



Promoting improvements
in policing to make
everyone safer

PEEL: Police efficiency 2016

An inspection of Northumbria Police



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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 Northumbria Police.

Reports on Northumbria 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.

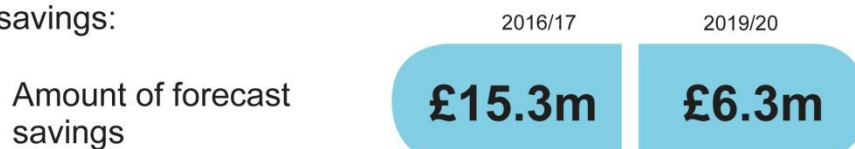
Force in numbers



Financial position



Forecast savings:



Workforce





Calls for assistance

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

Northumbria Police

141

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

51

2015/16

65

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

Northumbria Police

+29%

England and Wales force average

+9%



Victim satisfaction

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

Northumbria Police

91%

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

Northumbria Police has been assessed as good in respect of the efficiency with which it keeps people safe and reduces crime.

Northumbria Police has a good understanding of current demand for its services. It is taking positive steps to identify hidden demand and reduce unnecessary demand. The force has taken steps to assess future demand from emerging and changing crime types, and the implications for the force. It understands the requirement to reallocate resources to cover the greatest area of risk. The force understands the benefits of collaboration. It is actively seeking new arrangements with other forces, partner agencies and other emergency services. It has made sound financial planning assumptions for the short and medium term and has planned its resources to ensure its capability to provide an effective policing service.

Overall summary

Northumbria Police has a good understanding of current demand for its services and has taken active steps to reduce front-end demand. The force is taking steps to identify hidden demand and is achieving this through established processes involving minority communities. The force encourages staff to find ways of reducing unnecessary demand through innovation. ‘Change in a day’ and ‘Quick wins’ are just two of the initiatives that the force has implemented. Northumbria Police has taken steps to assess future demand from emerging and changing crime types, and the implications of this for the force.

The force has worked with partner agencies to explore ways to make working arrangements more efficient and effective. But HMIC believes the force could do more to understand the impact of reduced budgets on partner agencies and the likely implications for demand on the force.

The force understands the requirement to reallocate resources to cover the greatest area of risk. It has made potential savings of 205 officers from frontline policing by introducing a resolution without deployment team and changing its approach to shoplifting, making off without payment (bilking) and to people who are absent - not

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

at a place where they are supposed to be. This has enabled investment in a safeguarding department to allow the force to get ahead of demand. Workforce planning does, however, need to be more advanced. The force has a good understanding of workforce gaps and how to tackle them, but it now needs to ensure that it has the capability and capacity to address the emerging threat of cyber-crime.

The force understands the benefits of collaboration and is actively seeking new arrangements with other forces, partner agencies and other emergency services. It has made sound financial planning assumptions for the short and medium term and has planned its resources to ensure its capability to provide an effective policing service. The force can also raise considerable funds through the sale of redundant estate and the rise in the council tax precept. It had made plans to reduce its workforce in anticipation of a negative spending review in November 2015. The positive result enabled the force to continue with the planned changes while realigning resources to the areas of greatest risk.

The force has invested in technology such as body-worn cameras and 'phablets' (hand-held remote access devices), which has enabled frontline officers to be more visible. While each of the force's successful bids for Home Office funding has a built-in evaluation process as part of its business case, HMIC believes that the force could do more to evaluate the whole of the change programme to ensure that initiatives are beneficial.

The force has a comprehensive information and communication technology strategy and sufficient funds to see the programme through to completion. There are, however, some concerns that the force does not have sufficient expertise to ensure that the strategy is implemented.

Recommendations

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

Areas for improvement

- Northumbria Police should put in place better processes and governance to understand and realise the benefits of projects and change programmes and collaborative work, and how they affect the force's ability to meet current and likely future demand efficiently.
- Northumbria Police should ensure it has sufficient expertise to implement an effective ICT strategy to meet likely future demand for its services efficiently.
- Northumbria Police should ensure that workforce planning covers all areas of policing and that there is a clear rationale, based on evidence, to re-organise staff to meet current and likely future demand.

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

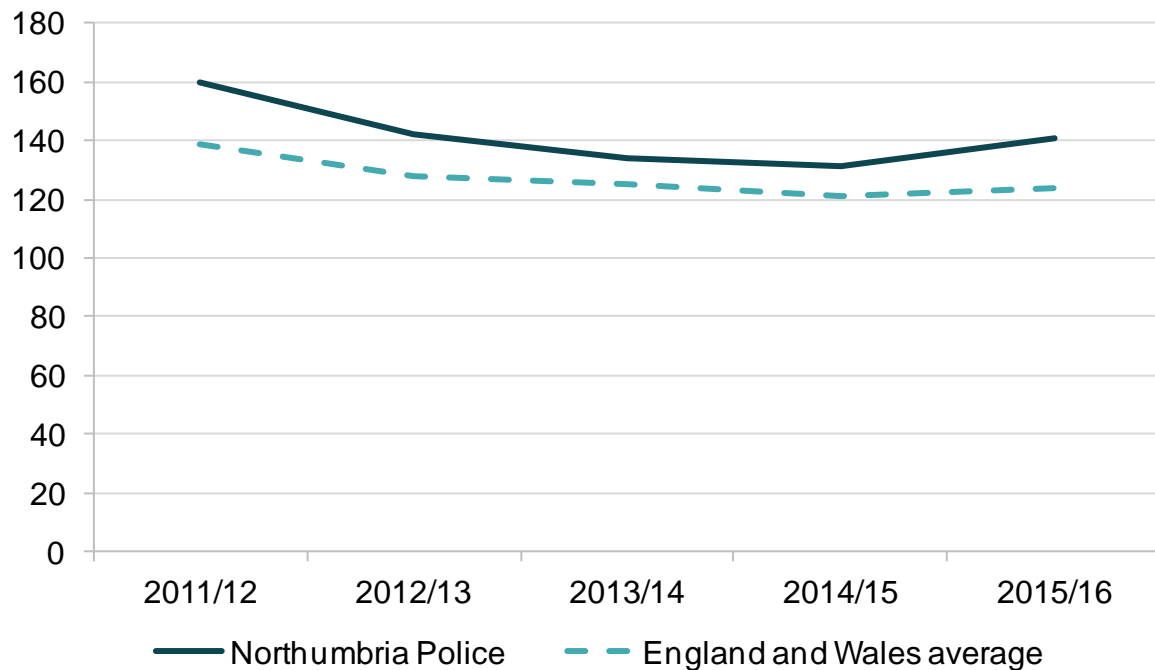
A good understanding of the demand for police services is vital in ensuring that forces have the right resources in the right place to provide the right level of policing now and in the future. This means not just an understanding of reported incidents but also how well a force proactively looks for 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 Northumbria Police compared with England and Wales in the 12 months to 31 March 2012 to the 12 months to 31 March 2016

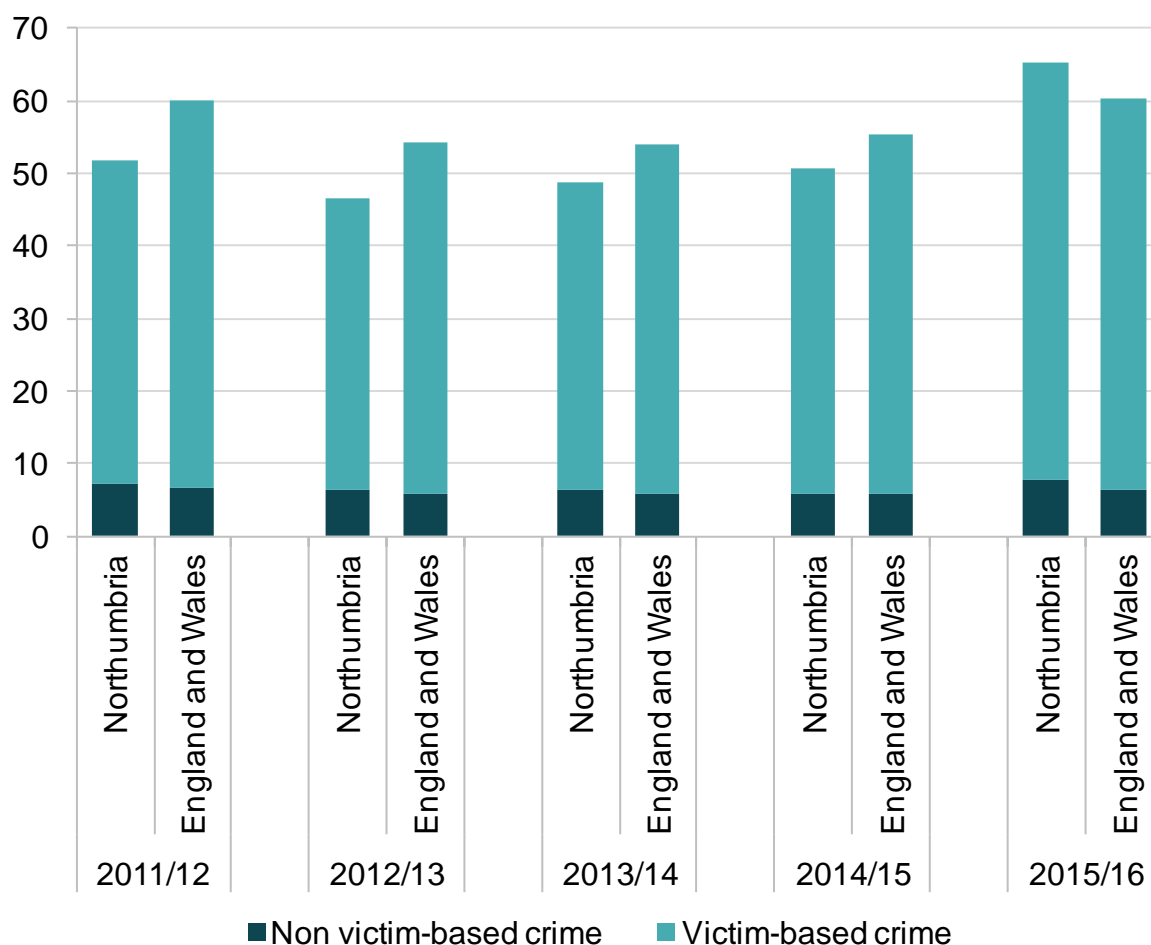


Source: Home Office Annual Data Requirement

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

Northumbria Police received 141 '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 160 '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 Northumbria 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, Northumbria Police recorded 57.6 victim-based crimes per 1,000 population, broadly in line with the England and Wales average of 53.8 victim-based crimes per 1,000 population. Over the same period, Northumbria Police recorded 7.8 non victim-based crimes per 1,000 population, higher than 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 30 percent and an increase in the non victim-based crime rate of 6 percent since the 12 months to 31 March 2012.

Northumbria Police has a good understanding of the principal areas of current demand for its services. The force has assessed the greatest threats and risk to communities across Northumbria, and has looked at the level of demand that each one places on frontline policing.

The force recognises the importance of understanding fully all areas of current demand so that it can develop its services better and target its resources to ensure that the greatest risks are managed appropriately and vulnerable victims are

protected. A force improvement team was created to increase understanding of all demand, including hidden and under-reported demand. The force is improving its understanding of less obvious demand. An important role of the team is to thoroughly understand the demand from safeguarding vulnerable people, and to develop operating models across all the agencies that will enhance service provision and maximise efficiency savings.

Neighbourhood policing remains at the heart of Northumbria Police's approach and it continues to work hard to break down barriers with those communities that traditionally have little trust in policing. Well-established links through community cohesion teams and partner organisations have helped to increase levels of public confidence. The force has noticed this particularly among female members of diverse communities, some of whom may not trust or report matters to the police. For example, over the past three years, the force has worked with the Bangladeshi community to develop better links, and this has helped it to understand the levels and nature of hidden demand from that particular community. It recognises that this is work in progress, and continuing work with such communities is expected to improve its understanding of demand even further.

Northumbria Police has also identified that some of its internal processes are making unnecessary demands on police time and creating inefficiencies. The force has completed a review of these processes to find out where the inefficiencies are occurring. Under the direction of the new leadership team, the force has encouraged staff from across the organisation to suggest innovative ideas for improving internal working practices to reduce waste and inefficiency and improve the service provided to the public. 'Change in a day' is one such initiative that the force has introduced. It invites suggestions from members of staff who can then present them to chief officers. If their ideas are accepted, staff members are encouraged, under the guidance of the force improvement team, to develop the new working practice and introduce it across the force. A recent example is the introduction of a new vehicle recovery system which has streamlined the original process. The force's own evaluation has identified that there is now reduced demand for roads policing officers, the force has saved money and there has been a reduction in complaints.

How well does the force understand potential future demand for its services?

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.

The force has fully assessed changing crime types as part of its annual strategic assessment. This strategic assessment gives a detailed picture of emerging demand for police response throughout Northumbria. The main areas of growing demand include cyber-crime, child sexual exploitation, domestic abuse, organised immigration crime, so-called 'honour-based violence', hate crime and anti-social behaviour. The force has used a tool developed by the London School of Economics to analyse current and predictive data. The analysis identifies the potential gaps in service provision and the action a force needs to take in order to be fully prepared to respond to all the emerging threats. For example, for Northumbria Police, the analysis has identified a growing problem of modern-day slavery. The force is now aware that it needs to do more work to understand better the scale and nature of such crime locally. Its actions will include raising awareness among local recruitment agencies, private landlords and the general public as to what to look out for. These findings also recommend enhanced training for frontline officers.

Northumbria Police has worked alongside partner organisations, such as local authorities and the ambulance service, to understand those areas where ineffective joint working practices can have a serious impact on police demand. This has led to the establishment of a partnership agreement with the NHS locally. In this, mental health practitioners work alongside police officers to provide 'street triage' at incidents involving people thought to be suffering from mental health problems. The force has reported a considerable reduction in the number of people being detained over concerns for their safety (under section 136 of the Mental Health Act 1983). Instead, they are being dealt with in more appropriate settings. The force has also reported that, since the introduction of the scheme, the number of section 136 detentions has reduced from 26 per month to 11 per month. This has not only reduced wasted police time in dealing with such incidents but also, and more importantly, it has led to a better service for this vulnerable group.

Although the force is working more closely with local partner organisations, it does not yet fully understand the likely impact of continuing reductions in partners' budgets on demand for police services in the future. There is a risk that as other organisations, such as social services, withdraw or reduce their levels of service because of financial constraints, the public will increasingly look to the police to fill the gaps. The force has done some work to inform the public where to find support for non-police related matters. However, it cannot show a thorough understanding of the likely extra burden of responsibility once the full austerity measures have had their impact on partnership funding.

Summary of findings



Good

Northumbria Police is judged to be good in relation to how well it understands the current and likely future demand for its services.

Northumbria Police has a good understanding of current demand and has taken active steps to reduce front-end demand. The force is taking steps to identify hidden demand and is achieving this through established processes involving minority communities. The force encourages staff to find ways of reducing unnecessary demand through innovation. 'Change in a day' and 'Quick wins' are just two of the initiatives that the force has implemented. Northumbria Police has taken steps to assess future demand from emerging and changing crime types, and the implications of this for the force.

The force has worked with partner agencies to explore ways to make working arrangements more efficient and effective. But HMIC believes the force could do more to understand the impact of reduced budgets on partner agencies and the likely implications for demand on the force.

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

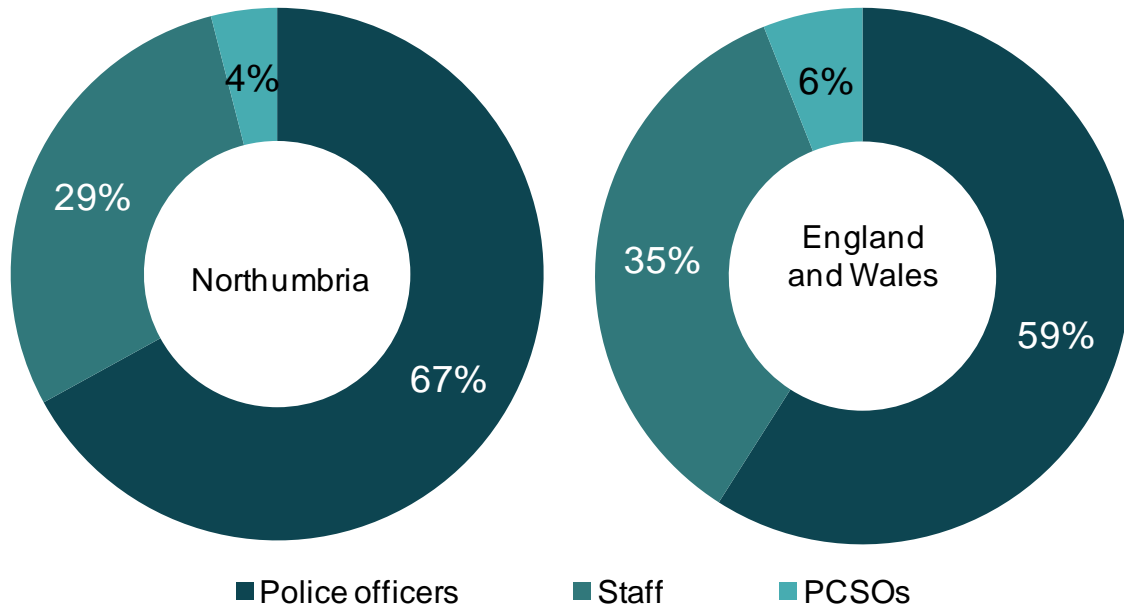
Police forces need to operate in a way that makes the best use of all available resources so that demand is met and public expectations are satisfied. We looked at the extent to which Northumbria Police has the right people with the right skills in the right place to protect the public and to fight crime. 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 look at how well Northumbria 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 Northumbria 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 67 percent of Northumbria Police's workforce. This was higher than the England and Wales average of 59 percent. The proportion of staff in Northumbria Police was 29 percent, lower than the England and Wales average of 35 percent. The proportion of police community support officers in Northumbria Police was 4 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 Northumbria 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	4,187	-20%	-14%	3,336	-5%	-2%	3,181
Staff	2,096	-32%	-21%	1,432	-13%	-5%	1,248
PCSOs	438	-55%	-35%	196	-16%	-6%	164
Workforce total	6,721	-26%	-18%	4,963	-7%	-3%	4,593

Source: HMIC Efficiency data collection

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

Managing demands for police services

An improved understanding of demand has enabled Northumbria Police to explore new ways of working – ways that will enable it to go on providing an effective police response to demand and still meet public expectations, but which can be achieved with reduced resources. It has introduced a new, more rigorous approach to the risk assessment of all 999 and 101 calls to ensure that the most appropriate police response will be deployed. This approach is known as ‘THRIVE’ (threat, harm, risk, investigation, vulnerability and engagement). It aims to gather enough information to make a better-informed decision as to the best response in every case. The emphasis has shifted from a response based on the crime or incident type to one that focuses on the victim and the risks posed. The handling of initial calls has also been enhanced through the introduction of a new ‘resolution without deployment’ (RWD) unit, which deals with calls for service by telephone without sending a police officer to attend. These tend to be ‘lower-level’ incidents, freeing up response officers to attend to more urgent calls more quickly. The unit is staffed by experienced officers.

The force has realigned its workforce model to manage demand and respond more appropriately to those who are vulnerable. In total, the force estimates that it will make potential savings of 205 officers from frontline policing by introducing the new RWD team and changing its approach to shoplifting, bilking and the absence category. This has enabled investment in a safeguarding department to allow the force to get ahead of demand.

The force has used data provided by the London School of Economics to understand current demand better and to predict future demand. This has been used to shape the new neighbourhood policing model and allocate resources in a more informed way.

With the establishment of the RWD team, the force can increase the number of incidents and calls that can be resolved without sending an officer to attend. Its aim is to continue to meet the public's expectations for an effective service, while at the same time freeing up police resources to tackle crimes that pose the most harm and risks to vulnerable people. The force has also given its staff more responsibility to make decisions about the appropriate level of investigation in relation to each incident. This allows officers to complete as thorough an investigation as necessary, depending on the factors and complexity of each case. Victim satisfaction figures remain consistently high and the efficiencies realised have enabled resources to be redeployed to those areas of policing with the greatest threat, harm and risk.

The force estimates that if the RWD team dealt with 30 percent of all calls, and if the force changes its approach to shoplifting, bilking and the absence category, the team could reduce the demand on frontline policing by the equivalent of 205 officers. It is monitoring the reductions in deployment, but it is too early to assess actual savings.

Increasing efficiency

Northumbria Police is committed to ensuring that the quality of service to the public is not compromised by making cashable savings. The force has invested in technology, such as body-worn video cameras and 'phablets' (hand-held devices that have a screen larger than a mobile phone's but smaller than a tablet's), that give mobile access to police IT systems and enable frontline officers to work and be more visible when outside in their communities.

The force has successfully secured £7m from the Home Office police innovation fund² for new projects, each with a built-in evaluation process as part of its business case. While the force has taken some steps to evaluate the effectiveness of elements within the change programme, it does not have a systematic or consistent overall approach.

² For more information about the Police Innovation Fund, see: www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/470122/HARD_LAUNCH_20151020_-_PIF_2016-17_on_a_Page.pdf

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 Northumbria 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

Northumbria Police has a good understanding of the skills of every employee within the organisation. It has assessed the skills and expertise of the workforce comprehensively. All the information is recorded in a central database used to identify individuals suitable for redeployment around the force to fill gaps in capability.

Tackling workforce gaps

The skills database gives Northumbria Police a good understanding of where there are workforce gaps in relation to skills and leadership capability, and the force has identified the actions needed to address these gaps. Its 'workforce training summary' outlines the areas where training is predicted to be needed – for example, enhanced training in skills linked to safeguarding as well as a comprehensive leadership development programme.

HMIC does, however, have concerns that the force has not planned adequately for the increasing impact of cyber-crime and the need to equip the workforce fully with the skills and knowledge to tackle it. The force recognises that this crime type will continue to grow but it does not appear to have any detailed plans to increase its capability and capacity in response.

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

We assessed how well Northumbria 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 the demand for its services.

Northumbria Police is actively seeking ways to work collaboratively with others to enhance policing services and reduce costs. The force is fully committed to extending its collaborative arrangements. This is emphasised with the recruitment of an assistant chief constable who has considerable experience in this field and who has been given the task of extending the force's collaborative arrangements. Joint working opportunities are being sought and considered under three headings: geographic community safety, safeguarding, and police-to-police collaboration. The Northumbria Safer Roads initiative is just one example of the force working in partnership with local authorities, the Highways Agency, courts services, local university and fire service. The programme seeks to reduce the number of people killed or seriously injured on Northumbria's roads.

The force is one of three forces that form the North East Regional Special Operations Unit (NERSOU) and links with Durham Constabulary continue to be explored. At the time of the inspection, the force was considering collaborating with Durham Constabulary on overseas registration services and dog kennel services.

Collaboration benefits

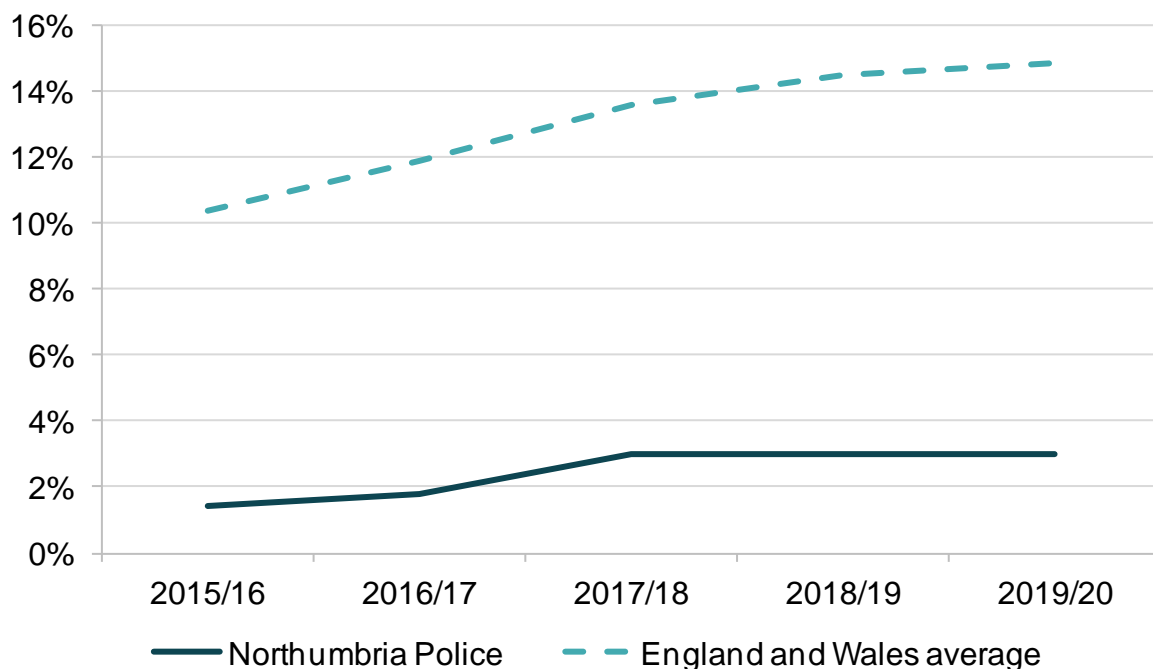
Northumbria Police has established strong governance processes that guide decisions on whether or not to enter collaborative arrangements, based on a number of target outcomes. These are listed as: service improvement, improved value for money, improved efficiency, financial savings, improved resilience and the opportunity to address any capacity or capability shortfalls. The force can show the achievement of considerable efficiencies through collaborative agreements. The regional asset recovery team, which forms part of NERSOU, is one such example of joint working enhancing the level of outcome at a reduced cost. The force has also been able to quantify the savings in staff time achieved through the mental health street triage agreement, estimated to be a saving of 600 staff hours per month. This has been achieved by deploying police officers alongside mental health practitioners who provide expert advice to calls relating to concerns for welfare. Another example is the agreement with Durham Constabulary to share dog kennel facilities, in which the force estimates that cash savings of £60,000 per year have been achieved.

Similarly, sharing buildings with the fire service has supported the estates rationalisation programme that the force estimates has achieved savings to date of £2.8m.

Northumbria Police is working with other public sector organisations to manage demand more efficiently. The force works with local partners to understand their respective demand and how they can collaborate to achieve efficiencies. For example, there is an ongoing review of safeguarding processes. The force reports that in Northumbria crimes linked to safeguarding have increased by 180 percent over the past two years – a figure that is predicted to continue to increase. This is an area where good joint working, particularly with social services, can not only help manage demand but also, importantly, result in a better service to vulnerable victims.

The force has also examined the benefits of entering collaborative agreements with other blue-light agencies – for example, with the North East Ambulance Service regarding the way in which people are assessed at the roadside. The agreement enables police officers to link directly to the ambulance control rooms and reduces the time police spend waiting for an ambulance to attend.

Figure 5: Projected percentage of net revenue expenditure in Northumbria 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

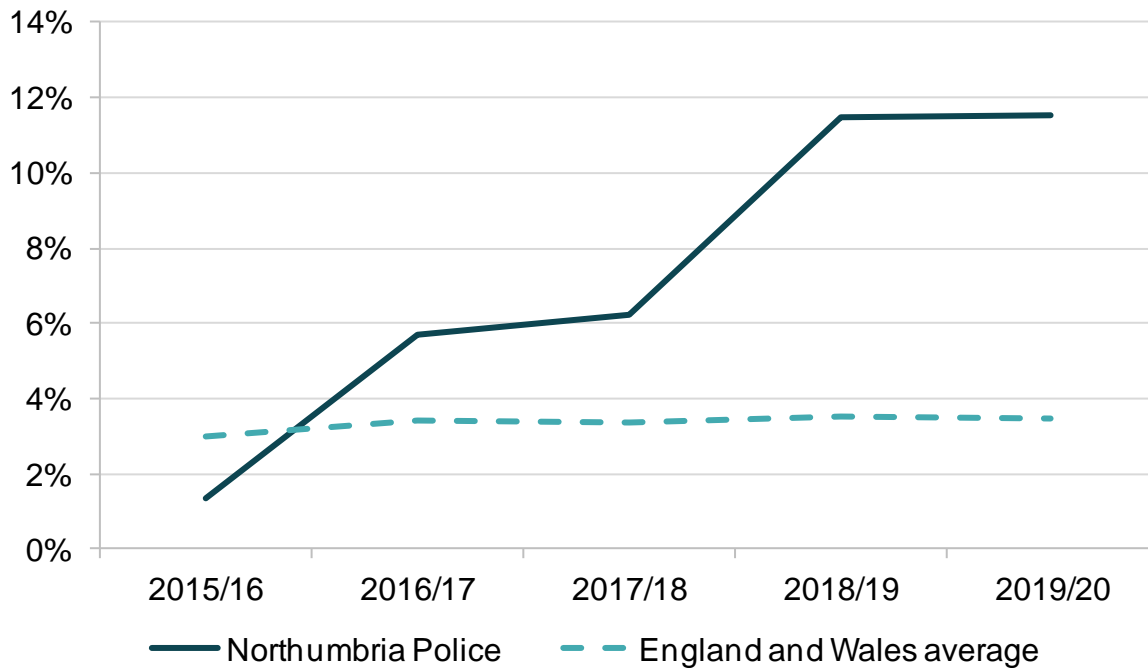


Source: HMIC Efficiency data collection

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.

Northumbria Police has forecast that it will spend £4.8m in 2016/17 on collaboration with other police forces. This is 1.8 percent of its net revenue expenditure (NRE), which is lower than the England and Wales average of 11.9 percent. For 2019/20, the force has forecast that it will spend £7.8m (3.0 percent of NRE) on collaboration with other police forces. This is lower than the England and Wales average of 14.8 percent.

Figure 6: Projected percentage of net revenue expenditure in Northumbria 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

Northumbria Police has forecast that it will spend £15.2m in 2016/17 on collaboration with non-police organisations. This is 5.7 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 £30.2m (11.5 percent of NRE) on collaboration with non-police organisations. This is higher than 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.

Northumbria Police has undertaken a number of evaluation exercises linked to its change programme. This programme's evaluation document identifies the processes that will be used to assess thoroughly the benefits achieved. One such area of evaluation relates to the 'street to strategic' programme of investment in IT capability. This programme included installing video-conferencing equipment, buying body-worn video cameras, 3,500 mobile phones and phablet mobile devices that can access police systems. The video-conferencing facility has been evaluated and was found to have considerable benefits including a 48 percent reduction in mileage claims for staff using the facility. The force has additional plans to complete similar evaluations of the smart phones and phablets, but this process is yet to start.

HMIC received a mixed picture of Northumbria Police's capacity to understand fully the impact of the changes that have taken place. There are some examples in which there has been a detailed evaluation, such as the work done by the RWD team, where the force assessed the reduction of officer hours and associated costs linked to the deployment of front line resources. However, this is not consistent across the many change initiatives that the force has started in the past 12 months. The areas of change in the force which are linked to innovation funding have a built-in evaluation process which needs to be completed before the Home Office releases the funding. Force programmes that fall outside the innovation funding will not necessarily have any formal process of evaluation.

Summary of findings



Good

Northumbria Police uses its resources well to manage current demand. Its understanding of this demand ensures that it allocates resources appropriately, and in line with priorities, to match demand and keep pace with financial requirements. The force has a good understanding of its workforce skills and uses this information effectively to identify and fill gaps in capability. There is a comprehensive training plan that is linked to an awareness of future requirements.

However, HMIC has some concerns that the force has not fully considered enhancing its capacity and capability to meet the rising demands from cyber-crime. The force is keen to increase collaborative working and has a clear strategy as to how it will achieve this. It already links with other police forces, partner organisations and blue light agencies, and it is able to show savings and improved service provision as a result of joint working. However, its approach to evaluating the benefits from the change programme systematically is not consistent.

Area for improvement

- Northumbria Police should put in place better processes and governance to understand and realise the benefits of projects and change programmes and collaborative work, and how they affect the force's 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 Northumbria 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 Northumbria 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

Northumbria Police has financial plans that align well with force priorities and have enabled resources to be targeted at areas of policing that have the greatest demand. Human resources and finance departments ensure that effective short, medium and long-term workforce and financial planning are achieved. There is an understanding of the workforce numbers required to support the policing plan over the next four year period. However, this is limited in detail as to the exact numbers of officers and staff that the force intends to recruit and indeed which areas of policing the extra resources will be deployed to. The force is looking to enhance its workforce planning capability but at this stage it is recognised as being a work in progress.

Before the government's spending review at the end of 2015, the force had been planning for as much as a further 20 percent cut in its budgets from 2016. The workforce plan had included reductions in the numbers of police community support officers (PCSOs). The better than expected financial position for 2016/17 has meant that the only PCSOs leaving the force will be doing so through choice. The force also now plans to recruit 120 officers in 2016/17 and then 200 per year from 2017/18

onwards. This will mean a net reduction in officer headcount for 2016/17, because the force is expecting that around 200 officers will either retire or leave. However, this figure will be maintained at stable levels from then on.

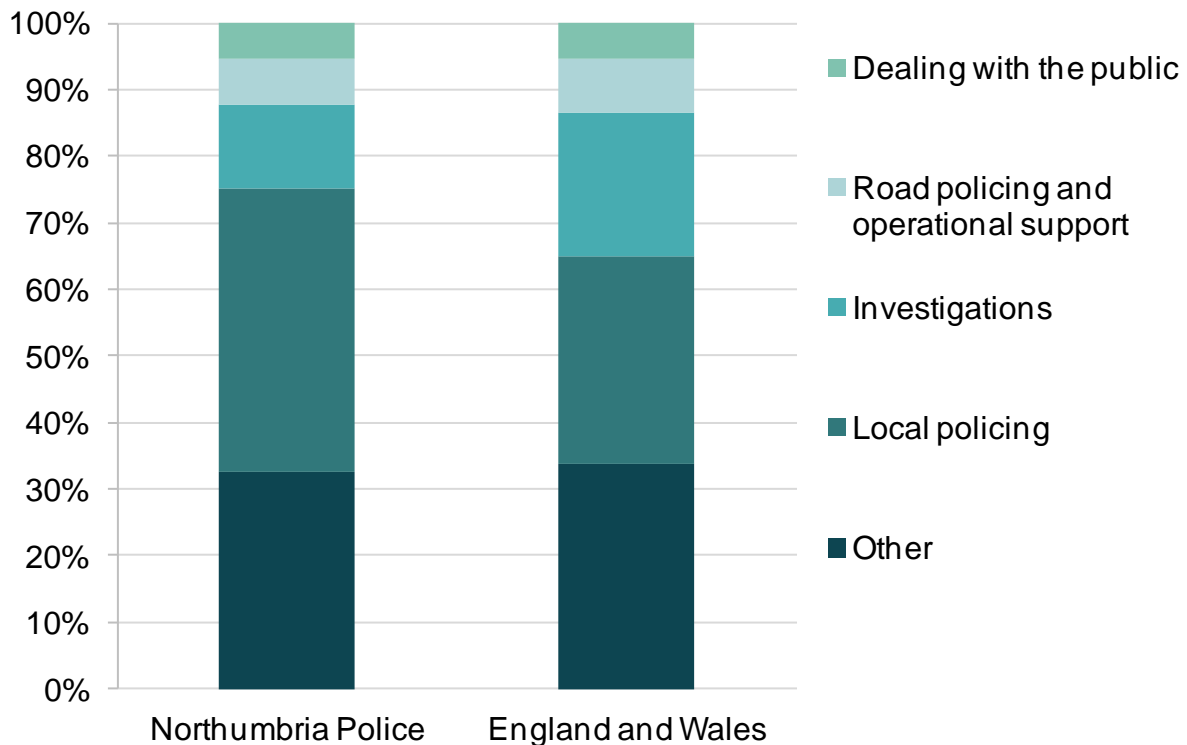
Investing in ICT

Northumbria Police has a comprehensive ICT strategy, which is an integral part of its change programme. Its plans for ICT align closely with its workforce and service plans. The strategy will enable the force both to continue its current work more efficiently and to improve the way it provides its service. The force has identified some risks to the ICT strategy and has a number of provisions in place to address these. The force has already invested in mobile technology such as phablets and body-worn video cameras to improve productivity and service quality. It currently has a £22m budget within the capital programme allocated for ICT investment. At the time of inspection, £10m of this budget was unallocated to any specific programme, which means that there should be enough money to implement appropriate ICT solutions for the force's priorities.

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 Northumbria Police'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.

Figure 7: Estimated percentage of gross revenue expenditure allocated across different policing functions in Northumbria Police compared with England and Wales in the 12 months to 31 March 2016



Source: HMIC Efficiency data collection

For further information about the data in figure 7 please see annex A

Northumbria Police has established robust governance arrangements for investment and savings planning, with oversight provided by the police and crime commissioner (PCC). Business plans for considerable investments, such as the migration of the force IT network, have to be agreed by the PCC. Before agreement is reached, the plans have to go through a series of hearings that test their ability to achieve revenue savings and improve productivity. The head of finance meets with the chief executive of the PCC’s office every two weeks, and attends a range of formal and informal meetings to update stakeholders and partners as programmes develop.

HMIC does, however, have concerns about the force’s current capability to ensure that the investment linked to the ICT strategy is managed effectively. The force does intend to recruit and seek expert support, but this appears to be planned for the future rather than an immediate requirement.

Planning for the future

Northumbria Police has a good understanding of its current and future financial position. The force has identified a number of opportunities to reduce the size of its estate by selling buildings and land that are surplus to requirements. The predicted

income generated from these sales is estimated to be around £30m. These funds will go towards financing the ICT strategy and reducing the capital financing requirement.

Northumbria Police, out of the 43 forces in England and Wales, is in the lower quartile for the council tax precept. In 2016/17, the PCCs of these forces within the lower quartile were given permission to raise their precept above the national cap to up to £5 per household. The PCC in Northumbria chose to do this and the extra funding raised will be invested in areas that the force has identified as priorities. The medium-term financial strategy includes assumptions that this increase will be applied each year for the next four years. The force has recognised the potential risk associated with central cuts in funding (the funding formula review) and has prepared plans that can be refreshed and implemented in such a case.

In line with its priorities and predictions of future demand, Northumbria Police has recognised that it needs to move more resources into safeguarding provision. The force is committed to neighbourhood policing and has consulted with the PCC and six local authority leaders across Northumbria about its plans to realign its 21 neighbourhood policing teams to manage demand better. The new neighbourhood operating model allows for the continued use of the police and crime plan while maintaining service levels to meet demand. The new model focuses on identifying and supporting the most vulnerable members of the public through partnership working.

To what extent does the force fund its investments sustainably?

Police forces have made considerable financial savings over recent years which has 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

Northumbria Police is continuing to make savings to meet existing budgetary requirements and invest for the future. Up until December 2015, the force had been planning to reduce costs in order to meet anticipated budget cuts. When the government announced its intention to protect police budgets for 2016/17, the force

made the decision to continue with change but to reinvest savings in resourcing areas with predicted future demand. The reinvestment will primarily be targeted at safeguarding.

The force has plans for 80 new posts in safeguarding. To achieve this, it has already removed 30 posts from response policing, ten of which will work in the project team developing the safeguarding model, while 20 will be used to support current gaps in service. As and when the extra posts are released, they will be added to the safeguarding team to enlarge it. The emphasis of the enhanced safeguarding provision will be on prevention, with some resources going into multi-agency teams and some based geographically, working with schools to tackle the causes of vulnerability.

Northumbria Police is still relying on using its reserves to bridge the budget gap in the short term. The current medium-term financial strategy includes plans to balance the revenue budget with £5.7m from reserves in 2016/17, £1.5m in 2017/18 but with no use of reserves at all in 2018/19. The force plans to add £1m to the reserves in 2019/20. This is an improved position on the previous strategy, which included a greater dependence on reserves to balance the revenue budget. HMIC was previously concerned that reserves were forecast to fall too close to two percent of the net revenue expenditure. Current financial planning provides the force with reserves of 3.4 percent of the revenue budget, which provides a better cushion against any unforeseen expenditure.

Working together to improve future efficiency

Northumbria Police is actively looking at new ways of working, either through internal change or through collaborative arrangements across policing, partner agencies and other emergency services. The new safeguarding team and the formation of multi-agency safeguarding hubs have allowed the force to work closely with its main partners, share expertise and enhance service provision for vulnerable people within the community.

The force is part of an estate-sharing strategy with two fire and rescue services and this has generated considerable savings to date. Work with the North East Ambulance Service has enabled a working protocol to be agreed, which reduces demand on both services. The ICT strategy and the planned change to the IT operating model have enabled the force to consider all service providers. At the time of the inspection, the force had not decided who would provide the upgrade in technology.

Summary of findings



Requires improvement

Northumbria Police has established plans to enable it to manage future demand. It has financial plans that align well with force priorities and it can therefore target resources at areas of policing that have the greatest risk. Workforce planning needs to become more advanced to ensure that there is a clear and sound basis for moving staff into areas of greatest demand and that all areas of policing across the organisation are appropriately staffed.

The force has a comprehensive ICT strategy that should help in service provision and achieving efficiencies. HMIC does, however, have concerns that the current in-force capability to implement this strategy is limited. The force does have plans to seek external specialist support and also plans to recruit individuals into the organisation who will support the strategy, but at this stage there are no timescales as to when this will take place.

The force has considered various ways to generate income and has identified both the sale of estate and the rise of the council tax precept. It is already involved in collaboration and partnership agreements across the range of the police service, partner agencies and other emergency services. Additional work is under way to explore other avenues of collaboration to further enhance policing services and maximise efficiency savings.

Areas for improvement

- Northumbria Police should ensure it has sufficient expertise to implement an effective ICT strategy to meet likely future demand for its services efficiently.
- Northumbria Police should ensure that workforce planning covers all areas of policing and that there is a clear rationale, based on evidence, to re-organise staff to meet current and likely future demand.

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' than, 'higher' than 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 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 are 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 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 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. These data include officers on career breaks and other types of long-term absence, and those seconded 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 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 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

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

These data cover 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 these 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

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

Figure 7: The percentage of gross revenue expenditure allocated to different policing functions in the 12 months to March 2016

These data were provided to HMIC by individual forces at the time of data collection (April 2016), prior to inspection. These data define policing functions using the Policing Objective Analysis categories which we have grouped. The grouping is illustrated in the table below.

Figure 7 policing functions	POA categories
Local policing	Local policing
Investigations	Specialist Investigations Investigative Support Public Protection
Road policing and operational support	Roads Policing Operations Support
Dealing with the public	Dealing with the Public
Other	Intelligence Criminal Justice Arrangements Support Functions National policing Office of PCC Central Costs