveillance and cyber-crime investigation. The regional provision of these capabilities can reduce or remove the need for forces to maintain specialist capabilities of their own, many of which are expensive to maintain and only required on relatively rare occasions.

Figure 2: Rate of organised crime groups (OCGs) per 1 million population, by force, as at 1 July 2017¹⁰



Source: 2016 and 2017 HMICFRS data return

For further information about this data, please see annex A

Disrupting and investigating serious and organised crime

As West Mercia Police’s understanding of the threat posed by serious and organised crime is limited, it is unable to demonstrate how effectively it investigates and disrupts serious and organised crime. In HMICFRS’ 2016 effectiveness report, we indicated that the force should engage routinely with partner agencies at a senior level to enhance intelligence sharing and promote an effective, multi-agency response. This year, we found that the force has started to adopt good practice from its alliance partner by introducing serious and organised crime joint action groups (SOCJAGs) in different counties. However, these developments are recent and have not yet proven successful in bringing the police and partner organisations together to identify those at risk of being drawn into this type of criminality or by introducing programmes to deter offending.

¹⁰ The City of London Police has been removed from the graph as its organised crime group data are not comparable with other forces due to its size and its wider national remit. For further information, please see annex A.

In line with national guidance, lead responsible officers (LROs) are in place to oversee local plans to tackle serious and organised crime. However, no assessment of their proficiency to undertake this role is made when they are appointed. Too many assumptions are made on the basis of the rank and position individuals hold, as opposed to their competency to discharge their responsibilities. Recognising this, the alliance has sought to develop the competencies of its LROs by providing mentoring and training; this includes expert support from the local SOCU (Serious Organised Crime Unit) and similar support from the ROCU. The alliance has identified that it must scrutinise the action it takes to tackle serious and organised crime more effectively, particularly those cases that involve the regular supply of drugs from other force areas. The director of intelligence has established a forum that meets each month to assess progress. The forum provides strategic direction and guidance to local commanders, co-ordinates operational activity in local communities and ensures it follows national guidance on tackling OCGs.

Although we view these recent developments positively, we were disappointed to find that the force still does not record and evaluate its disruption activity, despite our observations in HMICFRS' 2016 effectiveness report. The force also needs to make more use of the Government Agency Intelligence Network (GAIN)¹¹; sharing information and drawing on support from other organisations involved in law enforcement, for example HMRC, can have a significant impact on the disruption of organised crime.

The force does involve its local policing teams in organised crime group disruption, and support and advice is available from specialist teams. Local officers we spoke to possess a good level of knowledge of intelligence requirements that relate to organised crime groups involved in drugs activity; however, the force's understanding of its longer-term impact on serious and organised crime is limited, and needs to improve.

Preventing serious and organised crime

We found that West Mercia Police takes action to prevent serious and organised crime, reflecting the force's vision of protecting the most vulnerable. However, it is still developing its overall approach, and its partnership arrangements for serious and organised crime are immature.

The alliance takes steps to prevent offending among established organised criminals, but this remains an area of weakness. We recognise that those who have been imprisoned are subject to monitoring to prevent them from continuing to commit crime while in prison. We also saw how the force anticipates the release of harmful criminals and puts plans in place to monitor their activity in communities.

¹¹ The Government Agency Intelligence Network (GAIN) is a large network of partners, including all police forces in England and Wales, which shares information about organised criminals.

However, we noted that in the 12 months to 30 June 2017, the force has not made use of serious crime prevention orders¹² to place restrictions on the lifestyles of offenders; their use did not appear to have been considered as a means of curbing offending behaviour.

Cause of concern

The force's approach to tackling serious and organised crime lacks the essential features expected of an effective force and is putting the public at risk of harm.

Recommendations

The force should immediately take steps to:

- engage routinely with partner agencies at a senior level to establish intelligence sharing arrangements and an effective, multi-agency response to serious and organised crime. This should include the creation of a local profile for serious and organised crime which provides the force and its partners with a single, comprehensive picture of the threat;
- ensure that it maps all organised crime groups promptly following identification and re-assesses them at regular intervals in line with national standards. All mapped organised crime groups should be subject to regular scrutiny and oversight, enabling the force to routinely identify and pursue opportunities for disruption and investigation;
- assign capable lead responsible officers to all active organised crime groups as part of a long-term, multi-agency approach to dismantling them. These officers should have a clear understanding of their responsibilities, and adopt a 4Ps (pursue, prevent, protect, prepare) approach to tackling serious and organised crime;
- identify those at risk of being drawn into serious and organised crime, and ensure that preventative initiatives are put in place with partner organisations to deter offending; and
- begin to measure its activity on serious and organised crime across the 4Ps, and ensure that it learns from experience to maximise the disruptive effect of this activity.

¹² A court order that is used to protect the public by preventing, restricting or disrupting a person's involvement in serious crime. An SCPO can prevent involvement in serious crime by imposing various conditions on a person; for example, restricting who he or she can associate with, restricting his or her travel, or placing an obligation to report his or her financial affairs to the police.

Specialist capabilities

Ungraded

National policing responsibilities

*The Strategic Policing Requirement (SPR)*¹³ specifies six national threats: terrorism, cyber-crime, public order, civil emergencies, child sexual abuse and serious and organised crime.

West Mercia Police has the necessary arrangements in place to ensure that it can fulfil its national policing responsibilities. The alliance has assessed its capability to respond to the six national threats included in the SPR.

The force uses the management of risk in law enforcement (MoRiLE) methodology to prioritise national threats and ensure and build its capabilities to manage them. An assistant chief constable now leads a SPR programme board on behalf of both alliance forces. This ensures strong governance and scrutiny to assess the alliance's preparedness constantly. A regular programme of exercises and training programmes has been established – this is run in conjunction with the Local Resilience Forum (LRF), a statutory body which brings together emergency services and other organisations, such as local councils, that are responsible for crisis management and disaster recovery. Further joint exercises are planned to test new control room facilities later in 2018.

Firearms capability

HMICFRS inspected how well forces were prepared to manage firearms attacks in our 2016 effectiveness inspections. 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*¹⁴ makes forces responsible for implementing national

¹³ 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 at: www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/417116/The_Strategic_Policing_Requirement.pdf

¹⁴ *Code of Practice on Police Use of Firearms and Less Lethal Weapons*, Home Office, 2003.

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

West Mercia Police operates joint arrangements with Warwickshire Police to provide armed policing. The force has an adequate understanding of the potential harm facing the public; its APSTRA conforms to the requirements of the code and College of Policing guidance.¹⁵ The force last reviewed its APSTRA on 17 November 2017.

There are two areas where the APSTRA could be improved. It could improve procedures to identify the locations such as crowded places that are attractive targets for terrorists. It would also benefit from an analysis of how quickly armed response vehicles (ARVs) respond to armed incidents.

HMICFRS expects APSTRAs routinely to consider sites and venues that are most likely to be the scene of a terrorist attack. This helps to identify ARV patrol areas. Additionally, collecting data on the time taken for ARVs to attend armed incidents is important; it helps a force to know whether it has sufficient armed officers to meet operational demands.

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

¹⁵ College of Policing Authorised Professional Practice on armed policing. Available at: www.app.college.police.uk/app-content/armed-policing/?s

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 2,700¹⁶ 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

¹⁶ 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/policeforceareadatatables

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 Rules¹⁷ 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.

¹⁷ 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.

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.

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.