

PEEL: Police effectiveness 2015

An inspection of Cheshire Constabulary



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

Overall judgment¹



Good

Cheshire Constabulary is good at keeping people safe and reducing crime. The constabulary uses priority-based budgeting effectively to support its priorities and preventing crime and anti-social behaviour is its highest priority. It works well to protect and support vulnerable² victims. The constabulary has the necessary arrangements in place to ensure that it can fulfil its national policing responsibilities but it needs to do more to improve its arrangements to tackle serious and organised crime. This is the first year HMIC has graded forces on their overall effectiveness so a year-on-year comparison is not possible.

Summary

Cheshire Constabulary is good at keeping people safe and reducing crime. The constabulary is strongly committed to preventing crime and anti-social behaviour and making a difference for communities. Its informed decision-making means that it allocates resources to reflect this commitment absolutely and staff understand that the prevention of crime and anti-social behaviour is a priority. Staff use a range of tactics and work well with other organisations to solve problems in neighbourhoods, including intervening early to stop them from escalating.

When a crime has occurred, the constabulary carries out high-quality investigations. It has invested significantly in training staff, including special constables, in investigation skills and file preparation. Serious crimes such as rape are investigated to a very high standard. The force works well with other agencies to identify, investigate and bring to justice repeat and dangerous offenders and to stop them re-offending.

Cheshire Constabulary is effective in identifying at an early stage those victims who may be vulnerable and investigates crimes against vulnerable victims thoroughly. The constabulary responds effectively to reports of children who have gone missing and has made a good start at ensuring it is prepared to tackle the threat posed by the sexual exploitation of children. It provides an effective response to victims of

¹ Outstanding, Good, Requires improvement or Inadequate – see Annex A of report for definitions.

² A vulnerable person is someone who is in need of special care, support, or protection because of age, disability, or risk of abuse or neglect.

domestic abuse, securing specialist support in appropriate cases and ensuring the victim's safety is the priority.

Cheshire Constabulary has a good understanding of the threat posed by serious and organised crime. It regularly monitors the activity of organised crime groups and has good relationships with regional and national bodies, which can provide specialist skills and resources. However, the intelligence function needs to improve, and the knowledge and awareness of local officers about locally based information is inconsistent.

The constabulary has appropriate arrangements in place to ensure that it can respond to national threats.

How effective is the force at preventing crime and anti-social behaviour, and keeping people safe?



Outstanding

Cheshire Constabulary is outstanding at preventing crime and anti-social behaviour and keeping people safe.

The constabulary has used priority-based budgeting to help it make informed decisions about the allocation of resources to support its priorities.

The constabulary has made preventing crime and anti-social behaviour its highest priority and this is clearly and consistently understood by officers and staff throughout the organisation.

The constabulary is making good use of a broad range of tactics to prevent crime and anti-social behaviour. HMIC found good evidence of the constabulary's use of specific powers to tackle anti-social behaviour.

The constabulary has effective information-sharing protocols with a wide range of partners. The constabulary's

How effective is the force at investigating crime and managing offenders?



Good

Cheshire Constabulary has a clear framework for allocating crime investigations, ensuring that crimes are investigated by officers with the appropriate knowledge and skills.

Response, neighbourhood and detective investigators work well together and staff are used flexibly to meet demand.

By the end of 2015-16, the constabulary plans to have delivered classroom-based training to all frontline officers in the quality of investigation and file preparation. It is also starting to train volunteer special constables, to equip them to work alongside regular officers in the custody investigation team.

Cheshire Constabulary investigates serious crime to a very high standard. This is particularly evident in investigations conducted by staff in the dedicated rape unit.

strategic threat and risk assessment uses a wide range of partner data, helping the force to generate a fuller understanding of the environment in which it operates.

HMIC found strong evidence that the constabulary is firmly committed to working with a wide variety of partners to keep people safe and tackle local problems of crime and anti-social behaviour.

The paedophile and cyber investigation team has successfully eliminated the backlog in computer examination. Working methods are cost effective, provide effective prioritisation of investigations, help to bring offenders to justice more quickly and reduce the potential harm to the public.

Cheshire Constabulary effectively identifies offenders and appropriately diverts them away from crime and anti-social behaviour. It has effectively integrated its offender management programme, Navigate, with its new model of local policing. The constabulary has effective ways of identifying and monitoring sexual and other dangerous offenders.

How effective is the force at protecting from harm those who are vulnerable, and supporting victims?



Good

Cheshire Constabulary is good at protecting from harm those who are vulnerable and supporting victims.

The chief officer team provides strong leadership and clear direction to officers and staff. The constabulary has responded well to the recommendations made by HMIC in its inspection reports. It is good at identifying those who are vulnerable at an early stage. The constabulary investigates crimes

How effective is the force at tackling serious and organised crime, including its arrangements for fulfilling its national policing responsibilities?



Requires improvement

Cheshire Constabulary has a good understanding of the overall threat posed by serious and organised crime. It has produced a comprehensive profile of serious and organised crime, which outlines the level and type of threat that exists within the force area. However, more could be done with the inclusion of partner information.

The capability of the intelligence function needs to improve within the

committed against the most vulnerable victims well, assigning the right people with the right skills and experience to deal with the complexity of such investigations.

The constabulary has clear and structured processes for responding when children are reported missing or absent. The constabulary's investigations into missing children are well-supervised and it works well with partners to keep these children safe.

The constabulary has made a good start in ensuring it is well prepared to tackle child sexual exploitation. With the four local safeguarding children boards, it has agreed a pan-Cheshire child sexual exploitation plan, supported by a shared multi-agency child sexual exploitation screening tool. The constabulary's Know and See campaign to raise awareness of child sexual exploitation and provide information and training to a range of partners including parents and children is proving effective.

Cheshire Constabulary provides a good response to victims of domestic abuse and has immediate options available to keep the victim safe and obtain specialist advice.

constabulary's new arrangements. The knowledge and awareness among local officers about locally based information is inconsistent.

The constabulary has effective relationships with the regional organised crime unit and the National Crime Agency. HMIC found good evidence of partners being involved and engaged in the planning, investigation and disruption of serious and organised crime groups.

The constabulary routinely looks to publicise successful prosecution outcomes involving organised crime groups through use of local and national media and its own website.

Cheshire Constabulary has the necessary arrangements in place to ensure that it can fulfil its national policing responsibilities.

This is the first year HMIC has graded forces on their effectiveness at tackling serious and organised crime, including a force's arrangements for fulfilling its national policing responsibilities, so no year-on-year comparison is possible.

Force in numbers



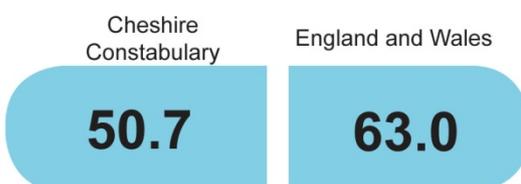
Calls for assistance

Calls for assistance per 1,000 population 12 months to 31 March 2015

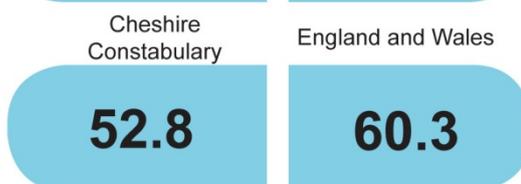


Crime

Crimes recorded (excluding fraud) per 1,000 population 12 months to 30 June 2015



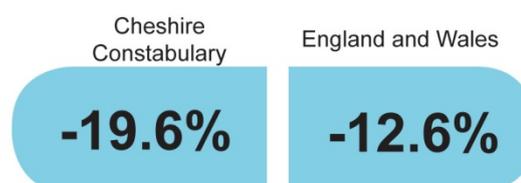
Crimes recorded (excluding fraud) per 1,000 population 12 months to 30 June 2014



Changes in recorded crime (excluding fraud) 12 months to 30 June 2014 against 12 months to 30 June 2015

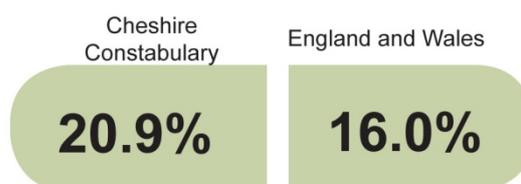


Changes in recorded crime (excluding fraud) 12 months to 30 June 2010 against 12 months to 30 June 2015



Charge rate

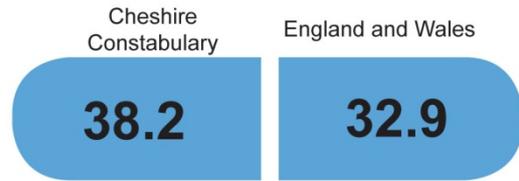
Charge rate as a percentage of all crimes recorded (excluding fraud) 12 months to 30 June 2015





Anti-social behaviour

Anti-social behaviour incidents per 1,000 population 12 months to 30 June 2015



Anti-social behaviour incidents per 1,000 population 12 months to 30 June 2014



Domestic abuse

Domestic abuse as a percentage of all recorded crime (excluding fraud) 12 months to 31 March 2015



Domestic abuse as a percentage of all recorded crime (excluding fraud) 12 months to 31 March 2014



Organised crime groups

Organised crime groups per million population as at 30 June 2015



Victim satisfaction rate

Victim satisfaction rate 12 months to 31 March 2015



Introduction

The public expects their local police force to:

- Prevent crime and anti-social behaviour and, when crime occurs, to investigate it properly and provide support to victims.
- Use appropriately trained officers and staff and approved practice when investigating crime, gathering evidence and building cases to ensure offenders are brought to justice.
- Support victims of crime by responding to calls for service, identifying and putting in place the right help at the first point of contact, keeping them informed and consulting them about the possible outcomes of their case.
- Ensure that vulnerable people who might not have been a victim of crime are identified and given appropriate support, for example, people at risk of domestic abuse, children at risk of sexual exploitation and missing or absent children.
- Understand and be prepared to respond to threats beyond their own force boundaries, including national threats such as terrorism, serious and organised crime and cyber-crime.
- Work effectively with local partner organisations and other bodies to prevent all types of crime and re-offending and to protect the public.

HMIC's annual inspections into police effectiveness, efficiency and legitimacy (PEEL) consider whether forces keep people safe and reduce crime (how effective a force is), whether these activities are being carried out at the most appropriate cost (how efficient a force is), and how forces are ensuring they have the confidence of their communities (the public legitimacy of a force).

All forces are subject to significant cost reductions; this is reflected in our efficiency reports published in October 2015. The judgments we are making in this effectiveness report are made understanding the financial challenges forces are facing. Reports on the efficiency and legitimacy of Cheshire Constabulary are available from the HMIC website (www.justiceinspectors.gov.uk/hmic/).

HMIC's effectiveness inspections make an assessment of how well forces are preventing and investigating crime and anti-social behaviour; tackling serious and organised crime; and protecting victims and those who are vulnerable. These are the most important responsibilities for a police force, and are the principal measures by which the public will judge the performance of their force and policing as a whole.

Our effectiveness inspection focused on the overall question: "How effective is the force at keeping people safe and reducing crime?"

To answer this question we looked at four in-depth questions, three of which are discussed in more detail within this report:³

1. How effective is the force at preventing crime and anti-social behaviour, and keeping people safe?
2. How effective is the force at investigating crime and managing offenders?
3. How effective is the force at protecting from harm those who are vulnerable, and supporting victims?
4. How effective is the force at tackling serious and organised crime, including its arrangements for fulfilling its national policing responsibilities?

During our inspection, we collected data from forces, reviewed case files and surveyed the public to seek their views on the effectiveness of the force. We also surveyed and interviewed representatives from partner organisations to gather evidence about the effectiveness of their working relationships with the force. We interviewed chief constables and chief officers and held focus groups of officers and staff at all grades and ranks. We also made numerous unannounced visits to police stations to talk to frontline officers and staff about their work. This report sets out the findings from this wide-ranging inspection of Cheshire Constabulary.

³ HMIC inspected forces on questions 1, 2 and 4 between September and November 2015. Question 3 was inspected between June and August 2015, and a separate report was published in December 2015 (available from: www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmic/publications/police-effectiveness-vulnerability-2015-cheshire/) In 2014, in preparation for the PEEL programme, forces were inspected to assess how effective they are at cutting crime (available from: www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmic/publications/crime-inspection-force-reports/).

How effective is the force at preventing crime and anti-social behaviour, and keeping people safe?

The police's ability to prevent crime and anti-social behaviour and to keep people safe is a principal measure of its effectiveness. Crime prevention can be cheaper and more effective than investigating crime, and it makes society a safer place. The police cannot prevent crime on their own; other statutory and non-statutory bodies have a vital role to play. Police effectiveness in this matter is therefore dependent on their ability to work closely with other partner organisations to understand local problems and have access to a wide range of evidence-based interventions to resolve them.

How much crime and anti-social behaviour is there in Cheshire?

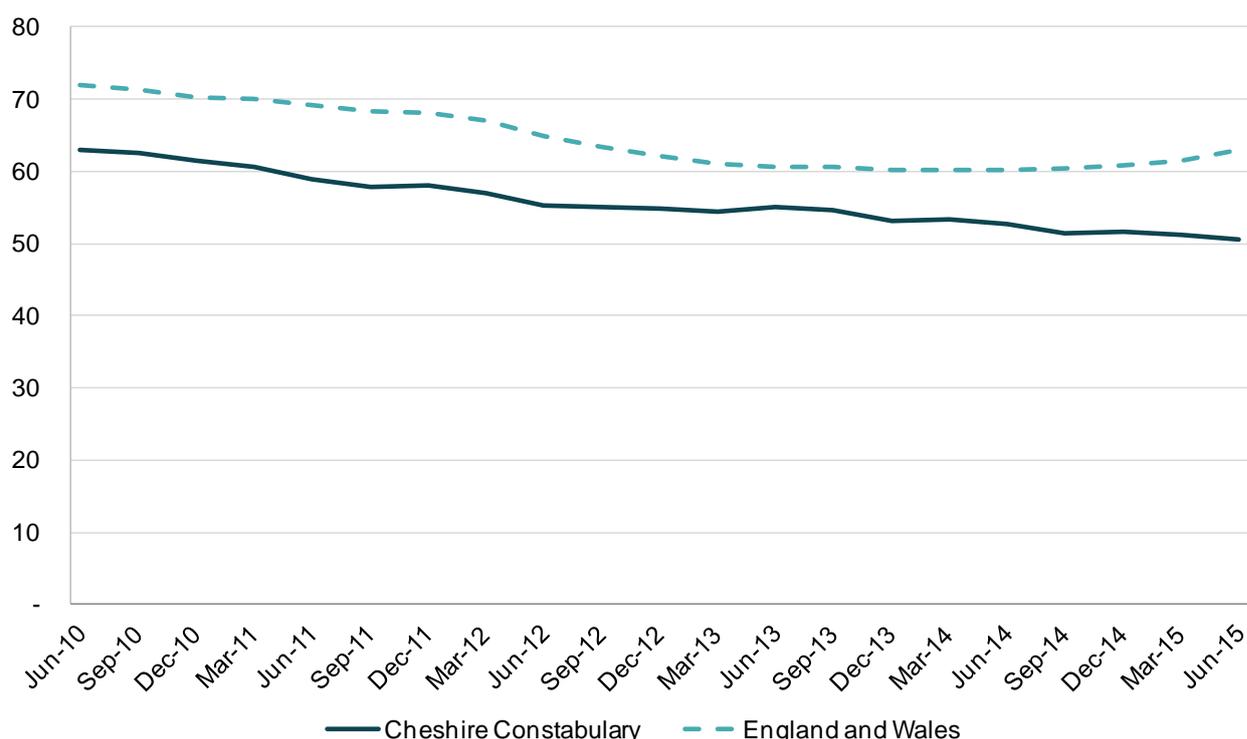
Although police recorded crime is by no means a complete measure of the totality of demand for calls on its service that a force faces, it does provide a comparable indication of performance across all forces. Crime rates are reported as a number of crimes per 1,000 population in each force area to enable comparison between areas. Total recorded crime is made up of victim-based crime (e.g., theft) and non victim-based crime (e.g., possession of drugs). More than two-thirds of forces showed an annual increase in total police recorded crime (excluding fraud) in the 12 months to 30 June 2015. This increase in police recorded crime may have been affected by the renewed focus on the quality and compliance of crime recording since HMIC's national inspection of crime data in 2014.

In 2010 the Home Secretary set a clear priority for the police service to cut crime. When compared with the 12 months to 30 June 2010, police recorded crime (excluding fraud) for the 12 months to 30 June 2015 fell by 20 percent in Cheshire compared with a reduction of 13 percent across all forces in England and Wales.

Over this same period, victim-based crime (i.e., crimes where there is a direct victim such as an individual, a group, or an organisation) decreased by 21 percent in Cheshire, compared with a reduction of 12 percent across England and Wales.

When compared with the previous year, police recorded crime (excluding fraud) in Cheshire decreased by 4 percent for the 12 months to 30 June 2015. This is compared with an increase of 4 percent across England and Wales over the same period.

Figure 1: Police recorded crime rates (per 1,000 population) for the five year period to 30 June 2015



Source: Home Office data

The volume of police recorded crimes and incidents of anti-social behaviour per head of population indicates how safe it is for the public in that police area. Figure 2 shows crime and anti-social behaviour rates in Cheshire (per 1,000 population) compared with England and Wales.

Figure 2: Police recorded crime rates (per 1,000 population) for the 12 months to 30 June 2015

Rates per 1,000 population	Cheshire Constabulary	England and Wales
Recorded crime (excluding fraud)	50.7	63.0
Victim-based crime	44.6	56.0
Sexual offences	1.2	1.6
Assault with injury	5.0	6.3
Burglary in a dwelling*	5.4	8.4
Anti-social behaviour incidents*	38.2	32.9

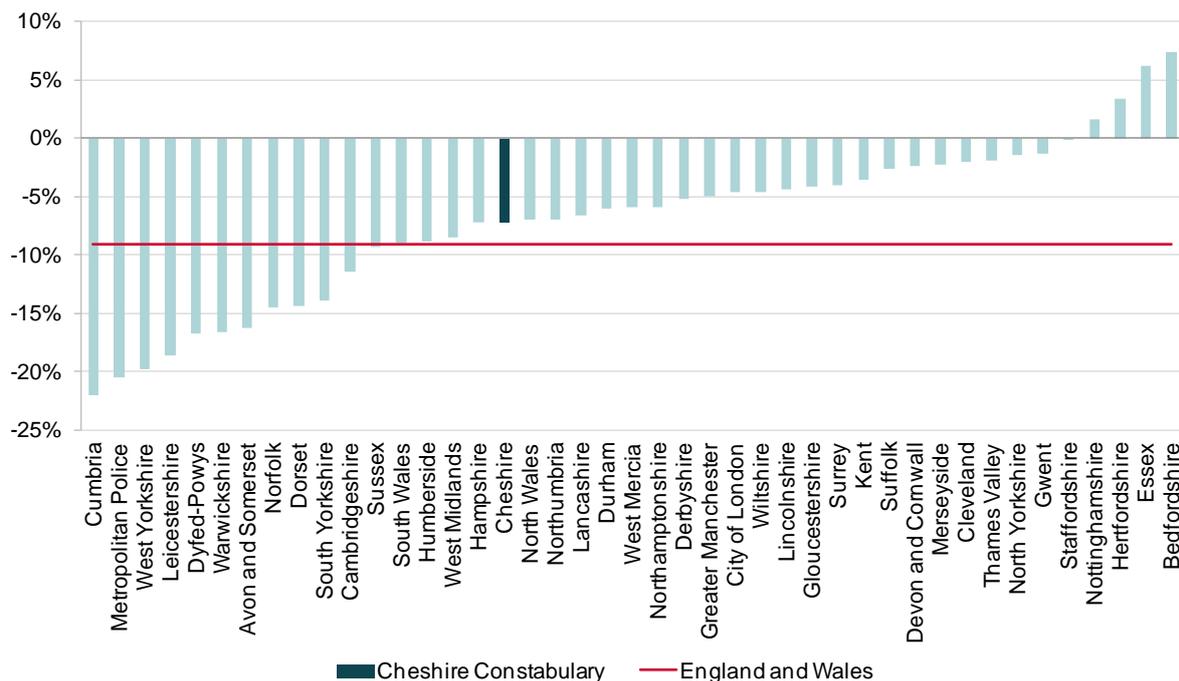
Source: Home Office data, HMIC data return

*Anti-social behaviour data is from the constabulary's data return and the rate for burglary in a dwelling is the rate per 1,000 households, not population.

HMIC has chosen these types of crime to indicate offending levels in the constabulary area. We are not judging the effectiveness of the constabulary on police recorded crime rates only.

In the 12 months to 30 June 2015, Cheshire Constabulary recorded 39,708 incidents of anti-social behaviour. This is 7 percent fewer incidents than the constabulary recorded during the previous 12 months. When considering all forces across England and Wales, there were 9 percent fewer incidents in the 12 months to 30 June 2015, than recorded during the previous 12 months.

Figure 3: Percentage change in the volume of anti-social behaviour incidents, by force, comparing the 12 months to 30 June 2015 with the 12 months to 30 June 2014



Source: HMIC data collection

How well does the force work to prevent crime and anti-social behaviour, and keep people safe?

How well is the force prioritising the prevention of crime and anti-social behaviour?

The first priority in the Cheshire police and crime plan⁴ is to enhance frontline policing to help the constabulary to prevent and reduce crime. This objective is supported in the force’s control strategy,⁵ which identifies 12 operational priorities

⁴ *Police and crime plan 2015-16*, Police and Crime Commissioner for Cheshire, 2014. Available from: www.cheshire-pcc.gov.uk/Document-Library/Police--Crime-Plans/Police-and-Crime-Plan-2015-16.pdf

⁵ The control strategy sets out and communicates the operational priorities for the force or command area and sets the longer-term priorities for crime prevention, intelligence and enforcement.

including anti-social behaviour, serious acquisitive crime, violence and victims. The control strategy highlights prevention as a key theme which in turn drives activity across each of the 12 operational priorities.

Cheshire Constabulary has prioritised the reduction of crime and anti-social behaviour. It has developed a crime prevention strategy which seeks to reduce crime and tackle local problems by working in partnership with others. The crime prevention strategy focuses on what it calls the four 'Ps' – people, places, property, and problems.

HMIC found strong evidence that this strategic approach is well understood throughout the organisation and that the prevention of crime and anti-social behaviour is seen by staff as being everyone's business.

How well are resources allocated to prevent crime and anti-social behaviour?

The constabulary recognises the importance of a neighbourhood-based policing model in preventing crime and anti-social behaviour and allocates its resources accordingly.

In July 2015, the constabulary introduced a new way of working, its new operating or policing model, which involved a fundamental restructure and the reallocation of resources. Local policing is now provided from eight local policing units. These are aligned to local authority boundaries, and involve neighbourhood, response and investigative staff working closely together under local line management. These local units are supported by specialist staff who work across the force area.

The constabulary determined the allocation of resources to the new policing model by applying a priority-based budgeting process. This involved identifying existing demand, resource levels, service levels, and assessing future demand and then identifying potential levels of service that could be provided. Through this process, the chief officer team allocated resources according to the constabulary's priorities. As a result, 130 posts in back-office support functions were identified to be redirected to frontline roles including neighbourhood policing and other priority areas such as protecting vulnerable people.

At the time of our inspection, the constabulary had over 1,700 volunteers supporting its regular police officers and staff. This includes over 400 members of the special constabulary, who as well as undertaking routine patrols, also run regular projects to assist in policing the night-time economy. The constabulary has created a career path for members of the special constabulary, including supervisors up to and including a special constabulary chief officer.

How well is the force using a broad range of effective tactics to prevent crime and anti-social behaviour?

Cheshire Constabulary is making good use of a broad range of tactics to prevent crime and anti-social behaviour. HMIC found that the constabulary is making good use of specific powers to tackle anti-social behaviour,⁶ for example, in supporting Cheshire West and Chester Council to implement a public space protection order in Chester city centre.

In HMIC's crime inspection in 2014,⁷ we recommended that the constabulary should take action to improve the quality of problem-solving. Since that time, the constabulary has adopted a problem-solving model known as SARA. This is based on four stages of the problem-solving process – scanning, analysis, response and assessment. The constabulary has also created a 'what works' database, a computer system to record learning and provide an accessible toolkit of effective problem-solving responses. In this inspection, HMIC found that officers and staff in the local policing units are good at identifying local problems and providing a timely and comprehensive response. However, we found that their application of the SARA model is inconsistent. In particular, HMIC found poor recording of the use of the model, with little evidence of any analysis being undertaken of the problem or any recorded assessment of the effectiveness of the response. Officers and staff may therefore be wasting time devising solutions to problems that have been successfully resolved elsewhere in the force area. HMIC appreciates that problem-solving is an integral part of the ongoing training being delivered to beat manager constables. However, the constabulary should consider how it could improve the consistency of the application, recording and sharing of SARA problem-solving activities.

During the inspection, HMIC identified a number of successful projects where local officers and staff are actively addressing local crime and anti-social behaviour problems. Operation Shield is the constabulary-wide initiative to reduce burglary offences through the use of unique traceable liquids to protect property, homes and businesses. In Chester, Operation Brisbane identified that a number of elderly, vulnerable people were being subjected to crime and anti-social behaviour by a group of offenders, all of whom were prosecuted, while ongoing support was provided to the victims. The constabulary has introduced the use of predictive analysis, assessing crime, incident and anti-social behaviour data to identify areas, which are likely to be targeted by criminals. Officers and staff are then deployed on a proactive basis to undertake preventative patrols. Supervisors monitor activity through a computerised mapping system, which allows them to see which resources have been in the relevant area at the appropriate times.

⁶ Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014. Available from: www.gov.uk/government/collections/anti-social-behaviour-crime-and-police-bill

⁷ *Crime Inspection 2014 - Cheshire Constabulary*, HMIC, November 2014. Available from: www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmic/wp-content/uploads/cheshire-crime-inspection-2014.pdf

How well does the force work with partners to prevent crime and anti-social behaviour and keep people safe?

How committed is the force to working with partner organisations?

The constabulary understands the importance of, and is committed to, working with a wide range of partners to prevent crime and anti-social behaviour and to keep people safe.

Each of the eight local policing areas across the constabulary has a dedicated anti-social behaviour team. This team works closely with both statutory and non-statutory partners including local authority staff, businesses, churches, charitable organisations, social housing providers, the fire and rescue service, and others.

HMIC found strong evidence, supported by the views of partner organisation representatives, that the constabulary works effectively with partners at both force level and locally. We found that local constable beat managers have developed good relationships with the local partners, with whom they meet regularly. This allows them to devise joint solutions to local problems, such as anti-social behaviour associated with new tenants in a complex of flats. By working with the police, the housing agency revised its policy on tenant suitability and selection for placement in that area.

How well does the force share and use information with partners to prevent crime and anti-social behaviour?

The constabulary has effective information-sharing protocols, not only with the four local authorities with which it works, but also with a wide range of other partners. Partner data is used as part of the constabulary's strategic threat and risk assessment, which allows the force to generate a fuller understanding of the environment in which it operates.

The constabulary is an active member of, and leads, many multi-agency and partnership initiatives, through which it tries to reduce crime, tackle anti-social behaviour and keep people safe. HMIC found clear evidence of the constabulary's effective sharing and use of information in many areas. Examples at force level included partnerships such as Altogether Better, which supports and intervenes with complex families; Operation Encompass, under which the constabulary shares information with schools to safeguard children affected by domestic violence; and a plethora of 'watch' schemes including business watch, pub watch and horse watch. In local policing areas, HMIC also found evidence of effective information sharing through problem-solving groups and community safety partnerships such as Operation Centurion, a multi-agency approach to tackle crime and anti-social behaviour connected with the night-time economy in Chester city centre.

How well is the force working with partner organisations to keep people safe and tackle anti-social behaviour in local neighbourhoods?

Cheshire Constabulary is working very effectively with partner organisations to keep people safe and to prevent crime and anti-social behaviour in local neighbourhoods.

HMIC found that the constabulary is firmly committed to working with a wide variety of partners to keep people safe and tackle local problems of crime and anti-social behaviour. One such example is in Runcorn, where both the police and local partners were concerned at the level of crime and anti-social behaviour associated with the night-time economy. The constabulary supported the local authority with its application for a public space protection order, using anti-social behaviour powers conferred by the Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014. This was successful in reducing incidents, which were having a detrimental effect on the lives of local people, and in increasing community trust and confidence. The results were shared within the constabulary and a similar order is now being applied for in Crewe.

The constabulary identified an area in Runcorn, known as The Grange, as having disproportionately high levels of crime and anti-social behaviour. The area also suffers from higher levels of deprivation and unemployment than found in most other areas of the constabulary. The police and crime commissioner (PCC) made funding available to pilot in this area the use of a participatory budgeting approach.

Participatory budgeting is a scheme designed to give local people an opportunity to have their say in decisions about how money is spent. It involves engaging with the community before decisions are made, rather than seeking their opinions afterwards. The PCC maintained active oversight of the project through to completion.

Officers from the local neighbourhood team were identified to work alongside the community, to raise their involvement and engagement and to understand the priorities for the area as identified by members of the community themselves. Under the banner "Change the Grange", the police supported the creation of a stakeholder group, made up of local residents, representatives from the church, the local housing trust and staff from the office of the police and crime commissioner.

Once established, this community-led group invited local groups and projects to bid for the available funding. As a result, 16 projects were identified and subject to a public vote to identify the community's priorities. Successful projects which received funding included the creation of a job club to provide training and support to unemployed local people, a community garden built and tended by young people, a lunch club and support for a local football club. As well as helping to build community capacity, the levels of crime, anti-social behaviour and calls for police service in the area have all dropped considerably. As a result of evaluating the first phase, the police and crime commissioner has agreed to fund a further four participatory budgeting schemes in each of the four local authority areas across the force area.

Summary of findings



Outstanding

Cheshire Constabulary is outstanding at preventing crime and anti-social behaviour and keeping people safe.

The constabulary has used priority-based budgeting to help it make informed decisions about the allocation of resources to support its priorities.

The constabulary has made preventing crime and anti-social behaviour its highest priority and this is clearly and consistently understood by officers and staff throughout the organisation.

The constabulary is making good use of a broad range of tactics to prevent crime and anti-social behaviour. HMIC found good evidence of the constabulary's use of specific powers to tackle anti-social behaviour.

The constabulary has effective information-sharing protocols with a wide range of partners. The constabulary's strategic threat and risk assessment uses a wide range of partner data, helping the force to generate a fuller understanding of the environment in which it operates.

HMIC found strong evidence that the constabulary is firmly committed to working with a wide variety of partners to keep people safe and tackle local problems of crime and anti-social behaviour.

How effective is the force at investigating crime and managing offenders?

When a crime occurs, the public must have confidence that the police will investigate it effectively, take their concerns as victims seriously, and bring offenders to justice. To be effective, investigations should be well planned and supervised, based on approved practice, and carried out by appropriately trained staff. The risk posed by those who are identified as being the most prolific or dangerous offenders must also be properly managed (in partnership with other organisations), to minimise the chances of continued harm to individuals and communities.

HMIC referred to national standards and best practice in examining how well the force allocates and investigates both complex and non-complex (e.g., burglary, robbery and assault) crime. This included the full range of ways police officers and staff can gather evidence to support investigations (these include the more traditional forensics, such as taking fingerprints, as well as digital sweeps to find evidence of online abuse, for instance).

We also looked at how well the force works with partners to identify vulnerable offenders and prevent them from re-offending, and how well it identifies and manages repeat, and dangerous and sexual offenders.

How well does the force bring offenders to justice?

Since April 2014, police forces in England and Wales have been required to record how investigations are concluded in a new way, known as 'outcomes'. Replacing what was known as 'sanction detections', the new outcomes framework gives a fuller picture of the work the police do to investigate and resolve crime. The new broader framework (now containing twenty different types of outcomes) is designed to support police officers in using their professional judgment to ensure a just and timely resolution. The resolution should reflect the harm caused to the victim, the seriousness of the offending behaviour, the impact on the community and deter future offending.

Given the work involved in amending police force crime-recording systems to accommodate fully the new outcomes framework, two forces have not yet been able to provide a full year of data for all new outcomes types. Cheshire Constabulary, however, has been providing the Home Office with full data since April 2014. The complete range of new outcome types will be used in future HMIC inspections, once all forces have provided a full year of data. Figure 4 shows only those outcome types for which full data is available for all forces in England and Wales.

Figure 4: Outcomes recorded in the 12 months to 30 June 2015 for all police recorded crime (excluding fraud)^{8 9 10}

Outcome type/group	Cheshire Constabulary Number of outcomes	Rate	England and Wales Number of outcomes	Rate
Charged/Summoned	11,028	20.9	577,678	16.0
Taken into consideration	387	0.7	21,318	0.6
Out-of-court (formal)	2,395	4.5	165,384	4.6
Caution - youths	275	0.5	19,703	0.5
Caution - adults	1,732	3.3	115,000	3.2
Penalty Notices for Disorder	388	0.7	30,681	0.8
Out-of-court (informal)	2,433	4.6	159,915	4.4
Cannabis/Khat warning	729	1.4	41,964	1.2
Community resolution	1,704	3.2	117,951	3.3

Source: Home Office crime outcomes data

Outcomes are likely to differ from force to force for a number of reasons. Certain offences are more likely to be concluded without offenders being prosecuted, typically including types of crime such as cannabis misuse. If this type of crime is particularly prevalent in a force then it is likely that the level of 'cannabis/khat'¹¹ warning' outcomes would be greater.

The frequency of outcomes may also reflect the force's policing priorities. For example, some forces work hard with partners to ensure that first time and low-level offenders are channelled away from the criminal justice system. In these areas, locally-based community resolutions are likely to be more prevalent than elsewhere.

When considering all crimes recorded (excluding fraud), outcome rates for Cheshire Constabulary are broadly in line with most other forces in England and Wales.

⁸ Rate based on number of outcomes recorded in 12 months to 30 June 2015 divided by number of offences recorded in 12 months to 30 June 2015.

⁹ For a full commentary and explanation of outcome types please see *Crime Outcomes in England and Wales 2014/15*, Home Office, London, July 2015. Available from: www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/445753/hosb0115.pdf

¹⁰ Community resolutions are an out-of-court disposal the police can use to deal with anti-social behaviour and low-level crime. 'Taken into consideration' is when an offender admits the commission of other offences in the course of sentencing proceedings and requests those other offences to be taken into consideration.

¹¹ A plant native to Africa and the Arabian Peninsula, the leaves of which are frequently chewed as a stimulant; the possession and supply of khat became a criminal offence in England and Wales in 2014.

How well does the force investigate crime and keep victims safe and informed?

How well does the force initially investigate and allocate cases?

It is important that when the police are called to an incident they respond in a timely manner, with officers or staff who are trained and competent to keep people safe, and who can take steps to apprehend offenders and investigate the circumstances if a crime has occurred. An effective initial response by the police increases the likelihood of a successful outcome for both the victim and the criminal justice system. Subsequent investigation by detectives and other specialist police staff also needs to be well managed and resourced.

The constabulary has a clear framework for the allocation of crime investigations, designed to ensure that crimes are investigated by officers with the appropriate knowledge and skills.

During this inspection, HMIC found that the constabulary allocates and investigates crime well at all levels. Response and neighbourhood officers in the local policing areas carry out crime investigations. We found that the number of investigations being undertaken by these officers is manageable. The nature of the crimes they investigate is also appropriate to their level of skill and experience. The crime allocation framework requires that the reporting officer should retain investigative responsibility unless the level of seriousness or risk is such that it should be allocated to a specialist investigator.

With the introduction of the new operating model in July 2015, the constabulary created a custody investigation unit located in each of the force's main custody sites. The constabulary's aim is for the unit to undertake the investigation of 80 percent of crimes which do not require more specialist skills. Initial indications from officers in the local policing areas are that the unit has reduced the number of investigations that response and neighbourhood officers are expected to undertake. The same officers also expressed confidence that, once the unit was fully staffed, they would have more time to dedicate to their respective core functions of responding to incidents and community engagement. We also found that the custody investigation unit is applying strict standards in respect of the quality and minimum standards of initial investigation and will reject any investigations that fail to meet the minimum standards. This is serving to improve the overall quality of crime investigations.

How well does the force investigate different types of crime?

In HMIC's crime inspection in 2014, we assessed Cheshire Constabulary's overall approach to the investigation of crime as good. However, the report made two recommendations. The first related to the service provided to vulnerable and repeat victims and the second to the quality of investigations, including supervisory oversight.

Prior to this inspection, HMIC conducted a dip sample of a small number (40) of crime investigation files involving offences including rape, wounding, assault and burglary of a dwelling.¹² Our review considered a range of issues, including the overall quality of the investigation, the identification and treatment of vulnerability and the level of supervisory oversight. While not statistically significant, the results do nonetheless give a valuable indication of the constabulary's approach to these areas. In Cheshire Constabulary the dip sample concluded that the investigation had been conducted to a good standard in 80 percent (32 out of 40) of the case files reviewed and that 74 percent (30 out of 40) had been well supervised. Of the files reviewed, eight were identified as involving vulnerable victims. In all of those cases we found that the constabulary had responded promptly to the initial call. It had quickly and appropriately identified the victim's vulnerability and subsequently managed it well during the investigation. HMIC found good evidence that the right staff with the right skills had quickly been allocated to these cases, and the resulting investigations were of a high standard, well supervised and clearly focused on the needs of the victim. The cases we reviewed showed consistent evidence of the use of specialist officers with appropriate skills and training to conduct the more serious and complex investigations. We found clear and consistent use of these specialist officers and departments to properly support the investigation and the victim. All the cases reviewed had comprehensive investigation plans, with clear direction provided by effective supervision.

During the inspection HMIC undertook further assessment of the quality of investigation and the levels of supervisory oversight. We considered a range of ongoing investigations being conducted by neighbourhood and response officers, officers from the custody investigation team, detectives in local policing areas and specialist investigators in the dedicated rape unit. Overall we found that crimes are being allocated for investigation in line with the crime allocation framework. Assessments are made as to the seriousness and complexity of the investigation and the skill levels required to undertake it. Response, neighbourhood and detective investigators work well together and there is flexibility in the deployment of staff and specialist skills across teams. This is well managed through the daily management meeting held each morning. We found improvements in the supervision of investigations, including the setting of clear investigation plans at an early stage. This was evident in the overall quality of the case files reviewed.

By the end of 2015-16, the constabulary plans to have delivered classroom-based training to all frontline officers in the quality of investigation and file preparation. It is also starting to train volunteer special constables, to equip them with the skills to work alongside regular officers in the custody investigation team.

¹² HMIC reviewed a sample of rape, burglary, offences of serious violence and actual bodily harm cases. In most forces the review consisted of 10 cases from each crime category but in some larger forces the sample was increased to 15. The file review was designed to provide a broad overview of the identification of vulnerability and the effectiveness of the investigation.

As well as providing additional support at periods of high demand, this also offers innovative and interesting development opportunities for members of the special constabulary.

In the pre-inspection dip sample of case files and again during the inspection itself, HMIC found that Cheshire Constabulary investigates serious crime to a very high standard. This was particularly evident in investigations conducted by staff in the dedicated rape unit. The unit was set up in 2011 to deal with an anticipated workload of approximately 200 investigations per year. Staff in the unit currently manage around 450 cases per year. The unit is co-located with specialist lawyers from the Crown Prosecution Service. HMIC found that the availability and accessibility of this specialist legal advice was reflected in the quality of investigation and case preparation. Resources in the unit were recently increased as a result of the priority-based budgeting process. The constabulary should continue to monitor its capacity in this area as demand changes over time.

How well does the force gather digital evidence?

Increasingly, crime in England and Wales is committed online and through the use of digital devices such as tablets, computers or mobile phones. All forces have to retrieve data from these devices and examine them for evidence; staff, in what may be known as high tech crime units (HTCU), carry out these examinations.

At the time of HMIC's crime inspection in 2014, the constabulary had just merged its high tech crime and paedophile investigation units to create a single paedophile cyber investigation team (PCIT). The PCIT has been successful in providing an effective way to review computers and other digital storage devices including tablets and mobile telephones, to support investigations in a timely manner.

HMIC found that since its inception, the PCIT has introduced ways of working which have eliminated the backlog in computer examination and assisted in managing the risk presented by offenders. The triage processes that have been put in place use a range of techniques to focus activity on devices that hold evidence and thereby reduce unnecessary seizures. HMIC found that in the six months prior to the inspection, these new processes had reduced the number of devices seized by over 1,200, with an associated cost saving in examinations in the region of £300,000. The triage process and the PCIT approach is attracting attention from many other forces across the country. As a result, the constabulary recently held a master class event to highlight its approach to digital investigations, to which it invited all other forces. As well as being cost effective, the process provides the constabulary with an evidence-based method through which investigating officers can prioritise cases. This helps to bring offenders to justice more quickly and reduce the potential harm to the public.

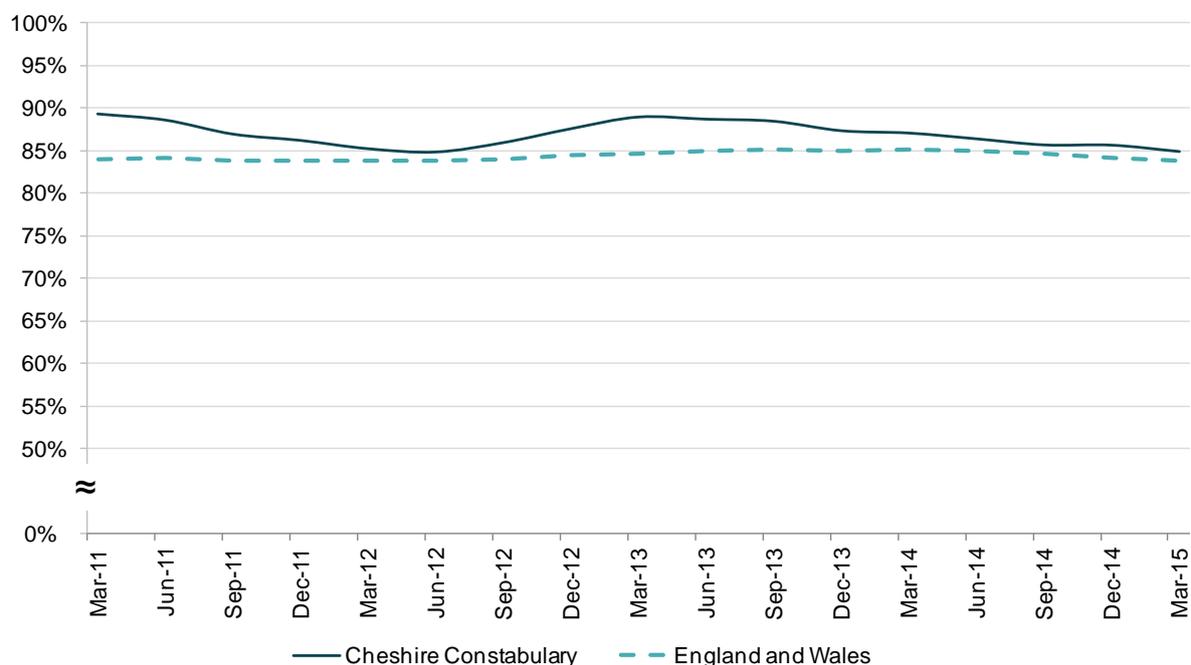
Subject to availability, staff from the PCIT accompany officers when exercising search warrants or at the time of arrest, to provide expert advice and triage. The current turnaround time for mobile telephone examinations is between four and six

weeks. However, the constabulary prioritises the examination of victims' mobile telephones, which means that they can be examined and returned within 24 hours, and as a result, minimises inconvenience.

How satisfied are victims of crime with the service provided by the force?

Of those who have been the victim of a crime in Cheshire in the 12 months to 31 March 2015, 84.9 percent were satisfied with their whole experience with the police. This is similar to the national victim satisfaction rate of 83.8 percent over the same time period. The victim satisfaction rate in Cheshire for the 12 months to 31 March 2015 is broadly in line with the previous year's rate, while it is significantly less than the rate for the 12 months to 31 March 2011.

Figure 5: Percentage of victims satisfied with the overall service provided by the police, for the four-year period to 31 March 2015



Source: Home Office data provided by forces

How well does the force identify and manage offenders to prevent re-offending?

How well does the force divert offenders away from crime?

Cheshire Constabulary identifies offenders effectively and diverts them appropriately from crime and anti-social behaviour.

The constabulary has integrated effectively its offender management programme, known as Navigate, with its new model of local policing. Staff in the Navigate teams also monitor repeat offenders who fall outside the scope of the integrated offender

management programme.¹³ This allows them to provide advice to local officers on appropriate disposals or solutions outside the formal criminal justice system or on the available support services and diversionary opportunities which might help steer the offender away from repeat offending.

HMIC also found that officers feel empowered to use out-of-court or community-based resolutions¹⁴ to minor offences. We found that staff in the custody suites are able to identify vulnerable young offenders and, if the circumstances of the offence are appropriate, seek to divert the offender away from the criminal justice system through engagement with local authority youth services.

The constabulary engages with and understands its communities. Recent increases in tension within an East Timorese community had spilt over into violence. Identifying that the community held a deep faith, the constabulary used the local church to build relationships. This resulted in officers arranging martial arts classes, which helped to divert young people successfully away from engaging in violent criminal behaviour.

How well does the force deal with repeat offenders?

The constabulary deals effectively with repeat offenders through its integrated offender management scheme, Navigate, which is in place and understood by staff throughout the constabulary. The constabulary has developed effective information-sharing agreements with a wide range of partners. These include: the four local authorities; community safety partnerships; drug and alcohol services; education, training and employment providers; the national probation service; and Purple Futures, the local community rehabilitation company, which is funded according to results in reducing the re-offending of those on the scheme.

Each local authority area has its own multi-agency Navigate team, in which key partners are co-located. Each team meets formally on a monthly basis, to assess those offenders who may be suitable for being included or removed from the scheme. They also consider the progress of offenders already being managed through the scheme. They do so both in terms of their offending behaviour as well as their engagement and compliance with their personal action plan. Offenders are graded red (meaning that they are wanted for, or suspected of, committing an offence); amber (meaning that they may be committing offences or showing signs of withdrawing engagement); or green (meaning that they are engaged and compliant).

¹³ Integrated offender management (IOM) brings a multi-agency response to the crime and re-offending threats faced by local communities. The most persistent and problematic offenders are identified and managed jointly by partner agencies working together.

¹⁴ A community resolution is an alternative to formal criminal prosecution. It is a way of dealing with less serious crimes, allowing officers to use their professional judgement when dealing with offenders. It can be used for offences such as low level public order, criminal damage, theft, and minor assaults. Community resolution will enable victims to have quick resolutions and closure to their crime, offenders will receive speedy justice.

At the time of the inspection, 85 percent of the offenders who were being managed through the scheme were selected for their involvement in serious acquisitive crime, while 15 percent were selected because of their involvement in committing violent crime.

The Navigate teams have established effective links with prison intelligence for those offenders serving custodial sentences. This includes identifying appropriate pathways prior to their release to support their rehabilitation and improve opportunities upon their release. The constabulary has also developed an effective way to identify quickly those offenders who have been released from prison and are due to be recalled for committing further offences or breaching their licence conditions.

How well does the force deal with sexual and other dangerous offenders?

Cheshire Constabulary has effective ways of identifying and monitoring sexual and other dangerous offenders.

The constabulary has a dedicated unit for sex offender management. The constabulary has implemented an active risk management system, a structured risk assessment process based on factors known to be associated with sexual re-offending. Introducing this process in Cheshire has led directly to an overall reduction in the number of high risk and very high risk offenders. However, the constabulary found the implementation of this process was very demanding on staff time, taking an average of six hours per offender with no increase in resources to manage this workload.

The number of registered sex offenders in the area has increased in line with the national trend. HMIC found that staff in local policing areas have an inconsistent awareness of the sex offenders resident in their area. Some staff have a good level of awareness, but others are not aware of registered sex offenders who live in the area which they police. The constabulary should take steps to assure itself that appropriate information is being provided to all frontline staff. The increase in sex offender numbers, together with the new risk management process and the success of the PCIT, has led to an increase in demand on staff in the unit. The constabulary acknowledges this and intends to consider resource levels in the annual priority-based budgeting process due to take place in the autumn of 2015.

The constabulary is alert to the risk from dangerous offenders who are suitable for multi-agency public protection arrangements (MAPPAs).¹⁵ These arrangements are used by the constabulary and partner organisations, including prisons and probation,

¹⁵ MAPPAs are in place to ensure the successful management of violent and sexual offenders. Agencies involved include as responsible bodies the police, probation trusts and prison service. Other agencies may become involved, for example the Youth Justice Board will be responsible for the care of young offenders.

to monitor those offenders assessed as presenting a high risk to the public, and to stop them re-offending. Offenders assessed as presenting the highest level of risk require co-ordinated action with partner organisations to reduce these risks.

Summary of findings



Good

Cheshire Constabulary has a clear framework for allocating crime investigations, ensuring that crimes are investigated by officers with the appropriate knowledge and skills.

Response, neighbourhood and detective investigators work well together and staff are used flexibly to meet demand.

By the end of 2015-16, the constabulary plans to have delivered classroom-based training to all frontline officers in the quality of investigation and file preparation. It is also starting to train volunteer special constables, to equip them to work alongside regular officers in the custody investigation team.

Cheshire Constabulary investigates serious crime to a very high standard. This is particularly evident in investigations conducted by staff in the dedicated rape unit.

The paedophile and cyber investigation team has successfully eliminated the backlog in computer examination. Working methods are cost effective, provide effective prioritisation of investigations, help to bring offenders to justice more quickly and reduce the potential harm to the public.

Cheshire Constabulary effectively identifies offenders and appropriately diverts them away from crime and anti-social behaviour. It has effectively integrated its offender management programme, Navigate, with its new model of local policing. The constabulary has effective ways of identifying and monitoring sexual and other dangerous offenders.

How effective is the force at protecting from harm those who are vulnerable, and supporting victims?

This question was inspected between June and August 2015, and the full report was published in December 2015.¹⁶ The following is a summary of the findings.

Summary of findings



Cheshire Constabulary's chief officer team provides strong leadership and clear direction to officers and staff across the constabulary. The police and crime plan for Cheshire establishes the protection of vulnerable people and supporting victims and witnesses as key objectives for the constabulary. Cheshire's strategic threat and risk assessment identifies the overarching priorities of protecting people from harm and reducing vulnerability. HMIC judges Cheshire Constabulary as good at protecting from harm those who are vulnerable and supporting victims.

The constabulary has responded well to the recommendations made by HMIC in its inspection reports in 2014 and 2015. It has provided training to frontline staff on the identification of, and response to, vulnerability including domestic abuse, child sexual exploitation, and safeguarding and risk assessment. This investment in training was evident when speaking to officers and staff, by their knowledgeable, understanding and caring attitude. Cheshire Constabulary is good at identifying those who are vulnerable at an early stage.

The constabulary investigates well crimes committed against the most vulnerable victims, assigning the right people with the right skills and experience to deal with the complexity of such investigations.

Cheshire Constabulary has clear and structured processes for responding when children are reported missing or absent. Investigations into missing children are well supervised and the constabulary works well with partners to keep these children safe.

The constabulary has made a good start in ensuring it is well prepared to tackle child sexual exploitation. Together with the four local safeguarding children boards, the constabulary has agreed a pan-Cheshire child sexual exploitation strategy, supported by a shared multi-agency child sexual exploitation screening tool.

¹⁶ PEEL: Police effectiveness 2015 (Vulnerability) – Cheshire Constabulary, HMIC, December 2015. Available from: www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmic/publications/police-effectiveness-vulnerability-2015-cheshire/

The constabulary has developed the 'Know and See' campaign to raise awareness of child sexual exploitation and provide information and training to a range of partners including parents and children. In terms of child sexual exploitation, this inspection only considered how well prepared the force is.

Cheshire Constabulary provides a good response to victims of domestic abuse. Police officers who attend these incidents are aware of the immediate options available to keep the victim safe and where to obtain specialist advice.

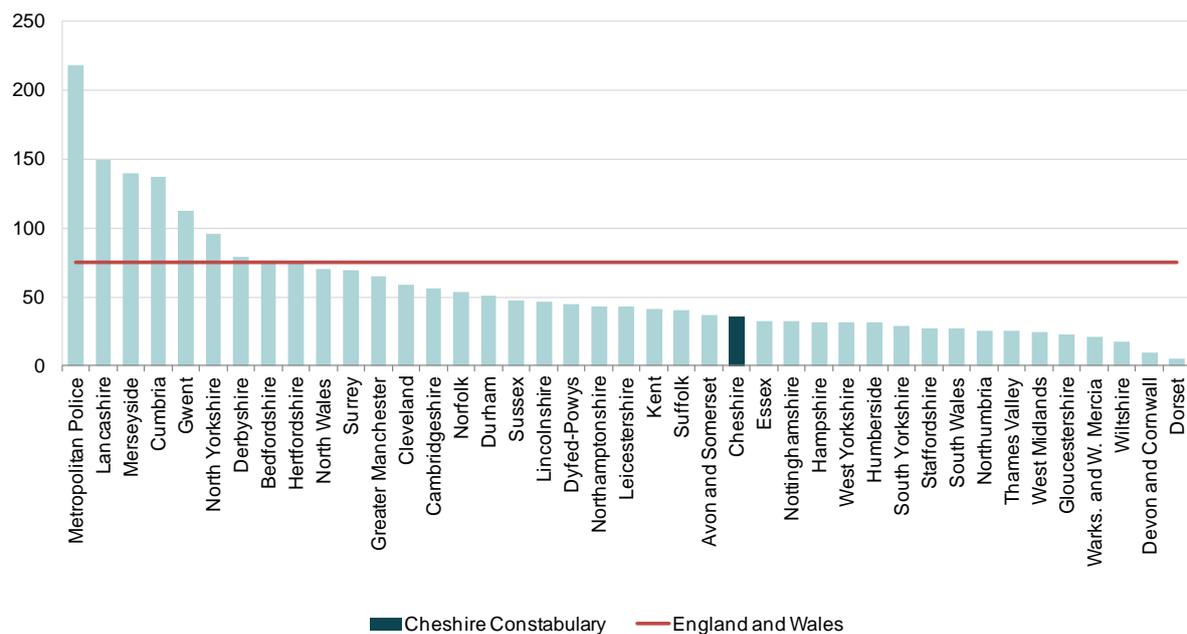
How effective is the force at tackling serious and organised crime, including its arrangements for fulfilling its national policing responsibilities?

Serious and organised crime poses a threat to the public across the whole of the UK and beyond. Individuals, communities and businesses feel its damaging effects. Police forces play a critical role in tackling serious and organised crime alongside regional organised crime units (ROCU), the National Crime Agency (NCA) and other partner organisations.

Police forces that are effective tackle serious and organised crime not just by prosecuting offenders, but also by disrupting and preventing organised criminality at a local level. They also use specialist capabilities (for example surveillance and undercover policing) where appropriate in order to protect the public from highly sophisticated and rapidly changing organised criminal threats. A number of forces within a regional area often share specialist capabilities as this provides better value for money and is a more efficient way of working.

As at 30 June 2015, Cheshire Constabulary was actively disrupting, investigating or monitoring 37 organised crime groups (OCGs). This represents 36 OCGs per one million of the population.

Figure 6: Organised crime groups per one million population, by force, as at 30 June 2015^{17 18}



Source: HMIC data collection

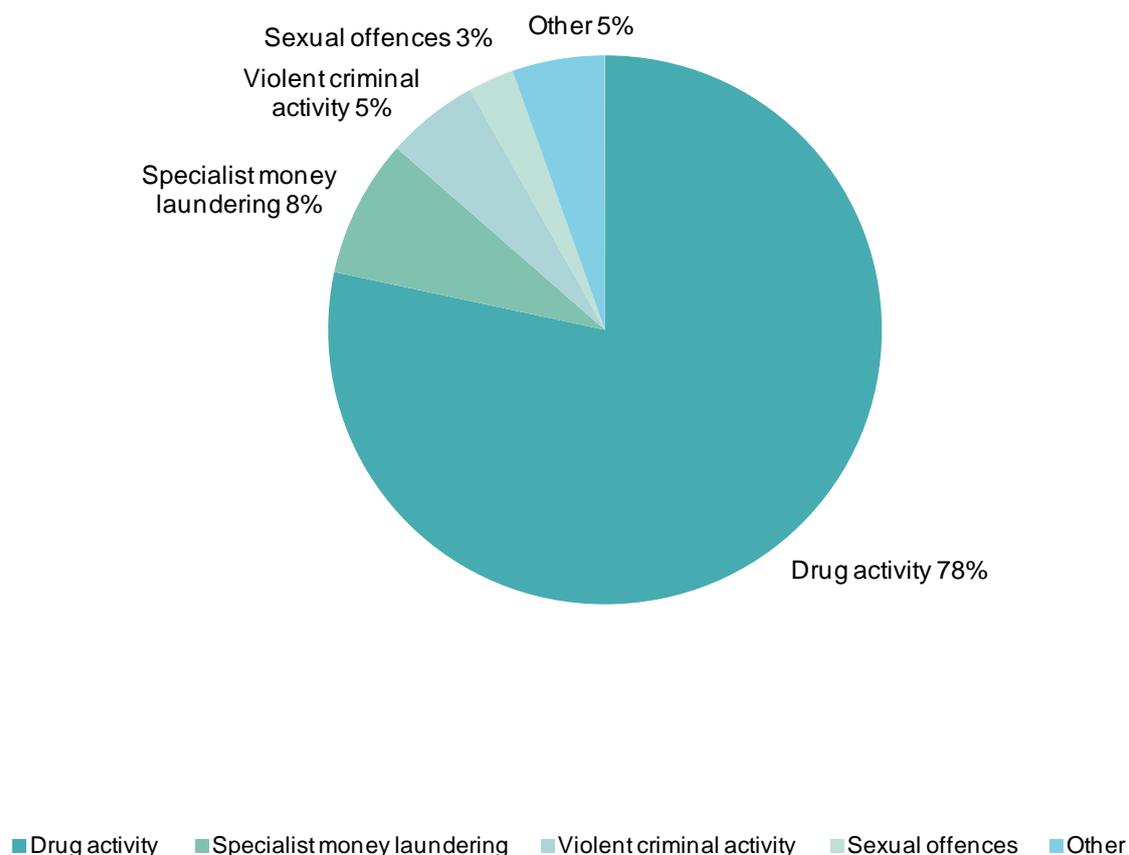
Forces categorise OCGs by the predominant form of criminal activity in which the group is involved. Although OCGs are likely to be involved in multiple forms of criminality, this indicates their most common characteristic. 'Drug activity' was the predominant crime type (78 percent) of the OCGs managed by Cheshire Constabulary as at 30 June 2015. 'Drug activity' was also the most common predominant crime type recorded by all forces in England and Wales,¹⁹ with 64 percent of all OCGs classified in this way.

¹⁷ City of London Police data has been removed from the chart as its OCG data is not comparable with other forces due to size and its wider national remit.

¹⁸ The number of OCGs in the Warwickshire Police and West Mercia Police force areas is a combined total of OCGs for the two force areas. The OCGs per one million population rate is based upon their areas' combined population figures.

¹⁹ The Metropolitan Police Service is not included in the England and Wales figure because it does not categorise in the same way as other forces; by the predominant form of criminal activity.

Figure 7: Force organised crime groups by the predominant crime type, as at 30 June 2015²⁰



Source: HMIC data collection

Serious and organised crime is one of six national threats specified within *The Strategic Policing Requirement*.²¹ These are terrorism, serious and organised crime, national cyber-crime incidents, threats to public order or public safety, civil emergencies, and child sexual abuse. These are complex threats which means that forces must work together to respond to them effectively. It is beyond the scope of this inspection to assess in detail whether forces are capable of responding to these national threats.

²⁰ Figures may not sum to 100 percent, due to rounding.

²¹ *The Strategic Policing Requirement*, Home Office, March 2015. Available from: www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/417116/The_Strategic_Policing_Requirement.pdf

The Home Secretary issues the SPR annually, setting out the latest national threats and the appropriate national policing capabilities required to counter those threats. National threats require a co-ordinated or aggregated response from a number of police forces. Forces often need to work collaboratively, and with other partners, national agencies or national arrangements, to ensure such threats are tackled effectively.

Instead, HMIC has checked whether forces have the necessary arrangements in place to test their own preparedness for dealing with these threats, should they materialise.

How well does the force understand the threat and risk posed by serious and organised crime?

Cheshire Constabulary has a good understanding of the threat posed by serious and organised crime. In line with national guidance, it has produced a serious and organised crime local profile,²² which outlines the level and type of threat that exists within the force area. The profile is based currently solely on police information and intelligence, although plans are in place to overlay partner agency information later in 2015. The constabulary profile identifies a particular concentration of OCGs in the Widnes area. It has produced a more detailed local profile for that area and plans to complete similar profiles for each of the other three local authority areas.

The introduction of the new operating model in July 2015 involved the centralisation of the intelligence function to headquarters and an overall reduction in the number of staff working on intelligence. HMIC found that these changes are having an adverse effect on the capability and capacity of the intelligence unit to meet all demands placed upon it. The constabulary recognises this and plans to consider resource allocation in the forthcoming priority-based budgeting process.

The constabulary has an effective relationship with Titan, the North West regional organised crime unit. However, the relatively small number of OCGs active in the constabulary area, and the limited capability and intent, which those groups are assessed as having, means that operational support from Titan is mainly focused elsewhere in the north west region.

The force intelligence bureau provides information on OCGs to each of the local policing areas, which includes any intelligence or disruption activity required of local officers. Each group has its own profile, which can be accessed electronically by all officers across the constabulary. HMIC found that knowledge and awareness of this information among local officers is inconsistent. Some officers and staff are aware of the profiles of OCGs that are active in their area. However many others do not have this understanding, receive no intelligence and are not allocated any actions to gather intelligence or disrupt OCGs.

²² Serious and organised crime local profiles are reports that outline the threat from serious and organised crime within a specific local area. Available from: www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/371602/Serious_and_Organised_Crime_local_profiles.pdf

How effectively does the force respond to serious and organised crime?

The constabulary responds well to the threat posed by serious and organised crime. It restructured its strategic approach to the management and co-ordination of serious and organised crime. In September 2015, the constabulary re-instated regular monthly organised crime group management meetings chaired by the assistant chief constable. HMIC views this as a positive step.

The constabulary has a specialist economic crime unit, which investigates offences of fraud and suspicious activity reports from financial institutions. The constabulary has identified a number of OCGs involved in complex fraud and is working with Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs on joint investigations.

How effectively is the force working with partners to prevent serious and organised crime?

The constabulary has effective relationships with the regional organised crime unit (Titan) and the National Crime Agency. HMIC found good evidence of engagement and co-operation with other forces across the country. We also found evidence of a number of partner organisations being involved and engaged in the planning, investigation and disruption of serious and organised crime groups. These partners include local authorities, trading standards, HMRC and the government agency intelligence network (GAIN).²³ However, as yet there is limited partner involvement in activity specifically designed to prevent serious and organised crime.

The constabulary routinely looks to publicise successful prosecution outcomes involving OCGs through the use of local and national media and its own website.

How effective are the arrangements in place to ensure that the force can fulfil its national policing responsibilities?

It is beyond the scope of this inspection to assess in detail whether forces are capable of responding to the six national threats. Instead, HMIC has checked whether forces have the necessary arrangements in place to test their own preparedness for dealing with these threats, should they materialise.

Cheshire Constabulary has the necessary arrangements in place to ensure that it can fulfil its national policing responsibilities.

Responsibility for overseeing the constabulary's preparedness to meet its national policing responsibilities is shared between the two assistant chief constables.

²³ The Government Agency Intelligence Network (GAIN) is a large network of partners, including all police forces in England and Wales, which shares information about organised criminals.

The constabulary reports regularly to the police and crime commissioner’s scrutiny panel on its continued capability and capacity to respond to each of the six threats. HMIC found that the constabulary regularly tests its preparedness and ability to respond. In addition, a series of significant events during the summer of 2015, including a fatal explosion in a wood-processing mill, a fatal air crash during a motor show and a major chemical incident on the motorway provided real-time tests of the constabulary’s and its partners’ contingency plans.

The constabulary has effective relationships with, and supplies staff to, both the north-west regional organised crime unit and also the north-west counter terrorism unit.

The constabulary is also an active member of the Cheshire local resilience forum and has a range of contingency plans in place for a variety of incidents, particularly in relation to the proliferation of chemical and other high-risk hazardous sites. HMIC found that the constabulary tests and reviews these plans on a regular basis.

Summary of findings



Requires improvement

Cheshire Constabulary has a good understanding of the overall threat posed by serious and organised crime. It has produced a comprehensive profile of serious and organised crime, which outlines the level and type of threat that exists within the force area. However, more could be done with the inclusion of partner information.

The capability of the intelligence function needs to improve within the constabulary’s new arrangements. The knowledge and awareness among local officers about locally based information is inconsistent.

The constabulary has effective relationships with the regional organised crime unit and the National Crime Agency. HMIC found good evidence of partners being involved and engaged in the planning, investigation and disruption of serious and organised crime groups.

The constabulary routinely looks to publicise successful prosecution outcomes involving organised crime groups through use of local and national media and its own website.

Cheshire Constabulary has the necessary arrangements in place to ensure that it can fulfil its national policing responsibilities.

This is the first year HMIC has graded forces on their effectiveness at tackling serious and organised crime, including a force’s arrangements for fulfilling its national policing responsibilities, so no year-on-year comparison is possible.

Areas for improvement

- The force should add relevant data from partner agencies to its serious and organised crime local profile, and ensure that it has a local partnership structure in place with responsibility for tackling serious and organised crime.
- The force should improve the awareness of organised crime groups among neighbourhood teams to ensure that they can reliably identify these groups, proactively collect intelligence and disrupt their activity.
- The force should take steps to identify those at risk of being drawn into serious and organised crime, and ensure that preventative initiatives are put in place with partner organisations to deter them from offending.

Annex A – HMIC judgments

Our judgments

The judgment categories are:

- outstanding;
- good;
- requires improvement; and
- inadequate.

Judgment is made against how effective the force is at keeping people safe and reducing crime; it is not an assessment of the overall effectiveness of policing. In applying the categories HMIC considers whether:

- the effectiveness the force is achieving is good, or exceeds this standard sufficiently to be judged as outstanding;
- the effectiveness of the force requires improvement, and/or there are some weaknesses; or
- the effectiveness of the force is inadequate because it is considerably lower than is expected.