

PEEL: Police effectiveness 2015

An inspection of Northumbria Police



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

Overall judgment¹



Good

HMIC judges Northumbria Police to be good at preventing crime and anti-social behaviour, and keeping people safe. The force investigates crime well and maintains a strong focus on managing offenders to reduce offending. Officers and staff focus on protecting and supporting vulnerable victims and have been trained accordingly. The force has well-established partnership arrangements with other agencies to improve its understanding of serious and organised criminality and to respond effectively. 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

Northumbria Police is good at keeping people safe and reducing crime. It is good at tackling anti-social behaviour and managing offenders and has good systems in place to ensure it investigates crime effectively at all levels.

The force has a commitment to attend all crime incidents and most other incidents reported by the public. This may contribute to the relatively high levels of public satisfaction, as well as to its performance in bringing offenders to justice, which is better than in most other forces.

The force has good arrangements to tackle repeat offenders and to manage, with partners, those individuals who present a risk to the public. However, the force should improve how it manages offenders, using integrated offender management, and how it monitors registered sex offenders across the force.

Protecting vulnerable people is a priority for the force and good systems are in place to provide appropriate care and support for victims of crime. Staff have been trained in understanding vulnerability and the force has good arrangements with partner services to support vulnerable² victims.

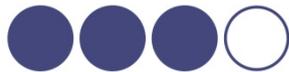
The force manages serious and organised crime well and is building on current relationships with other agencies and partners to improve its understanding even further. A cohesive approach to tackling organised crime groups draws on the full

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

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

resources available to the force. The force is able to test its ability to fulfil its national policing responsibilities.

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



Good

Northumbria Police is good at preventing crime and anti-social behaviour, and keeping people safe.

Neighbourhood teams continue to provide the mainstay of how policing services are provided across the force area, with locally based officers being central to providing a good service to communities.

The force retains a good understanding of the communities it serves and has established good lines of communication with individuals, community groups and partnership agencies to deliver policing services tailored to match community needs and to respond to crime and anti-social behaviour.

The force continues to attend all crime incidents and the overwhelming majority of other non-crime-related incidents. Tackling crime and anti-social behaviour is a priority and staff are aware of their responsibility in responding positively to victims and giving them the best support possible.

HMIC found good examples of how new legislation has been used to tackle and deal with emerging issues of anti-social behaviour.

Northumbria could improve how it stores

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



Good

Northumbria Police performs well at bringing offenders to justice.

The force's crime investigations are well managed and closely supervised. Staff view the location and interviewing of outstanding offenders as a priority and the force monitors this through daily meetings.

Investigators are trained and equipped to conduct investigations suitable for their role. We found that the force provides a good standard of forensic and digital analysis of exhibits to help its investigators identify offenders.

The force has good procedures in place for its officers to focus their attention on those offenders who are committing the most crime and anti-social behaviour in neighbourhoods. The force routinely allocates officers the task of carrying out monitoring activity to curb the behaviour of offenders.

The force's governance and oversight of its integrated offender management programme is limited. Neighbourhood staff given the task of managing offenders have not had any training around integrated offender management and partnership working arrangements could improve.

and shares information across the force in relation to effective problem-solving methods. Similarly, information between the force and partner agencies could be shared more efficiently by introducing more integrated information sharing systems.

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



Good

Northumbria Police is good at protecting from harm those who are vulnerable and supporting victims. Protecting vulnerable people and supporting victims is a high priority for Northumbria Police. Both the police and crime commissioner and the chief constable are committed strongly to improve the services they provide.

The force has clear and consistently applied processes in place to identify repeat and vulnerable victims. There is regular and robust supervision and scrutiny of incidents to ensure an appropriate and timely response.

To help achieve the force's commitment to improve the services provided to vulnerable people a significant investment has been made in training staff. This ensures that they have a good level of knowledge and understanding. The force uses widespread and

The force's management of offenders under multi-agency public protection arrangements by a dedicated team is good. However, the force needs to do more to involve frontline patrolling staff in the routine monitoring of registered sex offenders.

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



Good

Northumbria Police is good at tackling serious and organised crime.

The force is developing a serious and organised crime local profile to enhance its understanding of the threat presented by organised crime groups across Northumbria.

The force has good links to other partners in law enforcement regionally and is working to improve relationships with key partners even more.

Northumbria identifies organised crime groups at local and force levels and it has good systems in place to tackle organised crime groups using a wide range of policing options.

The force should improve how it makes the most of intelligence gathering opportunities, particularly those available through partner arrangements. The force's intelligence system is outdated and does not support intelligence

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

The force has made, and continues to make investments in IT to support improvements to bring about greater efficiencies and effectiveness in victim care services.

The force has good arrangements with partner agencies to keep vulnerable people safe and is continually working to enhance these arrangements further. Planned additional analytical support should make these arrangements even more effective.

Overall the force provides a good response to and safeguards missing children, and victims of domestic abuse, and is well-prepared to tackle child sexual exploitation.

gathering effectively in relation to serious and organised crime.

The force is able to test its ability to fulfil its national policing responsibilities. The force has enough resources to deal with most public order contingencies and respond to a major incident.

Force in numbers



Calls for assistance

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

Northumbria Police

England and Wales

356

350



Crime

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

Northumbria Police

England and Wales

53.1

63.0

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

Northumbria Police

England and Wales

48.0

60.3

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

Northumbria Police

England and Wales

+10.6%

+4.5%

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

Northumbria Police

England and Wales

-12.0%

-12.6%



Charge rate

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

Northumbria Police

England and Wales

26.0%

16.0%



Anti-social behaviour

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

Northumbria Police

England and Wales

52.2

32.9

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

Northumbria Police

England and Wales

56.1

36.2



Domestic abuse

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

Northumbria Police

England and Wales

10.0%

10.0%

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

Northumbria Police

England and Wales

8.3%

8.5%



Organised crime groups

Organised crime groups per million population as at 30 June 2015

Northumbria Police

England and Wales

25.8

74.7



Victim satisfaction rate

Victim satisfaction rate 12 months to 31 March 2015

Northumbria Police

England and Wales

92.2%

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 Northumbria Police are available from the HMIC website (www.justiceinspectors.gov.uk/hmic/).

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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.

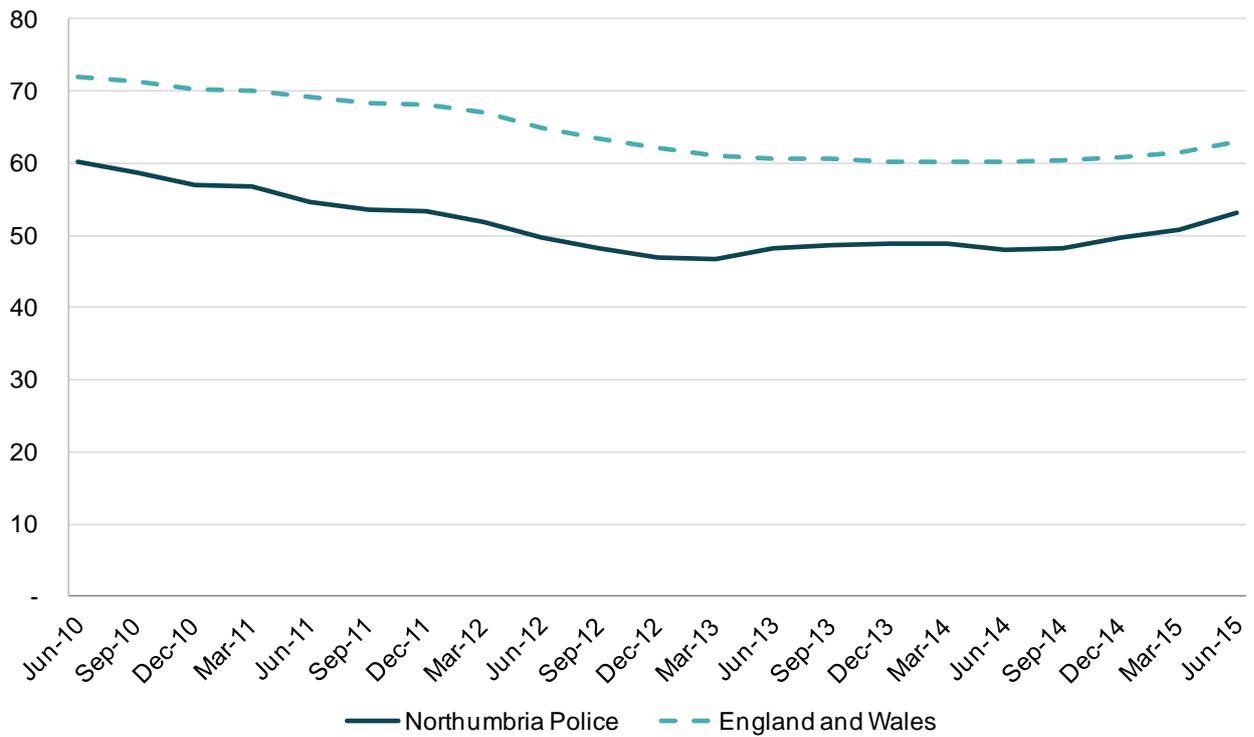
Northumbria Police has placed an emphasis on improving the accuracy of crime recording among staff. It is also encouraging vulnerable victims of crime to report offences so that the police can protect them better and bring more offenders to justice.

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 12 percent in Northumbria 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 10 percent in Northumbria, compared with a reduction of 12 percent across England and Wales.

When compared with the previous year, police recorded crime (excluding fraud) in Northumbria increased by 11 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 Northumbria (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	Northumbria Police	England and Wales
Recorded crime (excluding fraud)	53.1	63.0
Victim-based crime	47.3	56.0
Sexual offences	1.7	1.6
Assault with injury	5.7	6.3
Burglary in a dwelling*	5.1	8.4
Anti-social behaviour incidents*	52.2	32.9

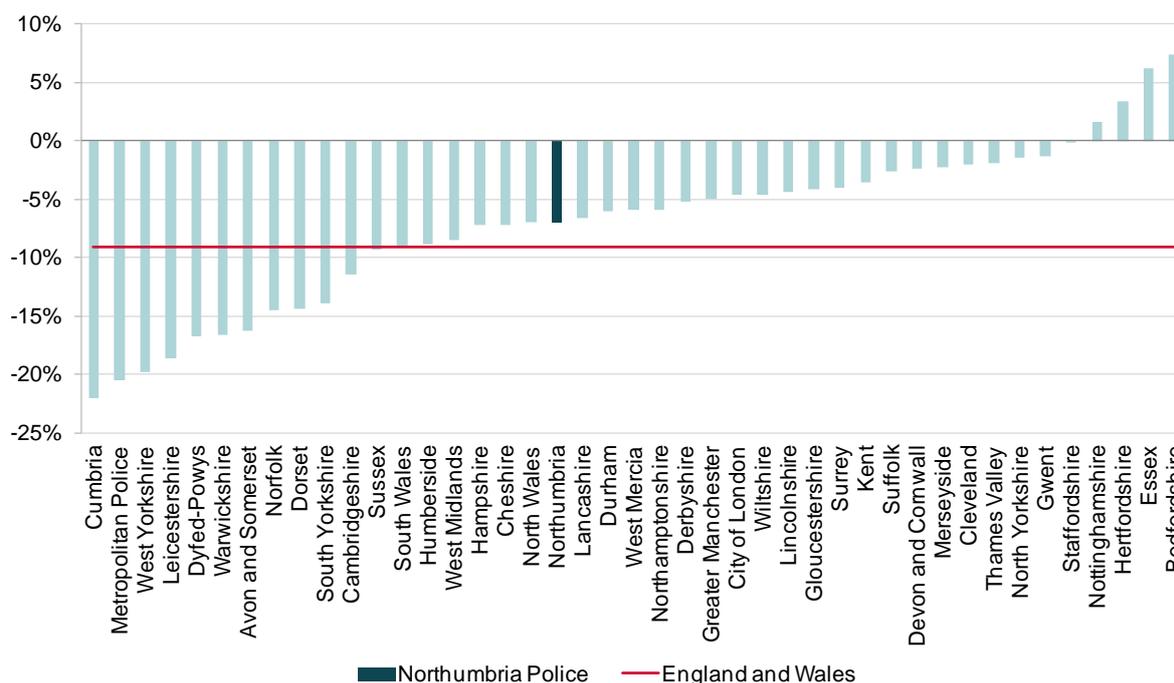
Source: Home Office data, HMIC data return

***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, Northumbria Police recorded 74,944 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?

Northumbria Police has a strong commitment to reduce crime and anti-social behaviour with a clear shift in emphasis to protecting the vulnerable. The force analyses crime data, as well as information from public consultation, to identify the threats and risks facing communities as part of an annual assessment process. This work is then used to inform the priorities set out in the police and crime commissioner’s police and crime plan. The priorities reflect the force’s commitment to reduce crime, tackle anti-social behaviour and put victims first.

We found clear evidence of information sharing with partners, such as local authorities, probation services, voluntary organisations and housing associations at local neighbourhood levels. However, the force does not routinely obtain information from partner organisations to inform its annual assessment process. Instead, its annual assessment relies primarily on police data. This means that the force may miss important information in relation to threats and risks faced by some communities. The force needs to improve how it shares information with partner agencies at a strategic level.

The importance of preventing crime and anti-social behaviour and keeping people safe is generally well understood throughout the force. Operational activity reflects force level and local prevention priorities, with the work of neighbourhood policing teams of note in this regard, particularly for their role in safeguarding⁴ the most vulnerable members of the community.

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

Northumbria Police allocates resources effectively to prevent crime and anti-social behaviour. The force continues to attend all reports of crime and the majority of other incidents reported to police. The force acknowledges that any future reductions in its workforce will affect its ability to attend all incidents. It is therefore developing options to deal with some incidents at the first point of contact, without the attendance of an officer.

The force recognises the value of dedicated officers and staff working within neighbourhoods to prevent crime and anti-social behaviour. To that end, it has ensured that the neighbourhood policing teams in each local area have the resources required to meet the commitment to reduce crime and tackle anti-social behaviour.

The force uses a computerised duty management system to help ensure that the necessary resources are available across the force area at any one time. HMIC found examples of neighbourhood officers being taken away from their main role to respond to calls requiring immediate police attendance. However, neighbourhood officers generally understood that these calls were a priority and had accepted that they would be used in this way if response officers were not available. While this may be an appropriate use of resources, it has meant that neighbourhood officers have on occasions been unable to meet prior commitments that fall within their day-to-day neighbourhood responsibilities to support vulnerable victims or attend scheduled community meetings.

Neighbourhood teams use their local knowledge and regularly consult with the public to understand local problems. They undertake a variety of engagement activities with local communities to identify and solve short and long-term problems relating to crime and anti-social behaviour. Neighbourhood teams also immediately put in place harm reduction plans for repeat victims of crime or anti-social behaviour, and people the force identifies as being vulnerable. Local neighbourhood inspectors take responsibility for managing the harm reduction plans, which involves ensuring that force and local partner resources are co-ordinated and targeted to intervene early, stop any increase, and reduce risk of harm.

HMIC reviewed a small sample of five plans, which involved repeat anti-social behaviour incidents assessed as high risk. All were of a good standard with evidence of supervisory review and involvement of a variety of local partners.

⁴ The term safeguarding means providing protection and support to ensure the safety of the vulnerable person and prevent further harm.

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

Neighbourhood policing teams use a broad range of tactics to prevent crime and anti-social behaviour and keep people safe. This includes the use of anti-social behaviour powers,⁵ for example the use of closure orders in relation to the sale of legal highs (Operation Jakarta) as well as disruptive tactics and joint problem-solving initiatives with local partners to prevent burglary (Operation Optimal). The force is improving its use of social media messaging to provide crime prevention messages and to raise awareness of its success in tackling crime and bringing offenders to justice. In doing so, it hopes to enhance community confidence even further. Officers also use restorative interventions⁶ to tackle offending behaviour, reduce opportunities for crime and improve victim satisfaction.

Neighbourhood policing teams have a variety of methods for recording their crime prevention activity. These include harm reduction plans, daily beat records and specific tasks in relation to identified crime or anti-social behaviour hot spots. This activity is recorded on a number of different force IT systems which makes it difficult to search for, identify and recall for future use. HMIC found no evidence of the force carrying out formal evaluation of the tactics used.

In HMIC's crime inspection report in 2014 we recommended that the force introduce a review process to evaluate the benefits of established and new crime fighting and anti-social behaviour initiatives, capture best practice around crime prevention and problem-solving, and share best practice across the force. HMIC is disappointed that the force has not yet introduced such an arrangement and this remains an area for improvement for the force.

⁵ Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014. Available from: www.gov.uk/government/collections/anti-social-behaviour-crime-and-police-bill

⁶ 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 work with partners to prevent crime and anti-social behaviour, and keep people safe?

How committed is the force to working with partner organisations?

Neighbourhood officers and staff are strongly committed to working with partner organisations to support communities. They understand and accept the arrangements for working with partner organisations. The additional resources, skills and enforcement powers that partners bring helps Northumbria Police to keep people safe and tackle problems at an early stage. HMIC spoke with representatives from a number of partner agencies who were extremely positive regarding the commitment that the force makes to partnership working in local areas. This was particularly evident through neighbourhood policing teams, local multi-agency problem-solving meetings (LMAPS), the work of Safer Newcastle action and problem-solving (SNAP) groups and the involvement of local police commanders with community safety partnerships.

At a strategic level, the force works with six separate local authorities. HMIC found some examples of effective partnership working across the force area, such as the police-led investigation model, which aims to protect vulnerable people. In this, the investigative element is supported by significant community engagement and an extensive media and marketing campaign. The operation places the safeguarding of vulnerable victims as its main priority, with the investigation as second. It is supported across the force area by partners from social care, health and the third sector. However the force believes that the understanding of the demands faced by each partner agency needs to improve and that it needs to do more work with all agencies to secure their commitment to sharing assets and intelligence. This would enable successful joint working to be applied in other areas of business across all authority areas.

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

The force has effective, well-established arrangements to collect, share and act on partner information to prevent crime and anti-social behaviour. However, in the main this is not a structured approach and relies heavily on local arrangements between neighbourhood policing teams and partners such as local authorities and local housing providers.

Information sharing, case discussion and agreed joint preventative activity takes place through both informal and formal multi-agency working arrangements. Partners do not have access to IT systems of other agencies. Analytical support from force analysts to research local neighbourhood problems is in short supply and difficult to obtain. HMIC found examples of officers spending time carrying out their own research of IT systems to support multi-agency activity.

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

HMIC found good examples of effective problem-solving with partner organisations to prevent crime and anti-social behaviour and keep people safe, including:

- Structured multi-agency problem-solving meetings across the force area;
- using Pubwatch,⁷ Shopwatch⁸ and Your Homes Newcastle⁹ to share information and to prevent crime and anti-social behaviour;
- undertaking regular joint operations alongside local housing providers;
- using a range of powers to keep people safe in public places including dispersal orders to prevent anti-social behaviour having an impact on local communities, and closure orders for premises selling legal highs in Newcastle city centre; and
- participation by neighbourhood teams in the government's safer schools scheme.

These are all well-established arrangements. However, the force has seen a reduction in the commitment from the main partners to these arrangements over recent years. For example in one area, a community safety partnership previously had four individual domestic abuse, anti-social behaviour and dedicated youth and harm reduction leads within its community safety arrangements. This has now been reduced to one member of staff across four areas, which has meant that partnership working in these areas has been reduced.

The force recognises that securing the continued investment of support by partner agencies is presenting a challenge as all the different agencies re-align their services to become more efficient and reduce costs. However, the force remains committed to working with partner organisations to keep people safe.

⁷ Pubwatch is a partnership where licensees unify as an independent group to pre-empt crime and anti-social behaviour in licensed premises.

⁸ Shopwatch is a partnership where retailers unify as an independent group to pre-empt theft in retail premises.

⁹ Your Homes Newcastle is an arms-length management organisation responsible for managing council homes on behalf of Newcastle City Council.

Summary of findings



Good

Northumbria Police is good at preventing crime and anti-social behaviour, and keeping people safe.

Neighbourhood teams continue to provide the mainstay of how policing services are provided across the force area, with locally based officers being central to providing a good service to communities.

The force retains a good understanding of the communities it serves and has established good lines of communication with individuals, community groups and partnership agencies to deliver policing services tailored to match community needs and to respond to crime and anti-social behaviour.

The force continues to attend all crime incidents and the overwhelming majority of other non-crime-related incidents. Tackling crime and anti-social behaviour is seen as a priority and staff are aware of their responsibility in responding positively to victims and giving them the best support possible.

HMIC found good examples of how new legislation has been used to tackle and deal with emerging issues of anti-social behaviour.

Northumbria could improve how it stores and shares information across the force in relation to effective problem-solving methods. Similarly, information between the force and partner agencies could be shared more efficiently by introducing more integrated information sharing systems.

Areas for improvement

- The force should use evidence of 'what works' drawn from other forces, academics and partners to continually improve 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. Northumbria 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)^{10 11 12}

Outcome type/group	Northumbria Police Number of outcomes	Rate	England and Wales Number of outcomes	Rate
Charged/Summonsed	19,821	26.0	577,678	16.0
Taken into consideration	779	1.0	21,318	0.6
Out-of-court (formal)	5,865	7.7	165,384	4.6
Caution - youths	990	1.3	19,703	0.5
Caution - adults	4,454	5.9	115,000	3.2
Penalty Notices for Disorder	421	0.6	30,681	0.8
Out-of-court (informal)	3,515	4.6	159,915	4.4
Cannabis/Khat warning	727	1.0	41,964	1.2
Community resolution	2,788	3.7	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/khat¹³ 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. Northumbria Police has one of the highest rates for 'Charged/Summonsed', 'Caution – youths' and 'Caution - adults', of all forces in England and Wales.

¹⁰ 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.

¹¹ 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

¹² 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.

¹³ 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.

Northumbria Police is good at responding to incidents, gathering evidence where a crime has occurred and in providing the necessary care and support to victims of crime. The force has a good process for initial investigation and subsequent allocation of crimes for further investigation. The force attends all reports of crime and any subsequent crime allocation for further investigation is based on threat, harm and risk rather than by the type of crime involved. It also considers the investigative skills that are required for each specific crime prior to allocation. This means that it allocates cases to investigators after due consideration of the complexity of the case and the vulnerability of the victim. This change to crime investigation policy and procedures was introduced in the spring of 2015, and we found that officers and staff know about, and are supportive of, this approach.

How well does the force investigate different types of crime?

The force investigates different types of crime well. Once allocated, the force undertakes effective investigations into those crimes, which occur most frequently. Crimes assessed as being of higher risk or as more complex such as burglary, robbery and serious assault are predominantly investigated by more experienced and appropriately trained investigators. Those crimes assessed as being less complex or lower risk, for example criminal damage and theft, are investigated by officers working within neighbourhood policing teams and those officers who respond to calls for service. Officers dealing with these cases have the necessary skills and are closely supervised by line managers to ensure that they conduct cases well, keep victims informed and follow all relevant lines of enquiry.

Investigative staff dealing with cases that are more complex are appropriately trained or are working towards accredited status. They identify investigative opportunities and pursue them in a timely fashion. The force's crime allocation policy, introduced in June 2015, has been effective in addressing the concerns about the distribution of investigative work that were highlighted in HMIC's 2015 efficiency report.

HMIC reviewed a sample of crime investigations¹⁴ and found that most had clear investigation plans prepared by supervisors, which set out actions for the investigator to follow. These plans are documented on the force's crime recording system where HMIC found good evidence of supervised decision-making and monitoring by sergeants to ensure that officers make enquiries promptly. We found clear evidence that investigators keep victims up-to-date in line with their wishes and following important events during the investigation.

The force's use of forensic specialists to support investigations is effective and consistent. Crime scene investigators (CSIs) attend all crime scenes for certain types of crime, such as burglary, and will attend any crime scene where opportunities for the recovery of forensic evidence are identified. Forensic specialists also provide a triage service for investigators to assist in identifying the best options to recover and preserve forensic evidence to support investigations.

The force has trained officers to investigate more complex and serious crime, such as child abuse, serious sexual assault and homicide. The force has increased the numbers of specialists for the investigation of complex sexual exploitation cases involving vulnerable children and adults. Most of the serious and complex crime cases that HMIC reviewed had evidence of thorough investigations with clear investigation plans, and strong and consistent supervisory oversight. In particular, we found evidence of strong efforts to keep vulnerable victims engaged and supported within the investigative process.

The force monitors and maintains the number of trained specialist investigators that it has available to investigate crime. The force currently has only one PIP4¹⁵ trained senior investigator, qualified to manage highly complex investigations. It does not have a clear plan for the selection and training of investigators to replace the PIP2 investigators forecast to leave the force, through retirement, over the next two years. Given the lead-in time for selection and accreditation, the force will need to address this in good time.

The force prioritises the arrest of suspects to prevent them committing further offences. Where the force identifies suspects for crime, it has effective processes in place to locate them and where appropriate make an arrest. The force's local daily management processes consider and manage the arrest of those suspected of

¹⁴ HMIC reviewed a sample of rape, burglary, offences of serious violence and actual bodily harm cases. In most forces the review consisted of 10 cases from each crime category but in some larger forces the sample was increased to 15. The file review was designed to provide a broad overview of the identification of vulnerability and the effectiveness of the investigation.

¹⁵ The aim of the Professionalising Investigation Programme (PIP) is to ensure that staff are trained, skilled and accredited to conduct the highest quality investigations:

- PIP level 1 – priority and volume crime investigations
- PIP level 2 – serious and complex investigations
- PIP level 3 – major investigations
- PIP level 4 – strategic management of highly complex investigations.

committing crimes against vulnerable victims, such as victims of domestic abuse, together with those wanted for serious or priority crime such as burglary. Local commanders and supervisors monitor all cases involving suspects sought for arrest. Regular days of action are also arranged, with officers given tasks to carry out arrests of suspects still outstanding.

HMIC found that the force does not routinely conduct intelligence checks on arrested foreign nationals through ACRO (Criminal Records Office).¹⁶ This is significant, as the port of Tyne is an emerging route for foreign nationals involved in committing serious and organised crime to enter the UK. The lack of checks on foreign nationals means that the force cannot understand fully the threat posed by these persons and in turn cannot assess accurately their possible involvement in serious and organised crime. The force has recognised this and taken steps to rectify the situation but we found that there is still confusion among officers over who is responsible for carrying out the checks. Even more concerning is the lack of clarity among staff within custody suites over who should complete checks for foreign nationals detained in custody by Northumbria Police.

Forensic evidence such as DNA and fingerprints is a valuable method of identifying crime suspects. The force has arrangements in place to ensure that it swiftly allocates cases where suspects are identified through forensic evidence so that it can deal with the case as a priority and arrest any suspects at the earliest opportunity. However, these arrangements do not include a systematic process for scrutinising progress and rely on officers updating records to confirm action has been taken. This means that some cases may not be dealt with as quickly as they could, which may result in suspects remaining at large to commit further offences.

The force discusses good practice from crime fighting and anti-social behaviour initiatives at force level and local management meetings. However, the force does not have formal arrangements in place to capture and evaluate good practice or retain the learning for future use.

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.

¹⁶ ACRO: Association of Chief Police Officers – now the National Police Chiefs' Council – Criminal Records Office manages criminal record information and is able to receive and share information with foreign countries in relation to foreign offenders arrested within the United Kingdom.

The force is well placed to gather and analyse digital evidence from a range of sources to inform investigations. Northumbria has a well-managed HTCUC with effective prioritisation processes in place to deal with the most serious offences first. However, we found delays in the examination of devices for those cases not assessed as high priority. For example, HTCUC computer examinations of medium-priority cases take an average of four weeks to complete and those for standard cases an average of seven months. The force has recognised this issue and is putting in place measures to reduce delays.

We also found backlogs in high tech investigations, whereas routine investigations may take up to six months to resolve but can be speeded up significantly with the payment of overtime to HTCUC staff. This suggests that prioritisation may be an issue together with insufficient staffing and capacity within the HTCUC.

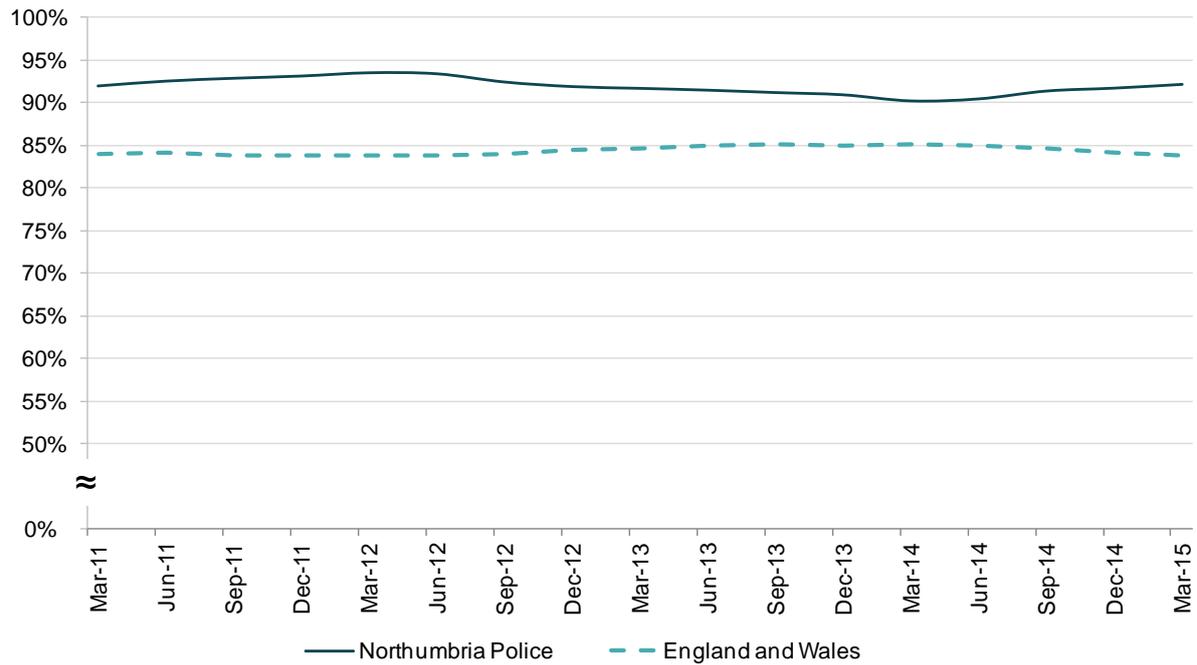
The force is taking steps to reduce the demand on the HTCUC to allow the unit to be more efficient. It is recruiting additional staff for the HTCUC and has purchased portable computer software designed to give officers an indication that digital devices found at scenes may contain unlawfully held material. This allows police to assess devices at scenes and then seize only those digital items, which are likely to hold incriminating evidence. However, the force is not yet using this technology. For lower priority cases, the force has purchased equipment and trained some officers to examine mobile phones locally, without having to submit them to the HTCUC.

The force has also adopted an innovative approach to increasing the levels of expertise within the HTCUC. Three interns studying IT at Northumbria University undertake roles in the HTCUC offering technical advice during the early stages of the referral process. The force is exploring other methods to increase expertise in this area, for example using suitably experienced volunteers.

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

Of those who have been the victim of a crime in Northumbria in the 12 months to 31 March 2015, 92.2 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 Northumbria for the 12 months to 31 March 2015 is significantly higher than the previous year's rate, while it is broadly in line with 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

Northumbria Police has consistently placed great emphasis on victim engagement and providing an effective response to calls from the public. The chief constable has set out a new approach to policing Northumbria called Proud to Protect. This builds on a strong ethos of providing good service and empowers staff to make decisions that are in the best interest of the victim and the local community. We found that senior leaders and frontline staff all share a common understanding that the needs of each victim are paramount. Senior leaders believe that it was this approach that has been instrumental in bringing about the high levels of public satisfaction in the police in Northumbria.

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

How well does the force divert offenders away from crime?

The force identifies and seeks to divert offenders out of the criminal justice system and prevent further offending through its integrated offender management (IOM) programme.¹⁷ Neighbourhood officers working closely with probation colleagues provide the IOM programme through a number of local arrangements. Offenders managed under the IOM programme are predominantly perpetrators of acquisitive crimes such as theft and burglary (July 2015).

The force is unable to assess the effectiveness of its IOM programme. It has very limited strategic oversight as the programme is provided through a number of local arrangements. There is no force-level performance information to determine how successful the programme has been in diverting offenders from crime.

Probation staff and neighbourhood officers, with limited engagement with wider partners such as housing providers and drugs and alcohol charities, undertake the selection and management of offenders within each local IOM programme. Neighbourhood staff have received no training to support them in this role. The selection of perpetrators is determined by capacity rather than necessity. Outdated force computer systems make it difficult to track progress and measure the effectiveness of the IOM approach in comparison to other policing methods. Northumbria Police's approach to IOM is undeveloped and ineffectively co-ordinated, so does not ensure that the force can measure how successful it is at diverting offenders within this group away from further offending.

During HMIC's crime inspection in 2014, we noted the force's intention to change its approach to IOM. At that time, HMIC recommended that the force implement immediately a plan to increase engagement with partners in the lead-in to the proposed restructure, so that the force could consider the views of partners properly before it introduced the new arrangements. HMIC is concerned that the current IOM arrangements have limited involvement from partner agencies in the selection and management of perpetrators. We remain concerned that the force needs to work more closely with partner agencies in the offender management programme and this remains an area for improvement for Northumbria Police.

¹⁷ IOM brings a multi-agency response to the crime and reoffending threats faced by local communities. The most persistent and problematic offenders are identified and managed jointly by partner agencies working together.

How well does the force deal with repeat offenders?

The force uses a number of approaches to identify repeat offenders and prevent them re-offending. Like most forces, Northumbria Police has several groups of offenders ranging from serious sexual and violent offenders to those committing burglary and theft. The force has formal arrangements for identifying and managing repeat and high-risk offenders, such as IOM and multi-agency public protection arrangements (MAPPAs).¹⁸ In addition, the force has less formal arrangements within neighbourhoods to identify those repeat offenders, referred to as sector targets, who are committing offences such as theft and anti-social behaviour.

HMIC found that neighbourhood officers often contribute to the identification of sector targets through self-generated research of force IT systems, community contact, focused patrolling and engagement with local partners. We found examples of neighbourhood inspectors assessing intelligence with force intelligence units to identify individuals, who are then monitored closely by neighbourhood teams on each shift.

Neighbourhood inspectors and identified neighbourhood officers manage continuing activity in relation to sector targets. We saw regular shift briefings, intelligence collection and swift action to deal with further offences committed by each sector target. Response officers are also aware of these individuals of concern and are allocated tasks aimed at preventing and reducing their offending behaviour.

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

The force has effective processes for identifying and monitoring sexual and other dangerous offenders. A central team consisting of dedicated, trained and accredited staff, called risk management officers, carries out all aspects of intelligence gathering, monitoring and risk management in relation to these types of offenders.

In Northumbria, the number of registered sexual offenders is increasing and the force has identified that anticipated future increases would require an increase in the number of specialist resources to monitor them. The vast majority of registered sexual offenders reside within communities, but HMIC's fieldwork identified that most frontline patrol staff were unaware which registered sexual offenders lived in their area. Furthermore, none of the neighbourhood staff we interviewed felt that they had a part to play in the monitoring of and gathering intelligence in relation to registered sexual offenders. Instead, they saw this as being the responsibility of the risk management officers on the central team. Risk management officers have primary responsibility for registered sex offenders, and allocate specific tasks directly to neighbourhood teams only if they require additional support. Frontline patrol staff could, however, be more involved in the day-to-day monitoring of registered sex

¹⁸ 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.

offenders to improve the intelligence picture and reduce the likelihood of their offending or presenting a danger to the public.

The force manages offenders within the MAPPA effectively. The force has recognised the risk from a growing number of dangerous offenders who are suitable for the MAPPA process. The force and partner organisations, including the prison and probation services, use MAPPAs to monitor those offenders who present a high-risk to the public, and to stop them re-offending. Offenders presenting the highest level of risk require co-ordinated action with partner organisations to reduce these risks.

These offenders are subject to regular scrutiny and review with the same dedicated team that monitors registered sex offenders being responsible for MAPPA across the force area. The force gives good consideration to risk and appropriate partner involvement. A strategic management board meets quarterly and involves both statutory partners and other partner agencies with a duty to co-operate, which helps ensure effective governance.

Summary of findings



Good

Northumbria Police performs well at bringing offenders to justice.

The force's crime investigations are well managed and closely supervised. Staff view the location and interviewing of outstanding offenders as a priority and the force monitors this through daily meetings.

Investigators are trained and equipped to conduct investigations suitable for their role. We found that the force provides a good standard of forensic and digital analysis of exhibits to help its investigations identify offenders.

The force has good procedures in place for its officers to focus their attention on those offenders who are committing the most crime and anti-social behaviour in neighbourhoods. The force routinely allocates officers the task of carrying out monitoring activity to curb the behaviour of offenders.

The force's governance and oversight of its integrated offender management programme is limited. Neighbourhood staff given the task of managing offenders have not had any training around integrated offender management and partnership working arrangements could improve.

The force's management of offenders under multi-agency public protection arrangements by a dedicated team is good. However, the force needs to do more to involve frontline patrolling staff in the routine monitoring of registered sex offenders.

Areas for improvement

- The force should improve its ability to retrieve digital evidence from mobile phones, computers and other electronic devices quickly enough to ensure that investigations are not delayed.
- The force should work with partner organisations to develop its approach to integrated offender management (IOM) in line with the Home Office IOM principles.
- The force should ensure that checks are routinely conducted to verify the identity, nationality and overseas convictions of arrested foreign nationals.

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 2015.¹⁹ The following is a summary of the findings.

Summary of findings



Northumbria Police has made protecting vulnerable people from harm a high priority for the force. Both the police and crime commissioner (PCC) and the chief constable have a strong commitment to improving the services they provide. HMIC judges the force as good at protecting from harm those who are vulnerable and supporting victims.

The force has clear and consistently-applied processes in place to identify repeat and vulnerable victims. We found regular and robust supervision and scrutiny of incidents to ensure an appropriate and timely response.

To help achieve the force's commitment to improve the services provided to vulnerable people, it has invested significantly in training staff. This ensures that they have a good level of knowledge and understanding, which was demonstrated during reality-testing in HMIC's inspection.

The force is using widespread and innovative ways of working to protect and support vulnerable people, often in partnership with other agencies.

The force has made, and continues to make investment in information technology (IT) to support improvements to bring about greater efficiencies and effectiveness in victim care services.

Good arrangements are in place with partner agencies to keep vulnerable people safe, and the force is continually working to enhance these arrangements further. Additional analytical support should make these arrangements even more effective.

Overall the force provides a good response to and safeguards missing children and victims of domestic abuse, and is well prepared to tackle child sexual exploitation.

¹⁹ *PEEL: Police effectiveness 2015 (Vulnerability)* – Northumbria Police, HMIC, December 2015. Available from: www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmic/publications/police-effectiveness-vulnerability-2015-northumbria/.

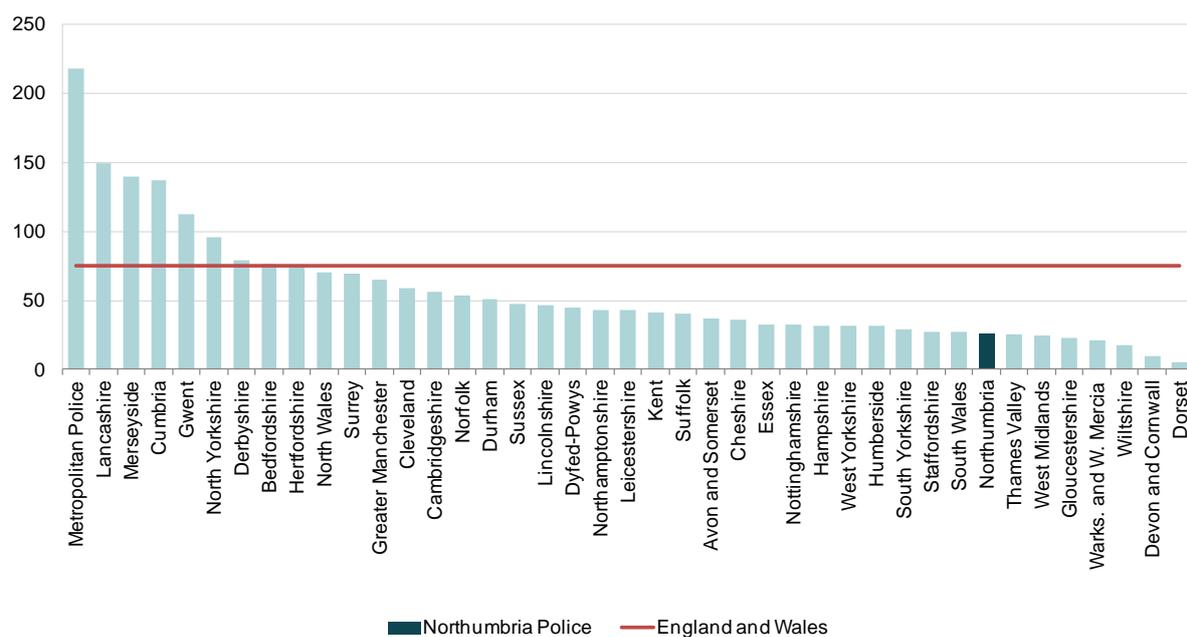
How effective is the force at tackling serious and organised crime, including its arrangements for fulfilling its national policing responsibilities?

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, Northumbria Police was actively disrupting, investigating or monitoring 37 organised crime groups (OCGs). This represents 26 OCGs per one million of the population, which is low compared with other forces in England and Wales.

Figure 6: Organised crime groups per one million population, by force, as at 30 June 2015^{20 21}



Source: HMIC data collection

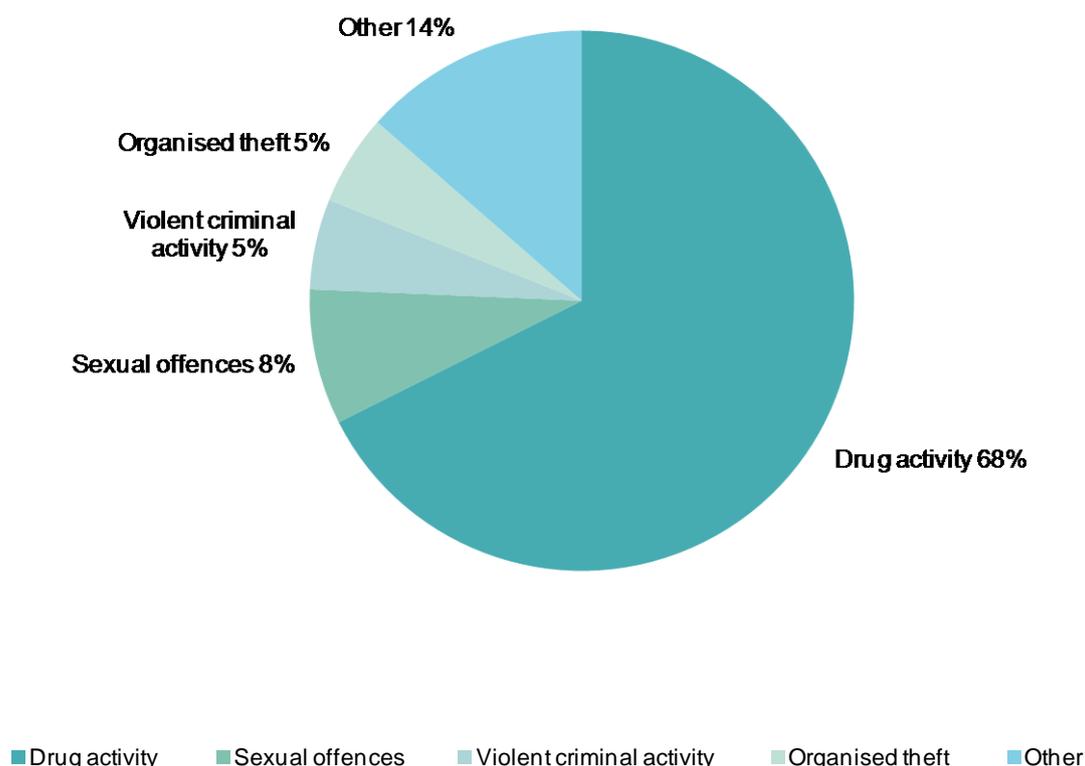
Forces categorise OCGs by the predominant form of criminal activity in which the group is involved. Although OCGs are likely to be involved in multiple forms of criminality, this indicates their most common characteristic. 'Drug activity' was the predominant crime type (68 percent) of the OCGs managed by Northumbria Police as at 30 June 2015. 'Drug activity' was also the most common predominant crime type recorded by all forces in England and Wales²² with 64 percent of all OCGs classified in this way.

²⁰ 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.

²¹ 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.

²² 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 2015²³



Source: HMIC data collection

Serious and organised crime is one of six national threats specified within *The Strategic Policing Requirement*.²⁴ 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. 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.

²³ Figures may not sum to 100 percent, due to rounding.

²⁴ *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.

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

Northumbria Police has a good understanding of the threat posed by serious and organised crime. Serious and organised crime does not, however, feature as a force priority within the police and crime commissioner's police and crime plan. The force does not have a current control strategy²⁵ but it has conducted a strategic intelligence assessment to identify intelligence-gathering requirements. Although organised crime does not feature in its own right as a priority in the assessment, the elements of organised crime do feature throughout, demonstrating the force's understanding of the issue.

The force has completed a comprehensive strategic threat and risk assessment (STRA)²⁶ of organised crime as part of its responsibilities under *The Strategic Policing Requirement*.

The force has not yet completed a local profile of serious and organised crime,²⁷ but at the time of HMIC's inspection, this was being developed. The completion of the profile is important as it is informed by information and data from partners, as well as the force's own intelligence. Drawing this relevant information together will give the force a more comprehensive understanding of the threat posed by OCGs.

Northumbria Police can improve how it uses intelligence to understand the threat from serious and organised crime. The force's intelligence system does not allow for the easy identification of intelligence, which may indicate organised crime activity. However, once the system has identified individuals, it allows for an individual's profile to be highlighted as being linked to serious and organised crime. This greatly improves intelligence collection and dissemination. The force's current intelligence system is outdated and an improved intelligence system would greatly assist in identifying and managing OCGs.

²⁵ Each year, a force will carry out a strategic assessment from which it sets a control strategy and intelligence requirement. The force reviews the assessment after six months to assess whether the priorities for tackling crime need to be amended and, where necessary, the control strategy updated.

²⁶ Police forces are required to produce an annual strategic threat and risk assessment (STRA). The STRA will be reviewed every six months, but should be monitored, reviewed and updated regularly to ensure it remains current.

²⁷ SOC local profiles are reports that outlines the threat from serious and organised crime within a specific local area. Available from: www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/371602/Serious_and_Organised_Crime_local_profiles.pdf

We found that the force has started to use referrals to the Government Agency Intelligence Network (GAIN)²⁸ although the force accepts that this is still developing.

The force has good processes and structures in place to identify emerging threats and groups. Once identified, OCGs are assessed appropriately.

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 National Crime Agency (NCA) and a number of non-police organisations such as Border Force, use OCG mapping. Northumbria Police has mapped 37 OCGs.

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.²⁹

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

HMIC found that Northumbria Police is firmly committed to tackling serious and organised crime. The force has good links with the North East Special Operations Unit (NERSOU), including the Regional Intelligence Unit (RIU) and the Regional Asset Recovery Team (RART). Of the 37 OCGs mapped in Northumbria, the force is managing 36, with the remaining one being managed by NERSOU. In addition, the force maintains good links with other agencies such as HM Revenue and Customs, Border Force and the NCA.

²⁸ The Government Agency Intelligence Network (GAIN) is a large network of partners, including all police forces in England and Wales, which shares information about organised criminals.

²⁹ *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

The force has good governance arrangements for managing OCGs. It runs a widely recognised force operation called Operation Magnet aimed at disrupting OCG activity. At a local level, the force holds monthly Magnet meetings to discuss activity and progress. At force level, the force discusses progress at a monthly tasking and co-ordinating meeting. The force also attends quarterly regional meetings with other partners involved in tackling OCGs.

The force is good at disrupting and investigating OCGs. At force level, a detective chief inspector (DCI) leads a proactive organised crime team (POCT). This unit has appropriately trained officers with access to more specialist resources and investigative techniques to enable them to conduct covert policing operations. HMIC found that these officers are motivated, highly competent and have the capability and knowledge to tackle OCGs. The force has demonstrated its capacity to conduct complex investigations into serious crime, with little reliance on other agencies. The force has identified five priority OCGs and has further assessed the levels of activity required to tackle each of the 37 OCGs.

The force at the local policing area tactical tasking and co-ordinating group (TT&CG) meeting initially discusses locally identified emerging and established groups. A force-level tasking and co-ordinating group meeting then considers further those groups that present a greater degree of risk. If appropriate, monitoring and management of those groups deemed to present the most serious risk can be investigated at a regional level by specialist investigation teams.

At a tactical level the local policing area's DCI manages OCG activity through the monthly Magnet meetings. Lead responsible officers (LROs) who manage the local police action against OCGs will attend, as will POCT managers, analysts and a range of partner agencies.

HMIC observed one of these monthly Magnet meetings. We found that there is scope to define better the differences between the responsibilities of the head of the POCT and the LROs to ensure each understands their role in managing OCG activity. Further clarification is required for the transfer of LRO responsibility (when necessary) and for collaboration when the ROCU or other agencies undertake an investigative role in support of Northumbria Police. Generally, we found that these meetings provide a good structure for managing OCG activity.

HMIC found that local staff have a good understanding of some elements of organised crime such as child sexual exploitation. In some neighbourhoods, staff had a good understanding of the OCGs operating locally. Where local officers are aware of the crime groups, officers disrupt their activity and gather relevant intelligence. OCGs do not operate in every neighbourhood, but are concentrated in areas such as Newcastle and Sunderland in particular.

The force also uses the information from suspicious activity reports (SARs)³⁰ to inform current and developing investigations. The force has processes in place to research and act upon SARs. An officer within the fraud team researches all SARs and where appropriate creates an investigative intelligence package³¹ that is then allocated for action.

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

HMIC found a range of force action to prevent OCG activity. In addition to disruption activity, the force also uses serious crime prevention orders (SCPOs)³² and financial reporting orders (FROs)³³ to good effect.

Northumbria Police works well with partners at both force and local levels, managed through the Magnet meetings. HMIC found good evidence of partnership working focused on disrupting OCGs and evidence of good information sharing. Partners reinforced this during our inspection. However, partnership activity is largely focused on disruption and enforcement activity. Diversionary work to discourage young people at risk of being drawn into serious criminality through OCGs is limited. The force recognises that it needs to do more work to help deter people from becoming involved with OCGs and their criminal activities. The force recognises that it needs to develop further its work with partners to focus more on preventing serious and organised crime.

The force uses the local press and radio to inform the public when it has successfully prosecuted or seized controlled drugs, stolen property or firearms from those involved in serious and organised crime. The force actively informs the public of the threats associated with serious and organised crime, for example a local radio interview discussing the risks of individuals being drawn into serious crime through involvement in lower level crimes such as shoplifting.

³⁰ A SAR is information which alerts law enforcement that certain client/customer activity is in some way suspicious and might indicate money laundering or terrorist financing.

³¹ Intelligence packages provide targeted profiles and analysis to support and focus investigations.

³² SCPO: serious crime prevention order: a court order that is used to protect the public by preventing, restricting or disrupting a person's involvement in serious crime. An SCPO can prevent involvement in serious crime by imposing various conditions on a person; for example, restricting who he or she can associate with, restricting his or her travel, or placing an obligation to report his or her financial affairs to the police.

³³ The financial reporting order (FRO) was a 'post conviction' order introduced in 2005. Since SCPOs can also be used to impose financial reporting requirements, the Serious Crime Act 2015 repealed the FRO legislation; henceforth financial reporting requirements will be imposed through an SCPO.

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.

The force is meeting its national policing responsibilities. The force has updated its strategic threat and risk assessment, and has resources and processes in place to mitigate the threat from terrorism. The force works closely within the seven-force North East counter terrorism unit in relation to potential security threats.

The force's civil contingency planning is well developed and the force is an active partner in the Northumbria local resilience forum. The force participates fully in multi-agency testing and exercising.

In relation to public order, the force has significant resources trained and accredited to deal with most public order contingencies. The force is very experienced in dealing with major sporting events and protests and provides assistance to other forces as required.

Northumbria Police has conducted a full assessment of how it tackles cyber-crime. This concluded that the force is meeting current demand and is working to increase its capacity to tackle cyber-crime. However, it also identified that the force needs to enhance the understanding of officers through training to better manage the recovery of evidence and to develop further investigative capability. It also recognises that the force must improve its intelligence collection to assess the extent to which OCGs are engaged in online criminality and determine the nature of threat posed by criminals to Northumbria through cyber-crime.

Summary of findings



Northumbria Police is good at tackling serious and organised crime.

The force is developing a serious and organised crime local profile to enhance its understanding of the threat presented by organised crime groups across Northumbria.

The force has good links to other partners in law enforcement regionally and is working to improve relationships with key partners even more.

Northumbria identifies organised crime groups at local and force levels and it has good systems in place to tackle organised crime groups using a wide range of policing options.

The force should improve how it makes the most of intelligence gathering opportunities, particularly those available through partner arrangements. The force's intelligence system is outdated and does not support intelligence gathering effectively in relation to serious and organised crime.

The force is able to test its ability to fulfil its national policing responsibilities. The force has enough resources to deal with most public order contingencies and respond to a major incident.

Areas for improvement

- The force should complete a 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.
- The force should take steps to identify those at risk of being drawn into serious and organised crime, and ensure that preventative initiatives are put in place with partner organisations to deter them from offending.

Annex A – HMIC judgments

Our judgments

The judgment categories are:

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

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

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