

# PEEL: Police effectiveness 2015

An inspection of Durham Constabulary



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

## Overall judgment<sup>1</sup>



**Outstanding**

Durham Constabulary is outstanding at keeping people safe and reducing crime.

Its approach to preventing crime and tackling anti-social behaviour is innovative and based on finding long-term sustainable solutions. Crime is investigated thoroughly and considerable effort is placed on reducing re-offending. Vulnerable people are protected well and officers know the importance of reassuring victims. The constabulary understands the threat from serious and organised crime and tackles it as a priority at all levels. This is the first year HMIC has graded forces on their overall effectiveness so comparison of their year-on-year effectiveness is not possible.

## Summary

Durham Constabulary places considerable emphasis on providing long-term solutions to tackle crime and anti-social behaviour. Officers and staff take time to understand issues and adopt a problem-solving approach, using partner agencies when necessary, to provide sustainable solutions.

The constabulary attends all reports of crime and most other incidents and enjoys good levels of public satisfaction. The rates for positive conclusions, or outcomes, as a result of investigating crimes are among the highest in England and Wales, and recorded crime is lower than it was during the first year of the spending review.

Neighbourhood policing remains central to the way in which policing is delivered and the constabulary has excellent relationships with other public service partners. It has developed new and innovative methods to communicate with the public to understand what concerns them most and to feed back the results of police and partner action.

Officers are appropriately trained to investigate crime and anti-social behaviour and do so to a good standard. Investigators can draw on additional support from specialist departments to assist them in identifying offenders and developing investigations. Arresting suspects is treated as a priority.

The management of offenders is good. Officers work with partners to understand why offenders commit crime and then encourage each offender to follow a suitable route out of offending. The constabulary applies effective scrutiny to the most

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<sup>1</sup> Outstanding, Good, Requires improvement or Inadequate – see Annex A for definitions.

problematical offenders, both to support them to live better lives and to monitor their offending behaviour.

Vulnerable people are protected by the constabulary. Officers have received a significant level of training to enable them to support vulnerable victims appropriately.

Considerable efforts are made by all departments to build intelligence and use innovative approaches to disrupt organised crime groups. The continued support and investment made by partners has been particularly noteworthy in allowing the constabulary to have a comprehensive understanding of serious and organised crime and to have a broad range of interventions at its disposal to tackle it.

Overall, Durham Constabulary is outstanding at keeping people safe and reducing crime.

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



**Outstanding**

Durham Constabulary places a clear emphasis on crime prevention and delivering long-term solutions through effective analysis of issues and problem-solving. This is evident among staff and across all departments throughout the constabulary. The chief constable takes a personal lead as champion for this approach.

The constabulary is committed to local policing teams working effectively in neighbourhoods to tackle crime and anti-social behaviour. Frontline resources have been maintained to ensure neighbourhood teams can solve local crime and anti-social behaviour issues with supportive partner agencies.

Excellent links have been established with partner agencies who assist the constabulary with additional resources

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



**Outstanding**

Durham Constabulary has an excellent record of solving crime and bringing offenders to justice. It has a policy to attend all crime incidents to carry out an effective initial investigation. Good arrangements are in place to identify suspects at an early stage and to prioritise their arrest to prevent them from re-offending.

Crime enquiries are allocated to appropriately trained staff who have the necessary time and resources to carry out good quality investigations.

Digital evidence is gathered and assessed appropriately.

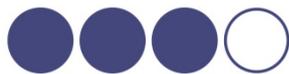
Good relationships exist with partner agencies to deal with persistent offenders in a holistic way to break their cycle of offending. This approach

and enforcement tactics to address crime and anti-social behaviour at an early stage.

HMIC found many good examples of the constabulary working innovatively to prevent and reduce crime and anti-social behaviour and make the best use of appropriate legal powers.

Good arrangements are in place through neighbourhood teams and community cohesion officers to communicate with the public, identify issues and update them on the service being provided by the constabulary.

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



**Good**

Protecting vulnerable people and supporting victims is a high priority for Durham Constabulary. Both the police and crime commissioner and the chief constable are committed strongly to improving services to protect and support vulnerable people and victims.

The constabulary has clear and consistent processes in place to identify repeat and vulnerable victims. Regular and robust supervisory processes are in place for the oversight and scrutiny of incidents to ensure an appropriate and timely response.

To help achieve the constabulary's

involves a strong element of victim reparation, offender rehabilitation and ensures the underlying reasons behind each offender committing crime are identified and addressed.

While offenders are managed appropriately by dedicated staff across the constabulary with partner agencies, there is scope for the constabulary to involve frontline policing teams more in the routine monitoring of registered sex offenders resident in some communities.

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



**Outstanding**

Durham Constabulary has a comprehensive understanding of serious and organised crime through a thorough assessment of intelligence gained through its own resources and from partner information. Excellent partnership arrangements are in place to continue to build intelligence and to investigate and disrupt serious and organised crime across the constabulary area.

Responsibility for leading the response to tackling organised crime groups is clearly set out and there are good arrangements in place to ensure that all staff understand and challenge organised

commitment to improve the services provided to vulnerable people, it has made a significant investment in training staff.

The constabulary uses innovative ways of working to protect and support vulnerable people, often in partnership with other agencies.

Good arrangements are in place with partner agencies to keep vulnerable people safe. The constabulary is working hard to enhance these arrangements further.

Overall the constabulary provides a good response to missing children and safeguards them. It is making good progress in its preparedness to tackle child sexual exploitation.

HMIC found that the constabulary is doing effective work to tackle domestic abuse and staff understand how to safeguard domestic abuse victims. The constabulary uses technology to improve its response and provide support to victims.

crime groups as an ongoing and priority activity throughout the constabulary.

Senior managers oversee a governance structure which monitors the response to organised crime and which is able to draw on the full support of a broad range of partner agencies.

The constabulary has appropriate arrangements in place to meet its national policing responsibilities and is developing a capacity to tackle cyber-enabled crime.

This is the first year HMIC has graded forces on their effectiveness at tackling serious and organised crime, including a force's arrangements for ensuring that it can fulfil 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

Durham Constabulary      England and Wales

**297**

**350**



### Crime

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

Durham Constabulary      England and Wales

**52.3**

**63.0**

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

Durham Constabulary      England and Wales

**53.9**

**60.3**

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

Durham Constabulary      England and Wales

**-2.8%**

**+4.5%**

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

Durham Constabulary      England and Wales

**-14.0%**

**-12.6%**



### Charge rate

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

Durham Constabulary      England and Wales

**22.9%**

**16.0%**



## Anti-social behaviour

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

Durham Constabulary England and Wales

44.9

32.9

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

Durham Constabulary England and Wales

47.8

36.2



## Domestic abuse

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

Durham Constabulary England and Wales

10.6%

10.0%

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

Durham Constabulary England and Wales

8.5%

8.5%



## Organised crime groups

Organised crime groups per million population as at 30 June 2015

Durham Constabulary England and Wales

51.4

74.7



## Victim satisfaction rate

Victim satisfaction rate 12 months to 31 March 2015

Durham Constabulary England and Wales

90.3%

83.8%

## 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 Durham Constabulary are available from the HMIC website ([www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmic/](http://www.justiceinspectorates.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:<sup>2</sup>

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 Durham Constabulary.

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<sup>2</sup> 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.justiceinspectors.gov.uk/hmic/publications/police-effectiveness-vulnerability-2015-durham/](http://www.justiceinspectors.gov.uk/hmic/publications/police-effectiveness-vulnerability-2015-durham/)). In 2014, in preparation for the PEEL programme, forces were inspected to assess how effective they are at cutting crime (available from: [www.justiceinspectors.gov.uk/hmic/publications/crime-inspection-force-reports/](http://www.justiceinspectors.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 the force area?**

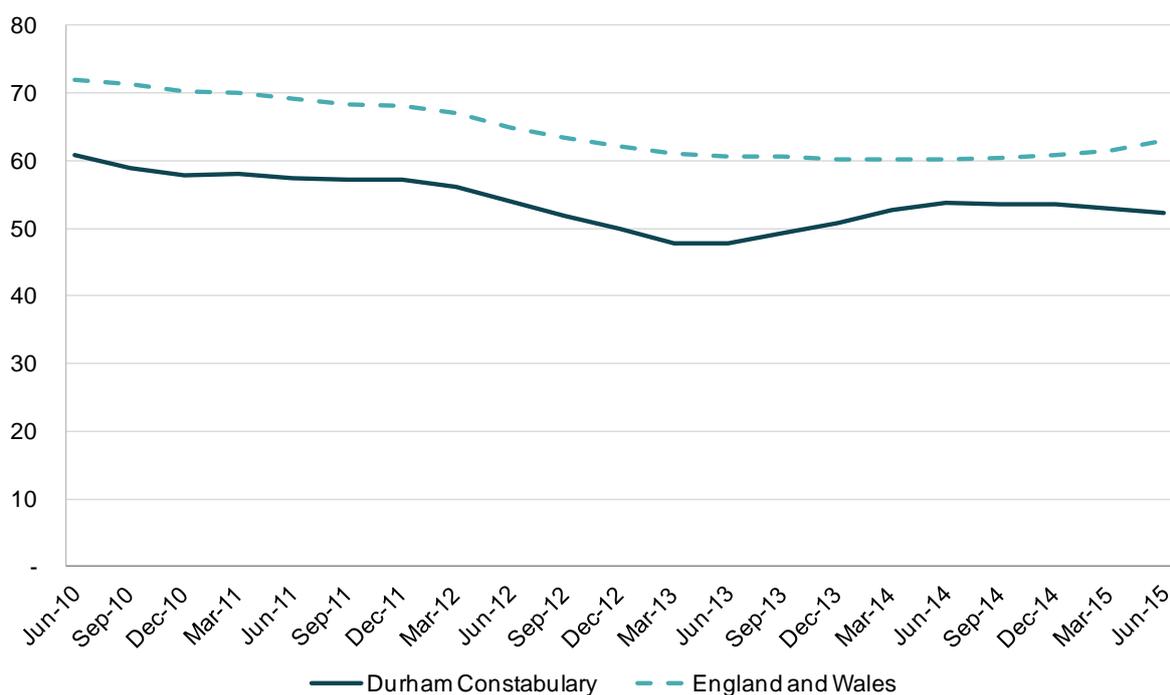
Although police recorded crime is by no means a complete measure of the totality of demand for calls on its service that a force faces, it does provide a comparable indication of performance across all forces. Crime rates are reported as a number of crimes per 1,000 population in each force area to enable 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 14 percent in Durham 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 14 percent in Durham, compared with a reduction of 12 percent across England and Wales.

When compared with the previous year, police recorded crime (excluding fraud) in Durham decreased by 3 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 Durham (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**

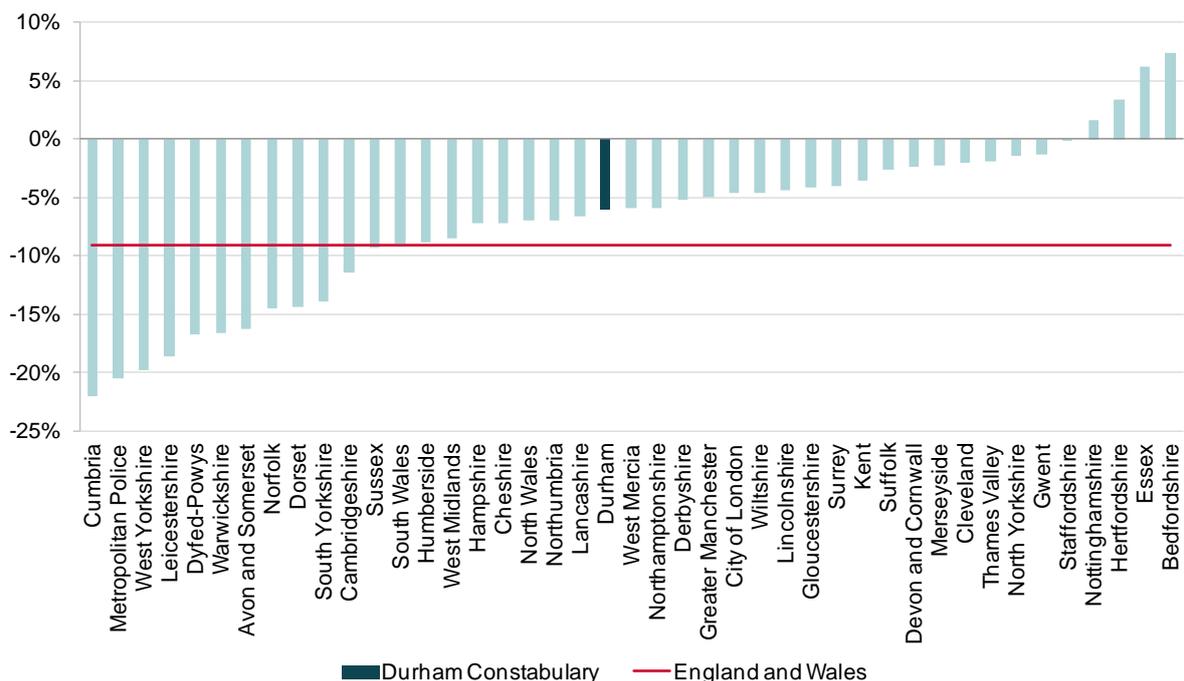
Rates per 1,000 population	Durham Constabulary	England and Wales
Recorded crime (excluding fraud)	52.3	63.0
Victim-based crime	47.1	56.0
Sexual offences	1.6	1.6
Assault with injury	5.9	6.3
Burglary in a dwelling*	4.7	8.4
Anti-social behaviour incidents*	44.9	32.9

**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, Durham Constabulary recorded 27,989 incidents of anti-social behaviour. This is 6 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?

Durham Constabulary has good arrangements in place to keep people safe and focus on the reduction of crime. HMIC found clear evidence of the constabulary placing a strong emphasis on tackling the underlying causes of crime and anti-social behaviour. The constabulary has developed a problem-solving approach to address crime and anti-social behaviour issues that is understood and used by officers and staff across the constabulary. The constabulary’s senior leaders place a high level of importance on this approach, illustrated by the chief constable taking a personal lead by giving problem-solving ‘master classes’ to officers and staff.

The constabulary formally recognises good work that has been highlighted by the public for exceptional service through the WOW! award ceremonies for outstanding customer service. A problem orientated policing (POP) conference is also organised to acknowledge staff achievement and promote and reward best practice in problem-solving

The constabulary has adopted the OSARA<sup>3</sup> problem-solving model. This sets out a planned approach for how problems should be considered in a structured and methodical way that is familiar to all staff. HMIC found strong evidence of widespread use of this approach. Problem-solving plans are recorded and managed on a problem-oriented policing database which is available to all staff. Officers are expected to evaluate their own plans at the conclusion of a project. Staff responsible for the most effective problem solving plans are also expected to produce a presentation of the results achieved. Problem-solving plans, evaluations and presentations are available to all staff on the constabulary intranet. This provides the constabulary with a clear mechanism for sharing good practice.

HMIC found evidence that the constabulary deals with local problems at a local level. Solving problems at the earliest opportunity is at the heart of this ethos and the constabulary has a clear commitment to developing this approach even more in the future. In order to understand local issues better, the constabulary has produced a range of problem profiles in relation to specific neighbourhood concerns. HMIC found clear evidence of strong links with partners at a strategic and operational level to ensure plans are jointly developed and fully implemented to have the maximum possible benefit.

HMIC found that the constabulary places a high degree of importance on preventing crime before it happens and tackling anti-social behaviour. The impact of this approach on reducing demand on public services and improving quality of life is very well understood throughout the constabulary and across all departments.

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

The constabulary is committed to officers and staff working effectively within neighbourhoods to prevent crime and anti-social behaviour. At a strategic level it has combined its crime and response policing commands. This is intended to increase flexibility and the availability of staff, so making the number of officers available to carry out neighbourhood policing duties as large as possible. Officers with whom HMIC spoke stated that this had largely been successful, with few and limited occasions when officers from the neighbourhood teams were abstracted (moved) to other duties.

Staff felt that any abstractions from neighbourhood patrolling that did occur were unavoidable owing to more pressing public safety concerns or to respond to urgent incidents. The police and community support officers (PCSOs) we interviewed are

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<sup>3</sup> OSARA – problem-solving model based on Outcomes, Scanning, Analysis, Response and Assessment.

rarely abstracted from their normal duties and are clear that their priorities were community engagement and tackling anti-social behaviour. The way in which this activity is carried out derives from local priorities and the problem-solving plans within their area of responsibility.

HMIC reviewed a number of problem-solving plans and found them to be of a good standard, with evidence of continued ownership and accountability, supervisory scrutiny and the involvement of a number of local agencies and partners. It is clear that the constabulary's commitment to preventing crime and anti-social behaviour is well supported by the resources allocated to manage these issues.

In order to engage with harder-to-reach communities, the constabulary uses dedicated community cohesion officers. These officers have a specific responsibility to build contacts and positive relationships with particular groups such as the black and minority ethnic community, lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender community and hearing and sight impaired groups. Their aim is to ensure that the views and needs of such communities are taken into consideration when police activity is being planned. HMIC found these officers to be extremely committed and considerate in their approach to involving minority groups in the way that Durham Constabulary serves all sections of the community.

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

The constabulary makes effective use of a broad range of appropriate tactics to prevent crime and anti-social behaviour and keep people safe. This includes a very good understanding and use of anti-social behaviour powers, including the use of closure orders to reduce anti-social behaviour at licensed premises and dispersal notices to prevent the gathering of individuals in a locality to disrupt the peace for local residents.<sup>4</sup>

Officers and staff are encouraged by the constabulary leadership to be innovative in their approach to tackling community issues and HMIC found strong evidence of this in practice. One such example involved the constabulary working with volunteers from Durham University to conduct patrols along the river that runs through Durham to prevent students from putting themselves in danger by entering the water while under the influence of alcohol. Other examples include a scheme whereby officers place cardboard 'hands' through insecure windows to highlight the potential for opportunist theft and to encourage home owners to give more consideration to home security.

The approach taken by the constabulary is very much preventative. Officers are encouraged to identify where crime and anti-social behaviour may happen and then take appropriate steps to reduce the likelihood that they occur.

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<sup>4</sup> Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014. Available from: [www.gov.uk/government/collections/anti-social-behaviour-crime-and-police-bill](http://www.gov.uk/government/collections/anti-social-behaviour-crime-and-police-bill)

Durham Constabulary has positive and established relationships with other agencies to prevent crime. The Safer Homes initiative involves the constabulary working in partnership with the local authority, the fire service and other agencies to ensure specific and tailored support is given to elderly or vulnerable victims of house burglary in order to prevent them becoming victims again. In addition, the constabulary has a very large number of 'watch' schemes, such as neighbourhood watch, farm watch and rural watch. It makes good use of these schemes to raise public awareness and to enlist the help of communities to tackle crime. The constabulary estimates that 24 percent of the population of County Durham and Darlington live within the remit of a current 'watch' scheme across the constabulary area.

## **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?**

Durham Constabulary has well-established and committed arrangements in place to ensure that its work with other organisations is effective and delivered in the most efficient way for all of the agencies involved. Working arrangements at all levels are strong and mature. HMIC found good evidence that the constabulary is working with partners to ensure a joint approach to the challenges posed by cuts to public sector funding. This has resulted in the development of common objectives and discussions at a strategic level about how to respond to the funding challenges in a way that will not disadvantage public services being delivered by other agencies. The constabulary has been proactive in drawing on the additional resources, skills and enforcement powers that partners bring to help make problem-solving effective and to tackle problems at an early stage. HMIC spoke with representatives from a number of partner agencies. All were extremely positive about the commitment that the constabulary makes to supporting them and in relation to the partnership working arrangements in place across the constabulary area.

We found examples of the constabulary using the knowledge and expertise of partners to improve the skills and abilities of its own staff. For example, the HALO project<sup>5</sup> has been involved in training Durham Constabulary officers in relation to diversity and emerging issues such as so-called honour-based violence, forced marriage and female genital mutilation.

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

The constabulary has strong arrangements in place to collect, share and act on partner information to prevent crime and anti-social behaviour. Each of the local

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<sup>5</sup> The Halo project provides training to the police and other services who may come into contact with victims of so-called honour-based violence and forced marriage. Available from:

[www.haloproject.org.uk](http://www.haloproject.org.uk)

policing areas has a formal information sharing meeting with partners. These were previously called 'zonal meetings'. However the constabulary is currently involved with Durham County Council in moving to a multi-agency information sharing (MAIS) meeting. This is intended to bring a more consistent approach to how information is shared across the partnership in the area covered by the local authority.

Information sharing, discussions about individual cases and pre-arranged preventative activity take place through both informal and formal multi-agency arrangements to prioritise activity and allocate resources. For example information about offenders on the Checkpoint project, which is aimed at deterring offending, is shared across agencies using a computer system developed by the constabulary and made available to a number of partners. This allows easy sharing of information and recording of activity. Anti-social behaviour data from partners is considered by the constabulary analytical team when refreshing the constabulary anti-social behaviour strategy. All of these arrangements ensure that the constabulary and its partners work in a co-ordinated way to make the most of the information they have available and to use it to understand how they can each best serve the local community.

The constabulary introduced an alcohol reduction unit in 2012 to reduce the impact that the misuse of alcohol was having on constabulary resources. The unit was also required to identify innovative ways to reduce the harm that misuse of alcohol causes as well as provide a central point of expertise for the constabulary in relation to licensing issues. The unit is co-located with partner services such as trading standards and environmental health. It has evolved into a multi-agency licensing hub where police and partner agencies use the full range of legal enforcement options available to monitor and regulate all licensed premises, security door staff and the local taxi services. This has meant that the constabulary has a fully integrated approach to managing the night time economy across the constabulary area and is able to exert a strong influence on those venues where there is a potential for disorder. In this way, the alcohol reduction unit officers have been able to secure the effective management of premises where legal requirements are not being adhered to or where criminal behaviour may be an issue. As a direct result, the team has been able to gain useful intelligence and disrupt organised criminals attempting to own or control licensed premises across the constabulary area.

HMIC found many good examples of effective information sharing being used productively to tackle issues at a local policing level. Neighbourhood teams have established positive relationships with other agencies working within the same communities. They share the same objectives to address and improve quality of life issues for the local community. One example of where this was put into practice involved a tenant who was frequently behaving in an anti-social manner towards his neighbours. The tenant was visited by housing association officers who saw evidence of cannabis misuse. They informed their local policing team who undertook enforcement action. This resulted in evidence that was sufficient to prove a breach of

tenancy. The tenant was subsequently evicted and moved out of the area. Such simple but effective approaches underpin the constabulary approach of dealing with local issues at a neighbourhood level.

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

The constabulary works well with partner organisations to keep people safe and tackle anti-social behaviour in local neighbourhoods. HMIC found a number of good examples of this type of effective problem-solving. The constabulary takes part in multi-agency information sharing meetings that set common objectives and focus activity on shared problems. Primary school children are involved through an initiative known as the Mini Police. This involves the children recording internet blogs relating to cyber safety and security. These are shared on the video-sharing website YouTube and have proved highly effective in increasing the understanding of young people in relation to the dangers of online contact with strangers. Local authority anti-social behaviour officers have been issued with police radios to allow them to be aware of constabulary initiatives and problem-solving activities. They can also be available to respond to incidents of anti-social behaviour, so reducing demand on the constabulary while improving the multi-agency response to victims of anti-social behaviour. Local authority anti-social behaviour co-ordinators work closely with neighbourhood policing teams, regularly informing and directing their patrolling plans. The constabulary has also adopted an educational approach with partners and local communities to tackle anti-social use of the roads, for example by motorcyclists riding at excessive speed and speeding cars in villages.

The constabulary has adopted a particularly innovative approach in the Deneside area as part of a community engagement initiative, Mutual Gain. Working with the local area action partnership, the constabulary has helped rejuvenate Deneside. Previously it had been a locality that had suffered from high levels of crime and anti-social behaviour, including large scale disorder. In addition, the local community had little confidence in the police. Since January 2014, the area has been transformed through the work of committed staff and by empowering local people to take control of their own destiny and make decisions about their future. This has been achieved by allowing them to have greater control over how local re-generation investment is allocated. As at September 2015, the constabulary's own analysis suggested that this approach had brought about a 21 percent reduction in recorded crime and 26 percent reduction in anti-social behaviour. More importantly, the community of Deneside is now in control of its future. The residents are now overseeing the initiative and the police are taking less of a leading role. The cycle of criminality among some families in that community has been broken and the demand on the police and other local public services has reduced. The constabulary believes that this is a long-term problem-solving initiative that has made a positive difference to the lives of local people.

## Summary of findings



### Outstanding

Durham Constabulary places a clear emphasis on crime prevention and delivering long-term solutions through effective analysis of issues and problem-solving. This is evident among staff and across all departments throughout the constabulary. The chief constable takes a personal lead as champion for this approach.

The constabulary is committed to local policing teams working effectively in neighbourhoods to tackle crime and anti-social behaviour. Frontline resources have been maintained to ensure neighbourhood teams can solve local crime and anti-social behaviour issues with supportive partner agencies.

Excellent links have been established with partner agencies who assist the constabulary with additional resources and enforcement tactics to address crime and anti-social behaviour at an early stage.

HMIC found many good examples of the constabulary working innovatively to prevent and reduce crime and anti-social behaviour and make the best use of appropriate legal powers.

Good arrangements are in place through neighbourhood teams and community cohesion officers to communicate with the public, identify issues and update them on the service being provided by the constabulary.

## 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, including 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. Durham 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)<sup>6 7 8</sup>**

Outcome type/group	Durham Constabulary Number of outcomes	Rate	England and Wales Number of outcomes	Rate
<b>Charged/Summonsed</b>	<b>7,468</b>	<b>22.9</b>	<b>577,678</b>	<b>16.0</b>
<b>Taken into consideration</b>	<b>518</b>	<b>1.6</b>	<b>21,318</b>	<b>0.6</b>
<b>Out-of-court (formal)</b>	<b>2,773</b>	<b>8.5</b>	<b>165,384</b>	<b>4.6</b>
Caution - youths	317	1.0	19,703	0.5
Caution - adults	2,017	6.2	115,000	3.2
Penalty Notices for Disorder	439	1.3	30,681	0.8
<b>Out-of-court (informal)</b>	<b>2,922</b>	<b>9.0</b>	<b>159,915</b>	<b>4.4</b>
Cannabis/Khat warning	351	1.1	41,964	1.2
Community resolution	2,571	7.9	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<sup>9</sup> warning' outcomes would be greater.

The frequency of outcomes may also reflect the constabulary'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. Durham Constabulary has one of the highest rates for 'charged/summonsed', 'taken into consideration', 'caution – adults' and 'community resolution' rates of all forces in England and Wales.

Where suspects for crime are identified, the constabulary has effective processes in place to locate them and where appropriate make an arrest. HMIC found clear

<sup>6</sup> 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.

<sup>7</sup> 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](http://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/445753/hosb0115.pdf)

<sup>8</sup> 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.

<sup>9</sup> 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.

evidence of officers being allocated tasks on a daily basis to locate and arrest suspects. This is well supported by records we reviewed on the constabulary's crime management system.

In the area of crime investigation and crime prevention, priority is given to the speedy arrest of suspects, particularly those suspected of committing crimes against vulnerable victims or who are wanted for serious or priority crimes, such as dwelling burglary. HMIC found consistently good evidence of monitoring of activity to arrest suspects by local commanders and supervisors.

Suspects not arrested quickly have their details placed on the police national computer (PNC) as 'wanted'. This means that if they are stopped in another part of the country and have their details checked by other police officers, they will be detained to be questioned about the offence for which they are wanted in the Durham Constabulary area.

HMIC found that the constabulary's processes for monitoring crime reports and files of evidence in cases where suspects are circulated as wanted on the PNC are not as robust as they could be. Furthermore, the regular audit of files involving suspects circulated as wanted, to ensure that they are of the required quality, has lapsed in some areas. The constabulary should consider how these cases are managed in future to ensure that files retain all necessary information and detail to allow a thorough investigation to continue once a suspect is detained.

Forensic evidence such as DNA and fingerprints are a valuable method of identifying suspects involved in crime. The constabulary has good procedures in place to ensure that once a suspect has been identified through forensic techniques, officers are notified swiftly so that the suspect may be dealt with as a priority. These arrangements include the ability to review progress in examining forensic evidence and locating and interviewing each individual identified by forensic means. This process is subject to regular assessment by supervisors and senior officers. HMIC found that this process is well managed with no undue delays.

## **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.

Durham Constabulary has a policy that where possible, it attends all reports of crime and anti-social behaviour to carry out an investigation and provide the necessary

support for victims. In applying this policy, the constabulary reports a current attendance rate of 97 percent. The 3 percent of crimes that it does not attend are historic crimes, or those allegations reported by organisations or individuals who reside outside the constabulary area.

The constabulary does not have a documented crime allocation policy to prescribe how different types of crime will be allocated to investigators. Despite this, HMIC found that officers clearly understand the process for allocating and investigating crime and there are clear, simple processes for deciding who is assigned to investigate cases. Staff have an extremely positive attitude and told us that they would deal with all crime investigations assigned to them. HMIC found no evidence that the lack of a formal policy affects the response to reports of crime or initial investigation.

The constabulary ethos is to 'get it right first time' and it supports this by directing specialist officers to attend serious crimes from the outset. It is often the case that an experienced detective will be despatched to a dwelling burglary or a sexual offence as the first responder wherever possible. Officers we spoke to were supportive of this approach and could evidence how this improved the initial investigation and overall level of service provided to the victim.

The service to victims of crime is clearly very important to Durham Constabulary. Officers we interviewed demonstrated a commitment to a high level of victim care, which included regular contact to update the victim on progress in their case. HMIC found high levels of compliance with the *Code of Practice for Victims of Crime*.<sup>10</sup> In all of the case files that HMIC reviewed, we found clear evidence that the requirements of this code had been complied with. This is supported further by the routine use of an information booklet which is issued to staff and given to all victims of crime. This booklet contains a range of information for victims and includes guidance on support services, crime prevention guidance, contact details of officers and other entitlements under the code.

The majority of people detained or arrested by the constabulary are dealt with by prisoner handling teams. HMIC found that the documentation used by arresting officers to transfer persons arrested to prisoner handling teams for interview and further investigation was of a high standard. The constabulary has clear processes to ensure ownership of and accountability for these cases. HMIC reviewed a number of investigations that had been carried out by prisoner handling teams and found all to be of a good standard.

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<sup>10</sup> The code of practice requires, among other things, that officers provide regular updates to victim of crime on the progress of investigations. *Code of Practice for Victims of Crime*, Ministry of Justice, October 2015. Available from: [www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/470212/code-of-practice-for-victims-of-crime.PDF](http://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/470212/code-of-practice-for-victims-of-crime.PDF)

### **How well does the force investigate different types of crime?**

Within Durham Constabulary, less complex crime is investigated by uniform staff with more serious or complex cases being investigated by detectives. HMIC found a strong element of personal responsibility, ownership and accountability for conducting investigations. This contributes to Durham Constabulary being effective at investigating crime at all levels. Investigative opportunities are identified and carried out in a timely fashion. All of the crime cases reviewed by HMIC had clear investigation plans and good evidence of supervisory input by line managers. It is clear that investigations are being monitored to ensure all investigative opportunities are considered and completed. Progress on these plans is recorded on the constabulary's crime management system. This system is used effectively to ensure that cases are appropriately managed.

The use of forensic specialists to support investigations is effective and consistent. Crime scene investigators attend every crime scene for certain types of crime (such as burglary), and will attend any other crime scene where there is a potential opportunity for the recovery of forensic evidence. Forensic specialists also provide a triage or prioritisation service by telephone for investigators to support them in identifying the best options to obtain forensic evidence and to develop investigations.

The constabulary has trained specialist resources to investigate more complex and serious crime, such as child abuse, high risk domestic abuse and homicide. The serious and complex crime cases reviewed by HMIC had evidence of thorough investigations with clear investigation plans, and strong and consistent supervisory input. This provides further evidence that the constabulary investigates crime effectively.

The constabulary has tracked the number of trained specialist investigators that it has available to investigate crime. It currently has an adequate number of skilled detectives across the constabulary and all detectives are either accredited or working towards accreditation under appropriate supervision.

### **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 (HTCUs), carry out these examinations.

In Durham, there is a well-managed HTCUC that deals with the examination of seized digital devices. The HTCUC estimates that 80-85 percent of its work relates to examining items containing possible evidence of indecent material involving children. The HTCUC has good procedures in place to assess whether there is likely to be evidence on each submitted exhibit when it comes into the unit. This helps to prioritise those cases where the present risk to children is deemed to be greatest.

However, there are delays in the examination of devices for those cases not assessed as high priority. For example, most computer examinations of medium and low-priority cases take between four and six months to process. The constabulary has recognised this issue and is putting in place measures to reduce delays. The constabulary is recruiting additional staff to the HTCUC to reduce the waiting times for examinations. This approach has been further supported by agreement with the Crown Prosecution Service to limit the examination of each device to a point where sufficient evidence is secured to support a prosecution case against a suspect. HMIC assesses that these measures will deal with the backlog in the short to medium term. The constabulary may wish to consider a review of how it deals with the increasing demand for such examinations in the longer term.

The majority of mobile phones are now examined by local officers trained to carry out a limited examination of evidence retained on these devices. The constabulary has purchased computer software designed to provide early indicative findings to support these officers in their examination and to ensure that these phones do not need to be submitted to the HTCUC for further assessment. The constabulary's own figures indicate that 90 percent of cases are now examined in this way. This has improved the timeliness of investigations where digital evidence is a factor and given a better service, both to victims and investigating officers. As it previously outsourced mobile phone examinations to a private company, this approach has also produced financial savings for the constabulary.

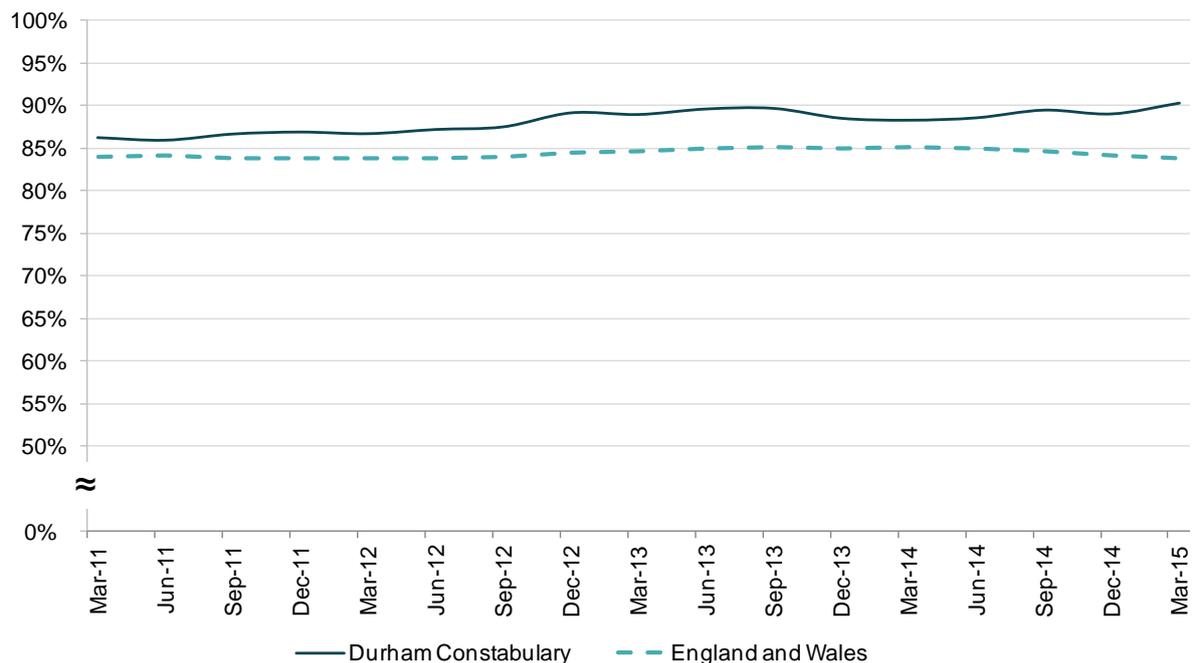
Durham Constabulary has recently set up a cyber-crime unit to deal with the growing threat of cyber-dependent crime. Cyber-dependent crime predominantly relates to hacking and deliberate denial of service attacks. To supplement the capability of this unit, the constabulary has recruited volunteer IT students from Durham University to complete research and analysis on behalf of the cyber-crime unit. The unit also intends to develop a strong preventative arm. It has already produced an internal cyber safety message for staff and has commissioned the students to design posters and messages for the wider public on this subject. The unit has also used the constabulary's Mini Police volunteers (primary school children) to record cyber safety messages that have been uploaded to YouTube to promote the e-safety message further.

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

Durham Constabulary focuses activity on providing a good service to victims of crime and anti-social behaviour. As well as the victim booklets and compliance with the code of practice for victims of crime, both of which are referred to earlier in this report, supervisors within the constabulary conduct telephone interviews with victims of certain types of crime, such as dwelling burglary and vehicle crime, seven days after the crime is initially reported. The purpose of this call is to provide reassurance, obtain any further information and ascertain if there are any issues in relation to the way the case is being managed. These calls are made irrespective of whether or not the crime is solved. The constabulary believes that this approach contributes significantly to the high levels of satisfaction among victims in Durham.

Of those who have been the victim of a crime in Durham in the 12 months to 31 March 2015, 90.3 percent were satisfied with their whole experience with the police. This is higher than the national victim satisfaction rate of 83.8 percent over the same time period. The victim satisfaction rate in Durham for the 12 months to 31 March 2015 is broadly in line with the previous year's rate, while it is significantly higher 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?**

Durham Constabulary places a great deal of importance on diverting offenders away from crime as part of its wider focus on preventing crime. The constabulary has adopted an approach that seeks to provide 'seven critical pathways'<sup>11</sup> out of offending behaviour for more persistent offenders. The general principle underpinning this approach is that these pathways can offer the stability and support that an offender will need to discontinue their involvement in crime.

Officers and staff within the constabulary are trained to recognise appropriate pathways and to offer support to offenders at an early stage. HMIC found clear evidence that offenders are being offered an interview separate from any criminal investigation in an attempt to understand the reasons for their offending and to break their cycle of offending. If the offender takes advantage of the service offered and requests support, then that help is offered by a multi-agency critical pathways team based within the police station. This support is quick and easy to arrange. If the offender is not willing to engage, the constabulary uses the intelligence from the interview to support its wider approach to preventing crime through increased monitoring of the offender, with a view to catching them for offences they may commit in the future and placing them before the court.

To support further its philosophy of intervening at an early stage, the constabulary introduced its Checkpoint scheme in April 2015. In this scheme, offenders who are at an early stage in their offending behaviour and have a small number of convictions for less serious crime, are identified and referred into the scheme before they leave custody. The decision to charge them with an offence is then deferred for four months, while the offender enters into a contract not to offend and to make reparation for the offence committed. During the four-month period, each offender on the scheme must comply with a contract that includes conditions such as apologising to the victim, attending drug or alcohol treatment sessions and completing a set number of hours of unpaid community work. If the offender accepts and abides by the conditions of the contract for four months, no charges are brought and the case is closed. Offenders are supported throughout the period of the scheme by an experienced 'navigator', who is a specially trained member of staff. Victims also support the scheme and are updated on progress of the offender. The scheme is due to be evaluated by Cambridge University, but initial results are encouraging. The constabulary reports that of the 43 offenders who have completed the 4-month contract so far, as yet, none have re-offended. When compared to re-offending rates

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<sup>11</sup> These pathways are i) Accommodation and support, ii) Education, training and employment, iii) Health, iv) Drugs and alcohol, v) Finance, benefits and debt, vi) Children and families, vii) Attitudes, thinking and behaviour. (Source: End to end management of offenders – National Offender Management Service).

for traditional integrated offender management schemes, this is remarkable and HMIC will await the evaluation with interest.

In addition to an approach that takes a more holistic look at why offenders commit crime and finds new ways to discourage their further offending, Durham Constabulary has also adopted a scheme specifically to support female offenders and divert them away from crime, in order to prevent a disproportionate impact upon families. The Women's Diversionary Scheme is still in its early stages but follows a similar approach to that already described. Its adoption further illustrates the efforts being made by the constabulary to deal more positively with the person committing the crime rather than merely tackling the crime itself.

These examples provide evidence that Durham Constabulary is committed to a rehabilitative approach when dealing with offenders who commit crime. It has trained 2,000 staff in restorative justice techniques and approaches.<sup>12</sup>

### **How well does the force deal with repeat offenders?**

Durham Constabulary has a more traditional integrated offender management (IOM) scheme which focuses predominantly on prolific offenders involved in committing acquisitive crime. The IOM programme is delivered through dedicated specialist officers working closely with neighbourhood officers and probation colleagues. Neighbourhood staff have extensive knowledge of the offenders being managed by IOM, which contributes to its effectiveness. HMIC found clear evidence of information sharing between the IOM and neighbourhood teams and the constabulary was able to demonstrate how offenders were managed successfully. We reviewed a number of case files involving these offenders. All showed adequate levels of monitoring of offenders on the scheme, together with effective partnership arrangements to both engage with offenders and gather intelligence on their circumstances and likelihood of re-offending.

Durham Constabulary is attempting to widen its approach to dealing with repeat violent offenders in its adoption of the serial perpetrators of violence scheme (SPOVS). Every six months the constabulary conducts analysis to identify violent offenders who are involved in committing more than one offence involving violence during that time. Plans are then considered on a multi-agency basis, to restrict the violent behaviour, either by targeting the offender to prevent further offences or by offering support to the offender to deal with any underlying issues. This is another example of the constabulary using an offender-focused approach to prevent re-offending.

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<sup>12</sup> Restorative justice brings together people harmed by crime or conflict with those responsible for the harm, to find a positive way forward.

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

The constabulary has clear processes for identifying and monitoring sexual and other dangerous offenders and has dedicated accredited staff in place to carry this out.

Registered sex offenders are monitored by a team of eight full-time officers based in a public protection unit in Durham. Clear supervision and governance arrangements are in place for those staff monitoring and engaging with registered sexual offenders. This helps to ensure these offenders are visited regularly. HMIC found that capacity to manage sex offenders may become an issue in future as the number of registered sexual offenders requiring supervision is increasing each year. This increase in workload is beginning to create pressure on the completion of timely risk assessment processes and the visits regime. Additionally, there is a backlog in the supervision and endorsement of risk management plans carried out by the two sergeants on the team in relation to the managed offenders.

The constabulary should consider how it will manage these issues in the future and reassure itself that the current arrangements will continue to provide the effective oversight of registered sex offenders to keep the public safe.

Many registered sexual offenders are resident and are managed by the public protection unit within communities. HMIC identified that neighbourhood staff have access to intelligence in relation to registered sexual offenders resident in their area. However, in practice they have limited involvement or interaction with them unless they are requested to do so by the public protection unit. As such, there is scope for the constabulary to do more to involve neighbourhood officers and other frontline staff in the routine monitoring of registered sex offenders.

The constabulary has recognised the risk from a growing number of dangerous offenders who are suitable for the multi-agency public protection arrangements (MAPPAs)<sup>13</sup> process. MAPPAs are used by the constabulary and partner organisations including the National Offender Management Service to monitor those offenders assessed as presenting a high risk to the public, and to stop them re-offending. HMIC found good management of these offenders within the constabulary, and a good level of knowledge among local policing teams. Senior officers from local policing teams attend meetings in relation to dangerous offenders where appropriate and take responsibility for managing the risk they present.

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<sup>13</sup> 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.

## Summary of findings



### Outstanding

Durham Constabulary has an excellent record of solving crime and bringing offenders to justice. It has a policy to attend all crime incidents to carry out an effective initial investigation. Good arrangements are in place to identify suspects at an early stage and to prioritise their arrest to prevent them from re-offending.

Crime enquiries are allocated to appropriately trained staff who have the necessary time and resources to carry out good quality investigations.

Digital evidence is gathered and assessed appropriately.

Good relationships exist with partner agencies to deal with persistent offenders in a holistic way to break their cycle of offending. This approach involves a strong element of victim reparation, offender rehabilitation and ensures the underlying reasons behind each offender committing crime are identified and addressed.

While offenders are managed appropriately by dedicated staff across the constabulary with partner agencies, there is scope for the constabulary to involve frontline policing teams more in the routine monitoring of registered sex offenders resident in some communities.

## 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.<sup>14</sup> The following is a summary of the findings.

### Summary of findings



Protecting vulnerable people and supporting victims is a high priority for Durham Constabulary. Both the police and crime commissioner and the chief constable are committed strongly to improving services to protect and support vulnerable people and victims. HMIC judges the constabulary as good at protecting from harm those who are vulnerable and supporting victims.

The constabulary has clear and consistently-applied processes in place to identify repeat and vulnerable victims. It has regular and robust supervisory processes for the oversight and scrutiny of incidents to ensure an appropriate and timely response.

To help achieve the constabulary's commitment to improve the services provided to vulnerable people, Durham Constabulary has invested significantly in training staff. HMIC found a good level of knowledge and understanding during this inspection.

The constabulary uses innovative ways of working to protect and support vulnerable people, often in partnership with other agencies.

Durham Constabulary has good arrangements with partner agencies to keep vulnerable people safe. The constabulary is working hard to enhance these arrangements further.

Overall the constabulary provides a good response to missing children and safeguards them well. It has made good progress in its preparedness to tackle child sexual exploitation.

HMIC found effective work being done to tackle domestic abuse. Staff understand how to safeguard domestic abuse victims and the constabulary uses technology to improve its response and to provide support to victims.

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<sup>14</sup> *PEEL: Police effectiveness 2015 (Vulnerability) – Durham Constabulary*, HMIC, December 2015. Available from: [www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmic/publications/police-effectiveness-vulnerability-2015-durham/](http://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmic/publications/police-effectiveness-vulnerability-2015-durham/)

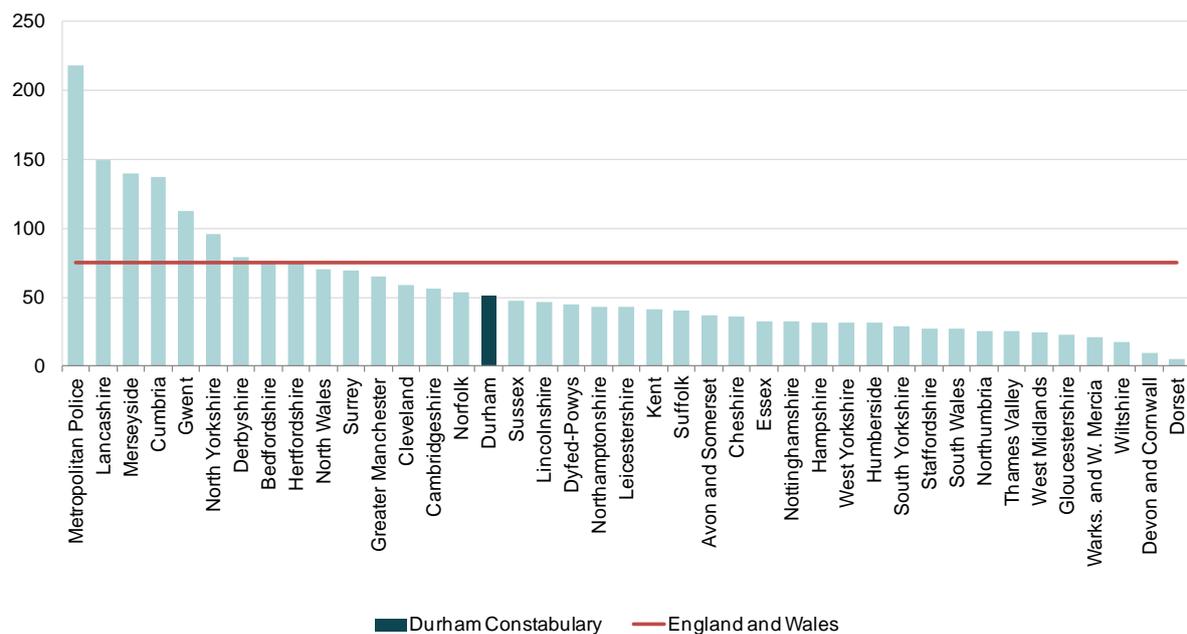
## **How effective is the force at tackling serious and organised crime, including its arrangements for fulfilling its national policing responsibilities?**

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 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, Durham Constabulary was actively disrupting, investigating or monitoring 32 organised crime groups (OCGs). This represents 51 OCGs per one million of the population.

**Figure 6: Organised crime groups per one million population, by force, as at 30 June 2015<sup>15 16</sup>**



**Source: HMIC data collection**

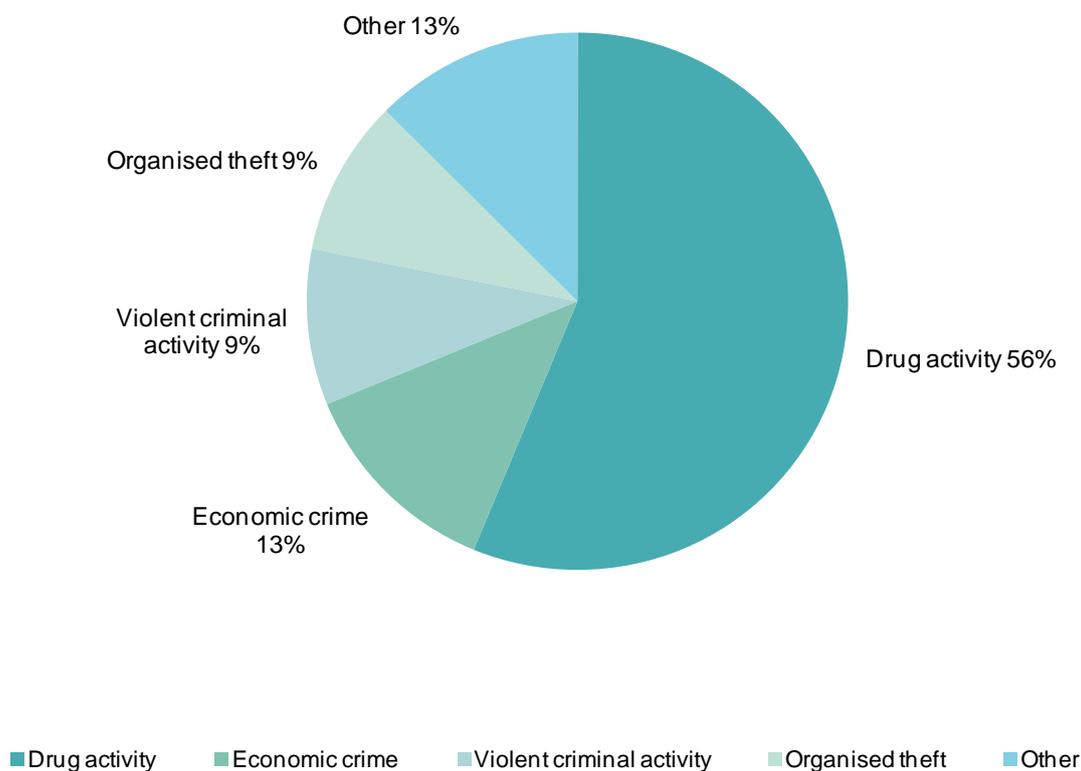
Forces categorise OCGs by the predominant form of criminal activity in which the group is involved. Although OCGs are likely to be involved in multiple forms of criminality, this indicates their most common characteristic. 'Drug activity' was the predominant crime type (56 percent) of the OCGs managed by Durham Constabulary as at 30 June 2015. 'Drug activity' was also the most common predominant crime type recorded by all forces in England and Wales,<sup>17</sup> with 65 percent of all OCGs classified in this way.

<sup>15</sup> 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.

<sup>16</sup> 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.

<sup>17</sup> 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 2015<sup>18</sup>**



**Source: HMIC data collection**

Serious and organised crime is one of six national threats specified within *The Strategic Policing Requirement*.<sup>19</sup> 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.

<sup>18</sup> Figures may not sum to 100 percent, due to rounding.

<sup>19</sup> *The Strategic Policing Requirement*, Home Office, March 2015. Available from: [www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/417116/The\\_Strategic\\_Policin\\_g\\_Requirement.pdf](http://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/417116/The_Strategic_Policin_g_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?**

The constabulary has made tackling serious and organised crime a force priority and this is reflected in the police and crime commissioner's plan to support a resilient regional OCG strategy.<sup>20</sup> The constabulary has good structures and established partnerships in place to fully understand and tackle organised crime. It has produced a local serious and organised crime profile using partner information and has identified membership and interdependencies of all the known current OCGs across the constabulary area. This enables the constabulary to understand which OCGs present the greatest risk to the public and enables it to target its resources accordingly.

OCG identification and mapping is undertaken to a high standard. One analyst undertakes OCG mapping for the force, providing a consistent approach to identifying and understanding the threat presented by OCGs and the localities where OCGs operate. There is a clear correlation in the perceived threat presented by the most dangerous OCGs and the provision of specialist resources assigned by the constabulary to tackle them.

When a police force identifies a group of individuals whom it suspects may be involved in organised crime, it goes through a nationally standardised 'mapping' procedure. This involves entering details of the group's known and suspected activity, associates and capability into a computer system, which assigns a numerical score to each OCG. It also places each OCG into one of several 'bands' which reflect the range and severity of crime in which a group is involved as well as its level of capability and sophistication. Police forces, ROCUs, the NCA and a number of non-police organisations such as Border Force, use OCG mapping.

Despite the use of standard software and methods, forces carry out OCG mapping inconsistently and there is significant variation in the number of mapped OCGs per head of population across England and Wales. This inconsistency is partly due to the unavoidably subjective nature of some aspects of the mapping procedure, which relies on human judgment as well as computer algorithms. Sometimes, groups exhibiting similar characteristics are scored in different ways, and forces do not always use the full range of information available to generate OCG scores, which can compromise their accuracy and usefulness.

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<sup>20</sup> *Police and crime plan 2015-17*, Durham PCC, 2015. Available from: [www.durham-pcc.gov.uk/Your-PCC/Police-and-Crime-Plan/Police-and-Crime-Plan.aspx](http://www.durham-pcc.gov.uk/Your-PCC/Police-and-Crime-Plan/Police-and-Crime-Plan.aspx)

For these reasons, HMIC has recommended that ROCUs assume responsibility for OCG mapping on behalf of their constituent forces.<sup>21</sup>

The constabulary has good intelligence sharing arrangements in place with the ROCU and with other regional police forces. In addition, the constabulary has good relations with the North East Regional Special Operations Unit (NERSOU), which has regularly supported the constabulary in more sensitive investigations.

Details of each OCG is presented on constabulary intelligence systems in such a way as to allow officers to understand its membership as well as details of the plan in place to challenge the group's criminality. This approach enables the constabulary to ensure that all staff are involved in targeting members of OCGs. As an example, specific frontline policing teams have been assigned individuals – who are known to be involved with OCGs – to monitor in order to gather intelligence and disrupt any criminality. Officers are regularly briefed. They know which OCGs are operating in their ward areas and actively contribute to the intelligence picture and disruption activity.

The constabulary has completed specific intelligence assessments in relation to emerging serious crime threats, such as child sexual exploitation, human trafficking and cyber-crime. The constabulary has excellent relationships with the ROCU, regional police forces and the NCA. Additionally, as well as having a detailed understanding of local OCGs that reside and commit crime in the area, the constabulary has a good understanding of the threat posed by those OCGs that reside outside of the constabulary area but pose a threat to Durham communities.

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

The constabulary's management of serious and organised crime is highly effective. It involves all parts of the constabulary and in addition, the constabulary has well established and productive partnerships which support initiatives to prevent serious and organised crime. An organised crime partnership disruption and intervention panel works with the constabulary to formulate a partnership approach to securing intelligence and tackling OCGs. In this way, partnership resources are focused on tackling the most significant crime threats across the constabulary area.

The constabulary has identified key members of staff to manage a planned tactical response to disrupting serious and organised criminality conducted by OCGs. These individuals set out a co-ordinated plan for each OCG that draws on different resources across the constabulary and partners to deal with crime committed by that group.

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<sup>21</sup> *Regional Organised Crime Units: A Review of Capability and Effectiveness*, HMIC, December 2015. Available from: [www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmic/wp-content/uploads/regional-organised-crime-units.pdf](http://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmic/wp-content/uploads/regional-organised-crime-units.pdf)

OCG management is fully incorporated into the constabulary's tasking and co-ordination processes. A separate multi-agency panel is developing that meets regularly to support investigators with additional tactical options when necessary. There is a strong emphasis on pursuing OCGs, with staff across the constabulary given consistent messages about their role in the identification of OCGs and their ongoing management. There are lead responsible officers (LROs) for each OCG who are supported and held to account for managing them effectively.

Within each area, a local threat and risk meeting is chaired each month by a superintendent. Among other things, these meetings consider intelligence on the emergence of new OCGs that require a plan owner to be identified and any that require referral to the disruption and intervention panel. Every plan owner submits monthly returns on the progress of investigations and the nature of any disruptive action taken which are reviewed at subsequent meetings. Plan managers have access to financial investigators and specially trained officers to support them in developing their tactical plans. Actions in each locality are then assessed for their effectiveness and are considered at a constabulary-level threat and risk meeting a few days after these area-based meetings have taken place.

On a daily basis, OCGs are reviewed both locally and at force level to ensure opportunities to disrupt them are fully exploited. We found several good examples of isolated pieces of intelligence being developed to identify offences that meant that significant OCG members could be arrested. In many cases, opportunities to involve partner agencies in enforcement activity were exploited to undermine OCGs further and restrict their capacity to commit crime.

The constabulary carries out enforcement operations with the Environment Agency, Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs (HMRC), Trading Standards, the fire and rescue service and the local council as well as private utility companies for re-payment of outstanding debts. These have all intervened in the business activities of OCGs to ensure that legal requirements relating to those businesses are being adhered to and the opportunities for these OCGs to engage in further criminality are reduced. Where breaches have been identified, prosecutions have followed.

In order to share best practice in tackling OCGs, the constabulary holds regular staff development days, which are attended by police officers and staff from across the constabulary area.

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

The constabulary is working with partner agencies and the community to prevent serious and organised crime on a number of levels.

HMIC found a significant number of examples where a range of partner agencies using different approaches have worked in a co-ordinated way to prevent crime and disrupt organised crime groups. We found excellent examples of the alcohol harm reduction unit closing down public houses which had been taken over by OCGs, by involving partner agencies to support them using a range of different enforcement options. This meant that OCGs were unable to establish a presence in communities to plan or conduct criminal behaviour, so preventing serious and organised crime from taking place. Another example was following the successful disruption of an OCG dealing drugs in Shotton, the constabulary spent £2,500 to provide new football strips to the local children's football team with the Operation Sledgehammer<sup>22</sup> logo on the shirts. This promoted a positive message that 'crime does not pay' to discourage potentially vulnerable young people from becoming involved in serious crime. This received significant media coverage and the parents were provided with leaflets to pass on to other parents of visiting teams. This generated interest in the police enforcement activity against local OCGs and reinforced community confidence that local criminals were being effectively dealt with.

To increase public awareness, visible police and partner activity in relation to serious and organised crime is always branded as Operation Sledgehammer. The constabulary ensures that it carries out leaflet drops in the proximity of initiatives involving OCGs and attends police and communities together (PACT) meetings afterwards to reassure the local community. In this way, the constabulary encourages local communities to have the confidence to come forward with intelligence in the expectation that the police will tackle organised crime.

Diverting young people is one of the success factors for Operation Sledgehammer. In the constabulary area, OCGs are often centred on small communities where there is a risk that impressionable children may aspire to become involved in organised crime. The constabulary makes a determined effort to identify young people they perceive to be at risk in this way. Vulnerable child forms are completed and submitted to partnership colleagues on the troubled families programme to ensure that adequate provision for their continued welfare is provided.

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<sup>22</sup> Operation Sledgehammer – Durham Constabulary generic operation to raise awareness of and tackle organised crime.

Where possible, the courts will support continued initiatives against organised crime in County Durham and Darlington. OCGs are subject to confiscations by the courts under the Proceeds of Crime Act 2002 to prevent OCGs from achieving financial benefit through committing crime. This money will be ploughed back into the partnership budget to support pro-active and preventative initiatives against organised crime.

## **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.

Durham Constabulary is meeting its responsibilities in respect of *The Strategic Policing Requirement*. The constabulary undertook an assessment of its standards and capabilities in April 2013 and produced an extensive report outlining its position in relation to *The Strategic Policing Requirement*. This included information on its preparedness in relation to organised crime, civil contingencies, counter-terrorism, critical incidents, domestic extremism, firearms, major crime, protecting vulnerable people, public order and roads policing.

The constabulary has a good relationship with the North East Counter Terrorism Unit (NECTU) and has built up a good understanding of managing local security issues which have a counter-terrorism element.

The constabulary has conducted analysis to establish the extent of child sexual exploitation across the constabulary area and continues to develop intelligence in relation to the sexual exploitation of women and girls in particular.

Cleveland Police and Durham Constabulary collaborate with their authorised firearms officers which provides resilience and supports mutual aid agreements.

The constabulary has recently set up and invested in a cyber-crime team and has conducted an assessment of its capability in responding to a cyber-enabled attack. The constabulary has expertly trained staff to monitor the threat of internet-based crime and draws on specialist volunteers to add capacity in this area.

Civil contingency planning is well-established in Durham Constabulary and there have been recent multi-agency exercises, most recently Exercise Gabion, to test resilience in a civil emergency. These were led by the chief constable who is a member of the local resilience forum.

In relation to public order, the constabulary maintains its mutual aid resource and states that it has been able to respond to requests for mutual aid on 99 percent of occasions. The constabulary has its own public order training facility and takes part in local and regional exercises.

## Summary of findings



**Outstanding**

Durham Constabulary has a comprehensive understanding of serious and organised crime through a thorough assessment of intelligence gained through its own resources and from partner information. Excellent partnership arrangements are in place to continue to build intelligence and to investigate and disrupt serious and organised crime across the constabulary area.

Responsibility for leading the response to tackling organised crime groups is clearly set out and there are good arrangements in place to ensure that all staff understand and challenge organised crime groups as an ongoing and priority activity throughout the constabulary.

Senior managers oversee a governance structure which monitors the response to organised crime and which is able to draw on the full support of a broad range of partner agencies.

The constabulary has appropriate arrangements in place to meet its national policing responsibilities and is developing a capacity to tackle cyber-enabled crime.

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

## 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.