



Inspecting policing
in the public interest

PEEL: Police effectiveness 2015

An inspection of North Wales Police



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

Overall judgment¹



Requires improvement

North Wales Police is judged to require improvement at keeping people safe and reducing crime. The force is good at preventing crime and anti-social behaviour. However in relation to how the force investigates crime, offender management is inconsistent and officers are sometimes assigned crimes to investigate that are beyond their level of training. Also, a more accurate assessment of risk when people first make contact with the force would ensure a better service is provided to victims. The force tackles serious and organised crime effectively in many respects although there is scope for improvement in some specific areas. This is the first year HMIC has graded forces on their overall effectiveness so a year-on-year comparison is not possible.

Summary

Overall North Wales Police is judged to require improvement at keeping people safe and reducing crime.

The priority to prevent crime and to keep people safe is commonly understood across the whole force. The force works effectively with partners in achieving these aims; the North Wales Police Victims Care Centre, which brings together partners to provide enhanced support to victims, is a good example.

Some minor improvements are needed in how North Wales Police assesses the impact of tactics used to tackle crime and anti-social behaviour; nevertheless the force uses a broad range of interventions to resolve local problems and is supported well by partner service providers.

North Wales Police's approach to investigating crime has some shortcomings. The force's policy for allocating crime to investigators is not clearly understood by the workforce. Furthermore we found examples of frontline officers undertaking investigations that were beyond their level of training and experience, including high-risk domestic abuse cases. This means that the service to victims might fall short of the required standard.

Additionally the integrated offender management scheme, which manages persistent offenders, has a number of problems that limit its effectiveness. These include

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

uncertainty about which offenders to include in the scheme, fragmented support from partner organisations and a lack of personalised plans for each client.

North Wales Police has a developing understanding of serious and organised crime. Serious and organised crime local profiles were being prepared but not complete at the time of our inspection. A greater involvement of partner organisations would not only bring a greater clarity of the scale of the problem but also offer solutions for tackling organised crime groups.

The force is assessed as being in a good state of readiness to fulfil its national policing responsibilities.

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



Good

North Wales Police is good at preventing crime, anti-social behaviour and keeping people safe. These priorities are explicit in the police and crime plan, the workforce understands them well and they are routinely translated into operational activity.

The chief officer group is driving the 'It Matters' campaign which reinforces the importance of professionalism, quality of service and victim focus. The force is adept at aligning resources to crime patterns and strong links with other service providers ensure that a broad range of tactics is available to address offending.

We found evidence of a well-motivated and experienced workforce working with others to provide a better service. A good example is the North Wales Police Victims Care Centre; this brings together a number of criminal justice partners to provide an enhanced level of support to

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



Requires improvement

North Wales Police's approach to investigating crimes requires improvement.

The workforce undeniably shows a commitment to victims and there are some examples of good investigative practice, but the force needs to improve its allocation of crime for investigation and offender management.

The identification of vulnerability at the first point of contact with the force is not assured. Furthermore, the force has no systematic policy to allocate crime for investigation based on the vulnerability of the victim. These shortcomings may mean that the force does not prioritise adequately its response to victims and the service provided falls short of required standards.

Once crimes have been allocated to investigators, the force conducts investigations well and supervision is good on most occasions. This represents

victims.

There are some areas where more could be done; for instance examples of 'evidence-based policing', an assurance that police tactics have been evaluated as being effective, are limited.

However, the force takes a firm lead in promoting the benefits of joint working. We found examples of this at regional, county and neighbourhood levels that make a real difference to communities in North Wales.

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



Requires improvement

North Wales Police has a strong work ethic to protect vulnerable people; clear leadership direction is being provided from the top of the organisation; it is explicit about its provision of frontline services and partner organisations are complimentary of the lead it takes in bringing together public services.

HMIC found that progress has been made since we last inspected domestic abuse in North Wales. Frontline response officers complete risk assessments with greater consistency and they are subject to better supervision. Safeguarding has become more assured as frontline officers

an improvement since this area was last inspected in HMIC's crime inspection in 2014.

Nevertheless, officers without the requisite training are investigating some complex crimes and sexual offences. A similar concern arises when the force assigns victims at high-risk of domestic abuse to investigators who do not have the relevant skills.

The force manages registered sex offenders well but staff we spoke to raised some concerns about their individual workload.

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



Good

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.

North Wales Police tackles serious and organised crime effectively in many respects although there is scope for improvement in some specific areas.

North Wales Police has established procedures to allow it to identify and map organised crime groups (OCGs). Recently introduced serious and organised crime boards have started to

develop awareness of how to gain support from other service providers; similarly an increase in the number of independent domestic advisors mean that the support available for high-risk victims is better.

An understanding of the scale and impact of child sexual abuse is developing and joint service delivery with Barnardo's is building stronger support for young people who are at risk.

This progress is being hindered by two enduring problems which HMIC has previously highlighted: the ability of the force to accurately identify vulnerability at the first point of contact; and the force's allocation of crime for investigation in a manner that matches the skills and experience of the investigator to the vulnerability of the victim. The impact of these shortcomings means that overall HMIC judges that the force's performance requires improvement.

address better joint working. However the scale of emerging threats, such as human trafficking, is not yet fully understood.

The force has procedures to escalate the management of OCGs to the regional organised crime unit if additional specialist resources are required. However, the force needs to do more to ensure that officers appointed to manage lower-risk OCGs are conversant with their roles and responsibilities. It should also ensure that neighbourhood policing teams are more routinely involved in tackling OCGs.

The force has satisfactory arrangements in place to fulfil its national policing responsibilities.

Force in numbers



Calls for assistance

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

North Wales Police

596

England and Wales

350



Crime

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

North Wales Police

51.8

England and Wales

63.0

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

North Wales Police

53.3

England and Wales

60.3

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

North Wales Police

-2.9%

England and Wales

+4.5%

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

North Wales Police

-17.4%

England and Wales

-12.6%



Charge rate

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

North Wales Police

22.0%

England and Wales

16.0%



Anti-social behaviour

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

North Wales Police

England and Wales

33.3

32.9

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

North Wales Police

England and Wales

35.8

36.2



Domestic abuse

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

North Wales Police

England and Wales

10.5%

10.0%

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

North Wales Police

England and Wales

10.5%

8.5%



Organised crime groups

Organised crime groups per million population as at 30 June 2015

North Wales Police

England and Wales

70.6

74.7



Victim satisfaction rate

Victim satisfaction rate 12 months to 31 March 2015

North Wales Police

England and Wales

81.8%

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 North Wales Police's efficiency and legitimacy inspections 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:²

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 North Wales Police.

² 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-north-wales/). 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/).

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 North Wales?

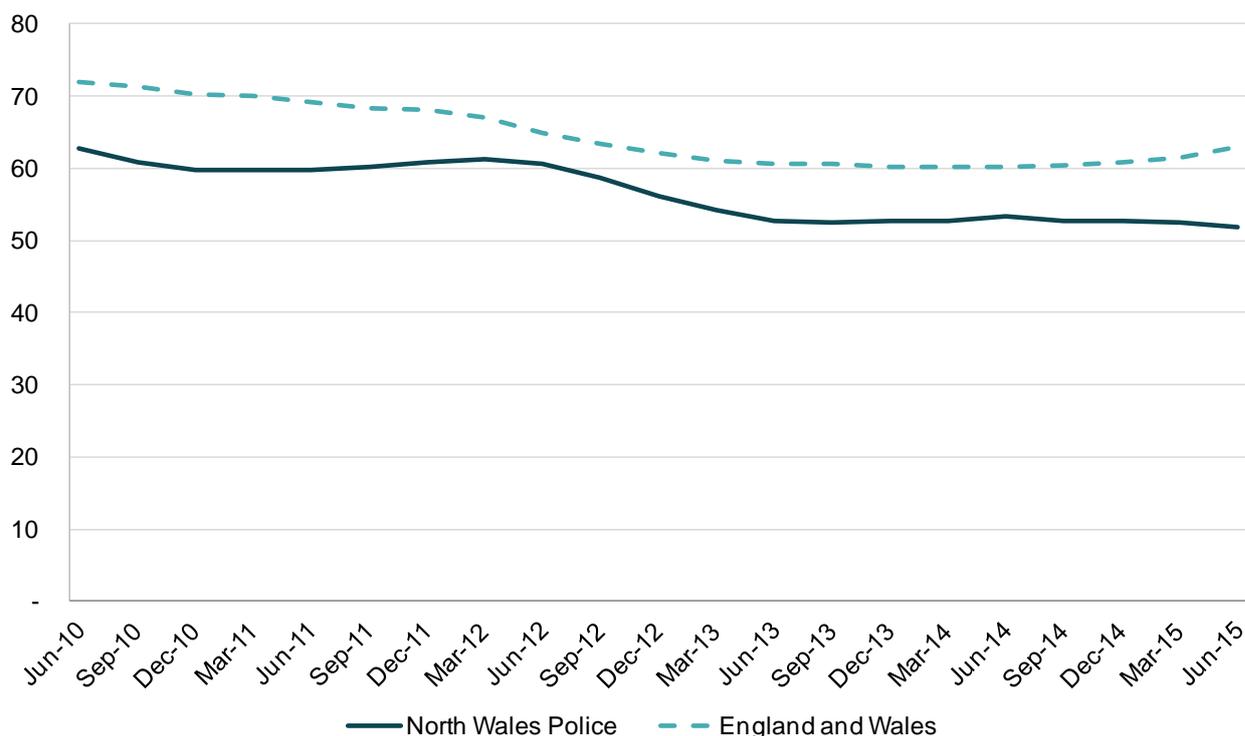
Although police recorded crime is by no means a complete measure of the totality of demand for calls on its service that a force faces, it does provide a comparable indication of performance across all forces. Crime rates are reported as a number of crimes per 1,000 population in each force area to enable 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 17 percent in North Wales 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 12 percent in North Wales, compared with a reduction of 12 percent across England and Wales.

When compared with the previous year, police recorded crime (excluding fraud) in North Wales 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 North Wales (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	North Wales Police	England and Wales
Recorded crime (excluding fraud)	51.8	63.0
Victim-based crime	46.4	56.0
Sexual offences	1.7	1.6
Assault with injury	6.2	6.3
Burglary in a dwelling*	4.6	8.4
Anti-social behaviour incidents*	33.3	32.9

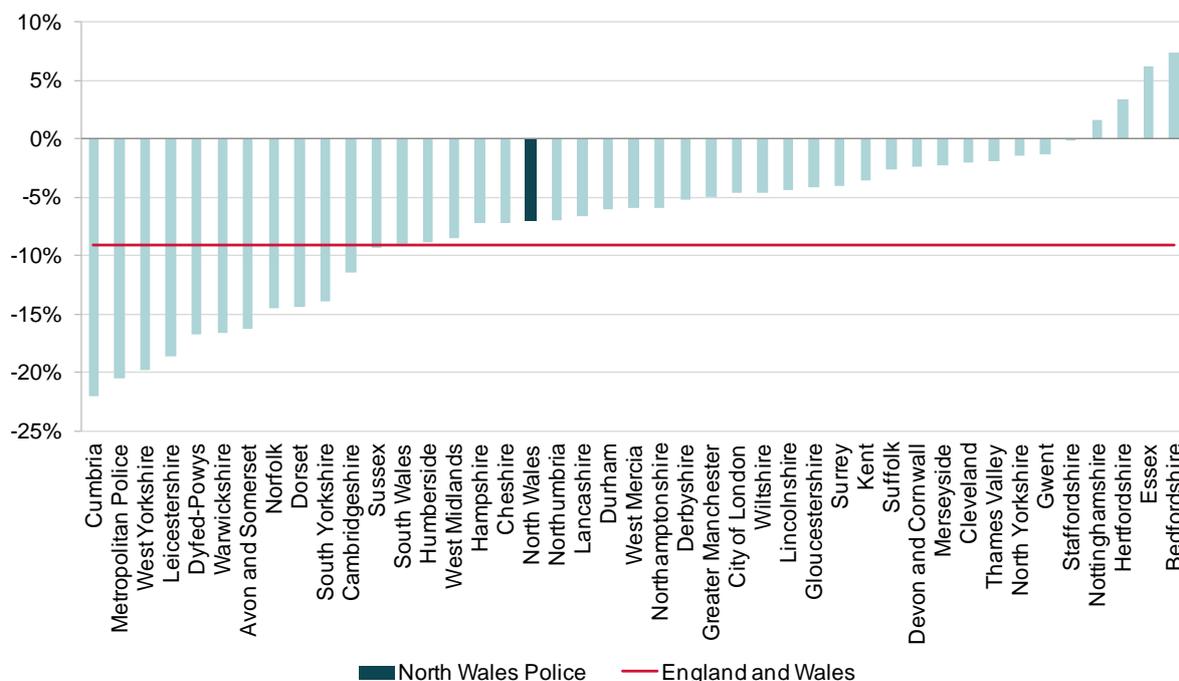
Source: Home Office data, HMIC data return

*Anti-social behaviour data is from the force'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 force area. We are not judging the effectiveness of the force on police recorded crime rates only.

In the 12 months to 30 June 2015, North Wales Police recorded 23,118 incidents of anti-social behaviour. This is 7 percent fewer incidents than the force 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 priority to prevent crime and anti-social behaviour and to keep people safe is commonly understood across the whole force. HMIC found a strong focus on this both from the chief officer group within the force and the police and crime commissioner (PCC); explicit reference is made to these priorities within the current police and crime plan. HMIC found that staff at all levels of the organisation understand these priorities very well.

A reduction of recorded incidents of both crime and anti-social behaviour is also important to the force; in the 12 months to 30 June 2015 crime reduced by 3 percent and anti-social behaviour by 7 percent when compared with corresponding period in the previous year. Over the same period, a strong force focus on burglary of people's homes has led to a sixteen percent reduction, an achievement of which the force is justifiably proud. North Wales Police's successes in this area are matched by its

determination to record crime and incidents ethically. The force has high levels of compliance with Home Office rules that govern the recording of incidents; this means the public in North Wales can have every confidence that reported crime levels are accurate.

Senior officers within North Wales Police send out a clear message to staff about the importance of preventing crime and anti-social behaviour, and keeping people safe. The chief officer team takes responsibility for the 'It Matters' campaign which provides road shows to every member of staff in the force. It reinforces the importance of professionalism, quality of service and victim focus. It was clear to us from speaking to officers and staff at all levels of the organisation that they understand the importance of 'It Matters' very well.

The force's strategic approach to anti-social behaviour is translated into positive action at a local level through a range of mechanisms. A good example is the force's use of an anti-social behaviour matrix in which victims are prioritised in accordance with their risk of harm. High and medium-risk cases are referred to the duty inspector for review and for directions to be given to staff to ensure a consistency of service. This process is well-established and the force uses it productively both to safeguard vulnerable victims and to provide them with the service that they need.

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

The force is committed to keeping people safe through increasing its understanding of those who are most vulnerable within its communities. This includes its determination to prioritise its resources towards those crimes and incidents that present the greatest risk of harm. This is a cultural shift away from previous established practices when the force deemed the type of crime committed as more important than its impact on victims.

To reaffirm this commitment, the force's tasking forum, which aligns force resources with developing crime patterns and emerging threats, has been renamed 'Protecting Communities'. The terms of reference of this forum have changed with a renewed focus on vulnerability and allocating resources based on the level of threat, risk and harm to individuals or communities.

The Protecting Communities forum is chaired by a senior officer and is structured to provide force-level scrutiny of dangerous, persistent and active criminals. It considers fully the harm offenders cause and the impact they have on individuals; this ensures that force activity is directed towards the places and the people that most need them.

In the face of financial restrictions that will see the loss of nearly sixty constable posts over the next three years, the chief constable has nevertheless restated his commitment to neighbourhood policing. It is likely that the amalgamation of various grass roots services provided at local level will be combined into safer neighbourhood teams to make this sustainable. Neighbourhood teams will continue to be the force's executive arm in the prevention of crime and the reduction of anti-

social behaviour. This is encouraging as HMIC's inspection of crime in 2014³ found that neighbourhood teams have a good understanding of the communities they serve and a firm commitment to victims of crime.

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

North Wales Police is using a range of tactics to prevent crime and anti-social behaviour. However, its evaluation of the effectiveness of these tactics is limited.

We found some evidence of the force using the SARA⁴ method of problem-solving, however we consider that the force should improve its understanding of 'what works' and disseminate best practice more effectively. The force has no shared database, which means that officers have no repository of problem-solving to draw upon. This leads to a tendency to reinvent solutions needlessly rather than learning from the evidence of past successes. HMIC considers that the force should introduce measures to maximise the opportunity to improve and share organisational learning.

The force uses a statistics-based analytical process to determine tactical deployments. Statistical process control (SPC) takes account of fluctuations in crime and seasonal variations to provide automated alerts when the frequency of crime is, or is likely to, exceed tolerance levels. SPC is a valuable mechanism which helps deploy resources to where they are most needed and helps shape the force's choice of day-to-day tactics to address peaks in offending.

While response officers have less involvement in crime prevention than their neighbourhood colleagues, their working relationships are effective in finding lasting solutions. In the course of their routine duties response officers use risk assessments to identify victims who are vulnerable. Neighbourhood officers use this information to develop preventative patrols in localities that have been targeted by criminals. A good example of this is in Caia Park in Wrexham, where sustained joint working during 2015 has led to impressive reductions in incidents of burglary and anti-social behaviour.

North Wales makes good use of current and predicted crime trends to determine tactical deployments, however the force should assess the effectiveness and impact of these tactics more thoroughly.

³ *Crime inspection 2014 - North Wales Police*, HMIC, 2014. Available from: www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmic/publications/crime-inspection-force-reports/

⁴ SARA is a decision-making model consisting of four steps: scanning, analysis, response and assessment.

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 force demonstrates that it works effectively with partners in preventing crime anti-social behaviour, and keeping people safe. The force takes a firm lead in advancing the benefits of joint working at regional, county and local levels.

The North Wales Safer Communities Board brings the force and the PCC together with borough and county councils, North Wales Fire and Rescue Service, the probation service and the Welsh Government in a strategic framework. It primarily seeks to agree shared priorities and a consistent means of provision of public services across North Wales' local jurisdictions. Two of the Board's subsidiary executives, the North Wales and Community Trust (PACT) and Crime Beat North Wales, administer a number of funds to support community initiatives. They have been instrumental in delivering the 'Justice in a Day' youth education project, as well as funding other community-inspired programmes to support the police and crime plan.

More locally, a productive grass roots partnership has been set up in Caernarfon that includes the police, the probation service, housing providers and the local council. This group identify vulnerable individuals who are at risk of offending and draws on a range of early intervention measures to channel them away from crime.

HMIC also recognises that there are some areas where the force's ambition to extend joint working is limited because of differing political and operational priorities in local authority areas. In particular, the force has been integral to persuading statutory and non-statutory partners to co-opt staff into multi-agency safeguarding hubs (MASHs).⁵ Elsewhere in England and Wales, bringing services together in this way has improved the provision of the safeguarding support to the vulnerable. North Wales Police is still committed to the principles of MASHs and continues to negotiate with partners in the hope that they will become firmly established at some point in the future.

The people of North Wales can be certain that the force is committed to working with partners in order to prevent crime and anti-social behaviour and keep people safe.

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

North Wales Police works well with partners to share and use information in order to prevent crime and anti-social behaviour.

⁵ A MASH brings together into a single location key safeguarding agencies to better identify risks to children (and in some areas, vulnerable adults), and improve decision-making, interventions, and outcomes. The MASH enables the multi-agency team to share all appropriate information in a secure environment, and ensure that the most appropriate response is provided to effectively safeguard and protect the individual.

The force is unlike many others in that it does not share databases with other public sector service providers. Nevertheless North Wales Police has effective information exchange protocols with other organisations to support victims and enforce the law. The legal basis for these arrangements is in crime and disorder legislation as well as the Welsh Accord on the Sharing of Personal Information.

A good example is the North Wales Police Victims Care Centre. The centre co-locates the support services of North Wales Police, the Crown Prosecution Service and a victims support organisation. The co-location of these organisations in an environment where information can be shared directly and securely is proving successful in developing effective care plans to support victims. The force is optimistic that, over the course of time, recorded satisfaction levels amongst victims in North Wales will increase.

The force also has a number of analyst posts that are funded jointly by the police and councils. Data held by the police, councils and other service providers is analysed to provide monthly profiles of patterns of offending and victimisation. This arrangement is useful in determining priorities and driving operational activity in support of victims.

At neighbourhood level, community safety hubs bring together local service providers to provide an early intervention service; this service is dependent on the successful sharing of information.

By working closely with partners and sharing information, North Wales Police is increasing its positive impact on crime and anti-social behaviour.

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

The force continues to maintain and develop its partnership arrangements in critical areas of business to tackle anti-social behaviour and other priorities. In line with the police and crime plan, the force's primary focus of partnership working is aimed at early interventions.

North Wales Police has a comprehensive schools programme which is supported by funding from the Welsh Government. The programme thrives at a number of different levels. For instance, 'say something' is a structured input into the school curriculum

that addresses child sexual exploitation, community support officers take the lead in responding to anti-social behaviour in schools and a yellow card warning system is used to stamp out offending at an early stage.

Other early intervention projects are specifically aimed at supporting the vulnerable. In Anglesey neighbourhood officers work with trading standards enforcement promoting awareness of trusted businesses, this follows a spate of rogue traders exploiting elderly residents in building frauds. Similarly, direct lines of communication between North Wales Police and GP surgeries in Flintshire act as an effective early warning system in support of victims; these arrangements enable the disclosure of incidents of domestic abuse to the police to ensure that the full range of support services is available to victims.

The force is also supported by a strong volunteer contingent. This includes an active Neighbourhood Watch that goes beyond the traditional 'eyes and ears' approach; it entrusts group members with such activity as visiting victims of burglary to assist with crime prevention. Watch groups are also themed to address certain types of crime, for example the theft of horses in rural areas and crime committed in pubs. Good use is also made of virtual neighbourhood watch supported by the online watch link (OWL).

North Wales Police works well with other service providers to broaden and deepen its efforts to reduce crime and anti-social behaviour.

Summary of findings



Good

North Wales Police is good at preventing crime and anti-social behaviour, and keeping people safe. These priorities are explicit in the police and crime plan, the workforce understands them well and they are routinely translated into operational activity.

The chief officer group is driving the It Matters campaign which reinforces the importance of professionalism, quality of service and victim focus. The force is adept at aligning resources to crime patterns and strong links with other service providers ensure that a broad range of tactics is available to address offending.

We found evidence of a well-motivated and experienced workforce working with others to provide a better service. A good example is the North Wales Police Victims Care Centre; this brings together a number of criminal justice partners to provide an enhanced level of support to victims.

There are some areas where more could be done; for instance examples of 'evidence-based policing', an assurance that police tactics have been evaluated as being effective, are limited.

However, the force takes a firm lead in promoting the benefits of joint working. We found examples of this at regional, county and neighbourhood levels that make a real difference to communities in North Wales.

Areas for improvement

- The force should use evidence of 'what works' drawn from other forces, academics and partners to improve continually its approach to the prevention of crime and anti-social behaviour. There needs to be routine evaluation of tactics and sharing of effective practice.

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. North Wales Police, 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)^{6 7 8}

Outcome type/group	North Wales Police Number of outcomes	Rate	England and Wales Number of outcomes	Rate
Charged/Summoned	7,885	22.0	577,678	16.0
Taken into consideration	190	0.5	21,318	0.6
Out-of-court (formal)	1,901	5.3	165,384	4.6
Caution - youths	286	0.8	19,703	0.5
Caution - adults	1,301	3.6	115,000	3.2
Penalty Notices for Disorder	314	0.9	30,681	0.8
Out-of-court (informal)	2,242	6.2	159,915	4.4
Cannabis/Khat warning	496	1.4	41,964	1.2
Community resolution	1,746	4.9	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/khat⁹ 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 North Wales Police are broadly in line with most other forces in England and Wales.

⁶ 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.

⁷ 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

⁸ 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.

⁹ 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.

North Wales Police recognises the importance of these principles; nevertheless there are areas for improvement. Shortcomings in the identification of vulnerability when callers first make contact with the force were highlighted in HMIC's inspection of vulnerability last year. Our primary concern in that inspection was the lack of a consistent application of approved operating procedures to identify the vulnerability of callers when they first make contact with the force. The force has intended for some time to implement a call-handling procedure known as THRIVE,¹⁰ which will guide call-handlers through an evaluation of threat posed to individuals, to address this. Since HMIC cited this as an area for improvement last year some progress has been made. We were advised that between forty and fifty percent of call-handlers have been trained in THRIVE.

A consistent approach to the identification of vulnerability at the first point of contact is fundamentally important to ensure that investigations are progressed effectively. THRIVE needs to be embedded into routine operational practice before the force can consider itself to be effective in this area.

One of the areas for improvement included in HMIC's crime inspection in 2014¹¹ was "to ensure that investigations of crime are allocated to appropriately trained staff in accordance with threat, harm and risk". The force has responded in part to the 2014 inspection findings with the implementation of a crime management plan, although HMIC was surprised that the force does not have a published policy that explains how crimes are allocated for investigation. We were told that there was a default position for day-to-day practice; this involves investigations being allocated on the basis of the type of crime committed with some additional consideration being given to the level of risk or harm faced by the victim.

¹⁰ The THRIVE concept assesses threat, harm, risk, investigation opportunities, the vulnerability of the victim and the engagement level required to resolve the incident.

¹¹ *Crime inspection 2014 – North Wales Police*, HMIC, 2014. Available from: www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmic/publications/crime-inspection-force-reports/

However HMIC found some evidence of confusion among staff and supervisors, meaning victims may receive an inconsistent service.

How well does the force investigate different types of crime?

North Wales Police investigates crime at four levels: specialist teams investigate serious crime and sexual offences; locally-based detectives investigate more complex offences; investigation support teams (ISTs) conduct desk-based enquiries; and officers on 999 response teams investigate the more frequently-occurring lower tier of crime.

In North Wales Police well-motivated teams of experienced detectives investigate complex crime in specialist and CID teams. In these teams officers are trained and experienced for the task at hand; we are encouraged that ninety-five percent of detective posts are filled by nationally-accredited detectives. HMIC found isolated examples of some detectives not having specialist training in relation to their specific responsibilities, for example, child abuse investigators who were not yet accredited as part of the Specialist Child Abuse Investigators Development Programme (SCAIDIP). However these were exceptions and the force has worked hard to develop resilience in its investigative capability.

ISTs are a relatively new addition to the force. Their remit is to investigate crimes where investigative leads are lacking and the likelihood of identifying an offender is limited. ISTs carry out what is known as desk-based investigations of crimes when it has been assessed that the deployment of an officer is not necessary. HMIC found some anomalies in how crime was allocated to the ISTs (these are described in the previous section) but in general terms they are working well. ISTs currently investigate about seventeen percent of all of crime committed in North Wales and there are clear advantages to this way of working. Victims are receiving a prompt service and the force is avoiding the necessity to deploy officers to crime scenes where their attendance is of little benefit.

While HMIC is encouraged by the work of specialist teams, the CID and the ISTs, we are concerned about the investigative workload of response officers. Part of their allocated workload can include high-risk domestic abuse cases and investigations involving sexual offences. These officers and their supervisors both commented that these investigations are beyond their levels of training and experience. This means that the force may not always be providing vulnerable victims with the service they need.

HMIC also reviewed the general standard of investigations once crime has been allocated to investigators. This was encouraging because the workloads of individual investigators are manageable, investigation plans set by supervisors are clear and victims are kept up-to-date with the progress of enquiries. This is a clear improvement on the standards that we observed in our crime inspection in 2014.

Forensic support to investigations is assured and officers spoke positively about the level of service they receive from crime scene investigators (CSIs). CSIs are locally-

based and their relationship with frontline operational staff is clearly a strength. Budgetary constraints and reorganisation are causing some uncertainty for staff, however the force is confident that planned collaborative arrangements with surrounding forces will guarantee an effective CSI service.

Although the force has made progress in future proofing the resilience of its investigative functions, officers are reticent about the opportunities for professional development that are available to them. The force is reliant on computer based training (NCALT)¹² for professional development. Feedback from operational officers and staff is that NCALT is not well-received. Many felt that face-to-face training on new and emerging threats, such as child sexual exploitation, people trafficking and cyber crime, is essential.

HMIC considers that standards of investigation in North Wales Police are improving. However, we will need to see that the force has a clear policy for the allocation of crime, and that officers are investigating crime in line with their levels of experience and training to be assured that standards are being met.

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.

North Wales Police has effective mechanisms in place to gather digital evidence in order to support investigations. The force has recently invested in additional resources to support its work in the high tech crime arena. These include increased investment in the paedophile online investigation team (POLIT), the cyber-crime team and the HTCU. As well as these specialist areas, digital media investigators give advice to other detectives who are less familiar with these techniques. Frontline officers also have access to facilities to download phone and tablet data in routine crime enquiries.

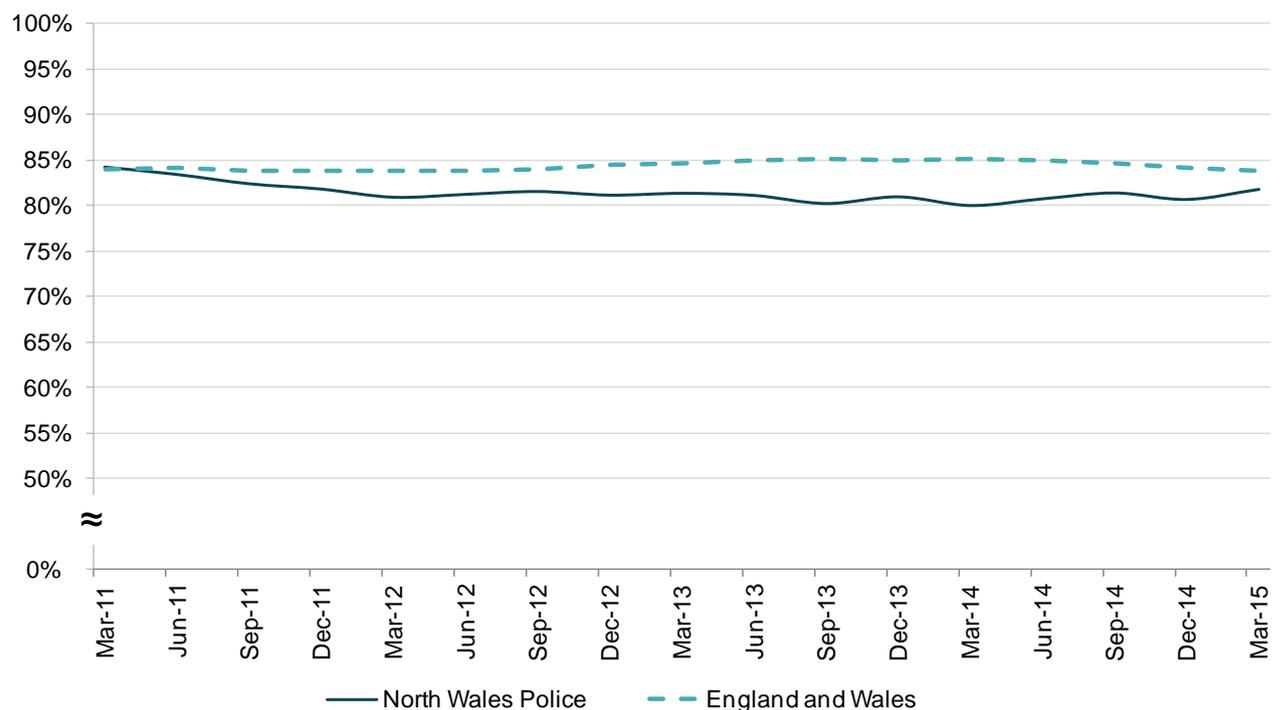
The force, like many others, has seen a significant increase in demand for digital evidence retrieval and is experiencing a backlog of cases. The force has recently moved its management of exhibits to a SharePoint facility on its record management system and it is anticipated that this will ease the situation. The force envisages that its investment in this area will reduce the backlog, which, at the time of our inspection, stretched back over a year. HMIC is concerned that current delays might undermine prosecutions and the service the force provides to victims. The force needs to monitor the impact of investment in this area to ensure that delays in the retrieval of digital evidence retrieval are reduced.

¹² NCALT is a programme designed by the National Centre for Applied Learning Technologies, is a computer-based training system used by many forces to train frontline staff in a range of contemporary policing issues.

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

Of those who have been the victim of a crime in North Wales in the 12 months to 31 March 2015, 81.8 percent were satisfied with their whole experience with the police. This is lower than the national victim satisfaction rate of 83.8 percent over the same time period. The victim satisfaction rate in North Wales for the 12 months to 31 March 2015 is broadly in line with the previous year's rate, while it is significantly lower than the rate for the 12 months to 31 March 2011. The force has local data that indicates victim satisfaction is now improving.

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

The force has increased significantly its focus on victim contact and service quality over the past twelve months. This includes introducing quality assurance processes known as 'call backs'; these involve supervisors re-contacting users of North Wales Police's services to ascertain their level of satisfaction with the service provided. The force uses frequently the verbatim feedback from these quality assurance checks in its organisational learning. The testament of satisfied victims and incidents of poor service are used as examples at part of the It Matters campaign.

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

How well does the force divert offenders away from crime?

North Wales Police uses a range of methods to divert offenders away from the criminal justice system. The force has invested significant resources into establishing

partnership arrangements for managing the most prolific offenders who pose a risk to the public.

The All Wales Reducing Reoffending Strategy 2014-2016 places a firm emphasis on channelling offenders away from the criminal justice system through the 'eight ways' scheme. The eight ways refer to the eight categories of service which individuals can have access to in order to address their needs and help them to stop offending. These include drug treatment, debt management, education and employment.

These principles are at the heart of the integrated offender management (IOM) arrangements in North Wales. The IOM scheme in North Wales consists of six units, one in each of the local authorities across the force area. IOM units bring together the work of the police, the probation service, the Department of Work and Pensions and housing providers to divert potential offenders from crime and support them in re-building their lives. The IOM units work with two principal types of offenders: first, offenders who are likely to re-offend on their release from prison (often requiring long-term management by the IOMs); and secondly, offenders who, because of the frequency of their offending, pose the highest risk to the community.

HMIC found good evidence of IOM units and frontline staff working together in support of these aims. Officers are provided with bulletins regarding prolific offenders who are being released from custody. This enables pre-emptive measures to be put in place to prevent offenders resuming a criminal lifestyle. The briefing system provides information regarding notable offenders and staff are tasked to manage these individuals on a one to one basis. The knowledge that the police are aware of their release from custody is frequently the incentive that offenders need to stay away from crime.

Another example is the drugs intervention programme (DIP) which is available in North Wales Police's custody suites. This provides detainees who have complex social needs with a facility to improve their lifestyles. The DIP provides direct access to specialist service providers to help with drugs dependency. Detainees in custody centres are frequently amongst the most vulnerable groups in society. Providing them with the opportunity to turn a corner in their lives is an effective means to reduce offending.

There are also explicit links between the force's recently established cadet force and offender management. Each of the force's three policing areas is allocated cadets; some of them are from troubled backgrounds and the opportunity to join the cadets gives them access to a more positive lifestyle. The force's schools programme has similar objectives. Additionally a number of officers have voluntarily started a boxing programme to encourage youngsters to engage in positive leisure activity.

Partners we spoke to have a positive impression of how the force is open to new ideas to keep vulnerable people away from crime.

How well does the force deal with repeat offenders?

The force has processes in place to identify and manage repeat offenders but these mechanisms are not as effective as they could be.

IOM units take the lead responsibility, with permanent representation in each unit from North Wales Police, the National Probation Service (NPS) and the Community Rehabilitation Company (CRC). We found that a number of common factors are affecting adversely the service, these include: weak commitment from other service providers; the IOM service is limited to only certain types of offenders; not all referrals into the scheme merit inclusion; and the personalised management of offenders is unstructured.

With the exception of North Wales Police, the NPS and the CRC, the commitment from other service providers is limited. This impinges on the force's effective identification and management of offenders. Furthermore offenders who commit acquisitive crime, that is crime that involves theft, are over represented the cohort of offenders. The force has plans to broaden the selection criteria for the IOM cohort through a participation in an all Wales pilot programme called WISDOM (Wales Integrated Serious and Dangerous Offender Management); as yet, however, opportunities are missed to work with a more diverse range of offenders including those who have a propensity to violence.

Finally, HMIC is concerned about the personalised case management of individual offenders. The force has no structured offender management plans for IOM subjects. These plans should be informing activity in support of individuals and developing intelligence to ascertain their likelihood of reoffending. This also has a secondary, adverse impact on operational effectiveness. Offenders who are known to have resumed criminal activity should be escalated to a category known as 'catch and convict'. Inadequate case management in North Wales means these individuals are not always quickly identified for escalation; this means that efforts to arrest them are sometimes missed and reoffending can run unchecked.

The force is aware of these issues and a review was recently commissioned by the assistant chief constable and Head of CRC. This review has made a number of recommendations that at the time of the inspection had not been published. HMIC urges the force to ensure these recommendations are implemented in full to provide clear, corporate systems to manage its most prolific offenders.

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

The force has well-established procedures for dealing with dangerous criminals and sexual predators. The multi-agency public protection procedures (MAPPAs)¹³ are

¹³ Multi-agency public protection arrangements is the name given to arrangements in England and Wales for the 'responsible authorities' tasked with the management of registered sex offenders, violent and other types of sexual offenders and offenders who pose a serious risk of harm to the public.

firmly embedded and overlaps between the MAPPa and the IOM programme are understood.

The force has systems in place to monitor and manage suspects and offenders who are wanted; this is particularly so for those who present a high-risk. The force's daily management meeting reviews and tasks activity towards arresting domestic abuse suspects, offenders who have been recalled to prison and other high profile criminals.

The management of suspects and offenders who are wanted are also subject to strong scrutiny as part of the force's performance management framework. HMIC found that senior managers effectively hold team leaders to account for the numbers of dangerous offenders who have yet to be arrested in each of the force's areas.

The force also effectively supervises registered sex offenders in North Wales. We found teams of skilled, experienced and well-motivated staff working in the force's sex offenders unit. Well-structured management plans are in place for each offender. Some officers expressed concern about high individual workloads and the force is advised to check that individuals are not being overburdened.

While we are encouraged by the above standards, HMIC is less convinced by the force's measures to control prisoners who are less dangerous but nevertheless cause harm in communities. The force has endeavoured to establish a process to manage 'potentially dangerous people' (PDP); these are individuals who fall outside the criteria for inclusion in the MAPPa but still pose a risk of harm. The PDP programme is not well understood by frontline staff and they are not clear on their expected contribution.

HMIC also consider the force is missing opportunities to monitor offenders who are on bail effectively. Arrangements to visit offenders who are subject to bail restrictions and curfews are ad hoc. A structured involvement of front line officers in managing bail conditions is likely to be more of a deterrent and prevent offending.

Summary of findings



Requires improvement

North Wales Police's approach to investigating crimes requires improvement.

The workforce undeniably shows a commitment to victims, but the force needs to improve its identification of vulnerability, its allocation of crime for investigation and offender management.

The identification of vulnerability at the first point of contact with the force is not assured. Furthermore, the force has no systematic policy to allocate crime for investigation based on the vulnerability of the victim. These shortcomings may mean that the force does not prioritise adequately its response to victims and the service provided falls short of required standards.

Once crimes have been allocated to investigators, the force conducts investigations well and supervision is good on most occasions. This represents an improvement since this area was last inspected in HMIC's crime inspection in 2014.

Nevertheless, officers without the requisite training are investigating some complex crimes and sexual offences. A similar concern arises when the force assigns victims at high-risk of domestic abuse to investigators who do not have the relevant skills.

The force manages registered sex offenders well but staff we spoke to raised some concerns about their individual workload.

Areas for improvement

- The force should ensure that all crimes are allocated promptly to investigators with the appropriate skills, accreditation and support to investigate them to a good standard.
- The force should ensure that all those carrying out investigations are provided with appropriate training and support.
- The force should work with partner organisations to develop its approach to integrated offender management in line with the Home Office IOM principles.

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 2015.¹⁴ The following is a summary of the findings.

Summary of findings



Requires improvement

North Wales's approach to protecting from harm those who are vulnerable and supporting victims requires improvement.

North Wales Police makes it a priority to protect vulnerable people and support victims and this understood throughout the force. The chief constable and police and crime commissioner want vulnerability to be at the centre of all policing activity in North Wales. We found increasing evidence that this priority is translating into operational activity with a reinvestment in specialist detectives and support services, more direct access to social care and a greater sensitivity towards the needs of vulnerable people. This means that the service to victims is improving.

This progress is being hindered by some enduring difficulties in the force that HMIC has highlighted previously needs improvement. The accurate identification of vulnerability and repeat victimisation by the force's call-handlers is still inconsistent. Similarly, the allocation of crime investigations to appropriately accredited investigators, although improved, still means that correctly skilled and experienced staff are not consistently dealing with the highest risk cases.

These shortcomings have to be set in the context of recent improvements in standards of investigation, equipping offices with body-worn video cameras and having a greater capacity to support domestic abuse victims – all of which bring tangible benefits. However, they are areas for improvement which the force should have addressed more swiftly.

HMIC considers that the overall service North Wales Police provides to victims and vulnerable people is improving. Among the force's greatest assets are its frontline staff who show an absolute commitment to protect those exposed to harm. However, until the force improves major processes to align its resources more accurately with the needs of individuals, HMIC judges that the force's performance requires improvement.

¹⁴ *PEEL: Police effectiveness 2015 (Vulnerability)* – North Wales Police, HMIC, December 2015. Available from: www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmic/publications/police-effectiveness-vulnerability-2015-north-wales/

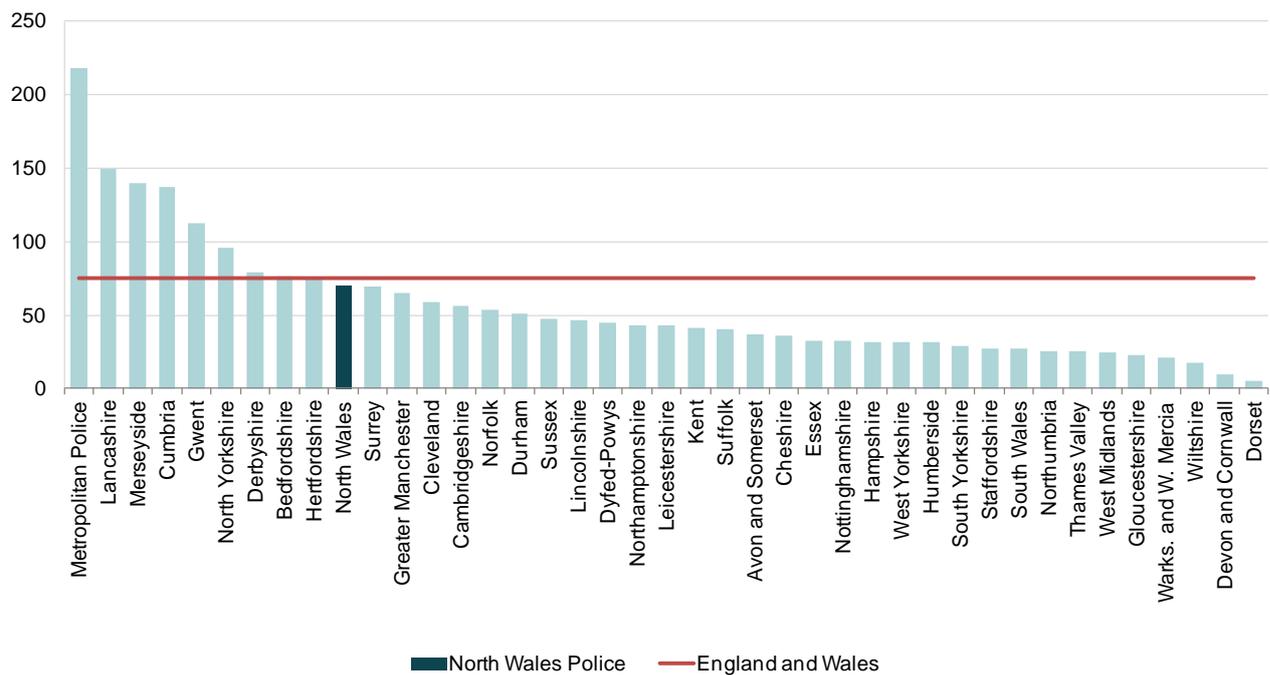
How effective is the force at tackling serious and organised crime, including its arrangements for fulfilling its national policing responsibilities?

Serious and organised crime poses a threat to the public across the whole of the UK and beyond. Its damaging effects are felt by individuals, communities and businesses. 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. Specialist capabilities are often shared by a number of forces within a regional area as this provides better value for money and is a more efficient way of working.

As at 30 June 2015, North Wales Police was actively disrupting, investigating or monitoring 49 organised crime groups (OCGs). This represents 71 OCGs per one million of the population, which is high compared with other forces in England and Wales.

Figure 6: Organised crime groups per one million population, by force, as at 30 June 2015¹⁵ ¹⁶



Source: HMIC data collection

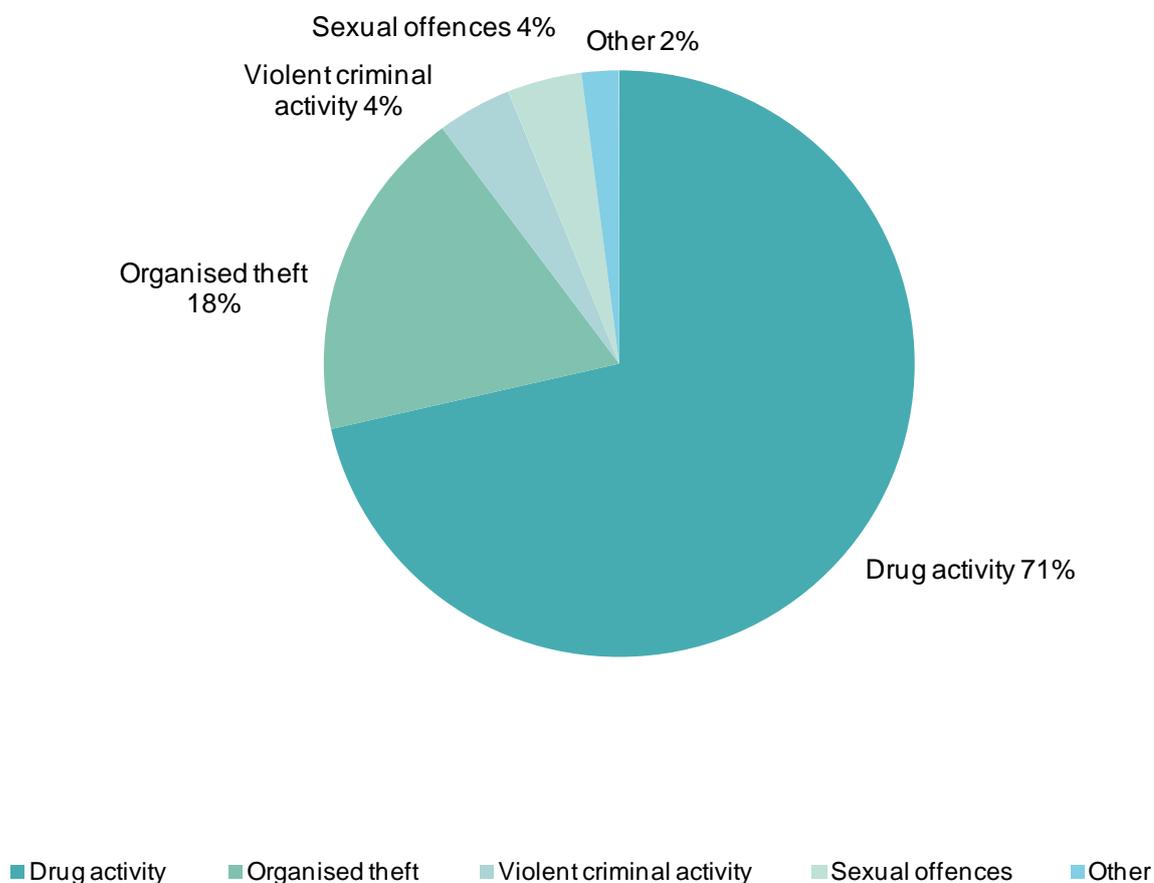
Forces categorise OCGs by the predominant form of criminal activity in which the group is involved. Although OCGs are likely to be involved in multiple forms of criminality, this indicates their most common characteristic. 'Drug activity' was the predominant crime type (71 percent) of the OCGs managed by North Wales Police as at 30 June 2015. 'Drug activity' was also the most common predominant crime type recorded by all forces in England and Wales,¹⁷ with 64 percent of all OCGs classified in this way.

¹⁵ 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.

¹⁶ 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.

¹⁷ 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 2015¹⁸



Source: HMIC data collection

Serious and organised crime is one of six national threats specified within *The Strategic Policing Requirement*.¹⁹ These include terrorism, serious cyber-crime incidents 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.

¹⁸ Figures may not sum to 100 percent, due to rounding.

¹⁹ *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?

North Wales Police is developing its strategic understanding of the threat in relation to serious and organised crime. High-level documents, known as strategic assessments, give an insight into the scale of OCG activity at regional and force-wide levels. The understanding provided by the force's strategic assessment would be strengthened if information held by partner organisations were included in the analysis. An over-reliance on law-enforcement data is limiting the force's effectiveness in this area.

North Wales Police has arrangements with partners to understand and prevent serious and organised crime. This is being progressed through recently introduced serious and organised crime boards which have a particular remit to increase information-sharing and develop joint tactics.

One of these, chaired by a senior representative of Anglesey Local Authority, looks specifically at human trafficking and has funded the position of a permanent co-ordinator. The boards are also developing the local serious and organised crime profile. Guidance on the production of local profiles was issued by the Home Office in November 2014. At the time of our inspection, the local profile for North Wales had not been completed, although a draft was available to share with partner organisations.

North Wales Police makes good use of intelligence held by government departments to develop knowledge and secure support in terms of law enforcement. The Government Agency Intelligence Network (GAIN) facilitates the sharing of information and co-operation to address criminality. Participating organisations include HM Revenue and Customs, the Security Services and Action Fraud. Officers we spoke were complementary of the value that the network added to their efforts to disrupt, deter and convict criminals.

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. For these reasons, HMIC has recommended that ROCUs assume responsibility for OCG mapping on behalf of their constituent forces.²⁰

North Wales Police has established procedures to allow it to identify and map OCGs. OCGs have been mapped in accordance with national guidance; this enables objective based decision making in relation to their prioritisation and subsequent enforcement activity against them. Of the forty-nine mapped OCGs over seventy percent are primarily involved in drug-related crime. The strong focus in this area, together with inconsistencies in the way that OCGs held at area level are scrutinised, means the scale of emerging threats such as human trafficking may not be fully understood. However, HMIC found the force is taking positive action to tackle child sexual exploitation with a large investigation currently being progressed.

HMIC is concerned at staffing levels in the force's intelligence units. Officers and staff we visited expressed frustration about the reduction in staffing levels and the lack of capacity to carry out some functions. We encourage the force to ensure that there is sufficient resilience in its intelligence capabilities to research all forms of serious and organised crime.

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

The force is part of the well-established collaborative arrangements with other forces in the region to tackle serious and organised crime. Similar arrangements to tackle terrorism exist in the Wales Extremism and Counter Terrorism Unit (WECTU).

Clear lines of accountability and responsibility support the management of serious and organised crime. An established mechanism within the force to co-ordinate activity and allocate resources means that OCGs of concern can be quickly addressed.

The force has dedicated in-house resources to address serious and organised crime; primarily these consist of a major investigation team (MIT), two small serious and organised crime teams and a surveillance capability. These units have a relatively modest overall capability and the force has recently relied on escalation procedures to resource a long running child sexual exploitation enquiry. ROCU and NCA officers now support this enquiry which is indicative of the strength of regional arrangements

²⁰ *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

to support local forces with demand-intensive enquiries. The force uses a scoring matrix to prioritise OCGs and assess the threat of harm they present. Specialist resources investigate a small proportion of OCGs, with the majority of OCGs being allocated to locally-based officers. These local officers are appointed as lead responsible officers (LROs); LROs are responsible for developing intelligence and disruption tactics for lower-risk OCGs. However, we established that they have not been trained for this role and were uncertain of their responsibilities.

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

The force is beginning to use serious crime prevention orders (SCPOs) to address OCGs. SCPOs impose conditions on individuals, for example by limiting who they can associate with, restricting their travel or obliging them to report their financial affairs to the police. This is encouraging as they are not routinely used in England and Wales and the impact of SCPOs will be of wide-ranging interest.

The serious and organised crime team communicates well with the public about successes and engages local press and media. Operation Scorpion, the name associated with the force's efforts to confront serious and organised crime, accompanies public messaging in the media. Operation Scorpion has become increasingly visible in the local press and HMIC believes the force could exploit this still further by greater use of its 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 these 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.

The force has the necessary arrangements in place to ensure that it can fulfil its national policing responsibilities. The assistant chief constable is the strategic lead for the six high-level national threats articulated in the Strategic Policing Requirement (SPR); governance is maintained through the force operations committee and external scrutiny is provided by the police and crime commissioner through the Strategic Executive Board.

The force operations committee determines the relevance of each threat in the context of the North Wales environment and designs the force's response to them. This is strengthened through its ties with the ROCU and WECTU, and we found a good alignment of operational activity with national and regional priorities.

The Local Resilience Forum (LRF) in North Wales brings together emergency services and other statutory bodies involved in crisis management and disaster

recovery. The deputy chief constable chairs the LRF and, among other responsibilities, the forum sets out a programme of exercise planning to test the force's state of readiness and response to major incidents. Recent exercises have included an assessment of the force's response to simulated chemical and biological attacks.

All forces have a standing commitment to mobilise officers for deployments in the event of major incidents which are beyond the capacity of the local force. North Wales Police has tried and tested procedures to mobilise officers in the event of crises. These procedures take place in conjunction with other forces in the region.

HMIC considers that North Wales Police is well-prepared to address the threats set out in *The Strategic Policing Requirement*.

Summary of findings



Good

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.

North Wales Police tackles serious and organised crime effectively in many respects although there is scope for improvement in some specific areas.

North Wales Police has established procedures to allow it to identify and map organised crime groups (OCGs). Recently introduced serious and organised crime boards have started to address better joint working. However the scale of emerging threats, such as human trafficking, is not yet fully understood.

The force has procedures to escalate the management of OCGs to the regional organised crime unit if additional specialist resources are required. However, the force needs to do more to ensure that officers appointed to manage lower-risk OCGs are conversant with their roles and responsibilities. It should also ensure that neighbourhood policing teams are more routinely involved in tackling OCGs.

The force has satisfactory arrangements in place to fulfil its national policing responsibilities.

Areas for improvement

- The force should complete its serious and organised crime local profile including relevant data from partner agencies, and ensure that it has a local partnership structure in place with responsibility for tackling serious and organised crime.

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. Introduction