



Promoting improvements
in policing to make
everyone safer

PEEL: Police efficiency 2016

An inspection of Northamptonshire Police



November 2016

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ISBN: 978-1-78655-249-5

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Introduction

As part of its annual inspections into police effectiveness, efficiency and legitimacy (PEEL), HMIC assesses the efficiency of police forces across England and Wales.

As with all public services, it is vital that the police service operates in a way that makes the most of all its available resources. Police forces need to make sure they understand the current demand for their services. This is to make sure that they use all the resources available to them to fight all types of crime and to protect communities. Also, forces need to be looking to the future to understand how that demand may change and to plan where they need to invest extra resources or change the ways they operate so that the public can continue to receive the policing it expects and deserves.

As part of the government's objectives to cut public spending, central funding to the police service in England and Wales has been reduced by around 20 percent since 2011. Police forces across England and Wales have faced a difficult challenge to sustain effective levels of policing in the face of significant budget cuts. Forces need to continue to make efficiencies and invest resources wisely in order to maintain a focus on reducing crime and keeping their communities safe. HMIC considers that a police force is efficient if it is making the best use of its resources to provide policing services that meet expectation and follow public priorities, and if it is planning and investing wisely for the future.

HMIC's efficiency inspection assessed all of these areas during 2016. More information on how we inspect and grade forces as part of this wide-ranging inspection is available on the HMIC website (www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmic/peel-assessments/how-we-inspect/). This report sets out our findings for Northamptonshire Police.

Reports on Northamptonshire Police's legitimacy and leadership inspections will be available on the HMIC website (www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmic/peel-assessments/peel-2016) in December 2016. Our reports on police effectiveness will be published in early 2017.

Force in numbers



Financial position



Forecast savings:



Workforce





Calls for assistance

999 calls per 1,000 population 12 months to 31 March 2016

Northamptonshire Police

134

England and Wales force average

124



Recorded crime

Changes in recorded crime (excluding fraud) per 1,000 population 12 months to 31 March 2016

2014/15

64

2015/16

68

Percentage change in recorded crime (excluding fraud) per 1,000 population 12 months to 31 March 2016

Northamptonshire Police

+7%

England and Wales force average

+9%



Victim satisfaction

Victim satisfaction with the overall service provided by the police 12 months to 31 March 2016

Northamptonshire Police

83%

England and Wales force average

84%

For further information about the data in this graphic please see annex A

Overview – How efficient is the force at keeping people safe and reducing crime?

Overall judgment¹



Good

Northamptonshire Police has been assessed as good in respect of the efficiency with which it keeps people safe and reduces crime. It is taking steps to understand current and future demand better and is developing tools to allow effective monitoring of changes in demand. The force is developing its understanding of hidden demand. While it sets great store on the opportunities for savings and efficiencies from the use of ICT and closer collaboration with other forces, its future planning needs to be strengthened.

Overall summary

Northamptonshire Police has improved the efficiency with which it keeps people safe and reduces crime since HMIC's 2015 inspection, although its planning for demand in the future requires improvement. The force has a good understanding of its current demand based on a range of data and a detailed policing model capable of providing relatively complex analysis. In collaboration with forces in Leicestershire, Northamptonshire and Nottinghamshire, and working with the College of Policing and academia, the force is developing tools to allow effective monitoring of changes in demand. It is developing its understanding of crime less likely to be reported, and has identified domestic violence and child abuse as concerns in the region. The force has done a great deal of work with partners to understand how the community is changing and to manage demand collectively with partners. It realises that it also needs to engage with harder-to-reach groups to prepare for changes in demand.

The force is good at using its resources to manage current demand. It has revised its service delivery model to focus on demand and has taken the opportunity of the redesign to try and identify inefficient processes. Good analytical tools are in place to help identify where costs can be reduced and to model the impact of any changes to its processes. The force has good processes in place to ensure benefits are realised from change programmes, and that potential negative impacts are identified and limited. It makes sensible decisions about how to deploy resources. For example, its demand model showed that cyber-crime was creating more demand than could be resourced so the force moved staff from other areas, and also used suitably qualified

¹ HMIC judgments are: outstanding, good, requires improvement and inadequate.

and vetted volunteers with specialist skills, to bolster its capability. The force has undertaken a skills audit and analysed every role in its workforce so it can map the impact of changes. However, it could do more to understand the non-operational skills in its workforce. The force collaborates effectively to reduce costs and improve efficiency. It has good joint working arrangements with other forces in the region, collaborating over armed response, roads policing and dogs services with three other forces and sharing an ICT governance board with four other forces. It works very closely with the fire service, especially on public safety and in arson investigations, and shares premises at several locations. It also works closely with local authorities in Northamptonshire, sharing a safeguarding lead on issues such as female genital mutilation, interpersonal violence and modern slavery.

Northamptonshire Police's plans for demand in the future require improvement. The force's budget is based on assumptions it expects to change. Although it is developing an ICT strategy as part of a collaboration with the forces in Leicestershire and Nottinghamshire and it has some individual ICT projects (such as agile working, body-worn video, hand-held devices and video calling), it has no clear ICT strategy of its own. There is no clear link between ICT and workforce plans. The force does not have a clear investment strategy and decisions have been made without a clear overall aim.

During our inspection some concerns were raised with HMIC about the arrangements for a move to a new police headquarters. HMIC is looking further into the circumstances relating to this matter and will return to consider it in future PEEL inspections.

Recommendations

Northamptonshire Police is a good force. HMIC has not identified any causes of concern and therefore has made no specific recommendations.

Areas for improvement

- Northamptonshire Police should undertake appropriate activities to understand its workforce's capabilities fully, in order to identify any gaps and put plans in place to address them. This will enable the force to be confident in its ability to meet current and likely future demand efficiently.
- Northamptonshire Police should develop and implement an effective ICT strategy to ensure that the force can efficiently meet likely future demand for its services.
- Northamptonshire Police should ensure it has adequate plans in place to show it can provide services, while also making necessary cost savings.

How well does the force understand its current and likely future demand?

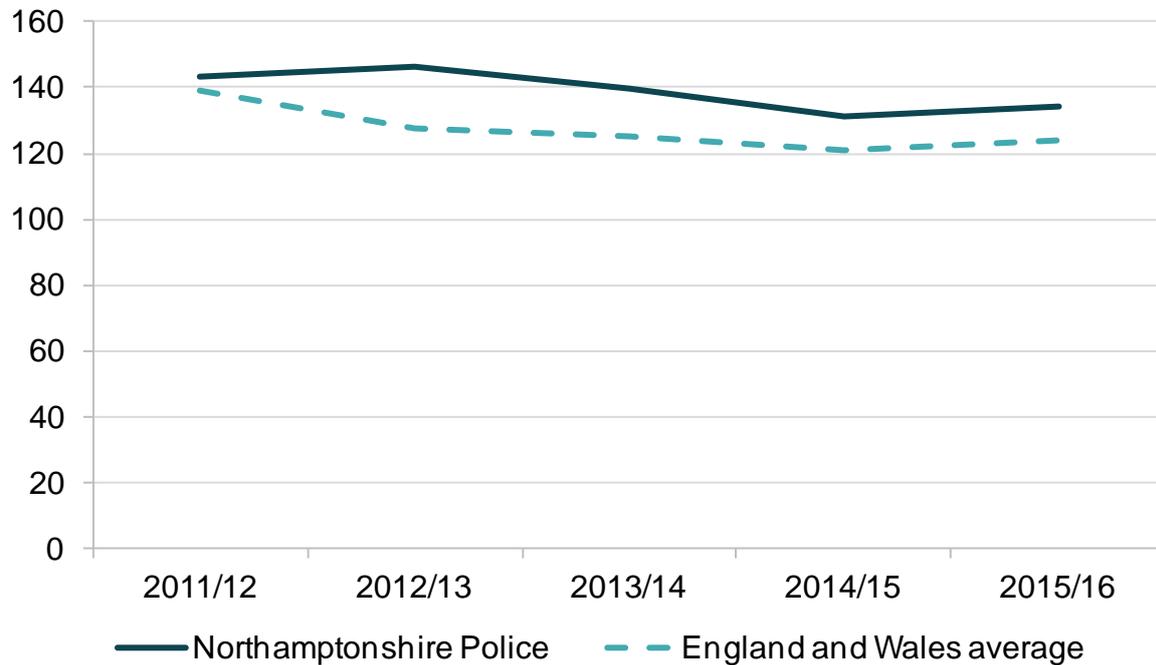
A good understanding of the demand for police services is vital in ensuring that forces have the right resources in the right place to provide the right level of policing now and in the future. This means not just an understanding of reported incidents but also how well a force proactively looks for demand that is less likely to be reported (e.g. incidents relating to modern slavery or child sexual exploitation) so that it can ensure that it protects the most vulnerable victims. Forces also need to understand how much resource to put into work that prevents crime and anti-social behaviour from occurring in the first place. It is important that forces continually review how they operate to ensure that they are not wasting police resources by operating inefficiently or responding to unnecessary demands.

Forces must understand how demand is changing and how they need to change in order to adapt to ensure that they can plan for the future and continue to respond effectively. As well as assessing likely future threats and risks from crime, this also means understanding and assessing the potential impact of wider societal and environmental changes on the demands they will face.

How well does the force understand the current demand for its services?

Police services cover a wide spectrum of activities and go far beyond the most obvious demands for providing a response to 999 calls, protecting victims of crime and pursuing offenders. It is important that forces have a comprehensive understanding across the whole range of different demands they face, including early intervention work with other organisations to prevent crime and proactively seeking out 'hidden' crimes (e.g. domestic abuse, internet crime, fraud, modern slavery and crime in communities who are more reluctant to trust or engage with the police). Police forces also need to understand how efficiently they run their own operations in order to avoid wasted effort and to ensure that they make the best use possible of all available resources.

Figure 1: Volume of 999 calls per 1,000 population received by Northamptonshire Police compared with England and Wales in the 12 months to 31 March 2012 to the 12 months to 31 March 2016

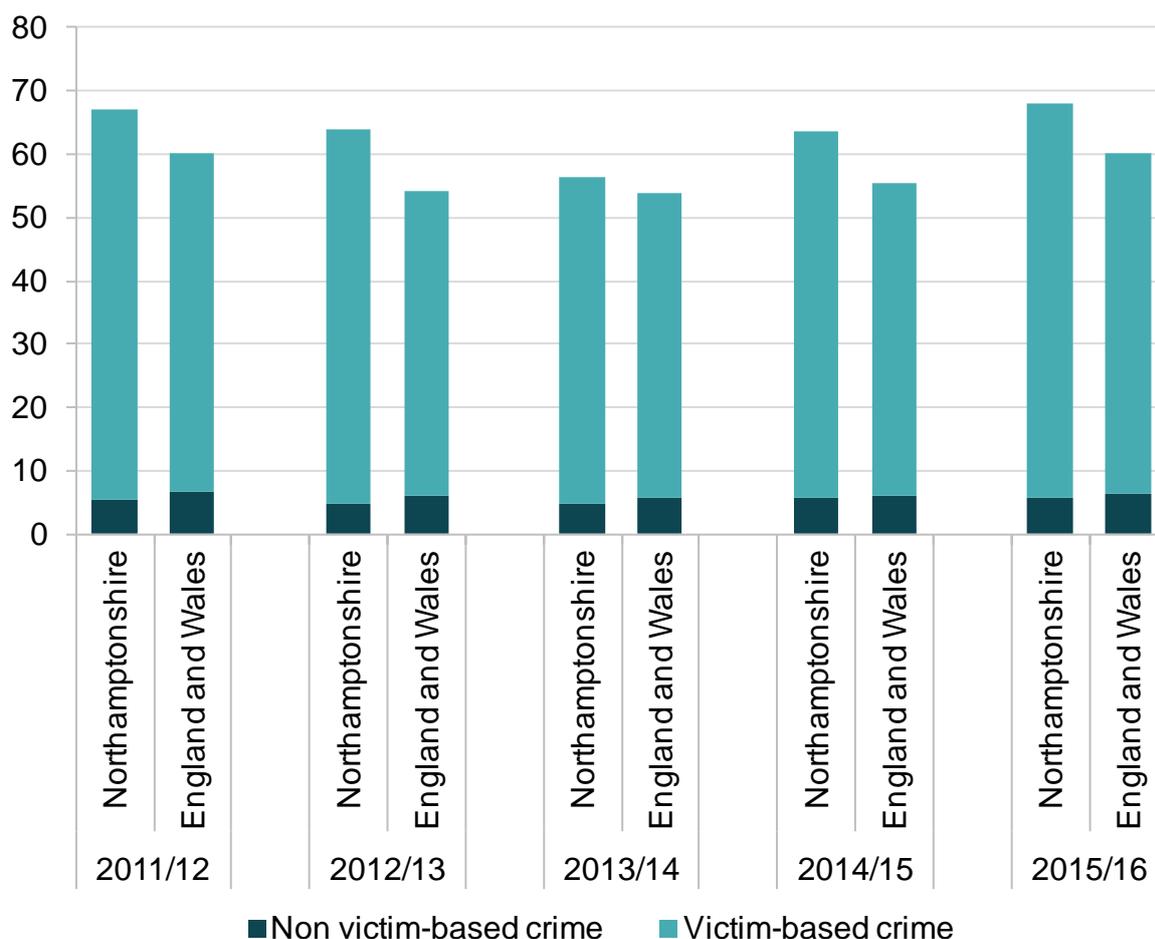


Source: Home Office Annual Data Requirement

For further information about the data in figure 1 please see annex A

Northamptonshire Police received 134 '999' calls per 1,000 population in the 12 months to 31 March 2016. This was broadly in line with the England and Wales average of 124 calls per 1,000 population. In the 12 months to 31 March 2012, the force received 143 '999' calls per 1,000 population, broadly in line with the England and Wales average of 139 calls per 1,000 population.

Figure 2: Police recorded crimes per 1,000 population in Northamptonshire Police compared with England and Wales in the 12 months to 31 March 2012 to the 12 months to 31 March 2016



Source: Home Office Police recorded crime data
For further information about the data in figure 2 please see annex A

With regard to police recorded crime for the 12 months to 31 March 2016, Northamptonshire Police recorded 62.4 victim-based crimes per 1,000 population, higher than the England and Wales average of 53.8 victim-based crimes per 1,000 population. Over the same period, Northamptonshire Police recorded 5.7 non victim-based crimes per 1,000 population, broadly in line with the England and Wales average of 6.5 non victim-based crimes per 1,000 population. There has been an increase in the victim-based crime rate of 1 percent and an increase in the non victim-based crime rate of 6 percent since the 12 months to 31 March 2012.

Northamptonshire Police has a good understanding of current demand. It has used a range of data (including 999 calls, crime data and custody data) to be able to model what a normal day looks like. The model can also give more detailed analysis, such as how long it takes the force to respond to calls of a certain type or how long the average investigation of a certain crime type takes. This enables the force to predict peaks and troughs, such as increases in night-time violence in summer, so as to ensure it is adequately resourced. More work is underway to try to create analytical

tools to understand how additional unforeseen demand is created and the impact of likely change, but this is at an early stage.

The force is taking some steps to develop its understanding of crime that is less likely to be reported. The force's demand analysis has identified that domestic violence is a concern in Northamptonshire and so it has worked with partners to engage an interpersonal violence analyst to understand the barriers stopping people reporting domestic violence. The force has also taken steps to encourage the reporting of under-reported crimes, including a large advertising campaign on how to report child abuse. While these issues have been identified and tackled, a more systematic analysis of hidden demand could potentially reveal others.

The force has used its demand analysis to design a new delivery model for policing Northamptonshire and has taken the opportunity of the redesign to try to identify inefficient processes. The force has analysed every role in its workforce to be able to map the impact of changes. The tool allows the force to model the savings from taking a step out of a process, including what additional cost is created elsewhere. This has led to new policies that create a net reduction in demand, such as officers calling colleagues directly rather than going through the control room. HMIC did find, however, that these processes were poorly understood by the workforce at large and more could be done to help them to understand better.

Demands for police services are continually evolving. Forces need to anticipate and understand likely future changes so that their plans keep pace with the public's needs and expectations. Potential future demand includes new and emerging types of crime, such as cyber-crime, modern-day slavery and human trafficking. Also, it includes changes to the communities that forces serve, developments in technology and environmental events, such as flooding.

Northamptonshire Police is developing tools to allow effective monitoring of changes in demand. Much of this is through the East Midlands collaboration (joint working between the Leicestershire, Northamptonshire and Nottinghamshire forces), which is working with the College of Policing and academia to understand how demand is changing in the region. The force is carrying out its own analysis too. For example, its demand model showed that cyber-crime was creating more demand than could be met. The force moved staff from other areas, as well as using suitably qualified and vetted volunteers with specialist skills, to bolster its capability to tackle cyber-crime.

The force works well with local partners. The force covers the overnight on-call services for other agencies such as the mental health trust, and in return those organisations have a presence in the force control room so as to be able to address quickly those calls that come into the police that can be dealt with better by other organisations. The force has a shared emergency planning team, based in the fire service, which plans all civil contingency and preparedness. It also runs a shared

rural intervention vehicle with the fire service, able to go to a wider range of jobs and carry out joint investigation on arson. Notably, the force has a dedicated chief inspector for early intervention who is responsible for identifying vulnerable people who could potentially create demand in the future and working with a range of partners to prevent the demand before it arises. The co-location of front counter services with the local authority aims to ensure that those attending are given the best service according to their needs.

Northamptonshire's office of the police and crime commissioner is a co-founder of the University of Northampton's institute of public safety, crime and justice (IPCSJ), which has undertaken a number of pieces of work to help the force understand the needs of the community it serves, including obtaining views on whether the community is treated with fairness and respect. For example, *Public Perceptions of Policing and Crime in Northamptonshire*² draws on the perceptions of 4,222 county residents on crime and policing. The force conducts public surveys, through the IPCSJ, to understand better what matters to its communities, and recognises that it needs to go beyond just increasing its visibility, which has been its focus to date. The force also recognises that engagement with so-called harder-to-reach groups is also important in order to understand fully, and to prepare for, changes in demand.

Summary of findings



Northamptonshire Police has a good understanding of its current demand. It has devised a detailed policing model capable of providing relatively complex analytical tools to understand demand better. The force has a good understanding of inefficient internal processes, supported by strong analysis. However, there could be a clearer link between its demand analysis and its work to respond to it, be that encouraging the reporting of underreported crimes or moving resources to deal with emerging crime.

The force has done a great deal of work with partners to understand how the community is changing and to manage demand collectively with partners. This puts it in strong position to deal with changing demand in the future, although the force accepts there is more it could do to understand its communities.

² *Public Perceptions of Policing and Crime in Northamptonshire*, IPCSJ, 2016. Available from: www.northantspcc.org.uk/the-briefing-room/downloads/?did=29

How well does the force use its resources to manage current demand?

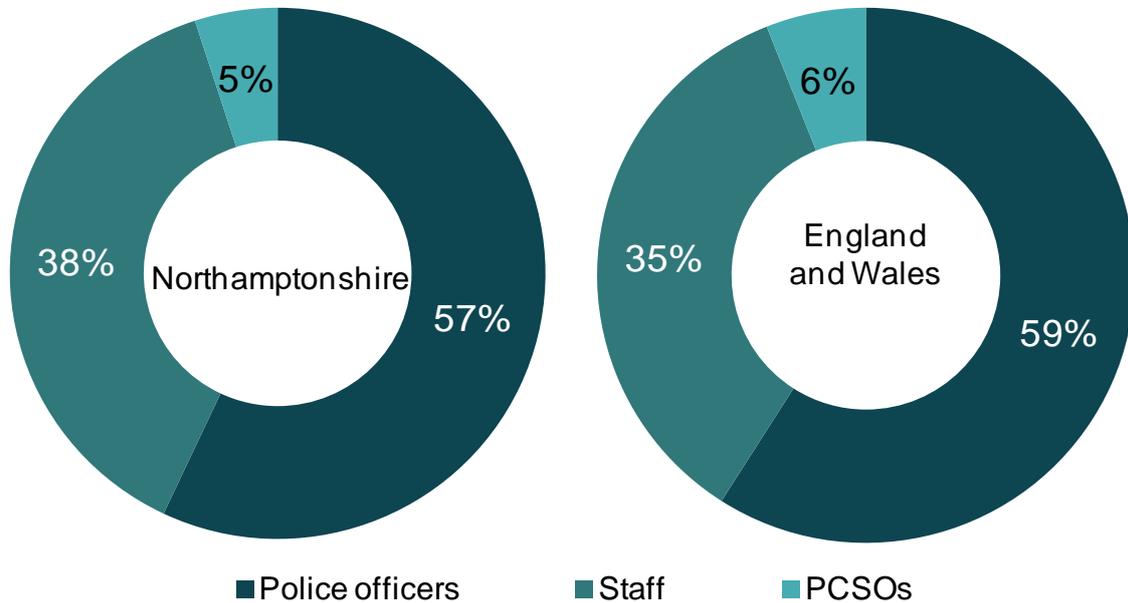
Police forces need to operate in a way that makes the best use of all available resources so that demand is met and public expectations are satisfied. We looked at the extent to which Northamptonshire Police has the right people with the right skills in the right place to protect the public and to fight crime. Police resources have been reducing continually over recent years. It is increasingly important that resources are aligned to priorities to provide value-for-money services that tackle priorities, manage demand and meet financial requirements. This not only involves a force using its own workforce as efficiently as possible; it also involves the police working in new ways with others to ensure the best possible service to the public, and using all available resources to improve efficiency.

For a number of years, police forces have been focused on changing the way they operate and finding ways to save money in order to manage reducing budgets. It is important that these savings are sustainable and forces can demonstrate that they have achieved efficiencies while continuing to have the capacity and capability to meet demand.

How well does the force's current allocation of resources match demand, organisational and financial requirements?

Police forces need to consider many factors when deciding how to allocate their resources, including all elements of demand, local risks and priorities, and their national responsibilities. We looked at how well Northamptonshire Police assesses these factors in making decisions about the level of service to provide and how to use its resources to best effect.

Figure 3: Police officers, staff and police community support officers (PCSOs) as a proportion of total workforce in Northamptonshire Police compared with England and Wales as at 31 March 2016



Source: Home Office Police workforce statistics

Note: figures may not add up to 100 percent due to rounding of numbers. For further information about the data in figure 3 please see annex A

As at 31 March 2016, police officers make up 57 percent of Northamptonshire Police’s workforce. This was broadly in line with the England and Wales average of 59 percent. The proportion of staff in Northamptonshire Police was 38 percent, broadly in line with the England and Wales average of 35 percent. The proportion of PCSOs in Northamptonshire Police was 5 percent, lower than the England and Wales average of 6 percent.

Figure 4: Planned changes in full-time equivalent workforce from 31 March 2010 to 31 March 2020 for Northamptonshire Police compared with England and Wales

	March 2010	Change from 2010 to 2016		March 2016	Change from 2016 to 2020		March 2020
		Force	England and Wales		Force	England and Wales	
Officers	1,343	-10%	-14%	1,214	0%	-2%	1,209
Staff	1,172	-31%	-21%	812	-20%	-5%	649
PCSOs	164	-40%	-35%	98	-24%	-6%	74
Workforce total	2,679	-21%	-18%	2,125	-9%	-3%	1,932

Source: HMIC Efficiency data collection

For further information about the data in figure 4 please see annex A

Managing demands for police services

Northamptonshire Police’s service delivery model is a redesign for how the force delivers policing, focused around demand. It has implemented a number of simple changes already in how it manages crime investigation and handles prisoners. It is, however, modelling a range of more fundamental changes to try to meet demand in a more sophisticated way, including changing the criminal investigation department’s shift pattern to enable crimes to be passed to investigators straight away. The department currently works normal working hours, but the force is investigating whether late cover or 24-hour cover would be more efficient. A fully demand-led shift pattern design is to be implemented by the end of the year.

The force has a good understanding of the service level it can provide to the public and at what cost. It uses statistical analysis to compare costs with other forces and value for money profiles to identify causes of increased cost or inefficiency, such as the number of people a victim speaks to at the first point of contact, or where victims becoming repeat victims could have been avoided if they had been responded to differently in the first instance. This enables the force to reduce costs without reducing the standard of service to the public. HMIC is concerned, however, that this good work seems to have slowed recently, due to reductions in the staff in the corporate development department.

Increasing efficiency

The force has achieved the savings required throughout the spending review period and continues to look for opportunities for further savings. It has good analytical tools to help identify where costs can be reduced and to model the impact of any changes to its processes. HMIC saw evidence that this approach has led to savings in staff time and that the related budget savings have been taken into account in future plans. We also saw good examples of shared procurement, to make greater economies of scale.

We were disappointed, however, to discover during our fieldwork that while the force's accounts for 2014/15 were eventually completed to an acceptable standard, they were submitted six months late and after a number of previous submissions had been rejected by the external auditor. HMIC acknowledges the changes the force has made in principal staff since this. We also note the force has improved its approach for the 2015/16 financial year, which has led to the accounts being properly signed off by the external auditors.

Following the implementation of the revised service delivery model, the force intends to evaluate its programmes comprehensively. Currently, however, the force does not conduct post-implementation reviews consistently or have clear arrangements to monitor whether the expected benefits have actually happened.

How well does the force improve the productivity of its workforce?

Finding ways to make police officers and staff more efficient when they are out in their communities and reducing time spent doing back-office functions is essential to ensuring that police officers remain visible, on the beat and engaged in activities to reduce and fight crime. Police forces spend around 80 percent of their budget on staffing, so it is vital that the workforce is as productive as possible. This means forces need to ensure that all their staff have the skills and capabilities to provide the required level of service. We assessed how well Northamptonshire Police understands the skills its staff need, both now and in the future; where there are gaps in either capacity or capability, we looked at whether the steps it is taking are appropriate to ensure that its staff work as efficiently and effectively as possible. We looked in particular at whether the workforce has the right level of digital skills, both to make the most of current ICT systems and to investigate crime digitally.

Understanding current workforce capabilities and gaps

Northamptonshire Police has some understanding of the skills present in its workforce, although it is limited. The force has recently conducted a comprehensive skills audit against the police national skills framework for police officers, which highlighted gaps in child protection and cyber skills. The force has recruited new volunteers to meet these skills gaps. The force has plans to complete a further audit

for police staff and to assess the skills needed for each role to identify skills gaps and to inform the training plan further. The force's understanding of skills is limited at present to operational skills, however, which in turn limits the scope of its training plan.

Tackling workforce gaps

The force has an understanding of its skills needs through its learning and development panel. This is chaired by the deputy chief constable and oversees all bids for learning and development support from departments to ensure that the training plan addresses the necessary skills and the training offered matches the plan. This is, however, limited until the skills audit is complete. Once fully complete, the audit will inform future plans for recruitment, learning and development and meaningful long-term succession planning, which are currently limited.

How well does the force work with others to improve how it manages demand for its services?

We assessed how well Northamptonshire Police has explored all opportunities to work in collaboration with others to increase efficiency and provide better, more resilient services. This can include work with other police forces, local public sector organisations, the private sector and the voluntary sector. We looked at whether the force has a clear rationale for the decisions it has taken about how it works with others and whether it has a good understanding of how successful its joint working has been in helping it to meet demand for its services better.

Northamptonshire Police is part of a number of joint working arrangements with other forces in the region and with other public services in Northamptonshire. These include the East Midlands operations support service, a collaboration with three other forces in the region providing armed response, roads policing and dogs services. The force also shares an ICT governance board with four other forces in the region. This oversees a number of collaborative projects such as a records management system and removal of firewalls. The ICT collaboration has the additional benefit of being able to pool skilled ICT staff for the benefit of all the forces involved.

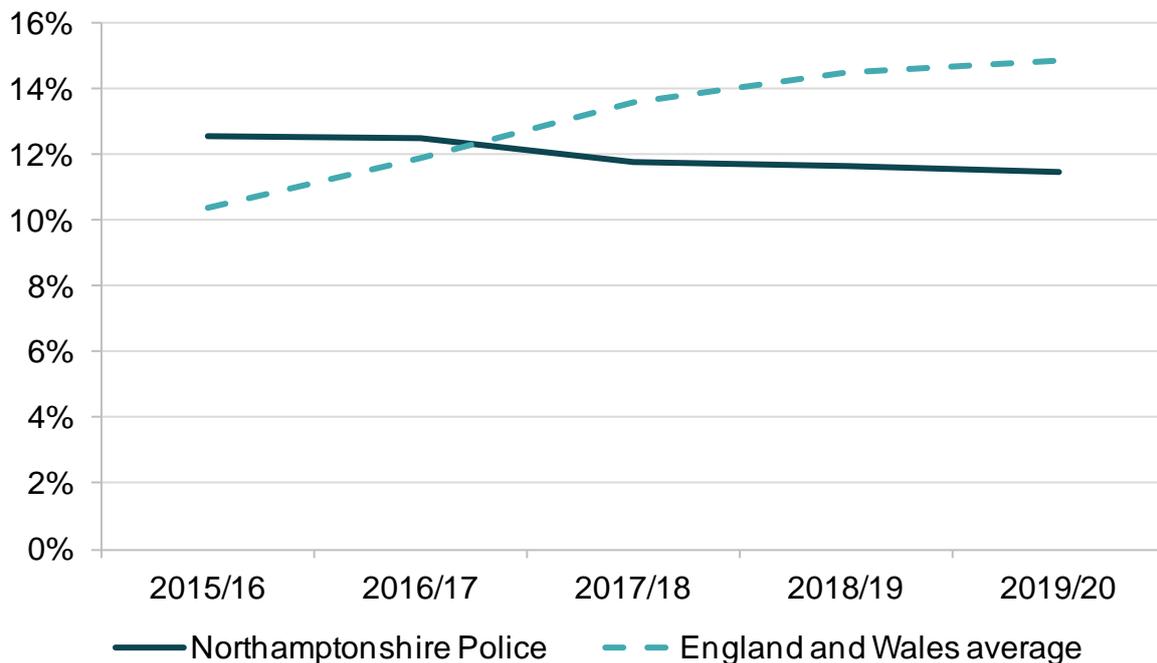
The force has strong joint working with other agencies in Northamptonshire, especially with the fire service. The two agencies share premises in several locations, and the fire service has taken the lead for public safety, with fire and police officers working alongside each other on this. The two agencies share a rural intervention vehicle for a wide range of work and carry out joint investigations on arson. The force also shares an emergency planning team based in the fire service, which plans all civil contingency and preparedness. As a result of its experience and enthusiasm for this partnership, the force has been at the forefront of demonstrating on the national stage the benefits of bringing the police and fire service closer

together. The force also works closely with Northamptonshire County Council: they share a safeguarding lead on issues such as female genital mutilation, interpersonal violence and modern slavery; and there is co-location of front-counter services. As discussed above, the force works well with a range of partners in identifying vulnerable people to prevent demand before it arises.

Collaboration benefits

Northamptonshire Police has some understanding of the benefits of its joint working. The deputy chief constable is the national lead for shaping the governance of collaboration with the fire service. Some individual projects have had clear benefits – the shared vehicle pilot with the fire service was extended after the pilot showed clear benefits in terms of savings for community engagement. However, there has been a lack of clear processes and governance for identifying and realising benefits from collaborative work, which has meant that decision making on joint working has been driven largely by political initiatives rather than a strategic analysis of the benefits of potential collaborations. The force has already recognised this and now has an analyst looking at the impact of joint projects.

Figure 5: Projected percentage of net revenue expenditure in Northamptonshire Police, compared with England and Wales, on collaboration with other forces in the 12 months to 31 March 2016 to the 12 months to 31 March 2020

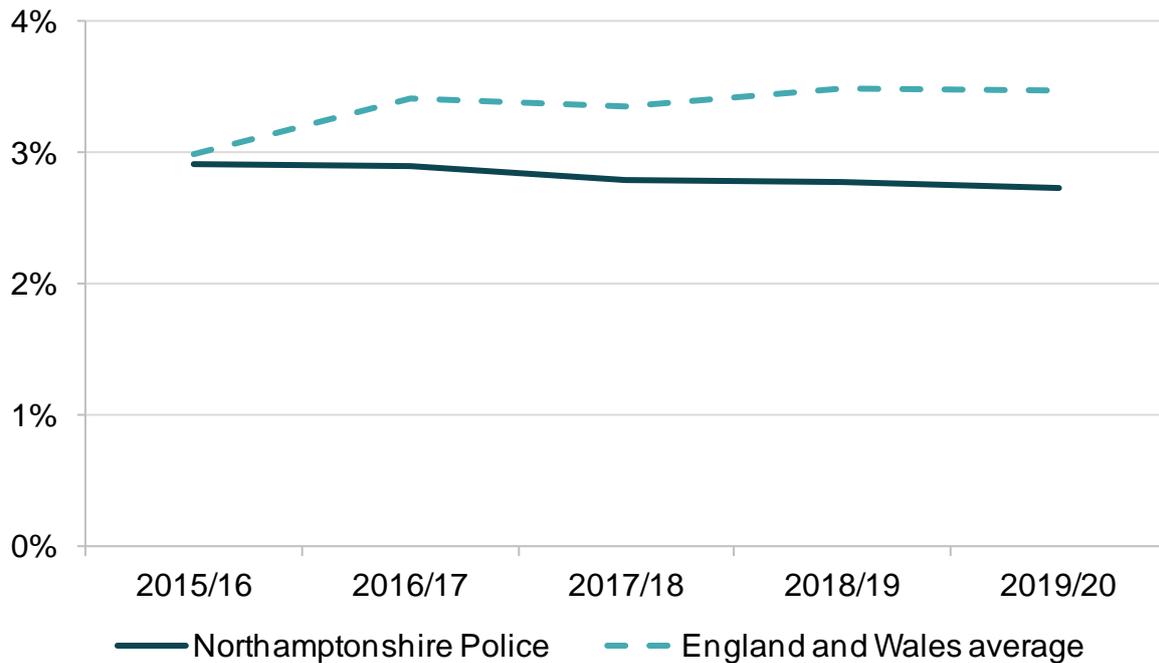


Source: HMIC Efficiency data collection

Note: some forces could not provide data for all years. These forces have been excluded from the England and Wales average in those years only. West Mercia Police and Warwickshire Police stated that all of their net revenue expenditure is spent in collaboration. To avoid distorting the distribution of forces, these have been removed from the England and Wales average for this figure. For further information about the data in figure 5 please see annex A

Northamptonshire Police has forecast that it will spend £14.4m in 2016/17 on collaboration with other police forces. This is 12.5 percent of its net revenue expenditure (NRE, which is broadly in line with the England and Wales average of 11.9 percent. For 2019/20, the force has forecast that it will spend £14.0m (11.5 percent of NRE) on collaboration with other police forces. This is broadly in line with the England and Wales average of 14.8 percent.

Figure 6: Projected percentage of net revenue expenditure in Northamptonshire Police, compared with England and Wales, on collaboration with non-police organisations in the 12 months to 31 March 2016 to the 12 months to 31 March 2020



Source: HMIC Efficiency data collection

Note: some forces could not provide data for all years. These forces have been excluded from the England and Wales average in those years only. For further information about the data in figure 6 please see annex A

Northamptonshire Police has forecast that it will spend £3.3m in 2016/17 on collaboration with non-police organisations. This is 2.9 percent of its net revenue expenditure (NRE), which is broadly in line with the England and Wales average of 3.4 percent. For 2019/20, the force has forecast that it will spend £3.3m (2.7 percent of NRE) on collaboration with non-police organisations. This is broadly in line with the England and Wales average of 3.5 percent.

How well does the force understand how any changes made to improve efficiency have affected its ability to manage demand?

As resources reduce and demands on police services become ever more complex, it is increasingly important that forces understand fully the benefits that are realised from any investment and the impact of any new ways of working. This understanding enables them to learn from what works and to take swift action to mitigate any negative results.

Northamptonshire Police has good processes in place to realise benefits from change programmes. All change programmes are managed by the force transformation board, chaired by the deputy chief constable, that must approve the benefits set out in the individual business case before any project can start. The board holds individual project teams to account for benefits realisation. For example, it recently identified that £400,000 of new body-worn video kit was not being fully used, and consequently ensured that it was. The force has processes in place to understand the potential negative consequences of change. When introducing new mobile technology, the force monitored its use, provided feedback opportunities for the workforce to report issues, and identified 'super users' across the force to help others with problems and concerns. The force has also used victim satisfaction surveys and victim and witness improvement groups to monitor the impact of change to services.

While these processes are well established and useful, HMIC has some concerns that the focus was too much on cost savings, rather than improved effectiveness.

Summary of findings



Good

Northamptonshire Police uses its good understanding of demand to inform decisions about how to deploy resources. It is considering some radical changes to ensure the force can meet its demand in a more sophisticated way. It is identifying inefficiencies to try to cut costs while delivering the same level of service to the public.

Although the force has a good understanding of the operational skills in the workforce and uses this to identify gaps and inform training, it does not have the same understanding of non-operational skills. The force has some processes in place to use recruitment to meet skills gaps.

The force has good joint working arrangements with other forces in the region, and with the fire and local authorities in Northamptonshire. However, HMIC understands

that decision making on joint working has been driven previously largely by political initiatives rather than a comprehensive cost benefit analysis. The force has now deployed an analyst to identify the costs and benefits of such working.

The force has good processes in place to ensure benefits are realised from change programmes, and that potential negative impacts are identified and limited. However, HMIC has some concerns that the focus was too much on cost savings, rather than improved effectiveness.

Area for improvement

- Northamptonshire Police should undertake appropriate activities to understand its workforce's capabilities fully, in order to identify any gaps and put plans in place to address them. This will enable the force to be confident in its ability to meet current and likely future demand efficiently.

How well is the force planning for demand in the future?

HMIC examined how well forces are using their understanding of current and future demand on their services to develop more efficient ways of operating that balance ambition, realism, innovation and risk. Our assessment examined the extent to which Northamptonshire Police's plans are credible and achievable while at the same time are creative and ambitious. This included how far it is aiming to improve efficiency through its workforce plans, collaboration plans, financial plans, ICT plans and approaches to risk.

How well does the force identify and prioritise areas to invest in for the future?

It is important that forces have good plans in place which take account of future demands for their services as well as the likely future funding available to them. They need to invest wisely for the future in order to ensure that they have the right capabilities to meet future demand. HMIC examined the force's financial plans and workforce plans to assess how far it is set to meet future changes in demand and local priorities. We looked in particular at how well Northamptonshire Police has considered its future ICT capabilities as well as any wider changes to the communities it serves.

Matching resources to demand, organisational priorities and financial requirements

While the force has good processes in place to understand demand and to match resources to demand there seems to be an absence of a clear strategy for the future. The budget for the next few years is based on a set of assumptions, but it was clear to HMIC that the force expected many of those assumptions to change. Examples were the assumptions on maintaining officer numbers, the recruitment of special constables and the savings that could be realised through regional joint working. HMIC did find, however, that reasonable assumptions had been made about future grant funding, the precept and increases in the cost base. HR and finance are working closely to understand the impact on workforce numbers. The agile working approach, together with the introduction of hand-held devices, should help to ensure that the force can work within a rationalised estate. This is, however, severely limited by the lack of an ICT strategy and of integration between ICT and workforce plans.

Investing in ICT

The force does not currently have an ICT strategy. It is developing a strategy with Leicestershire Police and Nottinghamshire Police. Therefore, the force's approach to investing in ICT is largely influenced by the regional force ICT governance board and the regional heads of ICT group. This work has focused on the removal of firewalls between forces. There are some individual ICT projects underway – agile working, body-worn video and video calling – but, without a strategy providing clear direction and understanding of the benefits to be realised, the force is at risk of failing to invest adequately in technology. There is also no clear link between the force's future plans on workforce and on ICT.

How well does the force plan its investments?

A force's plans for investment and savings need to be credible, realistic and informed by a full understanding of the future challenges (both financial and operational) that it is likely to face. HMIC assessed the extent to which Northamptonshire's future plans are prudent, robust and based on sound assumptions about future demands and costs, while at the same time being ambitious enough to meet public expectations, including identifying new ways of working and providing services in the future.

Northamptonshire Police was unable to provide a complete set of data prior to our inspection on the percentage of its expenditure spent on policing functions for 2015/16, so this data has not been included in this report.

Planning for the future

There seems to be no clear investment strategy for Northamptonshire Police. A number of decisions have been made, such as reducing the estate and moving over to more shared buildings, but there is no clear strategy for what this was to achieve overall. A great deal of work has been done on digitisation, providing online routes for reporting and increases in mobile ICT, but, without a clear ICT strategy, the force will find it difficult to decide where investment is best made.

The force is in the process of moving to a new police headquarters. Some concerns were raised with HMIC about the arrangements for this move given the uncertainty as to the cost and location of its new premises and the feasibility of operating an effective policing headquarters with a new school on the same site in the meantime.

While it is intended that the force operates out of new headquarters premises in the near future, at the time of our inspection no robust plans were in place regarding the new headquarters. The future revenue implications of such a move were unclear and there were no comprehensive plans in place for the effective operation of the existing headquarters when the new school was to become established on part of the existing headquarters site in September 2016. The lack of certainty about the cost of the new headquarters site has meant that the force has been unable to develop a

properly costed estates strategy, potentially inhibiting the future efficiency and effectiveness of the force. HMIC is looking further into the circumstances relating to this matter and how the situation has come about. We will return to consider this matter in future PEEL inspections.

To what extent does the force fund its investments sustainably?

Police forces have made significant financial savings over recent years which have enabled them to reduce their costs and protect frontline policing. They continue to face financial challenges, and it is vital to their ability to sustain effective policing that they continue to seek improved efficiencies and drive down costs so that they can not only balance their budgets but also invest in improving their capability in the future. Forces need to consider different ways of transforming the way they work in order to secure effective policing in the longer term. This may include plans to establish different joint-working arrangements with other organisations or investing in ICT to improve operational efficiency.

Saving to invest for the future

The force's plans are, as it acknowledges, based on assumptions that are likely to change. The force's medium-term financial plans are under review by the police and crime commissioner and changes to last year's plans have already been made in respect of the allocation of reserves. Northamptonshire Police now plans to have a greater proportion of unallocated reserves and a smaller proportion of allocated reserves for each year to 2019/20. With no real workforce or ICT strategies in place, HMIC has not seen any convincing evidence that the force has adequate plans for the future.

Working together to improve future efficiency

The force has mature and growing relationships in place with the fire service, NHS services, statutory and non-statutory partners as well as regional collaboration arrangements with other forces. These are all component parts of Northamptonshire Police's plans to improve its efficiency. These developments may mean changes to structures, with greater numbers of regionally based services, as well as shared arrangements across different agencies. The details of such changes are emerging as the plans for the service develop.

Summary of findings



Requires improvement

HMIC has seen little to show that Northamptonshire Police has good future plans.

The force's budget is based on assumptions that the force expects to change and, while it is developing an ICT strategy as part of a tri-force collaboration, it currently has no clear ICT or workforce strategy, and no integration between ICT and workforce plans. There is no clear investment strategy and decisions have been made without a clear idea of an overall aim.

Areas for improvement

- Northamptonshire Police should develop and implement an effective ICT strategy to ensure that the force can meet the likely future demand for its services efficiently.
- Northamptonshire Police should ensure it has adequate plans in place to show that it can provide services, while also making necessary cost savings.

Next steps

HMIC will assess progress on any recommendations and areas for improvement identified within its reports in a number of ways. We may re-visit those forces where we have identified a serious cause of concern, go back to assess as part of our annual PEEL inspection programme or receive updates through regular conversations with forces.

HMIC highlights recurring themes emerging from our PEEL inspections of police forces within our national reports on police effectiveness, efficiency, legitimacy, and also leadership. These reports identify those issues that are reflected across the country and may contain additional recommendations directed at national policing organisations, including the Home Office, where we believe improvements need to be made at a national level.

Annex A – About the data

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

Methodology

Please note the following for the methodology applied to the data.

Comparisons with England and Wales average figures

For some data sets, the report states whether the force's value is 'lower', 'higher' or 'broadly in line with' the England and Wales average. This is calculated by using the difference from the mean average, as a proportion, for all forces. After standardising this distribution, forces that are more than 0.675 standard deviations from the mean average are determined to be above or below the average, with all other forces being broadly in line.

In practice this means that approximately a quarter of forces are lower, a quarter are higher, and the remaining half are in line with the England and Wales average for each measure. For this reason, the distance from the average required to make a force's value above or below the average is different for each measure so may not appear to be consistent.

Statistical significance

When commenting on statistical differences, a significance level of 5 percent is used.

For some forces, numbers described in the text may be identical to the England and Wales average due to decimal place rounding, but the bars in the chart will appear different as they use the full, unrounded value.

Population

For all uses of population as a denominator, unless otherwise noted, we use the Office for National Statistics (ONS) mid-2015 population estimates.

Force in numbers

Forecast change in expenditure

These data show estimated gross revenue expenditure (GRE) for the force in 2016/17 and 2019/20, calculated using total GRE pay and total GRE non-pay budgets provided to HMIC by individual forces at the time of data collection (April 2016), excluding expenditure on the office of the police and crime commissioner.

Forecast savings

These data show planned savings (including use of reserves to bridge an in-year funding gap) in future years, calculated using the planned savings for pay and non-pay budgets provided to HMIC at the time of the data collection (April 2016). Some forces only provided figures for savings that they had formally signed off at that point, while others provided estimates for the whole period. Therefore a force with only a small savings requirement is not necessarily faced with only a small savings challenge for the future.

Workforce figures (based on full-time equivalents) for 31 March 2016 and 31 March 2020

These data were obtained from the Home Office annual data return 502. The data are available from the Home Office's published Police workforce England and Wales statistics (available from www.gov.uk/government/collections/police-workforce-england-and-wales), or the Home Office police workforce open data tables (available from www.gov.uk/government/statistics/police-workforce-open-data-tables). Figures may have been updated since the publication. Workforce includes section 38 designated officers (investigation, detention and escort), but does not include section 39 staff.

Projections for March 2020 are budget-based projections and therefore are likely to take into account a vacancy rate depending on a force's planning strategy. In some instances therefore an increase in budgeted posts may not actually indicate the force/constabulary is planning to increase its workforce. In other cases, forces may be planning to reduce their workforce but have a current high vacancy rate which masks this change.

Workforce costs per head of population are obtained from calculations in HMIC Value for Money Profiles 2015, which use the ONS mid-2014 population estimates. The England and Wales averages will differ slightly from the Value for Money Profiles because we have included City of London Police and the Metropolitan Police Service.

Figures throughout the report

Figure 1: Volume of 999 calls from the 12 months to 31 March 2012 to 12 months to 31 March 2016

These data are obtained from the Home Office annual data return 441.

Figure 2: Police recorded crime in 12 months to 31 March 2015 to 12 months to 31 March 2016

These data are obtained from Home Office Police recorded crime and outcomes data tables (available from www.gov.uk/government/statistics/police-recorded-crime-open-data-tables). Total police recorded crime includes all crime (excluding fraud

offences) recorded by police forces in England and Wales. Home Office publications on the overall volumes and rates of recorded crime include the British Transport Police, which is outside the scope of this HMIC inspection. Therefore England and Wales averages in this report will differ slightly from those published by the Home Office.

Figure 3: Percentage of officers, staff and PCSOs in force workforce on 31 March 2016 compared to England and Wales

Data as at 31 March 2016 are obtained from the Home Office annual data return (as set out in the Force in numbers section) which is an 'actual' full-time equivalents (FTE). The percentages used in figure 3 are derived from the total FTEs within forces, and therefore may differ slightly from the exact figures quoted within the report.

Figure 4: Planned changes in workforce FTE from 31 March 2010 to 31 March 2020 for the force compared to England and Wales

The figures in figure 4 are rounded to the nearest whole person, full-time equivalents (FTEs), and therefore may differ slightly from the exact figures quoted within the report. Police staff includes section 38 designated officers (investigation, detention and escort).

Data as at 31 March 2010 and 31 March 2016 are obtained from Home Office annual data return (as set out in the Force in numbers section) which is an 'actual' FTE, this data includes officers on career breaks and other types of long term absence, and those seconded in to forces. Projections for March 2020 are budget-based projections and therefore are likely to take into account a vacancy rate depending on a force's planning strategy, but may not include a projection for absences. In some instances therefore an increase in budgeted posts may not actually indicate the force/constabulary is planning to increase its workforce. In other cases, forces may be planning to reduce their workforce but have a current high vacancy rate which masks this change.

Due to the complex and continually evolving picture of workforce collaboration between neighbouring forces, not all changes in workforce figures reflect the workforce that is available to forces. Involvement in strategic alliances and/or regional organised crime units would be an example of where changes over time are likely to be skewed. Therefore sharp increases or decreases over time need to be considered with caution as they may simply represent accounting changes related to how staff are allocated to forces, not real changes in staffing levels.

At the time of the inspection, the future financial climate was uncertain. Several forces did not have confirmed/signed-off plans for workforce projections. It is important to note that figures provided are in many instances unconfirmed estimates provided to assist HMIC in our inspection programme and should not be seen as a concrete plan for the future workforce landscape of policing.

Figure 5: Projected net revenue expenditure on collaboration with other police forces for the 12 months to 31 March 2016 to the 12 months to 31 March 2020

This data was provided to HMIC by individual forces at the time of data collection (April 2016), prior to inspection.

The data covers the level of expenditure by forces on collaboration-related activity. Collaboration can include a variety of different types of activity, some of which may not incur specific expenditure, but may still generate benefits such as savings or improved services the public. Therefore this data should be seen as only one aspect of potential collaboration activity.

West Mercia Police and Warwickshire Police have a highly-developed integrated relationship and have stated that all of their net revenue expenditure is through collaboration. To avoid distorting the distribution of forces around the average, West Mercia Police and Warwickshire Police have been removed from the England and Wales average for this figure.

Figure 6: Projected net revenue expenditure on collaboration with non-police organisations for the 12 months to 31 March 2016 to the 12 months to 31 March 2020

This data was provided to HMIC by individual forces at the time of data collection (April 2016), prior to inspection. As suggested above, this data should be seen as only one aspect of potential collaboration activity.