



Promoting improvements
in policing to make
everyone safer

PEEL: Police efficiency 2016

An inspection of Thames Valley 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 Thames Valley Police.

Reports on Thames Valley 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.

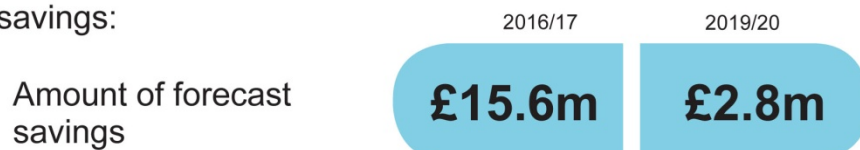
Force in numbers



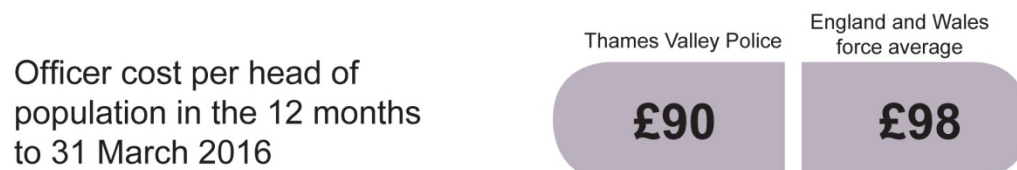
Financial position



Forecast savings:



Workforce





Calls for assistance

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

Thames Valley Police

110

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

55

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

Thames Valley 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

Thames Valley Police

88%

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

Thames Valley Police has been assessed as good in respect of the efficiency with which it keeps people safe and reduces crime. It has a comprehensive understanding of demand for its services and uses its resources to manage this demand well. The force has sound financial plans that are likely to achieve further savings while improving efficiency. In last year's inspection, Thames Valley was also judged to be good.

Overall summary

Since HMIC's 2015 inspection, Thames Valley Police has continued to be good in the efficiency with which it keeps people safe and reduces crime. It has a good understanding of current demand. By reviewing and analysing response demand, protective demand and investigative demand, the force aims to determine the source of demand, the time taken to deal with it and the average cost it involves. The force has taken action to uncover hidden demand such as child sexual exploitation, honour-based violence and hate crime by raising staff awareness, and recording of incidents has increased as a result. It is refining its understanding of both current and hidden demand by making better use of data held by partner organisations such as the fire service and local authority. The force has a strategic threat assessment that considers how demand may change over the next few years and it is looking at the potential impact on demand of reducing resources in its partner organisations.

The force is good at using its resources to manage current demand. It prioritises resources based on its assessment of threat, harm and risk and uses priority-based budgeting to align resources to the areas of greatest need. The force has a very good understanding of its workforce's skills, which are logged in a database so that skills profiles can be monitored and gaps can be identified and addressed. It has increased specialist detectives to address a substantial increase in reported cases of domestic abuse and serious sexual offences, and is addressing the changes in skills needed to deal with cyber-crime and the threat of terrorism. The force has a good track record of joint working with other police forces to improve efficiency and reduce

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

costs, for example in a shared contact centre, ICT and vehicle fleet management. It also works with other emergency services to agree the most appropriate service to respond to particular demand, and has a well-regarded mental health triage scheme.

Thames Valley Police is good at planning for demand in the future. The force has ambitious and transformational plans to use ICT more effectively in collaboration with Hampshire Constabulary. It is already making use of body-worn video cameras, smartphones and tablets. The force uses external expertise when necessary, for example to improve financial planning and to assure ICT plans for technical viability and value. Its projected workforce model and planned use of assets match its organisational priorities and financial requirements. It has a strong track record in meeting its savings requirements and it plans to increase its collaboration with other forces in its drive for efficiency and saving money. The force's financial plans are practical and credible and should achieve comprehensive change and savings.

Recommendation

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

Area for improvement

- Thames Valley Police should ensure its understanding of the demand for its services, and of the expectations of the public, are up to date by regularly reviewing its evidence base. These reviews should be conducted alongside local authorities, other emergency services and partner organisations, to ensure that the force takes the necessary steps to meet current and likely future demand, including hidden demand.

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

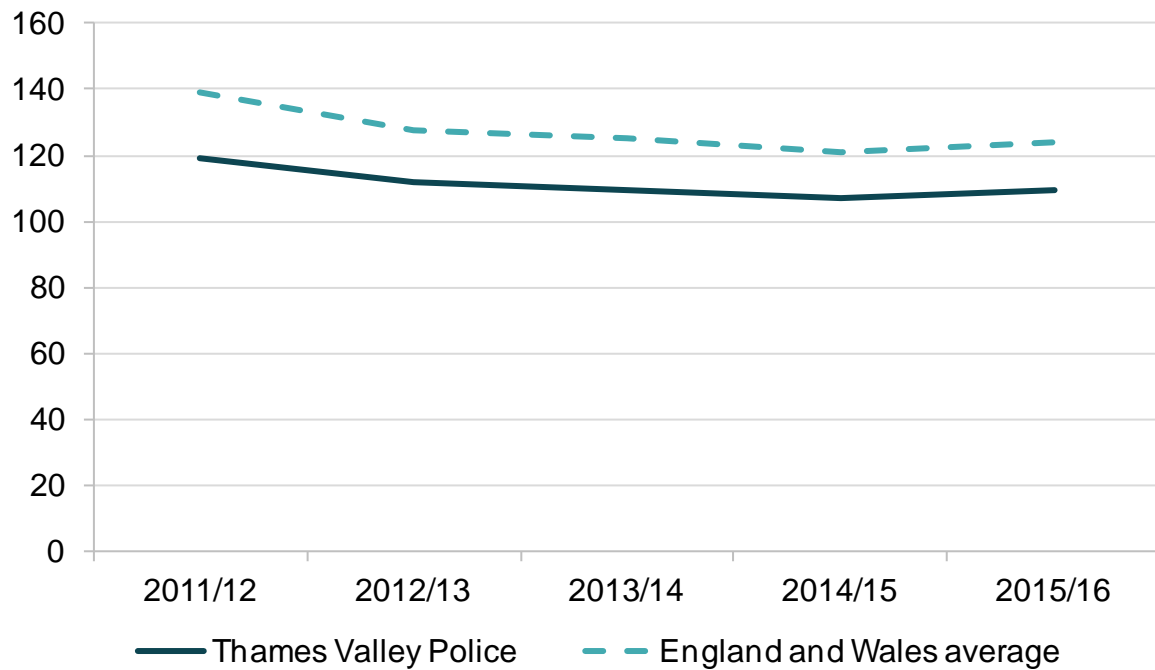
A good understanding of the demand for police services is vital in ensuring that forces have the right resources in the right place to provide the right level of policing now and in the future. This means not just an understanding of reported incidents but also how well a force proactively looks for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

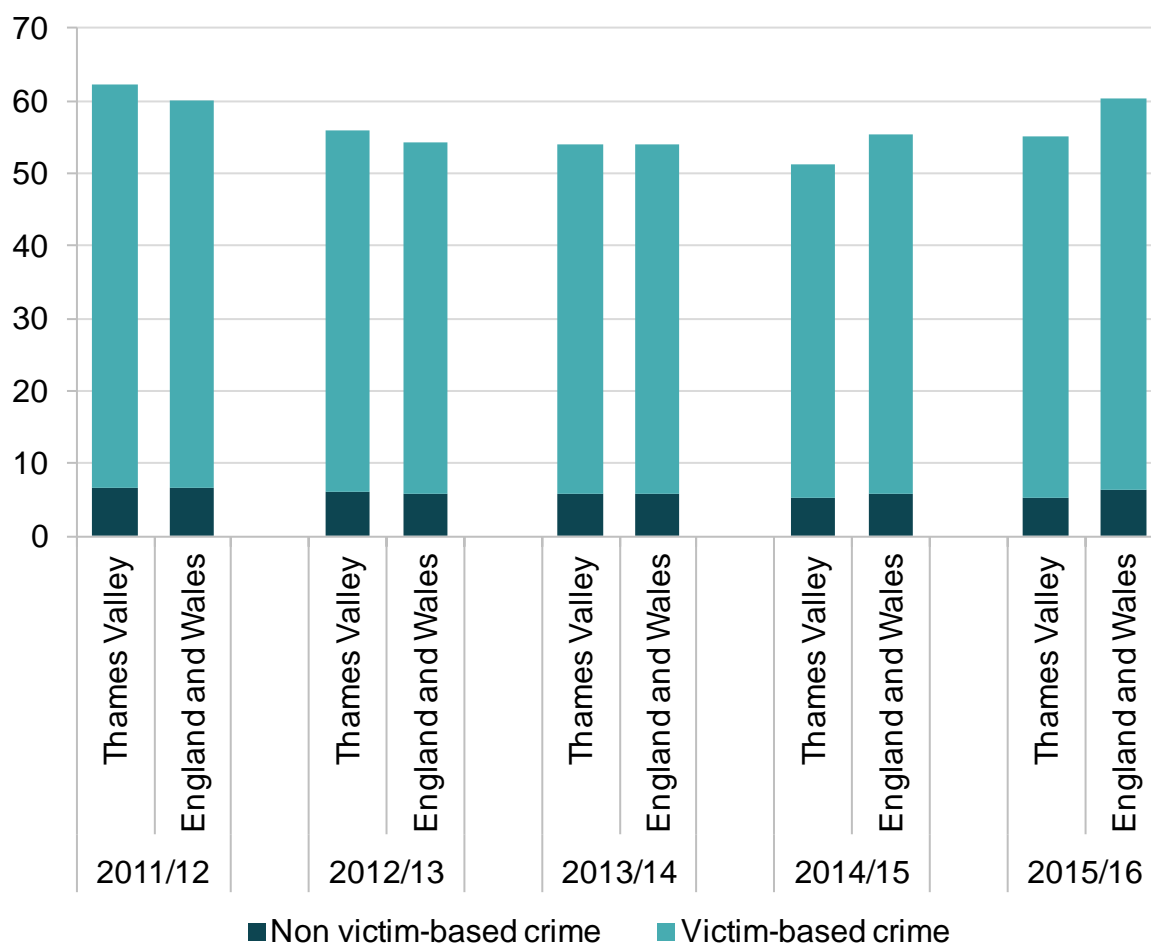


Source: Home Office Annual Data Requirement

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

Thames Valley Police received 110 '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 119 '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 Thames Valley 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, Thames Valley Police recorded 49.8 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, Thames Valley Police recorded 5.3 non victim-based crimes per 1,000 population, lower than the England and Wales average of 6.5 non victim-based crimes per 1,000 population. There has been a decrease in the victim-based crime rate of 10 percent and a decrease in the non victim-based crime rate of 22 percent since the 12 months to 31 March 2012.

Thames Valley Police has a good knowledge of the full range of current demand for its services and prioritises resources based on its assessment of threat, harm and risk. To date, the force has reviewed three areas of demand: response demand (the initial response the force makes in response to calls for service), protective demand (the service it provides to vulnerable victims) and investigative demand (the time and resources invested into the investigation of crime and other allegations). The reviews

have used analysis of internal (quantitative) data, including cost data, with the aim of understanding where demand has been generated, how long it is taking to deal with each type of activity and the average cost of each type of activity.

The force has been successful at uncovering hidden demand by raising staff awareness of child sexual exploitation, honour-based violence and hate crime. Increased rates of recording of such incidents indicate the success of the force's efforts in these areas. It is reasonable to assume that previously a number of these crimes had not been reported.

Thames Valley Police has used its understanding of demand to inform its priority-based budget (PBB) process, which enables an organisation to focus on the outcomes it seeks to achieve and to prioritise organisational change to achieve these outcomes. The force has specifically considered the resources invested in response and investigative demand. Thames Valley Police now uses this understanding to better align its resources with priorities and to identify and eliminate inefficiencies.

Thames Valley Police has benefited from PBB, by rationalising the operational bases used by its frontline staff and providing services more efficiently. Frontline staff have been relocated away from police stations to a smaller number of operational 'hubs'; this both reduces expenditure on premises and increases operational resilience.

Services are provided more efficiently through better management of demand, by addressing the root causes of problems in areas that are known for the highest number of 999 or 101 calls. Thames Valley Police collaborates with partner organisations both to work with individuals who are prone to cause a nuisance in local neighbourhoods and support those who are affected by their behaviour. A good example is working with councils and housing charities to support the homeless in areas where their lifestyle leads to repeated complaints of anti-social behaviour.

Through an analysis of call data, the force has also recognised that 30 percent of calls received relate to follow-up contact relating to the same incident. Most commonly they are made so that users can either receive or pass on further information about the incident. This presents an opportunity to work more efficiently and reduce demand in the contact centre. Thames Valley Police is working closely with Hampshire Constabulary to develop a new command and control system incorporating a customer portal. This will allow callers to report incidents, receive updates and pass on further information online without the need for direct contact with the force.

The force is refining its understanding of both current and hidden demand by making better use of data held by partner organisations. This is based on the response, investigative and protective demand model, but it is expanded to include data held by other organisations as well as the police. The research is known as demand and vulnerability module (DAVM); it is in its early stages, but the force has already

combined local authority and fire service data to build up a broader picture of demand on public services in certain areas.

Additionally, the inclusion of third-party data into the DAVM has enhanced Thames Valley Police's understanding of certain types of crime. This particularly involves crimes associated with vulnerable individuals who frequently need repeated support from different organisations. This provides an opportunity for more joined-up care programmes to be put in place to address their needs.

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's strategic threat assessment considers how the nature of its demand will change over the next few years. This includes areas where changes in other organisations, for example local councils, will affect Thames Valley Police. In some areas the impact will be clear, but in other areas the force is researching how changes to partners' services subject to budgetary cuts will affect its policing.

Thames Valley Police has already started to refine its knowledge of how the nature of demand will change in the future and has started to quantify the increases it expects to see in some areas of protective services such as domestic abuse. The force is aware that this will affect how it allocates its resources and will undertake more detailed research using lean techniques² to identify changing demand at a more detailed level and help it to deploy its resources better.

The force works well with partner organisations at both strategic and tactical levels. There are clear links between the chief constable, local authority chief executives and operational activity such as multi-agency safeguarding hubs.³ These have resulted in stronger joint working in support of victims. The force is aware that reducing partnership resources may affect demand on the force (for instance, reduction in joint-funded police community support officers). There are not, at this stage, any detailed plans in place to deal with this, but the force has commissioned work to consider the impact of diminishing local authority resources.

² LEAN is a technique which reviews business processes and seeks to create more value from services or products using fewer resources and minimising waste.

³ A multi-agency safeguarding hub co-locates safeguarding agencies (for example, social services, youth workers) and their data to help more effective joint working in respect of vulnerable people.

There is some evidence that the force has considered public expectation in respect of changes to how it will service demand. For instance, it has consulted with the public over closures to enquiry offices and the merger of two local policing areas. The force has also carried out an online survey to seek views about the acceptability of providing more services through online services. However, more needs to be done. When changing the way the force manages demand and provides services, it is important that the force builds on this communication to avoid members of the public being disappointed when they don't receive the personal policing response they may have expected or been used to.

Summary of findings



Good

Thames Valley Police has a good understanding of current demand and can demonstrate how it has increased its knowledge and reporting of hidden demand. The force has used the priority-based budgeting process to challenge itself to become more efficient and is anticipating how demand will change. However, it is still developing its understanding of how reductions in the resources available to its partners will affect demand for its services. The force has some appreciation of changing public expectations in relation to the service they receive from the police, but this comes from a limited number of sources.

Area for improvement

- Thames Valley Police should ensure its understanding of the demand for its services, and of the expectations of the public, are up to date by regularly reviewing its evidence base. These reviews should be conducted alongside local authorities, other emergency services and partner organisations, to ensure that the force takes the necessary steps to meet current and likely future demand, including hidden demand.

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

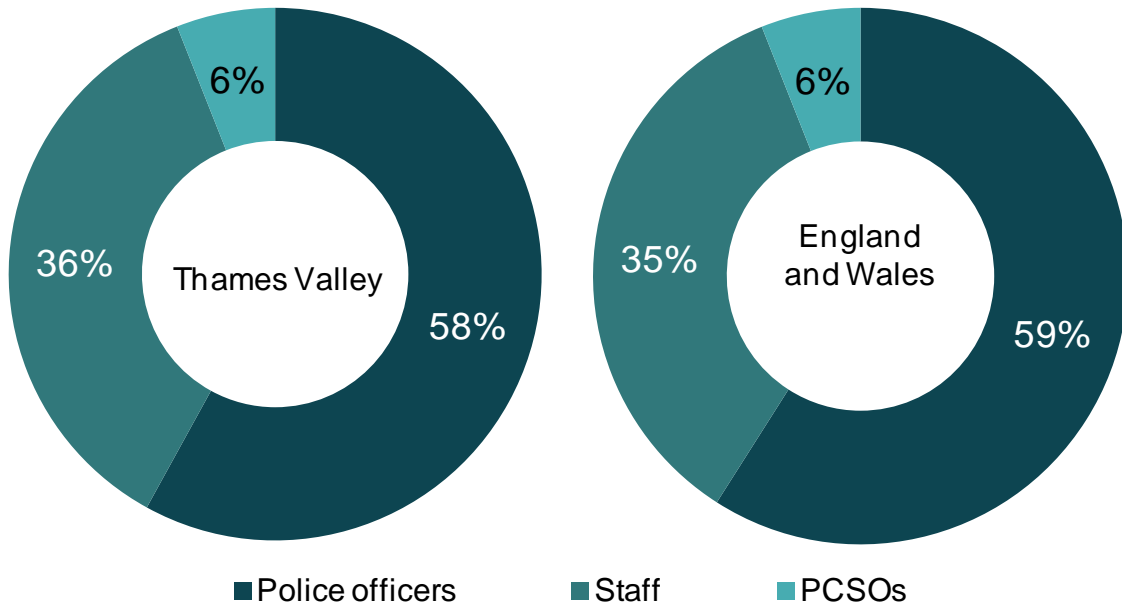
Police forces need to operate in a way that makes the best use of all available resources so that demand is met and public expectations are satisfied. We looked at the extent to which Thames Valley Police has the right people with the right skills in the right place to protect the public and to fight 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 Thames Valley 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 Thames Valley 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 58 percent of Thames Valley Police's workforce. This was broadly in line with the England and Wales average of 59 percent. The proportion of staff in Thames Valley Police was 36 percent, broadly in line with the England and Wales average of 35 percent. The proportion of police community support officers in Thames Valley Police was 6 percent, in line with 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 Thames Valley 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	4,434	-4%	-14%	4,244	-3%	-2%	4,124
Staff	3,000	-12%	-21%	2,632	0%	-5%	2,632
PCSOs	500	-7%	-35%	466	-14%	-6%	403
Workforce total	7,935	-7%	-18%	7,343	-3%	-3%	7,159

Source: HMIC Efficiency data collection

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

Managing demands for police services

Thames Valley Police has systematic processes to match resources to demand. It is managing these processes well. The force has lower levels of crime than the national average; furthermore, public satisfaction with the force and how it provides its services to victims of crime remains generally good. However, the force is not performing as well as it could at keeping victims of crime informed of progress relating to their case.

The priorities of Thames Valley Police are set out in the force delivery plan and correspond with its strategic assessment. The plan is informed by a detailed analysis of the current and future threats facing the force and all organisational activity is linked to one of more of the priorities in the delivery plan.

These priorities form an important part of the priority-based budget process, which includes a detailed analysis of the levels of service and resources for each area of activity. This means that there is a robust process in place to allocate resources; this is underpinned by the force's strategic threat assessment and an understanding of the cost of providing an agreed level of service in each area. The force links its ongoing priorities and the funding it has been allocated to the medium-term financial plan, which is revised and updated as required.

Thames Valley Police also has mature processes in place to align resources with emerging threats and risks if circumstances demand it. A series of regular tasking and co-ordination meetings take place both force-wide and in local policing areas, which ensures that resources can be mobilised to address high levels of crime or

anti-social behaviour in a particular area. The force is able to demonstrate that it prioritises its activities and sets service levels to manage the demand for its services.

During our fieldwork we found that the force has some ability to flex how it matches resources to demand. For instance, it is aware that the level of demand experienced in some of its protective services departments (for example, the investigation of rape, serious sexual offences and domestic abuse) has risen and is projected to continue to rise. This is partly a result of the force's success in ensuring that more victims have the confidence to come forward and report crime. Additional resources have been directed to these areas. We heard from some staff who were positive about the way the force had addressed this issue; however, in other areas, and despite the force's efforts, workload pressures are still evident. The force is working to address this situation.

Increasing efficiency

The force has encapsulated and communicated its overall strategic direction within its 'Our Commitment' programme. This sets out a vision of the force providing effective and efficient services through the use of new technology, a skilled workforce and with the support of community engagement.

The recent priority-based budget (PBB) process involved a systematic analysis of the cost of each policing activity undertaken by the force. This information, along with the force's understanding of demand, was used to develop proposals for its final PBB board. This included a commitment to the quality, timeliness and level of service that would be provided in each area of activity. These commitments made allowances for any anticipated changes to the volume of workload and any opportunities to carry out the activity more efficiently.

The force has considered the levels of service it wishes to provide through its new local policing operating model. As part of this approach, calls from the public will be assessed and when appropriate dealt with over the phone. When this is not possible, the calls will be allocated to the most appropriate officer who will attend. The force believes that this will result in a more efficient service being provided; matters will be resolved either at first point of contact or through contact with the most suitable officer. This aims to provide a better service to victims who have previously been referred to a number of different departments within the force. The force has a well-developed and effective performance management regime; progress against the force's strategic priorities are monitored and reported on regularly. As outlined above, Thames Valley Police has lower levels of crime than the national average and satisfaction levels reported by victims of crime remain high.

Thames Valley Police has a good record of implementing change programmes, having realised over £71m of savings between 2011/12 and 2015/16 through its productivity strategy. Its budget for 2016/17 includes a further £16m of savings,

which will be made through priority-based budgeting and the reinvestment of approximately £6m to support victims and communities.

The force's plans will see the re-deployment of 168 officers into areas of greater need over the next three years and investment in new technology to develop more efficient ways of working and improve the service it provides to the public.

The force has a robust process in place to manage change and ensure that the savings identified are made within agreed timescales. A force change review board, accountable to the force change governance board, which considers all new change proposals, monitors implementation and tracks the realisation of benefits.

Collaborative programmes with Hampshire Constabulary are overseen by the deputy chief constable's board. This reports to an overall governance board consisting of the two chief constables and police and crime commissioners. Through these arrangements, collaborative programmes and the benefits they bring are monitored. Examples include the joint operating unit collaboration, which provides roads policing, dogs, firearms and public order across both Thames Valley and Hampshire policing areas. A review of the unit conducted by the two forces highlighted estimated cost savings of £6m a year.

Thames Valley Police can demonstrate a close understanding of the costs of its functions. For example, the finance and productivity teams last year analysed the cost of certain investigations, particularly those that are likely to take a long time. This has resulted in changes to investigative processes and triage in forensic testing to ensure that benefits and costs are proportionate.

The director of finance maintains close working arrangements with the rest of the force through dedicated business partners; this provides a focus on costs, priorities and demand. For example, the force has reviewed the expenditure associated with investigating missing persons. This has led to new ways of working with those hospitals and children's homes that report a disproportionately high number of missing people. In a separate efficiency drive, the force is working with petrol retailers to reduce the instances of individuals driving away from service stations without paying for fuel. Historically, investigations of these offences have involved a very considerable amount of police time and the focus is now moving to how forecourt operators can prevent this type of crime.

The force has ambitious plans to use ICT to transform how it provides services. Frontline staff are now equipped with smartphones and tablets onto which they can enter data while out on their patrols. This means that more time can be spent in communities rather than having to return to police buildings to report crime and other incidents. The force is starting to see greater efficiencies from this type of mobile working, although it has not yet been formally evaluated. Other ICT change programmes are more ambitious. As part of its collaboration with Hampshire Constabulary, the force is about to implement a new system for joint call handling

that will provide greater resilience at times of peak demand and reduce overhead costs.

Furthermore, for the first time call handlers will have immediate access to all historical information relating to the caller, the venue they are calling from and the type of service they have required before. This will ensure that their needs are more readily understood by call handlers and that the service provided is in line with their immediate circumstances.

These improvements will also provide the users of services provided by Thames Valley Police a greater choice in how to access them. A new customer portal will offer self-service to the public. It will support online crime reporting, automated updates on the progress of investigations and notifications of how cases are concluded.

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 Thames Valley 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

Thames Valley Police has a good understanding of its current workforce skills and gaps in capabilities. Full details of workforce skills are maintained on a database that allows local policing area commanders to monitor skills profiles. Any anticipated shortfall is identified on the database and leads to discussions between the local area and the force HR department. This allows the force to address any shortfall in workforce skills, either through prioritising training courses or through the central allocation of resources if staffing levels fall beneath required levels.

The force's senior team also uses this workforce planning process to make strategic forecasts of workforce capabilities and gaps that take into account emerging crime trends or changes in policing priorities.

For example, the force has put measures in place to address a substantial increase in reported cases of domestic abuse and serious sexual offences by increasing the number of specialist detectives. Similarly, the workforce skills requirement is changing to confront the new challenges of cyber-crime and to increase the number of firearms officers needed to counter the heightened threat of terrorism.

Tackling workforce gaps

The force has a good system in place through which it identifies and addresses gaps in capability. The system is generally effective. Once a capability gap is identified, it will be considered by the force's strategic resourcing group, which will either prioritise training or allocate additional resources. In respect of the specific capability shortfalls in cyber skills, protecting vulnerable people (requiring specialist skills relating to crimes associated with the most vulnerable victims; for example, rape or child abuse) and firearms officers, the force is taking the following actions:

- investing in training to develop its approach to safeguarding, vulnerability and exploitation. This is based on the findings and recommendations of internal management reviews, serious case reviews and other national developments.
- providing specialist training to detectives to improve the force's capability to fight certain types of crime that occur in the Thames Valley area; for example, so-called honour-based violence and abuse. A number of officers have been trained in cyber-crime investigation. These officers also form part of a force-wide network and act as single points of contact to support local officers who are investigating internet-based crime.
- collaborating with Hampshire Constabulary to boost the number of firearms officers available, through a series of joint recruitment and training programmes.

The force recognises that it has ongoing risks in relation to recruitment and retention of staff in specialist areas. A strategic review group led by a chief officer has been set up; this ensures that staffing levels in priority areas are maintained and that recruitment policy is focused on ensuring that principal areas of activity have sufficient resources to cope with future change.

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

We assessed how well Thames Valley 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 better meet demand for its services.

Thames Valley Police has a long-standing commitment to collaboration and has developed a number of significant collaborative programmes with its neighbour, Hampshire Constabulary. It shares two chief officer posts with Hampshire Constabulary and has increased the scope of the programme to incorporate ICT and contact management in addition to specialist policing services. Further opportunities are being explored with Hampshire Constabulary and other regional forces.

The force works well operationally with other public sector organisations, including the fire and rescue service. There is a memorandum of understanding in place with the ambulance service in connection with some areas of shared work. In addition, the force provides services to vulnerable people in collaboration with other partners as part of co-located multi-agency safeguarding teams. However, the force considers that the complexity of its local authority landscape makes it difficult to establish force-wide collaboration with local councils. Thames Valley covers a large and diverse geographical area, which encompasses numerous different county, unitary and district councils. As a consequence, it regards its first choice partners for joint ventures to be other police forces in the region.

Collaboration benefits

We found significant evidence that collaboration and partnering by Thames Valley Police has reduced costs and improved services. The joint operation unit (incorporating specialist policing services; for example, firearms, dog support) with Hampshire Constabulary, which is led by a chief officer, has realised savings of £6m a year. ICT collaboration, which is also led by single chief officer, has brought together investment from both forces for a single contact centre platform and a single ICT help desk. It is also enabling a planned joint command and control system and customer portal. The force is the lead member of the Chiltern Transport Consortium, which manages the vehicle fleets of Bedfordshire Police, Hertfordshire Constabulary, the Civil Nuclear Constabulary and Thames Valley Police. This provides the opportunity for the force to benefit from access to a greater range of contracts and economies of scale in fleet management.

The force is also working well with other agencies to help manage demand more effectively. We set out below some examples of progress and promising practice in this regard.

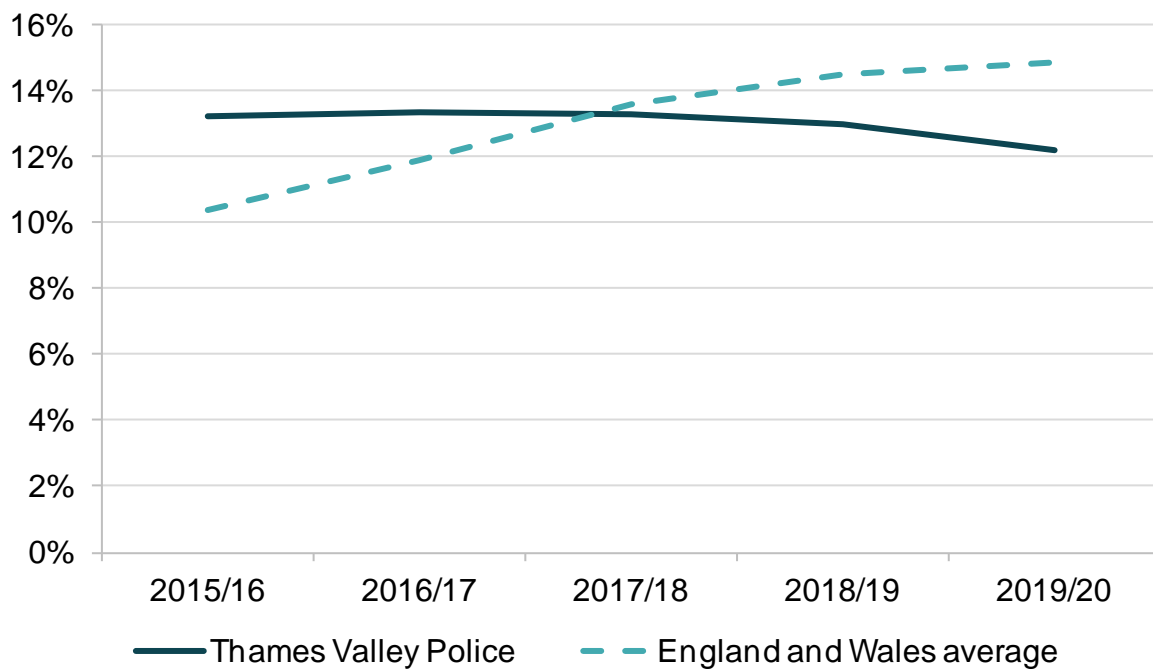
The force is collaborating with the fire and rescue service to reduce costs. The force signed a memorandum of understanding in July 2015 and this is leading to progress on estates collaboration, particularly in Berkshire and Buckinghamshire. Training on procedures to be followed when visiting homes if calls have been made expressing concern for people's welfare is now provided jointly to the police and fire service. This means that frontline staff from either the police or the fire service can manage this type of incident. This reduces duplication of effort and unnecessary deployments.

The force is developing protocols with partner agencies to agree which organisation should accept primacy for certain types of calls for service. For example, better working relationships with residential care homes for children is reducing unnecessary attendances by police officers when children are reported as missing.

The force has a well-regarded mental health triage scheme that is due to be extended. This involves psychiatric nurses working alongside frontline police staff to provide more direct access to appropriate services for those with mental health problems. Historically a considerable amount of police time has been spent co-ordinating the activity of other organisations to find the right medical care. The triage scheme now means that police involvement is restricted to those occasions when it is absolutely essential; it also ensures that immediate care is available to the most vulnerable.

The force has collaborated extensively with local partners in the use of buildings and premises. It currently has about 50 locations where it shares space with the fire and rescue service, a local authority, charitable organisations or as part of a multi-agency collaboration. A number of additional proposals to share buildings with other organisations are being considered in the interests of efficiencies and savings.

Figure 5: Projected percentage of net revenue expenditure in Thames Valley 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

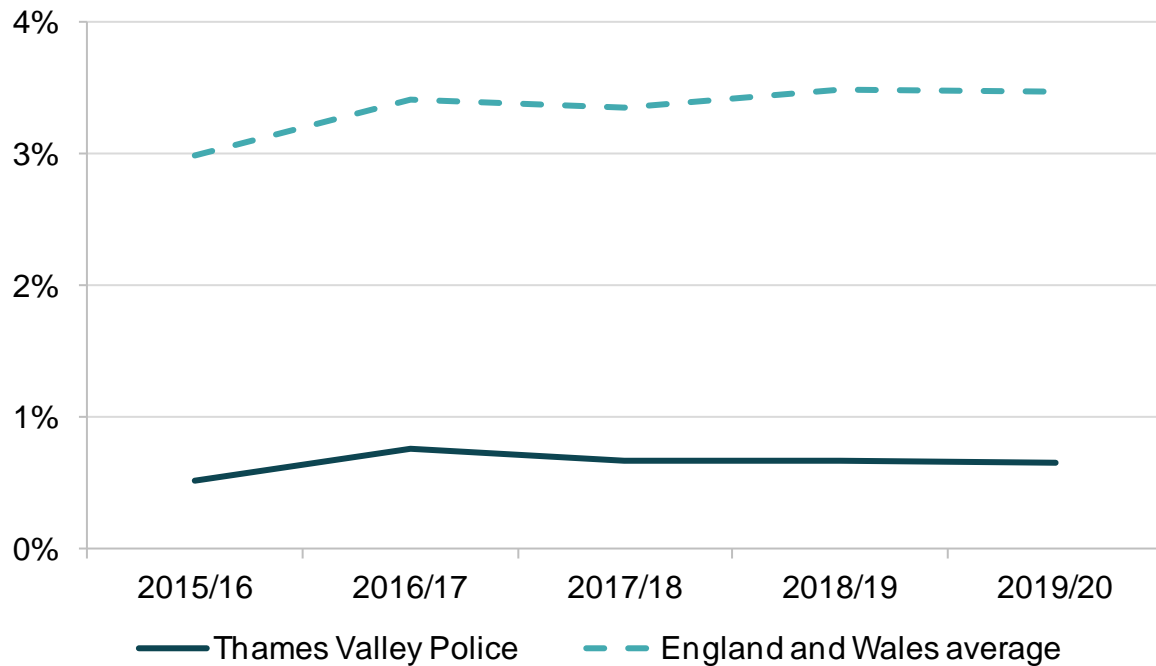


Source: HMIC Efficiency data collection

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

Thames Valley Police has forecast that it will spend £49.5m in 2016/17 on collaboration with other police forces. This is 13.4 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 £46.6m (12.2 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 Thames Valley 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

Thames Valley Police has forecast that it will spend £2.8m in 2016/17 on collaboration with non-police organisations. This is 0.8 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 £2.5m (0.7 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.

Thames Valley Police can provide some information to demonstrate how it has used investment to make savings; the force is well placed to calculate anticipated savings from current and future investments in ICT.

The main investment relates to the implementation of a shared contact centre with Hampshire Constabulary, which is scheduled to realise recurring savings of £5m a year. Ancillary projects include investment in software both to assist investigations and to improve the way the force polices demonstrations and other large events.

Many investigations are becoming increasingly reliant on securing evidence from computers, mobile phones and tablets. Historically, forensic examination of these devices has been time-consuming and led to investigations being unnecessarily protracted. The force has invested in new software that allows investigators to download digital evidence, which has speeded up investigations and ensures a better service is provided to victims.

In another programme, the force has invested in software that helps plan the number of officers necessary to police demonstrations and other events such as football matches and festivals. It is anticipated that this will bring more accuracy to event planning to ensure that police resources are better matched to the needs of the particular occasion.

Additionally, the force has made savings by investing in its own in-house legal service, thereby reducing the reliance on external law firms. This has reduced costs and improved the service provided.

The force has a strong track record in implementing changes and savings with the current priority-based budget process. Budgeting is subject to ongoing monitoring to ensure that the changes and savings are realised within agreed timescales.

The force can demonstrate that it takes some steps to review the impact of change on service provision. Internally, the change team has programme and project support managers to help operational staff understand the consequences of change.

For example, change support managers have undertaken research to establish the impact of the closure of some counter services in police stations. The closure of front counter services can be controversial and lead to criticism of a force, In Thames Valley, HMIC found that change managers had carefully monitored the preparation for closure and monitored the post-closure impact. This ensured that there was no adverse reaction in local communities affected by the closures.

Summary of findings



Good

Thames Valley Police makes good use of its resources to manage current demand. The force's method of setting priorities and directing resources is established and well-understood. It is based on a sound understanding of strategic threats and risks and good use of priority-based budgeting to align resources with the areas of greatest need. Among other measures to further improve this situation is the introduction of a customer services portal in the force's contact centre, designed to improve public access as well as manage demand in the contact centre.

The force can demonstrate a well-developed understanding of the costs of its services and workforce skills, and it also has a sound method through which gaps in the workforce can be identified and addressed. The force has a good track record of joint working with other police forces and works well in partnership with other agencies, including the numerous county, unitary and district councils across Thames Valley.

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 Thames Valley Polices 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 Thames Valley 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

The force's projected workforce model and planned use of assets match its organisational priorities and financial requirements. Its productivity strategy and priority-based budget approach is used to identify savings through changes in service provision. These drive the planned reduction in workforce numbers over the period to 2020, which has been arrived at on the basis of the force's assumptions about future funding.

The force has already started to adjust its workforce mix on the basis of its current understanding of future demand. It projects that during this financial year 87 officers will be redeployed to priority areas and an increased use will be made of police staff as accredited investigators instead of detectives. The force accepts that it does not yet have a comprehensive and detailed picture of exactly what future demand will look like and more work needs to be done in this area. Nevertheless, it anticipates that its proposed investment will allow it to prioritise relevant training and the allocation of resources.

The force has already started to shape the workforce towards some of the areas of growing demand and strategic priorities. For example, an enhanced programme of

safeguarding, vulnerability and exploitation (SaVE) training is in place to increase the capability of its workforce to support vulnerable victims. Another example is the development of the cyber-crime champions network to help frontline staff with investigations that rely on digital evidence.

Investing in ICT

Thames Valley Police has ambitious and transformational plans to use ICT more effectively in collaboration with Hampshire Constabulary. A nominated chief officer leads this programme in both forces and has significant influence on the overall strategic approach.

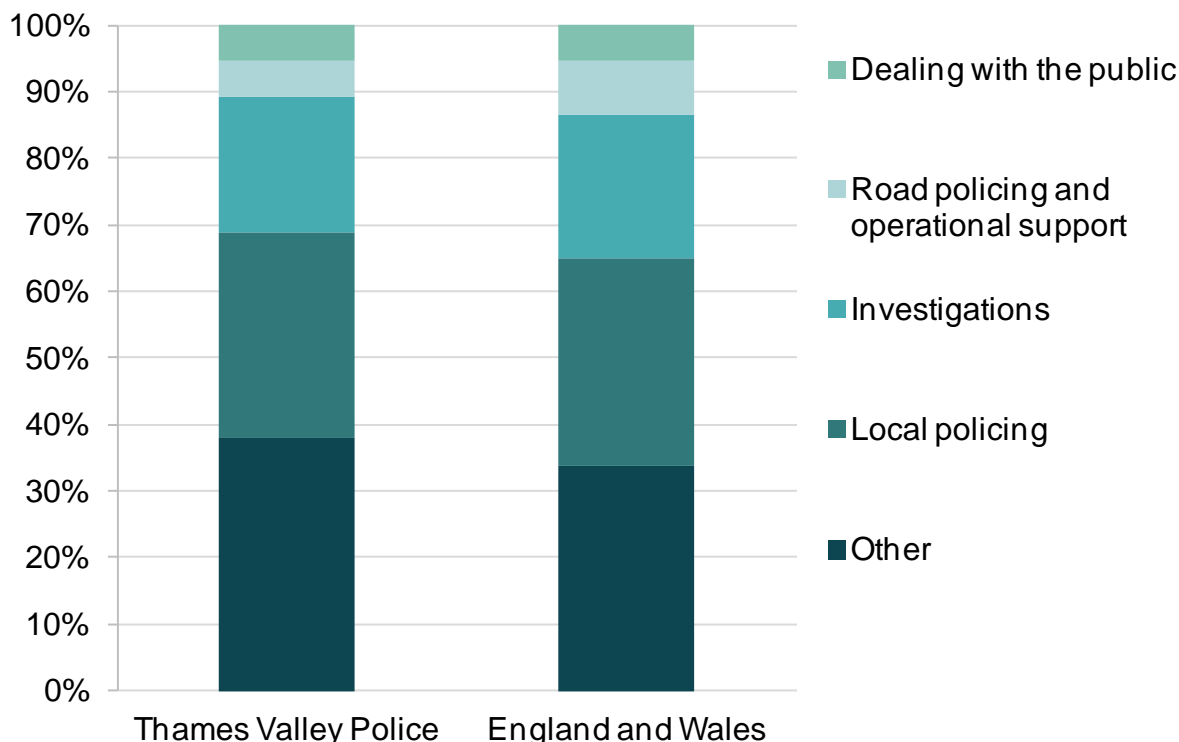
Evidence of progress that the force has made towards doing things more efficiently and improving services through ICT include:

- providing 380 body-worn video cameras to staff, with plans to increase the numbers by the end of the year.
- upgrading its IT network capacity to support plans for digital case files.
- providing smart phones and tablets to frontline staff to enable them to work more efficiently.
- an ambitious joint project with Hampshire Constabulary to develop a new contact management programme.
- plans to collaborate back office functions with Surrey Police and Sussex Police through a commercial software programme.
- work the force is doing on a number of upgrades to its ICT systems, including telematics for its vehicle fleet, internet-to-voice systems and upgrades to its records management system.

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 Thames Valley 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 Thames Valley 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

The force’s change and investment plans are rational and based on sound information, including advice provided by experts. The force has a good track record of making savings, initially through its productivity strategy and more recently through the priority-based budget process. Both form part of a robust change management process.

The force’s financial plans are prudent and its projected organisational size and shape can be achieved within the funding available. The force has not hesitated to secure external expertise to improve financial planning and efficiency. For instance, a benchmarking exercise in non-pay expenditure on estate management and evidential storage has identified that other forces perform better in this area. Thames Valley Police has recently engaged consultants to review current practices who have completed a report identifying three options for the future.

The force also brings in external support from business partners for ICT projects, particularly to assure plans for technical viability and value. To further assure the ICT programme, Thames Valley Police also takes a structured approach to ensuring user acceptance of any new technology. The force consults widely with operational

practitioners to ensure that developments are fit for purpose. Furthermore, the force seeks the views of the public on these developments from an independent advisory group.

The force has effective financial oversight arrangements through the joint independent audit committee. This committee is made up of lay members and provides independent assurance to the police and crime commissioner and the chief constable. It has a particular remit to assess the adequacy of the force's risk management framework and the associated control environment. HMIC found that the chair and the members are well informed and also provide challenge to the police and crime commissioner and the chief officers about progress and risks in a number of areas. This means that the force's spending plans in significant areas, for example ICT, are subject to external checks to challenge their credibility.

Planning for the future

The force's financial plans are practical and credible and should achieve comprehensive change and savings. The force's medium-term financial plan for the period to 2019/20 includes plans for £36m of savings. It has a strong track record in meeting its savings requirements. It also has a clear and systematic approach to ensure that financial and organisational plans are aligned and based on good understanding of data.

The force understands its financial risks and has plans in place to address most of them. The exception to this is the likely adverse changes to its future income from government grant, through the proposed revision of the police funding formula. The police funding formula is set nationally by central government and proposed changes mean that some forces, including Thames Valley Police, stand to receive less funding. These changes are not currently modelled in the medium-term financial plan because the final proposal is still awaited. As an interim measure, a contingency plan will be developed to ensure the force's future financial planning remains strong.

Thames Valley Police has used priority-based budgeting to review budgets and identify opportunities for efficiency savings. This has been a main tool for making austerity savings over recent years. Eighty percent of the force's budget has been reviewed to date. Those remaining to be examined relate to services provided in collaboration with other forces and they will be reviewed in due course. The approach taken is to challenge spending and ask the question "is that delivering what we need; is there a better way of doing this?" This enables resources to be redirected to priority areas; for example, multi-agency safeguarding hubs, domestic abuse and child abuse.

The force is working in collaboration with Hampshire Constabulary to transform how the public contact the police and how both forces can provide some services through better use of IT. The force's plans are innovative, achievable and well developed. Both forces share a single IT lead and are in the process of merging the contact

management departments. Currently, they are working with an external business partner to enhance the way the public can report crime and provide additional information that the police have asked for. Analysis conducted by the force over a three-day period demonstrated that approximately 30 percent of calls received were to provide or request updates. As a consequence of this, many of these calls will shift to online reporting, allowing the force to work more efficiently and to provide a better service to the public.

To what extent does the force fund its investments sustainably?

Police forces have made significant 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

Thames Valley Police has a well-developed medium-term financial strategy that brings together workforce planning and financial projections. The medium-term financial plan for revenue is balanced for the period to 2020 and identifies planned savings, committed expenditure, areas for reinvestment and workforce adjustments.

The force has well developed plans through which it has identified further savings to be made in order to balance its budget and provide for a programme of investment into areas of higher priority.

It has projected savings of a further £36m between 2016/2017 and 2019/2020; the force plans that £22m will be re-invested to improve technology or to re-shape the way the workforce is deployed.

The police and crime commissioner and the force have a sound approach to managing reserves; the policy is to maintain general balances around a guideline level of 3 percent of the annual net revenue expenditure budget, with an absolute minimum level of 2.5 percent. As at 31 March 2016, unallocated reserves were £16.4m, which equated to 4.4 percent of the net revenue budget in 2016/17. Over the next four years the estimated level is projected to fall to £15.9m by 31 March 2020, which equates to 4.2 percent.

Working together to improve future efficiency

Working with others to further improve efficiency is at the heart of the force's ICT strategy. It has ambitions for cross-regional collaboration with Hampshire Constabulary, Surrey Police and Sussex Police with the ultimate aim of ensuring, as far as possible, that the business of policing is done only once and on common systems. Progress includes:

- establishing a southeast regional practitioners network;
- a plan for a shared chief technology officer for the four forces (already a shared role for Thames Valley Police and Hampshire Constabulary); and
- common project management rules.

The force is consolidating contracts with other forces in the interest of efficiency. A good example is the convergence of its existing contract for the use of ICT devices with the corresponding contract used by Surrey Police and Sussex Police. This will facilitate greater economies of scale and allow additional forces to join into these contractual arrangements in the future.

The force constantly researches technological and organisational improvements to ensure that future collaborative programmes realise maximum benefits. For example, a common system across forces is being sought for new digital media storage and negotiations are in place for a single force to take primacy for forensics in the region.

The force is pursuing further opportunities to work jointly with Sussex Police and Surrey Police to replace existing HR and finance systems, including duties management. The system will also provide greater automation of transactional services. The investment in the new system is anticipated by the force to release £1.5m in savings per year and will be implemented in June 2018.

Summary of findings



Good

Thames Valley Police is good at planning for demand in the future. Its plans are solid and the force has made good use of information to project future demand. It has a comprehensive and shared ICT strategy, which has been informed by experts and is subject to ongoing scrutiny through the force audit committee. Priority-based budgeting has allowed the force to identify how to work more efficiently.

The force's future plans are ambitious and realistic. However, it is not yet able to demonstrate all of the anticipated savings it aims to secure through investing in ICT.

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