

State of Policing – The Annual Assessment of Policing in England and Wales 2020

**Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of
Constabulary**

Presented to Parliament pursuant to section 54 of the
Police Act 1996

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Foreword

This is my report to the Secretary of State under section 54 of the Police Act 1996.

It contains my assessment of the effectiveness and efficiency of policing in England and Wales, based on the inspections we carried out between March 2020 and March 2021.

This report's structure and purpose

Part 1 contains my assessment of the state of policing in England and Wales. In making my assessment, I have drawn on the inspections we carried out over the past year, as well as the findings and reports of other organisations, and other information and analysis available to me. Part 2 gives an overview of the findings of the inspections we carried out between 31 March 2020 and 31 March 2021, including a summary of our police effectiveness, efficiency and legitimacy (PEEL) inspections. Part 3 contains a full list of our inspections and other work in the year in question.

The results of our individual inspections enable an assessment of the performance of individual forces, and a more general assessment of performance in specific aspects of policing. I hope that people, including the public, who hold policing to account will draw on the overall conclusions in this report just as much as they

draw on the specific conclusions we have reached for each force.

The pandemic

Last year's assessment was written soon after the World Health Organization declared the outbreak of COVID-19 a pandemic. At that time, approximately 4,000 people had died worldwide. At the time of writing this report, that figure has risen to over 4 million.

The pandemic created an extraordinary year for policing: police forces had to adapt rapidly, and many officers and staff made great personal sacrifices to keep their families safe while continuing to go to work.

The pandemic continued during the entire period covered by this report. In many respects, the pandemic intensified vulnerability for many people, and this is therefore a theme running throughout this report.

Inspection programme

Most inspection activity was suspended for part of the year. Many of our secondees temporarily returned to their forces or services to support them in their responses to the pandemic. Others were released to support the work of other organisations, such as national policing bodies, other emergency services and the Government. Other members of staff remained with us and worked on developing, facilitating and enhancing our inspection capacity and capability for when inspections resumed.

Some inspections took place. These included an inspection into how the police service responded to the pandemic, how the police managed protests and how the Metropolitan Police responded to the Sarah Everard vigil at Clapham Common.

As with all organisations, we have had to adapt the way we work. In March 2020, following the suspension of our inspection programme, we moved to remote inspections. This mainly involved the use of video conferencing. I am grateful to forces and other organisations that have been involved with these inspections for adapting so well to this new way of working. We decided to continue with our work during subsequent lockdowns, as forces and other organisations were in a better position to be able to work with us than they were at the start of the pandemic.

We have learned from this experience and future inspections will balance both face-to-face and remote working.

HMI Zoë Billingham

In March 2020, HMI Zoë Billingham announced her intention to leave the inspectorate in September this year, after 12 years of distinguished service.

Zoë has responsibility for the forces in the Eastern Region. Since 2017, when our remit was extended to include inspections of fire and rescue services, she has

also been the senior responsible officer for our inspections of the fire and rescue services in England.

As the lead for our inspections of the police response to domestic abuse, Zoë has made a significant contribution towards improvements in this area of policing and the safeguarding of victims.

Her passion for keeping the public safe has been outstanding and she will be greatly missed at the inspectorate. Zoë has my deep gratitude for her dedicated service to the inspectorate and I wish her every success in the future.

HMI Andy Cooke

In April 2021, we welcomed HMI Andy Cooke QPM to the inspectorate. Andy has 36 years of experience in policing and was previously the chief constable of Merseyside Police – one of the most demanding police areas in the country. He has been the national lead for crime operations, serious and organised crime, and violence and public protection.

Andy brings extensive operational and investigative policing experience to the inspectorate. I very much look forward to working with him.

Contributions to my assessment

In previous years I have written to chief constables, police and crime commissioners and their equivalents and other interested parties to ask for their views on

policing during the year. This year has been no different and I am grateful for the responses I received. As expected, the pandemic was a principal theme running through the responses.

This year, we have again worked closely with the other criminal justice inspectorates: Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons; Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation; and Her Majesty's Crown Prosecution Service Inspectorate. We have also benefited enormously from our joint work with the Care Quality Commission, Ofsted, Estyn, Care Inspectorate Wales and Healthcare Inspectorate Wales.

I extend my profound gratitude to HMICFRS staff who always make significant contributions to my assessment. This year has been exceptional and staff have adapted well to the changing circumstances, and have demonstrated their immense dedication to their work and to protecting the public.

Sir Thomas P Winsor

Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Constabulary

Part 1: Overview

Overview

In many respects, 2020 proved to be an exceptional and extraordinarily difficult year for policing.

The pandemic posed a significant risk to public health, and the measures brought in to curb the spread of the virus, particularly restrictions on liberty and economic activity, have had a profound and far-reaching effect on the public.

Many people suffered the loss of family members, friends, neighbours and colleagues; the police were no exception. At the time of writing, 30 police officers and staff in England and Wales have lost their lives to COVID-19. On behalf of all those who work at HMICFRS, I offer my most profound condolences to those who have lost loved ones.

The pandemic has taken its toll on many other people because of intensified loneliness and isolation. It has deeply affected many people's mental health, as well as their economic and educational wellbeing. Some people continue to suffer the long-term debilitating effects of the virus. They do not know when, if ever, they will get better.

Many police officers are at risk of suffering from mental ill health. Not only do they come under great stresses in

the exercise of their duties, but they also face the most appalling and dreadful things.

I am talking not only about the angry and dangerous man, armed with a weapon, although that is prevalent enough, or the reckless or even murderous driver of a vehicle, determined to kill or maim, and the person who is mentally ill, endangering lives in his or her immediate vicinity. I also mean the circumstances of serious road traffic collisions, sudden deaths and suicides – sometimes of young people – people who have died in fires or by violence of all kinds, the elderly person who died alone and a long time before his or her body was found, the death of a baby, and so much else; and the strains of telling a parent of tragedy; and of the most unspeakable crimes against children; and the list goes on and on.

These things as we know have profound and lifelong effects on the police officers and police staff who have to deal with them. And yes, of course, they take those experiences home; how could it ever be otherwise?

Let us also acknowledge that these experiences have knock-on effects on officers' families and those close to them. When officers lie awake, unable to dispel what it is they have seen, and they withdraw into depression and worse, then their families suffer too, as they try to support and cope with the effects on their own loved one.

Most regrettably, in previous years my State of Policing reports have spoken of the deaths of officers who lost

their lives while protecting the public. With three such deaths to report, this year has been the worst in recent years.

In September 2020, Metropolitan Police sergeant Matiu Ratana was fatally shot in the Croydon custody centre.¹

In April 2020, South Yorkshire Police constable Matthew Lannie lost his life as a result of a collision between his police motorcycle and a car. He was on his way to an emergency incident at the time.²

In June 2020, special constable Resham Singh Natal of West Midlands Police died at home while recovering from injuries he sustained when hit by a car in 2019. He received these injuries while dealing with another road traffic collision.³

All police officers, whether full-time, part-time, or special constables, as well as police community support officers, police staff and some other volunteers, face risk every time they come to work. For many of them, and their families, living with the risk is a way of life: an unavoidable and accepted part of the job of keeping other people safe.

In many respects, policing is a dangerous job. It is incumbent upon all of us to be mindful of that and to do what we can to help those who help us.

¹ See: <https://policememorial.org.uk/rollofhonour.php>

² As before.

³ As before.

The culture of the police has many great strengths.

It is a culture of determination, courage, hard work and achievement, of facing any challenge or danger and confronting it in full measure. There is a considerable degree of goodwill in the police, in making sacrifices – personal and otherwise – to protect the public, deter crime, disrupt criminal networks, apprehend criminals and make communities safer. Nothing should be done which might jeopardise that.

There are many rewards in policing; indeed, I believe it may be one of the occupations with the highest potential for job satisfaction of any. Not only is the variety of work in policing exciting and stimulating, but most people can only imagine the reward of securing the conviction of a person who has committed a crime of a serious nature, or someone who presents a great threat to children, or a person who has made life almost unbearable for the members of a community. And so must be the knowledge that a threat of a catastrophic nature has been averted and those who presented the greatest danger to innocent people have been taken out of society.

These are not satisfactions which are available in most other kinds of work.

Policing during the pandemic

While policing the pandemic presented some difficulties for the service, in many respects, its response was exemplary. And this is no less than what the public expected.

We reported on this in detail in our report *Policing in the pandemic*.⁴

The National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC) quickly recognised the unprecedented problems caused by the pandemic, and by mid-March 2020 it had set up Operation Talla. The operation was designed to co-ordinate the police response to the pandemic, and managed communication and collaboration among all forces.

In last year's *State of Policing*,⁵ I observed that the public's resolve to comply with the restrictions imposed on liberty and economic activity may increasingly be tested. The figures speak for themselves: between 27 March 2020 and 14 March 2021, police forces in England and Wales issued 94,368 fixed penalty notices for breaches of the lockdown regulations.⁶

For the most part, the precise reasons why the police issued each of these notices never made the news.

⁴ [*Policing in the pandemic: The police response to the coronavirus pandemic during 2020*](#), HMICFRS, 20 April 2021

⁵ [*State of Policing: The Annual Assessment of Policing in England and Wales 2019*](#), Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Constabulary, 2 July 2020.

⁶ [*Update on Coronavirus FPNs issued by police – March 2021*](#), NPCC, 26 March 2021

Officers often issued these notices as a last resort, after first trying to engage with the public and encouraging them to comply with the new regulations.

There are, of course, highly publicised and isolated exceptions. For example, in January 2021, Derbyshire Constabulary issued fixed penalty notices to two women in open and almost deserted countryside, who had met up for a walk five miles from their homes. This case attracted substantial national media attention, and the force faced strident criticism. In the end, the force reviewed the notices and decided to rescind them.⁷

The media also criticised South Yorkshire Police after an officer told a family they weren't allowed to be in their front garden during lockdown. The force later apologised for their "well-intentioned ill-informed" actions.⁸

The service adapted well to new ways of working

Police stations became quieter places during the working day. While many officers reported for duty as usual, some officers and staff in support roles found that they could do their jobs almost as effectively from home.

⁷ [*A review into fixed penalty notices issued by officers from Derbyshire Constabulary last week has now concluded*](#), Derbyshire Constabulary news, 11 January 2021

⁸ [*Coronavirus: Public reassured over lockdown policing rules*](#), BBC News, 10 April 2020

Of course, officers couldn't do everything remotely – for instance, arresting people and interviewing suspects held in custody suites. But they could do certain tasks, including talking to members of the public by telephone and answering non-emergency 101 calls.

Law and guidance

The public found it difficult to distinguish between the law and government guidance. Information from different sources was contradictory and many people were left confused about what they were allowed to do.

In its report on the use of fixed penalty notices to enforce the lockdown regulations, Parliament's Joint Committee on Human Rights concluded that "the public cannot be expected to know the law if the guidance does not reflect the law, and politicians' statements match neither".⁹

The frequently changing nature of the regulations made it extremely difficult for both the public and the police to keep up; the first set of regulations covered 11 pages and the last ran to 123. The chair of the committee said that the regulations were neither straightforward nor

⁹ [*The Government response to covid-19: fixed penalty notices, Fourteenth Report of Session 2019–21*](#), Joint Committee on Human Rights, 27 April 2021, page 25.

easily understood, either by those who had to comply with them, or by the police who had to enforce them.¹⁰

In the light of the above, the policing of the pandemic – in particular, the policing of restrictions on movement – has brought into sharp focus the responsibilities and obligations of the public, the police and the Government.

All parties have distinct responsibilities and obligations. Usually, Parliament is responsible for creating legislation. Considerable powers are, however, vested in individual ministers to create some forms of legislation – these include the public health regulations used to reduce the transmission of the virus.

Primarily, it is the responsibility of the police to enforce regulations. And, in theory at least, the police's discharge of their functions should be a relatively straightforward matter. But the new regulations were accompanied by a considerable volume of Government-issued guidance, which had no legal effect. Put simply, citizens were not under any obligation to do anything other than what the law said.

The Government did not always make this important distinction sufficiently clear when publishing regulations and guidance, neither to the police nor to the public.

¹⁰ [Joint Committee on Human Rights: Every Fixed Penalty Notice issued under coronavirus Regulations must be reviewed](#), Joint Committee on Human Rights, 27 April 2021.

The police enforce the law, not guidance

Emphatically, the police's role is not to enforce government guidance; their role is to enforce the law. In the United Kingdom, unlike much of the rest of the world, the police are not the obedient and coercive arm of the executive government.

Ministers do not have the authority to demand action from a podium or behind a lectern and expect that criminal offences are created instantly; Parliament must authorise these offences first.

The fact that ministers asserted that their guidance – which had no higher status than requests – were actual instructions to the general public was inevitably confusing. This was equally confusing for the police.

For example, the Government's warnings to the public to stay within their local area, and to leave home only once a day, were just guidance and not the law.

Vulnerability

Crime patterns and trends changed

With the shops being shut and people staying at home, levels of acquisitive crime, such as burglaries and shoplifting, naturally went down during periods of lockdown. They then rose again when restrictions eased.¹¹

The pandemic provided organised crime groups in particular with new opportunities to enlarge and diversify their activities in ways which caused further severe harm to the public. These included selling counterfeit, unregulated and substandard personal protective equipment and using cryptoassets, such as Bitcoin, to launder money.¹²

Some crimes, however, continued to be committed.

¹¹ Between April and June 2020, during the first lockdown, total crime decreased by 15 percent, increased again by 19 percent between July to September 2020 when the restrictions were eased, and from October to December 2020 decreased again by 7 percent when restrictions were reintroduced.

The greatest decrease was in theft-related offences, such as shoplifting, burglaries and theft from the person. This was, no doubt, linked to more shops being closed and people staying at home. An increase in proactive police activity in crime hotspots in April to June 2020 saw a 15 percent increase in drug offences.

Many offences, particularly serious ones, did not diminish either in volume or in severity. These included many of the activities of organised crime gangs, firearm-related offences and offences committed online.

[*Crime in England and Wales: year ending December 2020*](#), Office for National Statistics, 13 May 2021

¹² [*National Strategic Assessment of Serious and Organised Crime 2021*](#), National Crime Agency, 2021.

The circumstances of the lockdown provided the perfect backdrop for many other crimes – especially those committed online.

The Online Safety Bill

In 2015, the then Home Secretary, Theresa May, added child sexual abuse to the Strategic Policing Requirement as a new national threat.¹³ This meant that the National Crime Agency (NCA) and the police have to give special emphasis to tackling child sexual abuse.

In *State of Policing 2018*,¹⁴ I said that parents have a responsibility to teach their children how to navigate the online world safely. I said that the onus cannot rest completely on them, and I warmly welcomed the proposed reforms announced by the Government in April 2019 in its *Online Harms White Paper*.¹⁵

The Government's draft Online Safety Bill was published on 12 May 2021.¹⁶ It is designed to regulate access to harmful content and provide significant protections to vulnerable people, especially children. These include susceptibility to grooming and access to images of child abuse, extreme violence, hate speech and radicalising material.

¹³ [The Strategic Policing Requirement 2015](#), Home Office, March 2015.

¹⁴ [State of Policing: The Annual Assessment of Policing in England and Wales 2018](#), Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Constabulary, 4 July 2019.

¹⁵ [Online Harms White Paper](#), HM Government, April 2019.

¹⁶ [Official Report, House of Commons](#), 12 May 2021 (Col 7WS).

This legislation cannot come quickly enough. Some tech giants now own and operate what, to many people, have become significant pieces of public infrastructure, and they need to be held to account. Their supervision of these networks and systems should now be subject to appropriately stringent public interest regulation.

The act of simply fining some of the world's richest companies for tolerating the presence of harmful material on their websites will not bring about meaningful change. While the sanctions available in the Online Safety Bill will undoubtedly be subject to close Parliamentary scrutiny, there is a case for these sanctions to be even greater.

As I said in *State of Policing 2018*,¹⁷ in the United States we have seen that what really weighs on the minds of the directors at the very top of large companies is the prospect of losing both their fortunes and their liberty. Were measures to that effect introduced in the United Kingdom, this would make tangible change and protect vulnerable children online.

Many people experienced intensified vulnerability

The lockdown intensified and increased the vulnerability of people who were already vulnerable.

During the first lockdown period, the National Domestic Abuse Helpline logged 65 percent more contacts and

¹⁷ [*State of Policing: The Annual Assessment of Policing in England and Wales 2018*](#), Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Constabulary, 4 July 2019.

calls compared to the previous three months. There was also a noticeable increase in domestic abuse-related demand for Victim Support services in the weeks following the easing of lockdown measures.¹⁸

This figure may not reveal the true extent of what was happening behind closed doors. Some people may have experienced difficulties in getting support while confined to their homes. Others may not have been aware of the fact that, under the lockdown regulations, if you were fleeing the threat of violence, or violence itself, you were entitled to leave your home.

Many forces worked with other organisations to identify vulnerable people at heightened risk. They were also aware of the fact that, in some households, adults couldn't escape their abusive partners, nor children their abusive carers.

Headteachers and their staff worked hard to keep schools open for some children, including those who were vulnerable. For some children, the only decent meal they had was the one provided in school canteens. However, with most children not being in school, bruises may not have been seen, malnutrition not noticed and children with no shoes may not have been spotted by teachers.

Children living with domestic abuse in some form or another will bear scars for life. Even if they were not

¹⁸ [*Domestic abuse in England and Wales overview: November 2020*](#), Office for National Statistics, 25 November 2020.

physically harmed, it's highly likely that they would have been psychologically harmed, just by being there. Many children will be profoundly affected by the fact that they witnessed and heard domestic abuse at home, or hid from it and knew that it was going on.

And this feeds into crime. It must never be overlooked that children who grow up in poverty and suffer severe neglect have a much higher chance of becoming offenders in the future.

A very high proportion of people in prison were, in one way or another, victims of domestic abuse when they were children. A lot of them grew up in an atmosphere of violence and fear, and many people who were victims of domestic abuse as children go on to be domestic abusers themselves later in life.

The prison system makes vulnerable people even more vulnerable

Many of the people who end up in prison or who are drawn into the criminal justice system are people who are ill and not bad. They have done bad things; they may have harmed, alarmed, or threatened other people. But in a high proportion of cases, what these people have been through in their lives, very often as either victims or witnesses to domestic abuse, has made a material contribution to how they have turned out.

If you brutalise somebody, they will become brutal, and this is exactly what is happening in our prisons.

In the first lockdown, many people in the criminal justice system with mental health, drug or alcohol problems had reduced access to support. Many prisoners were kept locked in their cells for longer. Of prisoners surveyed between July 2020 and September 2020, 78 percent said they were allowed out of their cells for under two hours each day, of whom 42 percent reported being allowed out of their cells for under an hour each day.¹⁹ This length of time spent in such confinement is inevitably detrimental to a person's mental health and wellbeing.

The former Chief Inspector of Prisons, Peter Clarke, has said that the practice of keeping prisoners locked in their cells for 23 hours a day to reduce the risk of infection from the virus was dangerous. He has also said that when that is happening “there is not much hope and I think hope is a key component for prisoners”.²⁰

If we are to break the cycle of offending, we need to have a sound rehabilitation system in place. In many cases, people commit offences because they have no money, no job, no stable accommodation, no food, and are often dependent on alcohol or drugs. If, once they leave prison, their circumstances haven't changed, and they still have no job and no home, they may very well

¹⁹ [Impact of the pandemic on the Criminal Justice System: a joint view of the Criminal Justice Chief Inspectors on the Criminal Justice System's response to COVID-19](#), Criminal Justice Joint Inspectorates, 19 January 2021, page 16.

²⁰ [Prisoners locked up for 23 hours due to Covid rules is 'dangerous'](#), BBC News, 20 October 2020.

return to previous offending habits, and the cycle starts again.²¹

The aim of rehabilitation is to prevent reoffending by providing a person with education and support. This can include vocational courses, assistance with finding employment and housing, as well as medical and psychiatric help.

In too many respects, the promises of rehabilitation are not kept; many people walk out of prison with £46 in their pocket,²² a bag containing their possessions, nowhere to live,²³ and no adequate preparation for life outside. Very often, they simply go back to the environment and associations, and incentives, which sent them to prison in the first place. Although we have seen a decrease in the levels of reoffending in recent years, the level is still far higher than it should be. Of

²¹ Inspections by HMI Probation in 2018 and 2020 found that, overall, probation services provided services to tackle service users' offending-related factors in more than half of all cases. Accommodation needs were met in 58 percent of cases; there is therefore a substantial shortfall. In 48 percent of inspected cases, there were links to drugs, but there were only sufficient interventions in only 44 percent of those cases.

[2019/2020 Annual Report: inspection of probation services](#), Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation, December 2020, pages 32–34.

²² Before their release, prisoners can apply for a £46 discharge grant and a £50 grant towards their first night's accommodation, which is paid directly to the housing provider.

²³ Between 2018 and 2019, 11,435 people were released from prison in England with no stable accommodation. Recall rates for prisoners who did not have settled accommodation (63 percent) were nearly double that for those who did (35 percent). [Accommodation and support for adult offenders in the community and on release from prison in England](#), Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation, July 2020, pages 6–8.

those prisoners sentenced to under 12 months in custody who were released between October 2018 and December 2018, 61 percent reoffended within one year.²⁴ This crisis in criminal justice has gone on for far too long.

Some public services keep on failing

Not only is it highly regrettable that the Coronavirus Act 2020 and the lockdown restrictions made certain members of the public more vulnerable, but it also limited access to support services. For example, Schedule 12 of the Act²⁵ temporarily released local authorities from some of their obligations in relation to vulnerable children and adult social care. Many local authorities were working under increased pressure and therefore had to prioritise those with the most urgent and acute needs. This meant that some who were in need, but not most in need, went without sufficient support.

In our 2018 report on policing and mental health, we said “too many aspects of the broader mental health system are broken”.²⁶ We also stressed that it was “a national crisis which should not be allowed to continue;

²⁴ [2019/2020 Annual Report: inspection of probation services](#), Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Probation, December 2020, page 4

²⁵ The Coronavirus Act 2020 amended the Care Act 2014 to enable local authorities to streamline assessment arrangements and prioritise care to meet the most urgent and acute needs.

²⁶ [Policing and mental health: Picking up the pieces](#), HMICFRS, 27 November 2018, page 3

there needs to be a fundamental rethink and urgent action”.²⁷

Not enough action has been taken to fix the mental health system, and the crisis in adult and child mental health has continued long enough.²⁸ Many people who have mental ill health as adults began that journey into ill health when they were children. To make matters worse, in an intolerably high number of cases, children and young people have difficulties gaining adequate access to NHS treatment for mental ill health.

In 2018, the Care Quality Commission carried out a review of mental health services available to children and young people. They found that too many children and young people, as well as their parents, families and carers, had found that they had to navigate a complex system that did not place them and their needs at its heart.²⁹ They also highlighted the symptoms of a system under pressure: long waiting lists, inappropriately high eligibility criteria, and gaps in service provision. In many respects, not much has changed. This will only make it harder for children and

²⁷ As before.

²⁸ An inspection is underway by all four criminal justice inspectorates (HMICFRS, HMCPSI, HMI Prisons and HMI Probation) into people suffering from mental ill health and the criminal justice system. This is the first time this has been assessed since Lord Bradley’s report of April 2009.

The Bradley Report: Lord Bradley’s review of people with mental health problems or learning disabilities in the criminal justice system, Lord Keith Bradley, Department of Health, London 2009.

²⁹ [Are we listening? Review of children and young people’s mental health services](#), Care Quality Commission, March 2018, page 3

young people to get the support they need at the right times.

In the cases of many vulnerable people, isolation and hardship made their experiences of the pandemic all the more painful. The effect of isolation intensified their loneliness and led many people to withdraw into themselves and experience feelings of helplessness. Many turned to alcohol to numb the emotional pain. Alcohol kills more people – directly and indirectly – than all other drugs combined.³⁰ Alcohol abuse often leads to addiction and long-term significant ill health. Not only does this have a material adverse effect on the individuals concerned and their families, but it also considerably increases demand on the police.

Unless the health and social care system is fixed, and people can get the support they need from it, people will continue to be vulnerable, which may lead them avoidably and unnecessarily into the criminal justice system.

Local democratic accountability

Police accountability was materially reformed by the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011. In replacing police authorities with police and crime commissioners (PCCs), Parliament's intention was to improve the democratic oversight of the police and give

³⁰ According to Professor Tanya Byron in her column of 7 June 2021, published in *The Times*.

local people better means to hold chief constables to account for police performance.

The model of criminal law enforcement we have in this country has grown up since the Middle Ages. Police officers as we recognise them today arrived in 1800 in Glasgow and 1829 in London. Their antecedents were ordinary citizens, discharging responsibilities which were – and still are – incumbent on everyone to prevent crime and apprehend offenders. The police come from and are of the community. In sharp contrast to the police in very many other countries, our police forces are not modelled on and do not operate as the obedient and oppressive arm of an authoritarian political leadership. The first duty of a chief constable – and the officers and staff under his or her direction and control – is the prevention and suppression of crime and disorder.

In this, the chief is operationally independent, and cannot act on unlawful orders or unduly intrusive political direction.

The operational independence of chief constables is crucial

The Policing Protocol Order 2011³¹ specifies how PCCs and chief constables should work together. It explicitly deals with the protection of the operational independence of chief constables. It states that it “does

³¹ [Policing Protocol Order 2011](#) Home Office 15th November 2011

not supersede or vary the legal duties and requirements of the office of constable.

Chief Constables remain operationally independent”.³²
The oath of office which PCCs must take includes a promise “not [to] interfere with the operational independence of police officers”.³³

Regrettably, that unequivocal legal commitment to operational independence is not always respected. In too many respects, the boundary of operational independence has been put under undue pressure, and sometimes it has been crossed.

Police and crime commissioners are not the line managers of chief constables; it is not a relationship of master and servant, and should not be understood as such. Police and crime plans are not sets of directions or orders, and cannot override the common law obligation of the chief constable to enforce the criminal law with objectivity and impartiality. If a PCC were to threaten to invoke the procedure for dismissal of a chief constable – under section 38 of the 2011 Act – simply because the chief refuses to carry out improper instructions, that would be illegal.

The principles and policy of the Policing Protocol are founded on there being a professional relationship between PCC and chief. It is of course impossible to

³² As before, paragraph 9.

³³ [*The Police and Crime Commissioner Elections \(Declaration of Acceptance of Office\) Order 2012*](#)

make detailed prescription for every factual permutation in the relationship. Policing is too complex for that. The trust and confidence in the proper operation of the relationship must be high, and that includes respect for the principle of operational independence.

Police and crime commissioners have positions of immense importance in local policing and, collectively, in regional and national policing. Their powers over the setting of policing priorities, the force's overall budget and the power to dismiss the chief for failures in efficiency and effectiveness, are considerable. Their abilities to improve criminal justice in their police areas are great and in many cases that is how they are used. But they do not amount to powers of intervention and direction, and they should not be regarded as opportunities for the application of undue pressure.

The criminal justice system

Still dysfunctional and defective

The perilous state of the criminal justice system has been widely criticised for many years, and the court backlog is a significant problem. In recent years, there has been a vast reduction in the number of cases brought to justice. In fact, the actual number of cases going into the criminal justice system is at the lowest level it has been for decades. Yet, for some reason, court backlogs and waiting times have become inexcusably long.

The already chronic backlog in court cases increased as a result of the pandemic. Between February 2020 and December 2020, there was an increase of 57 percent in the backlog of magistrates' court trials,³⁴ and an increase of 65 percent in the number of cases waiting to be heard at Crown Court.³⁵ While the courts did find ways to make better use of technology and operate safely, it wasn't enough for them to operate at their usual (still inadequate) capacity, and justice sharply deteriorated.

In January 2021, I reported jointly with the chief inspectors of the other three criminal justice inspectorates on the pandemic's effect on the criminal justice system. We said:

“We have each as independent chief inspectors commented in the past on the risks of chronic and systemic under-resourcing across the CJS [criminal justice system]. As a chief inspectors' group, we now consider that Covid-19 has resulted in these risks becoming critical”.³⁶

Several police forces expect that the delay between a crime being reported and the case reaching court will

³⁴ At the time of writing, some improvement has been made in the magistrates' court backlog, but the situation varies across England and Wales. In the Crown Courts, the backlog of trials at national level is still increasing, although the situation varies across England and Wales.

³⁵ [Impact of the pandemic on the Criminal Justice System: a joint view of the Criminal Justice Chief Inspectors on the Criminal Justice System's response to COVID-19](#), Criminal Justice Joint Inspectorates, 19 January 2021, page 22

³⁶ As before, page 26.

mean that victims and witnesses will require support for longer. In many cases, this unacceptable delay in taking cases to court will take its toll on the physical and mental health of victims, witnesses and those accused of committing crimes. Often these people are vulnerable.

Victims may lose confidence in the criminal justice system and decide they are no longer willing to support a prosecution. People suspected of having committed offences who are on remand will have to spend longer in prison: between March 2020 and September 2020, the number of remand prisoners increased by 22 percent.³⁷ All communities depend upon and deserve justice; this is not justice.

Those accused of offences should have easy access to legal representation through all stages of the criminal justice system. However, the financing of criminal defence is in a terrible state. The situation has been described by the Law Society as a “deepening crisis in the criminal legal aid profession”.³⁸ People with greater wealth are able to afford to instruct their own lawyers, while others have to rely on legal aid. The very considerable majority in the middle have no adequate wealth and no access to public funding. As a result, they are especially vulnerable to injustice and financial ruin, made worse by the absence of financial relief for

³⁷ As before, page 21.

³⁸ [*Criminal legal aid review – latest proposals are insufficient*](#), the Law Society, 28 February 2020.

defence costs after acquittal or the dropping of the case.

The Law Society has warned that, with no adequate funding in place, criminal defence services may become unavailable in some areas.

The need to reform the criminal justice system is, therefore, more pressing than ever. In *State of Policing 2018*,³⁹ I described the criminal justice system as “dysfunctional and defective”. I spoke about the cycle of offending and the system routinely letting down children and other vulnerable people.⁴⁰ By the time of my 2019 assessment, little improvement had been made.

A year has passed since then, and there hasn't been a great deal of change. The proposed Royal Commission on Criminal Justice, which was announced in late 2019, is intended to review and improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the criminal justice system in England. It still hasn't been established. Despite repeated questions to the Government, no indication has been given as to when the commission will start work.

Modern technology – on too slow a track

The Home Office is responsible on a national basis for three principal pillars of essential technology for the emergency services. Significant delays and cost overruns, and failures in specification and procurement,

³⁹ [*State of Policing: The Annual Assessment of Policing in England and Wales 2018*](#), Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Constabulary, 4 July 2019.

⁴⁰ As before.

have put the efficiency and effectiveness of the police, and others, at material risk.

Airwave replacement – long overdue

The police rely very heavily on mobile communications in all aspects of their work; one such example is in the deployment of officers to incidents. The current system, Airwave, has been in use for over 20 years. The other emergency services and some 363 other organisations, including local authorities, also use Airwave as their communications network.

In 2011, the Home Office said it would replace Airwave with the Emergency Services Network (ESN). The ESN was originally scheduled to be operational in 2017, yet four years later we are still waiting. This is due, in part, to failures in planning and collaboration between contractors, to organisations working to different technical standards, and to delays in related projects.

In its report *Progress delivering the Emergency Services Network*, the National Audit Office stressed that it would be unlikely for the ESN to be in place by the 2022 target.⁴¹ To make matters worse, the ESN has been further delayed due to the completion of the switchover, which is now expected to take place by the end of 2026.

⁴¹ [*Progress delivering the Emergency Services Network*](#), National Audit Office, 7 May 2019.

For every year that the ESN is delayed, it is costing the public purse approximately £650m per year.⁴²

These costs are racking up and the programme has already been overspent by a remarkable £3.1 billion,⁴³ with an anticipated total cost of £10.3 billion.⁴⁴

It is intolerable that public money is being used so unwisely, especially at a time when many forces expect that they will have difficulties with funding in the future. They anticipate that the purse strings of public sector finances will be tightened while the country recovers from the pandemic.

Law Enforcement Data Service – also overdue

The police also rely heavily on the Police National Computer (PNC).⁴⁵ It has been upgraded many times since its introduction in 1974, but there are limits on how much an upgrade can achieve.

The PNC is due to be replaced by the new Law Enforcement Data Service (LEDS), but regrettably this has also been delayed. The full transition of PNC into LEDS has been delayed by over a year, with a current overspend of £45m.⁴⁶ The fact that LEDS is still delayed

⁴² [Written response to Public Accounts Committee](#), Home Office, 13 October 2020.

⁴³ [Progress delivering the Emergency Services Network](#), National Audit Office, 7 May 2019, page 4.

⁴⁴ [Written response to Public Accounts Committee](#), Home Office, 13 October 2020, page 2

⁴⁵ The PNC contains 12 million individual records, which are used by policing, the NCA, wider law enforcement, Her Majesty's Court and Tribunal Service and a wide number of other agencies.

⁴⁶ [Written response to question asked by Liz Saville Roberts MP](#), Home Office,

means that the ageing PNC is still being relied on as the national police computer system.

This doesn't come without its problems: it is increasingly more difficult to update the PNC because it is harder to get older components to maintain its hardware and software. Moreover, it is difficult to maintain the PNC because a limited number of people have the skills and knowledge to code the 47-year-old system. The PNC data loss of 9 January 2021 also points to the fragility of the maintenance of the system – a human error led to the (fortunately reversible) deletion of a total of 209,550 offence records.⁴⁷

ANPR replacement – another overdue programme

Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) technology is used to help detect, deter and disrupt criminals' activity at local, force, regional and national levels, including organised crime groups, terrorists and those engaged in county lines drug running.

For a number of years, the Home Office has been running a programme to replace the ageing national ANPR data centre with a new national ANPR service (NAS). The national ANPR service was meant to be in place in 2018. The objective was to have a single national ANPR system, which would improve policing's ANPR capability overall.

18 November 2020

⁴⁷ [*Deletion of PNC Records: Response and Recovery*](#), UK Parliament, 8 February 2021

While the initial national operating capability is now live, the programme has been beset with problems. Regrettably, the introduction of further operating capability has been delayed and scaled back. This means that NAS will now not meet the level of national capability that the police need.

The Home Office is trying to put things right. In the meantime, forces need to run both NAS and their old systems.

The extra 20,000 officers

The Government's uplift programme, which was announced in 2019, continues to make good progress; it's even ahead of its target. The programme is designed to recruit an additional 20,000 police officers in England and Wales by 31 March 2023, which would broadly return police officer numbers to 2010 levels. In the year to March 2021, 8,771 officers had been recruited as part of this programme, against a target of 6,000.⁴⁸

While the programme to recruit an additional 20,000 officers is undoubtedly a good thing, there is significant pressure on forces to recruit the additional officers, as the 20,000 extra officers will be on top of recruitment to cover retirement and those leaving the service. Approximately 7,000 police officers leave the service

⁴⁸ [Police officer uplift, England and Wales, quarterly update to 31 March 2021](#), Home Office, 29 April 2021.

every year.⁴⁹ This is usually through normal retirement, with smaller numbers of officers resigning, leaving the service through medical retirement or, in a few cases, being dismissed.

Such an increase will, of course, increase the proportion of relatively inexperienced and young-in-service police officers.

It is also important that the numbers of specialists in forces and the NCA are maintained and, where necessary, increased to meet future demand.

Taking these factors into account, the service will need to recruit and train over 50,000 people over the three-year period.

The recruitment of 20,000 police officers may have an adverse effect on the rest of the criminal justice system. While the criminal justice system is not a single system, it needs to work like one. Without corresponding capacity increases, the prosecution, prison and probation services may not be able to cope.

Recruitment always carries risks

Police officers are vested with unique powers to detain people, to search them, to take away their property, and to take away their liberty at their own discretion. The service has a great responsibility to do all it

⁴⁹ [*Police Workforce, England and Wales, 31 March 2019*](#), second edition, statistical bulletin 11/19, Home Office, 18 July 2019, page 17.

reasonably can to ensure its new officers are fit to hold these powers.

A programme of this magnitude inevitably carries risks. There is a heightened danger that people unsuited to policing may get through and be recruited. On occasion, police recruitment vetting processes identify applicants' connections with organised crime groups that try to infiltrate the police. In too many cases, the system fails. This can have catastrophic consequences.

There is also a risk of recruiting officers who hold views that are generally incompatible with the office of constable, such as extremist and racist attitudes. When unsuitable applicants lie on their application forms, conceal their social media activity, or play down their criminal connections, the quality of vetting needs to be consistently high. Moreover, when probationary constables misbehave, the police should be assiduous in tackling that conduct and removing those who are, or are likely to be, unsuitable.

As we said in our report *Shining a light on betrayal: Abuse of position for a sexual purpose*,⁵⁰ the predation of vulnerable people by police officers for sexual advantage is one of the most serious forms of police corruption, and forces must do everything necessary to root it out.

⁵⁰ [*Shining a light on betrayal: Abuse of position for a sexual purpose*](#), HMICFRS, 27 September 2019.

Directorates of Professional Standards should be staffed by some of the best detectives, and senior officers need to take this problem very seriously indeed.

Diversity

For the effectiveness of local policing, and the confidence the community has in its police force, it is important that, as far as reasonably practicable, officers are conspicuously of and part of the community. In 1829, Sir Robert Peel said, “the police are the public and the public are the police”.

They are our fellow citizens, not visitors from distant and unfamiliar places. The current recruitment programme provides the police service with opportunities to improve diversity, and forces should try hard to ensure that there is a sufficient proportion of officers who are not white males. Between April 2020 and March 2021, 42 percent of recruits were female and 10.6 percent were from ethnic minorities.⁵¹

However, of those from ethnic minorities, there were three times more Asian than Black recruits. Overall, we have observed that the percentage of recruits from ethnic minorities is still not representative of the 14 percent of the general population (as established in the 2011 census).

⁵¹ [*Police officer uplift, England and Wales, quarterly update to 31 March 2021*](#), Home Office, 29 April 2021.

If all ethnic minorities are not better represented in the service, this will have long-term adverse implications for public confidence in and co-operation with the police.

Police legitimacy (how the police treat the public and their workforces) is closely linked to how officers use their powers, such as the power to stop and search and their use of force. This year, we reported on the disproportionate use of force and stop and search powers and the negative effect this can have on ethnic minority communities.⁵²

I am pleased to see, however, that many forces are working with their ethnic minority communities to encourage applications and support applicants through the process.

For example, in 2020, 11.3 percent of applicants in Sussex were from ethnically diverse backgrounds, compared to the previous three-year average of 5.9 percent and a local ethnic minority population of 6.3 percent.⁵³

Another such example is the Better Together team set up by Gloucestershire Constabulary, which sets out to provide support to people from underrepresented and diverse communities who are considering a career in policing.

⁵² [*Disproportionate use of police powers: A spotlight on stop and search and the use of force*](#), HMICFRS, 26 February 2021.

⁵³ Data provided by Sussex Police.

Spending the money wisely and well

For a considerable number of years, the inspectorate has published annual value-for-money profiles for forces, enabling forces, PCCs and others to see how each force compares with others in similar circumstances.

These instruments are explained in more detail in Part 2 of this report. They will be of especial importance to forces and those who hold them to account as they check and ensure that extra public money is being spent well.

Multi-year settlements

As I said in *State of Policing 2018*,⁵⁴ annual funding settlements are the norm for the police. But such short-term settlements are incompatible with efficient and effective long-term planning. When it comes to funding, forces and regional organised crime units need certainty, stability and predictability. So there is a clear need for multi-year statements.

This is not just about recruiting police officers and staff with the right skills. In many respects, the police need to invest for the longer term, particularly in technology, to become more efficient. It is essential that the police are given the means to do this. For example, body-worn video, fully functional handheld mobile devices, facial recognition and artificial intelligence, and the connected

⁵⁴ [*State of Policing: The Annual Assessment of Policing in England and Wales 2018*](#), Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Constabulary, 4 July 2019.

systems and infrastructure to support them, are all things in which police forces must invest for the long term. If they don't, they are left playing catch-up as offenders intensify and increase their abuse of modern technology to cause harm.

The integration of police systems with other parts of the criminal justice system also needs long-term investment. Lack of integration currently makes it harder for the police quickly to pass vital evidence, such as camera footage, to the Crown Prosecution Service. This, and other problems with the system, can result in delays, causing victims and witnesses to become disillusioned and withdraw from proceedings.

There is no reason why some forces should not be able to make these investment decisions with more confidence that they will have the money they need. Forces that we judge as being efficient have provided evidence that they use public money appropriately. So they should be able to benefit from multi-year settlements now.

Lessons from elsewhere

The service can, and should, adopt certain techniques and instruments used outside policing to increase effectiveness and efficiency and improve public safety.

Force management statements

Every well-managed enterprise needs a sound understanding of the demand it faces in the years to come, the state of its assets which it will use to meet

that demand, and how much money it will have. In the economically regulated industries which deal with safety-critical, monopoly, essential public services, these are known as network management statements. Since policing is probably the most essential of all public services, we have introduced force management statements, which are modelled on their regulatory equivalents.

In Part 2 of this report, I explain how force management statements have been successfully introduced, and are making material contributions to the quality of policing.

A network code

I have spoken many times about the 43-force policing model in England and Wales and the problems it presents for many aspects of policing, including in the flow of information and intelligence between forces, and the establishment and efficient operation of national ICT systems. There aren't 43 best ways of doing the same thing. There is an urgent need for more effective collaboration and co-operation between police forces, and between forces and other law enforcement agencies.

Some have proposed the idea of merging forces as a way of overcoming these obstacles. Mergers would not do away with force boundaries; the boundaries would just be further apart. Mergers are also expensive and create a huge amount of work for managers.

This year, I intend to propose a network code to enable the police service to achieve greater efficiency and effectiveness in these respects, dissolving the barriers to efficient cross-force operations. In other national systems, the interoperability and uniformity of standards and operation are achieved through the regulatory system and instruments similar to a network code.

The network code would be a multi-lateral contract – a legally binding collaboration agreement – entered into by all chief constables (and their London equivalents), all PCCs (and their mayoral equivalents), the NCA, the British Transport Police, the British Transport Police Authority, the Civil Nuclear Constabulary and the Civil Nuclear Police Authority, the College of Policing and the Home Secretary. Other participants in law enforcement, such as Police Scotland and the Police Service of Northern Ireland, could join later.

All parties could enter into the code voluntarily, and this would indeed be preferable. But the Home Secretary ultimately would have the power to direct chief constables and PCCs to enter into it. The code would be an enduring contract, and no party would have the right to withdraw.

My initial conception of the network code for law enforcement was that it would apply only to police ICT – its specification and procurement – to ensure, over time, the complete interoperability of ICT systems. But the code can and should go much further.

The code would allow for the creation of a process that assesses proposals for single-system operation (either regional or national, or both), which would be achieved by qualified majority voting. It would pool the individual sovereignties of the forces and PCCs in question. In a particular case, a force and its PCC could find themselves in an outvoted minority. However, the freedoms they give up will be far less valuable than what they gain through more consistent, stable, efficient and effective policing decisions.

Before getting to the stage of being put to a vote, proposals would have to be thoroughly evaluated by experts, to ensure they are sound, viable and affordable, and otherwise satisfactory. The College of Policing should have a leading role in this, since it sets standards. Other experts (for example, in ICT) may be required and engaged, according to necessity.

I have put forward the idea of a voting system that respects the relative sizes of the forces, but at the same time affords to small forces appropriate protections against always being outvoted by the largest forces.

Since the Home Secretary has overall political responsibility for law enforcement, and the Treasury controls the money, it would be necessary for the Home Secretary (on behalf of the Government) to hold a special or 'golden' vote. The special vote need not be cast in every case; it might never be used. It could be a reserve power, to be used only when the Home Secretary considers it necessary.

In many respects, policing is very far from simple, and the network code will offer an opportunity to cut through the complexity.

Conclusion

My annual State of Policing reports are, of course, about policing. But policing does not, should not, and must not sit alone or apart.

My assessment of the criminal justice system shows how essential it is that our public services work well together. The intensity of the interdependence of policing, education, housing, and health and social care must be fully recognised. We cannot, of course, separate policing from the rest of the criminal justice system.

For policing to be effective, the other public services must also be as efficient and effective as possible. If they are not, many more people may be drawn to crime, enter into cycles of offending, become victims, and lose confidence in policing.

The prevention of crime is the primary purpose of policing, and that purpose should never be forgotten or diluted. As Sir Robert Peel said, the test of police efficiency is the absence of crime and disorder, not the visible evidence of police action in dealing with it. Virtually all of the costs of the criminal justice system are incurred downstream of the commission of an offence. Prevention takes place far upstream from the interventions of the police. It takes place in the home,

with housing and social conditions, in health with timely treatment, and with early intervention with chaotic and troubled families. It is far cheaper than cure.

All safety-critical essential public services should never leave those vulnerable lost in bureaucracy (at best), and vulnerable to further abuse (at worst). During the pandemic, many cases of abuse may have gone unreported, and those victims – and children in particular – will live with the consequences for life; their wounds may never heal. The sufferings of children, and the risks that other children will endure them in the future, are of the highest and gravest concerns to the whole community. In many cases, children who are victims of domestic abuse go on to be violent themselves. This cycle needs to stop.

The first duty of the police is a protective duty. We all need to have confidence that, when we need them, the police will come. We need to know that they will arrive, quickly, to that 999 call for help at 3.00am, know what to do, and be able to do it with courtesy, compassion and care.

For this to happen, policing must exploit its greatest strengths, and those are the professionalism and dedication of its officers and staff. Officers are in an enhanced position in society: they have a duty of care, exceptional responsibility and the power to protect their fellow citizens. The service must therefore identify future leaders and foster their development. It must also make sure that the right people are recruited and

supported in doing some of the most demanding work anyone is called upon to do.

This support needs to be reflected in the Government's next spending review, which will provide an opportunity to put right many of the problems in policing.

This opportunity should, on no account, be missed.

The commitment demonstrated by police officers to public service, to protecting people and communities against some of the most violent, dangerous and corrosive forces in our society, is immense.

That commitment and professionalism needs to be equalled by other public sector agencies, who must do much more.

Part 2: Our inspections

Our PEEL inspections

In our 2019 annual assessment of policing in England and Wales, we set out how we intended to conduct our PEEL (police effectiveness, efficiency and legitimacy) assessments from 2020. We said we would move to an intelligence-led, continuous assessment model.

In March 2020, the pandemic required us to suspend all inspections which required appreciable work on the parts of police forces, including PEEL inspections. As a result, in 2020 we published no PEEL assessments.

The re-start of inspections in autumn 2020 was necessarily limited. This included two follow-up inspections of Greater Manchester Police and Cleveland Police. Our previous PEEL inspection findings caused us concern about the service those forces provided to the public. Our follow-up findings were published in December 2020 for Greater Manchester and February 2021 for Cleveland.

In February 2021, we published a spotlight report following our review of the proportionality of the police use of stop and search and force.¹

¹ [*Disproportionate use of police powers: A spotlight on stop and search and the use of force*](#), HMICFRS, 26 February 2021.

Inspecting the service provided to victims of crime

It is important that police forces provide the best possible service to victims² of crime, with the resources the public have provided, and as efficiently and effectively as possible. This should start at the point of contact and last throughout the criminal justice process. It includes recording the report of the crime, responding, and undertaking proportionate investigations, and making sure that any vulnerability is identified and properly evaluated, and that appropriate safeguarding measures are taken.

As part of this process, it is important that forces have high- quality crime data. This allows them to establish where, when and how often crime is occurring. This makes sure each force:

- offers victims of crime access to appropriate support services;

² In our inspection reports and other published documents, we often refer to 'victims' of crime. In very many cases, the people in question are victims and offences have been committed against them, and the position is clear. However, and depending on context, it must be understood that when we use this term in relation to circumstances where it has not been established that an offence has been committed, or who is the person against whom an offence was committed, we are referring to the person who (a) says he or she is the person against whom that offence was or may be committed; or (b) is said or considered by another person to be the person against whom that offence was or may be committed.

In using the term 'victim', there is no suggestion that the fundamental criminal justice principle of the presumption of innocence of a suspect or accused person is being disregarded.

- gives the public accurate information about crime in their area;
- understands its current and future demand; and
- can plan its work in support of the community and carry out the necessary investigations.

Our updated annual PEEL programme includes an assessment – called a victim service assessment – that focuses on the victim’s experience. It helps us understand the extent to which a force provides a good service. The updated programme incorporates our previous programme of inspection focusing on the integrity of crime data recorded by forces; that programme ended in spring 2020.

We applied our new approach to our autumn 2020 follow-up inspections of Greater Manchester Police and Cleveland Police. These inspections reviewed:

- force performance data;
- force documents relating to call handling, investigation and crime recording;
- incident reports and crime records, including the original calls for service;
- the initial response provided to victims;
- the approach to allocating crimes for investigation;
- a selection of investigation case files; and
- the recorded outcomes of reported crimes. We also interviewed officers and staff.

These inspections took place during a pandemic lockdown period. Each force gave us remote access to incident and crime recording systems, investigation files and telephone recordings for us to carry out our assessments.

Our findings

Greater Manchester Police

We found that, in too many cases, the service provided to victims of crime by Greater Manchester Police wasn't good enough.

The force urgently needs to make significant improvements to the service it provides to victims of crime, particularly those who are most vulnerable. We were pleased that the force records reports of rape and other sexual offences to a good standard. It has also started an ambitious programme of strategic change to better manage its service. The pace of change needs to increase. Our inspection established that the force:

- failed to answer approximately one in five 101 non-emergency calls for service;
- often failed to identify victims as vulnerable at the point of contact;
- failed to identify, record and investigate approximately one in four reports of violent crime, and failed to safeguard many victims of these crimes; these included behavioural crimes, such as harassment,

stalking and coercive controlling behaviour, domestic abuse, and those crimes reported by other agencies involving vulnerable adults and children;

- failed to consistently document investigation plans; approximately one in three plans did not meet basic standards;
- in nearly half of cases, failed to supervise investigations effectively, or to complete the required senior-level supervisory reviews;
- too often failed to progress investigations when it should;
- failed properly to engage and consult with approximately four in five victims when proposing to use out-of-court disposals (cautions and community resolutions) when dealing with offenders; and
- wrongly and prematurely closed substantial numbers of recorded crime investigations, including a high proportion of crimes involving vulnerable victims, as complaints which lacked the victim's support, but without the evidence to show this to be the case.

Call handling and deployment of resources

Approximately one in five non-emergency 101 calls went unanswered. An appreciable proportion of these calls were unanswered because callers hung up and elected to use online reporting (as encouraged by the recorded message). When calls were answered, in more than half of cases, a victim's vulnerability was not assessed when it should have been. This meant that

the force still missed some opportunities to safeguard vulnerable victims. And, in approximately half of cases, the force continued to miss opportunities to advise victims about securing evidence at the scene.

This could lead to the loss of evidence that would support an investigation and could risk further harm to the victim.

The force generally prioritised calls well and in accordance with its resource allocation policy.

This prioritisation was used appropriately in the initial response to victims.

Crime recording, screening and allocation for investigation

Since our 2018 inspection, recording of reports of rape improved markedly. The force has maintained its good recording standard for reports of other sexual offences. This is welcome.

But since 2018 overall crime recording standards deteriorated significantly. Especially serious was the failure to record a high proportion of violent crime, including domestic abuse and behavioural crimes such as harassment, stalking and coercive controlling behaviour. In many cases, the force did not investigate these unrecorded offences or safeguard victims.

This left many victims at risk. It is important that these shortcomings are put right as a matter of urgency.

Arrangements for allocating recorded crimes for investigation were generally in accordance with the force policy. In most cases, the crime report was allocated to the right department for further investigation. But we were concerned that the policy allows for some reported crimes with named suspects and clear investigative opportunities to be closed without further investigation, even if vulnerability and risk to the victim have been assessed. Further, we noted substantial delays in either contact with victims or the start of investigative work, without any apparent rationale for these delays. Such failures can harm victims' confidence in the police and may result in victims disengaging before the end of the investigation.

Investigations

Even when reports of crimes were recorded and investigated, we found that in too many instances investigation plans were inconsistently recorded. Plans were recorded on different parts of the force information technology system or not documented at all. The standard of the plans varied greatly. Some failed to identify necessary actions and obvious investigative opportunities. And often victims of crime were left in the dark as to the progress of an investigation despite promises to keep them regularly updated.

Throughout, we found a common theme of a lack of documented supervision, control and direction. Without these, the standard of investigation was generally weak and the pace of investigation slow.

By contrast, we found that good investigations were strongly supervised and well documented, and decision making was much clearer. The lack of documentation and supervision meant that the force could not adequately and reliably establish the extent to which it reduced the risk of harm to victims.

Investigation outcomes

Offenders can be given a caution or community resolution. To be correctly applied and recorded, the disposal must be appropriate for the offence and the offender, and the views of the victim should be taken into consideration. But, in approximately one in five of the cases we reviewed, the case did not meet the national criteria for these outcomes. In many cases, we found no evidence that the force had asked victims what they wanted or that it properly considered their wishes when it did ask.

When a suspect is identified but the victim doesn't support or withdraws support for police action, the force should have an auditable record of the victim's decision. This is so that it can close the investigation. But, in most cases we reviewed, evidence of the victim's decision was absent. This represents a risk that victims' wishes may not be fully considered before the case is finalised. Given that this outcome was used by the force in as many as seven in ten domestic abuse cases, this is a matter of concern.

Supervision and governance

Much of what we found during this inspection was already known to the force and presented to senior officers in its internal governance and performance oversight arrangements. But the effective and visible action of leaders – needed to address and overcome these known problems – was less evident. The force has established and is pursuing a programme of strategic change. This includes a significant investment in its communications function and a new centralised crime recording capability. However, the pace of change should be increased. The force has much to do to make sure that the internal supervision and governance it has invested in properly and adequately addresses these significant problems.

We made several recommendations that we will follow up during 2021 when we re-inspect as part of the PEEL inspection programme.

Cleveland Police – Integrated vulnerability inspection post-inspection review

Between 2017 and 2019, in addition to a PEEL inspection we carried out a National Child Protection Inspection (NCPI) and a Crime Data Integrity (CDI) inspection. A common strand in the findings from these inspections was concerns about the force's ability to protect vulnerable people, including children.

This follow-up inspection was a bespoke integrated vulnerability inspection, focused on how the force dealt

with vulnerable people including victims, suspects and offenders.

We found that the service provided had improved in some respects, but we were still worried by the limited progress made in some other areas.

Since our last inspection, the force has started a significant programme to make force-wide changes. As part of this, it has prioritised how it deals with vulnerable people, particularly victims of domestic abuse, and begun to develop an overall approach to vulnerability. In January 2020, the force began implementation of its vulnerability strategy, which focuses on “protecting vulnerable people in our communities with the objective of creating a vulnerability-centred approach to policing”.

Call handling and deployment of resources

The level of service for someone who calls the force for help had improved, as had the initial assessment of the call, which informs the correct grading of the response. The force had also improved its prioritisation of vulnerable victims to get to them as quickly as possible. It is also getting better at managing its incident queues. While we are pleased to see this progress, there were still too many victims, including victims of domestic abuse, whose risk grading meant that they should have been responded to within an hour but who were left waiting.

Officers were better at establishing when and to what extent a person was vulnerable and understanding the need to assess his or her risk so that appropriate support and safeguarding could be sought. We found that the content of these referrals needed to continue to improve so that other agencies and the force have enough information to decide what support is required.

The initial response to cases involving missing children was poor. We found notable improvement in some of the investigations of cases where a child had gone missing regularly, but not all these cases were investigated further once the child was found.

Assessment and help

We found that more risk assessments were being submitted when officers attended incidents involving vulnerable victims. They were also submitted more often for children in custody or who went missing from home, so that appropriate support could be sought from other agencies. This is a positive development.

The force was better at providing timely and relevant information to other agencies and facilitated support through arrangements with multiple partnerships (agencies involved with safeguarding children). But, too often, child strategy meetings were not being held when they should have been.

Crime recording

We were pleased with the significant improvement the force had made in its overall recording of reported

crime. It increased its workforce's knowledge and understanding of crime recording requirements, supported by good governance and audit arrangements. But it had made only marginal improvements to its poor recording standards for violent crime. This was particularly so for domestic abuse-related crimes such as coercive controlling behaviour, harassment and stalking, and many serious crimes involving elements of anti-social behaviour.

Dataset 1: Estimated crime recording accuracy from 2020 inspection and 2017/18 inspection in Greater Manchester and Cleveland

The recording accuracy of all crime has increased from 83.4% to 89.9% in Cleveland from the last inspection to the current inspection but for Greater Manchester Police this has decreased from 89.1% to 77.7% from the last inspection to the current inspection.

The decrease in recording accuracy for Greater Manchester Police can be seen for violent crime. However, for sexual offences, the recording accuracy has increased from 91.4% to 94.9% from the last inspection to the current inspection. The increase in recording accuracy for Cleveland can be seen across violent and sexual offences.

Source: HMICFRS Crime Data Integrity inspection and PEEL inspection

Investigations

The overall quality of investigations had not sufficiently improved. We established that under half the force's investigations were of a good overall standard; this was substantially the same as the position we found in 2019. This was evident across all types of investigations, but more apparent this time in complex investigations involving vulnerable adults and children. While the force had made several changes to its systems and processes, at the time of inspection, these had not yet resulted in the necessary improvement.

Officers had improved the ways in which they engaged with victims, making contact regularly and providing updates.

There were better relationships between officers and victims in investigated cases of domestic abuse. There was also a significant improvement in gaining the support of victims to progress prosecutions and bring offenders to justice.

Managing suspects and offenders

The force was better at catching criminals and making more timely arrests. Through its daily management meetings and regular reviews, the force prioritised wanted offenders and suspects who had not yet been arrested. It had improved its use of legal powers to prevent re-offending, through an increased arrest rate, the use of conditional bail, and better use of domestic violence protection notices.

Police detention

In many cases, detained children are vulnerable. We found that, too often, children spent the night in custody because of delays in the arrival of an appropriate adult to help them. For children who were charged and refused bail, we found that officers and staff rightly requested secure accommodation, but too often this could not be provided by the appropriate agencies.

Overall, we did not see sufficient improvements in how the force responded to, assessed, safeguarded and investigated cases involving vulnerable children, including cases relating to domestic abuse, missing children, and child abuse and exploitation.

The force was better at identifying, assessing, protecting and supporting adult victims of domestic abuse. It had changed its processes to focus on these victims after we found in 2019 that it was putting them at risk. In 2019, levels of repeat victimisation were high, the force was failing to identify victims as vulnerable, and it didn't fully assess and safeguard them.

Some victims got no response at all. The positive changes we found in 2020, such as the force's vulnerability desk and better officer engagement with victims, were starting to reduce the number of repeat domestic abuse victims. The force acknowledged that it needs to continue this positive progress to achieve a good overall standard and improve its investigation of domestic abuse-related crimes.

Through our monitoring and PEEL continuous assessment of the force during 2021 and 2022, we will revisit the areas where we have not yet seen sufficient improvements.

Disproportionate use of police powers

The murder of George Floyd in the USA in May 2020, and later protests, highlighted the significant adverse effect of police interaction with some groups of people. This is especially the case with people from Black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) communities.

There have been high-profile incidents of perceived unfairness in the UK, too. Examples include the traffic stop of Dawn Butler MP and the stop and search of athlete Bianca Williams. These incidents, widely reported in the media, were seen as having been initiated by racial profiling.

Some of the most intrusive and contentious police powers allow the police to use force and to stop and search people. The public rightly expect the police to protect them by using their powers effectively and fairly. But in very many cases force and stop and search have been used disproportionately against people from BAME communities for many years. In 2019/20, Black people were 5.7 times more likely to have force used on them than White people, and they were 8.9 times more likely to be stopped and searched.

Dataset 2: Likelihood of being stopped and searched and having use of force tactics used, by Black, Asian and minority ethnic group, compared to those from White ethnic groups, England and Wales, April 2019 to March 2020

This chart shows the likelihood of being stopped and searched and having use of force tactics used, by BAME group, compared to those from White ethnic groups, England and Wales, 2019/ 20. Black people are 8.9 likely to be stopped and searched and 5.7 times more likely to have force used on them compared to White people. People from Asian, mixed and other ethnic backgrounds are between 2.5-2.9 times more likely to be stopped and searched compared to a White person. Note: a likelihood of 1 indicates that the ethnic minority group is equally as likely to have force used on them as those who are White. Ethnicities are as recorded by the officer based on their perceptions.

Source: Home Office

This disproportionality doesn't necessarily mean that the police discriminate against BAME communities. But forces should be able to explain any disproportionality and show the public evidence that they use their powers fairly, lawfully and appropriately.

Our spotlight report,³ published on 26 February 2021, reviewed how the police use stop and search and force. We drew on multiple sources of evidence, including:

- published national and force-level data on the use of force and stop and search;
- findings from our 2018/19 Integrated PEEL Assessments (IPAs) covering the effectiveness, efficiency and legitimacy of all 43 police forces in England and Wales; and
- a review of a representative sample of 9,378 stop and search records from 2019.

Our findings

No force fully understands how its use of powers affects individuals and communities. In some important respects, large numbers of drugs possession searches, especially those that find nothing, are likely to cause more harm than good to police relations with communities.

We recommended a national debate on how stop and search is used to police controlled drugs, informed by the evidence. The damage caused by disproportionate use that can't be explained can be far-reaching and long-lasting. It may lead more BAME people into the criminal justice system. It may feed public and police

³ [*Disproportionate use of police powers: A spotlight on stop and search and the use of force*](#), HMICFRS, 26 February 2021.

perceptions of Black people and crime. And it may influence how the police allocate and deploy resources.

Interactions with the public: culture and learning

Forces are getting better at training their officers and staff with the aim of preventing unfair behaviour. They do this by addressing unconscious bias (personal biases we all have that are influenced by our surroundings and backgrounds). Forces are also getting better at applying this training when interacting with the public. But research⁴ shows that training will only bring about lasting improvement if the culture in the force is one of diversity, inclusion and equality.

Investigations by the Independent Office for Police Conduct⁵ have found that some officers carrying out stop and search don't understand the effect their actions and words can have on BAME people. Nor in these cases do they understand why they may be seen as unduly discriminatory. This highlights how important it is that officers and staff can overcome their biases and prevent unfair behaviour.

Use of force: forces still need to do more

Data about the use of force has only been systematically collected since 2017, except for data about the use of Tasers. It is important that forces

⁴ [*Diversity and Inclusion at Work: Facing up to the business case*](#), Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development, June 2018.

⁵ [*Letter from Independent Office for Police Conduct to the Metropolitan Police Service setting out recommendations*](#), 21 August 2020

properly understand how they use force. But, in too many cases, processes for monitoring use of force are still being developed.

This data isn't yet reliable enough to make definitive assessments. Forces need to analyse the data better and make sure that they record every occasion when they use force. But, despite these limitations, the data already suggests too many instances of the disproportionate use of force. This could mean that force is used on Black people with less justification than on White people, or there could be other explanations. Forces cannot yet adequately explain why, and it needs to be explored further.

Not all forces make enough effort to record each use of force. Incomplete records are also a problem. As part of our 2018/19 IPAs, we checked whether forces comply with the recording requirements introduced by the National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC) in 2017. Four forces weren't giving detailed enough information about Taser use.

Two more weren't recording compliant and non-compliant handcuffing separately.

In general, training in how to use force fairly and appropriately is good. But, in too many forces, the processes for monitoring, governing and scrutinising the use of force are ineffective or non-existent. These forces have a limited understanding of how fairly or appropriately their officers and staff use force.

Stop and search: forces need to do more to understand disproportionality

We found that no force fully understands the impact of stop and search powers. Disproportionality exists and no force can satisfactorily explain why. In 2019/20, BAME people were over four times more likely to be stopped and searched than White people. And Black people were nearly nine times more likely to be stopped and searched. Moreover, failures to record some ethnicity data may be hiding the true stop and search disproportionality rate.

Most searches are for drugs, and most of those are for possession rather than supply. The prevalence of drug possession searches indicates that forces are addressing the effect of the problem, rather than the root cause. So, stop and search isn't always targeted at the most serious offences, or those of highest priority for forces and the public. It could be that forces have decided to target lower-level drugs possession over other crimes. Or they're failing to give officers enough direction and guidance on how best to use these powers.

Drug searches affect the disproportionality rate more than other types of search, and risk damaging police and community relations. There is a wide variation of approaches among forces. This suggests a need for a national approach to using stop and search to police drugs. The potential damage to public trust and police legitimacy is substantial.

Forces also differ in how they initiate searches. Some target local crime problems and force or local priorities; others leave searching decisions to the discretion of officers.

Searches based on accurate and current intelligence or information are more likely to be effective. But we found a very low proportion of intelligence-led searches.

We found that training on stop and search has improved, with some examples of good practice, but there are gaps in too many officers' skills and knowledge. Supervisors, too, need more training on how best to supervise their officers' use of stop and search powers.

In general, forces are getting better at monitoring stop and search. But too many forces still don't analyse and monitor enough information to understand fully how fairly and effectively these powers are used. And not enough action is taken on the disparities they identify.

Most of the forces we inspected had good external scrutiny arrangements, involving a diverse panel of trained people.

Our recommendations

We recommended the following:

- Forces should make sure that officers and staff have effective communication skills, which should be reinforced as part of continuing professional development, and that supervisors should routinely

debrief them on these skills using body-worn video footage.

- Forces should make sure that officers record all stop and search encounters from start to finish using body-worn video. They should regularly review the videos to identify lessons to be learned and hold officers to account.
- They should let external scrutiny panel members see samples of body-worn video footage.
- The Home Office and the NPCC should make sure that data on incidents involving force in stop and search is of good enough quality to be published quickly.
- Forces should have effective internal monitoring and external scrutiny processes on the use of force.
- Forces should make sure that all stop and search records include the self-defined ethnicity of the person stopped.
- The Home Office should establish a national minimum standard for monitoring the use of stop and search powers.

Force management statements

As part of our inspection process, each year we require forces to send us information they use in their planning processes in the form of force management statements (FMSs).

Each FMS shows how the force expects demand to change and how it will adapt to meet that change. Force management statements are self-assessments by chief constables (and their London equivalents).

Each contains the chief's statement and explanation of:

- the demand (crime and non-crime, latent and patent) that the force expects to face in the next four years;
- how the force will develop and improve its workforce and other assets to cope with that demand;
- how the force will improve its efficiency to make sure the gap between future demand and future capability is as small as it can reasonably be made to be; and
- the money the force expects to have to do all this.

In 2020, because of the pressures faced by forces during the pandemic, we suspended the requirement for forces to provide FMSs and instead asked them to send us their FMSs by the end of May 2021.

Our PEEL questions have changed to match the structure of FMSs. This makes it easier to see where we use information from an FMS to inform our risk-based approach to PEEL fieldwork. So, for some forces, in the light of their FMSs the breadth and intensity of inspection were reduced. As forces become accustomed to producing FMSs, it will be easier for us to link the FMS information to our inspection work.

Why FMSs are important

So they can police communities effectively and efficiently, forces need to manage and deploy their assets well.

Its FMS provides the force with essential information which enables it to make better decisions about how it will meet future demand. But this is only if a force comprehensively assesses the demand it expects to face in the future, and makes a sound assessment of the present and future condition of its workforce and other assets. This knowledge means funds, resources and effort can be properly allocated. It also means the force can deal effectively and efficiently with the demand that poses the greatest risk.

When we introduced FMSs, there was considerable resistance from some chief constables and police and crime commissioners (PCCs). To facilitate the acceptance and orderly introduction of FMSs, we permitted forces significant latitude in how they explained their assessments of future demand and asset stewardship. This inevitably meant that there was very considerable variation in the quality of the first generation of FMSs. However, a very common shortcoming was in forces' assessments of demand and their evaluation of what they needed to do with their workforces and other assets efficiently to meet that projected demand.

Since then, a very great deal has changed. We have progressively tightened our requirement for more consistent specification of demand and asset stewardship, thus improving consistency and comparability. Many chief constables and a significant proportion of PCCs now fully accept the value of FMSs, and use them for their own purposes. They are no longer widely regarded as requirements of the inspectorate; rather, they are seen as essential management tools to ensure that planning is as sound as possible.

Early observations from the 2021 FMSs

The timing of this year's State of Policing means we have yet fully to evaluate all this year's FMSs. But we can make some early observations.

We are pleased that several aspects of the third generation of FMSs have improved. Forces have got better at:

- assessing and managing demand;
- showing how they allocate resources to meet expected future demand;
- placing emphasis on how they will look after their workforces, both in respect of their physical wellbeing and their mental health having especial regard to the considerable pressures and strains on frontline officers and staff in particular;
- plans to tackle identified gaps, such as how forces

- will deploy the additional officers recruited as part of the Government's recruitment requirements (Operation Uplift); and
- harmonising FMSs with forces' planning cycles.

It is clear from the most recent FMSs that they have been used effectively to facilitate planning during the pandemic. Some FMSs have contained detailed analyses and assessments of the current and future effects of the pandemic on demand and resources.

As intended, we are using the third generation of FMSs to:

- inform our inspection plans;
- inform our assessments of forces' effectiveness and efficiency;
- evaluate how demand is likely to change; and
- establish more fully what forces are doing to reduce crime and respond to national priorities.

Maintaining the workforce

The second generation of FMSs highlighted the effects of long-term austerity on forces. Some forces described strain in supporting functions such as training, human resources and analysis.

The third generation of FMSs describe the change in workforce as a result of the increase in officer numbers from Operation Uplift.

Forces told us how they have met the requirement to increase officer numbers in the first year of Operation Uplift and support future recruitment.

Many forces also said they face challenges in recruiting and training the extra officers. Some forces describe the changes and problems they expect to face with a larger, less experienced workforce.

Current and future demand

Forces are good at assessing current demand, including the numbers of incidents attended and the numbers of crimes they deal with. However, in too many respects some forces continue to focus on historic and current demand with limited assessments of future demand. And yet FMSs are all about the future. Without an assessment of expected future demand, a force will find it difficult to explain why it has decided to make the changes it has.

Demand projections are essential in planning.

The pandemic has had a significant effect on policing. Many forces describe how they are using remote working and new technology to maintain services.

Future FMSs should contain much more analysis of how demand is expected to change as lockdown restrictions ease. Forces should also analyse the expected changes in funding of police and other agencies, such as local authorities, other public services and charities. And it's important that forces

analyse expected changes in their socio-demographic and economic profiles.

Workforce and other assets

Forces need to assess the condition, capacity, capability, serviceability, performance and security of supply of other assets, as well as workforce wellbeing. If a force understands these things and has soundly assessed expected future demand, the changes it needs to make will be far more apparent.

In their FMSs, forces were generally good at describing the capacity and capability of their workforces, including where they need training. They told us about the wellbeing of their staff and what they are doing to improve it.

The third generation of FMSs should have contained more candid assessments of the performance some forces are achieving with their available workforces and assets.

Changing to meet expected demand

When forces do not properly analyse their asset stewardship and have weak assessments of future demand, it is not surprising that they struggle to explain how they need to change to meet that demand.

Generally, forces explained the actions they were taking. But the decision making behind these actions was not always clear.

In their FMSs, most forces failed to explain how they expect planned changes to affect the service they provide or their performance. This is an aspect which needs significant improvement.

Demand forces don't expect to meet

Most forces' FMSs included some evaluation of their expected ability to meet future demand. However, very few forces explained the extent and nature of projected demand they do not expect to meet. Some forces claimed that they will be able to meet future demand, but the supporting information was weak.

Developing FMSs

In the guidance for the fourth generation of FMSs, we have asked each force to provide further information on planning and performance management, including:

- an assessment of how the force expects demand to change because of the pandemic;
- an evidenced assessment of projected performance, including how effective it expects to be at reducing crime and meeting other national strategic priorities;
- how it will evaluate the effectiveness of planned changes and any expected interdependencies;
- the expected effect of any changes, any risks and the costs associated with the changes; and
- a candid assessment of the consequences of any unmet demand on risks to the community and service quality.

When a force meets these requirements effectively, its FMS will provide strong evidence that it is well run and has a good understanding of current and future demand.

We will continue to work with forces and leaders in different organisations further to develop FMSs to ensure they are as effective as possible in providing the best information needed by forces and those who depend upon them and hold them to account.

Our child protection inspections

National child protection inspections

We started our national child protection inspection programme in April 2014. By the end of March 2021, we had published reports on 31 police forces. We had also gone back to 26 of those forces to assess their progress against our recommendations.

How we carry out our national child protection inspections

In these inspections, we put the experiences of children at the centre of our analysis. We use this analysis to support learning and development. We assess decision making, leadership, training and forces' awareness of their safeguarding responsibilities. We don't make graded judgments but our reports give forces a detailed blueprint for recommended effective practice (the most effective way to work). We describe the strengths they should build on and where they can improve. We are

pleased that, in every follow-up inspection, we have found improvements.

In March 2020, our child protection inspections stopped when we decided that we wouldn't carry out any inspection activity that needed appreciable contributions from police forces. This was to allow forces to turn their full attention to responding to the pandemic.

When the pandemic restrictions were relaxed, we considered how we could resume child protection inspections. We identified activities that could be carried out virtually. For example, we did interviews or focus groups using remote technology and we remotely analysed case files. This enabled us to carry out three further post-inspection reviews (which check on progress a force has made since our first full inspection there).

In 2021/22, we plan to conduct extra inspections to complete those delayed by the pandemic.

Our post-inspection review findings

Senior officers are committed to protecting vulnerable people, including children, and to recognising and responding to areas of potential increased risk of abuse, harm and exploitation during the pandemic.

Our inspections continue to find examples of good work by individual frontline officers responding to incidents of concern involving children. We also find skilled and committed child protection staff, working in an

increasingly demanding, complex and evolving environment.

The standard of some investigations of incidents where children are exploited online or exposed to harm remains inconsistent. Often, there are delays before police safeguard children – for example, not doing so until arrests are made. We found that this can lead to delays in children getting the support and protection they need.

Forces have improved how they investigate some cases of children who repeatedly go missing from home. Forces work with other agencies concerned with safeguarding to make sure that they fully understand the risk a child may be exposed to while missing and respond appropriately.

Custody officers and staff recognise the need to ask the local authority to provide accommodation for children who have been arrested, charged and refused bail. Local authorities are responsible for providing this accommodation, which, in rare cases, might need to be secure. But this accommodation often isn't available for children. This is a national problem that we have reported on before.

Forces are continuing to work with safeguarding agencies to improve outcomes for children. But sometimes, wider risks to other children and opportunities to contribute to their longer-term safeguarding are being missed.

Joint targeted child protection inspections in England

In 2016, we started a programme of joint child protection inspections. We carry them out with Ofsted, the Care Quality Commission and Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation. This programme is continuing. In these inspections, we consider how well police, education, health and social services work together to help children in need of protection.

This programme, too, was suspended in March 2020 because of the pandemic. All inspectorates have used the suspension to review the programme and build on the benefits of joint inspectorate working. In 2021/22, we intend to pilot a new approach. The final plans for this will be confirmed as each inspectorate returns to routine inspection.

Joint inspection of child protection arrangements in Wales

In Wales, child protection and safeguarding responsibilities are devolved to the Welsh government. The All Wales Child Protection Procedures set out what is expected of all organisations involved in child protection in Wales, including the police. This means that the joint inspections of child protection we conduct with Ofsted, the Care Quality Commission and HMI Probation don't take place in Wales.

Throughout 2019, we worked with the Care Inspectorate Wales, Healthcare Inspectorate Wales, Eystn (the education and training inspectorate for Wales) and HMI Probation. Together, we developed a joint inspection programme to test the effectiveness of partnership working to protect children.

In December 2019, a pilot inspection took place and evaluated how local services in Newport, Gwent, handled child exploitation. Findings included the following:

- The police and local authority have co-located staff (staff who work together in the same building) to share information and improve joint decision making.
- The police adopted trauma-informed practice (understanding the effect of trauma) and adverse childhood experiences work (understanding traumatic childhood situations).
- This strengthened their understanding of the effect and appropriate response to children facing difficult situations.
- Together, agencies collectively recognised the broader aspects of abuse and exploitation, and were working together to protect children by disrupting organised crime gangs.
- This included sharing information before enforcement so schools and children's services could plan for disruption to a child's day and offer support when necessary.

- Agencies have worked together to develop a child exploitation assessment tool, which is used in cases of both the sexual exploitation of children and their criminal exploitation.
- Different agencies also work together at Multi-Agency Child Exploitation Meetings (MACEs) to oversee and co-ordinate work with children vulnerable to exploitation.

Like our other child protection inspections, we suspended this joint inspection programme in March 2020. We plan to start it again in summer 2021.

Children living with mental health problems

In December 2020, we published a joint targeted area inspection thematic report covering six inspections of the multi-agency response to children with mental health problems.

The inspection investigated how local partnerships and services were responding to children and their families when children were living with mental ill health.

We investigated how different agencies worked. This involved reviewing the effectiveness of multi-agency working arrangements, including children's social care, health services, youth offending services, schools and the police.

We found that, when partnerships work well together, prioritise children's mental health and build a skilled and

knowledgeable workforce, children get better support for their mental health.

We also found that knowing more about the local community, consulting with children, and working with a range of agencies leads to a better understanding of children's need for support with their mental health problems.

Individual professionals across a range of agencies can, and do, make a real difference to children with mental health needs. But some children wait intolerably long for their mental health needs to be identified and to access a specialist service.

The pandemic vulnerability inspection

*Policing in the pandemic: The police response to the COVID-19 pandemic*⁶ reported on child protection.

We carried out as much as possible of this inspection remotely. We examined self-assessments and documents from all 43 forces, and carried out fieldwork including interviews and focus groups with officers.

On child protection, we found the following:

- As the pandemic progressed, there was a change in the level of demand faced by the police from child protection incidents. The police worked with safeguarding agencies to analyse the changing

⁶ [*Policing in the pandemic: The police response to the coronavirus pandemic during 2020*](#), HMICFRS, 20 April 2021

nature of risk, identify children at increased risk and put in place joint plans to protect them.

- The police made good use of external and internal communications to highlight the changing nature of risk and hidden harms experienced by children.
- Children were seen to be more at risk of online exploitation because they spent more time at home and online. However, the police didn't see an associated increase in reported offences. In other forms of exploitation, such as county lines, the police reacted to changes in perpetrator behaviour and reallocated resources to identify children at risk.
- The police made changes to the way that they managed registered sex offenders in the community. Following national guidance issued in March 2020, we found that some had stopped visiting low-risk, and some medium- risk, offenders. Instead, they phoned or did virtual visits. We were concerned that the police might not be managing dangerous offenders appropriately and that this could put vulnerable people at risk. We asked forces to make sure that officers understood this guidance correctly.

We will follow up on these findings as part of our rolling child protection programmes.

Our specialist inspections

British Transport Police

In April 2019, the Minister of State for Transport commissioned us to inspect British Transport Police (BTP). British Transport Police has a Great Britain-wide jurisdiction, unlike other forces, and is focused on the rail network.

But its principles of keeping people safe and reducing crime are the same as for other forces. We were asked to assess how well the force works with the rail industry to minimise disruption on the network.

We focused on police-related incidents that cause disruption, such as trespass, fatalities and cable theft. The fieldwork took place in June 2019 and our report was published in April 2020.

We aimed to answer the question: “How well does the force minimise disruption on the railways, work with industry and reflect its priorities?” We considered how well the force:

- minimised the disruption to the railway network caused by trespass, fatalities, cable theft and other police-related matters; and
- aligned its policing priorities with those of the industry, while maintaining its operational independence.

Our findings

Minimising disruption

We found that BTP was good at prioritising and minimising police-related disruption on the network. The force had prevention plans and initiatives to reduce the effect of its response so that investigations of incidents cause minimum delay.

But these weren't consistently used across the force and weren't always supported by the rail industry. The force's recommendations to the industry about preventing disruption seemed mostly to be ignored. The force believed this was mainly because of cost. This meant that the force could not prevent some disruption, such as trespass.

Aligning force and rail industry priorities

The force tried to align its priorities better with those of the industry. But many organisations make up the rail industry, each with different priorities. The industry didn't fully see some of BTP's strategic priorities, such as safeguarding, firearms and counter-terrorism, as sufficiently relevant to them. It followed that some in the industry did not have a good enough understanding of the importance of these priorities for the force.

Operational independence

We were satisfied that the force remained independent when dealing with disruption and delay. Officers weren't affected by commercial pressures when deciding to

allow the re-opening of the network. But we were worried about industry influence on senior officers. We saw some evidence of people in the industry trying to influence senior officers' decisions: for example, to re-open the railway network quickly after closure for a fatality.

Passenger confidence

British Transport Police recognised that building public confidence and reducing fear of crime is a focus for the industry. The force had several initiatives to increase passenger confidence and improve its work with them. Examples were its 'see it; say it; sorted' campaign and its use of passenger surveys.

But we decided that more needed to be done to engage with passengers. Improved engagement helps the force understand what concerns the public most and what gives them confidence when using the rail network.

Trespass, fatalities and other police matters

British Transport Police makes responding to trespass and fatalities a priority. It has prevention plans in place and invests in training for all staff. The force recognised how trespass – especially by young people and people with mental health problems – affects the network. It worked with industry and other groups to reduce trespass and suicides. Many of the reasons for trespass and fatalities are complex and BTP can't solve them alone.

British Transport Police has said it will reduce the disruptive effect of trespass at the top ten hotspots on the network.

This is of course a sensible approach. Focusing police activity where it has the greatest effect is cost-effective and should reduce disruption and delay.

Using technology and data

The force understands the importance of data and technology in making operational decisions and informing prevention work. In its 2018–21 strategic plan, it pledged to improve how it uses technology. The force was good at collecting and analysing data to understand threats on the network. It had a clear national picture and understood police-related disruption. But we found that it could establish better ways to exchange information with the rail industry.

Our recommendations

We made five recommendations to make railway policing more effective. We said BTP should:

- consider how it works with the rail industry and find better ways to work with it strategically; closer working will help the force to better understand and thereby overcome the industry's complex, and often conflicting, priorities;
- review how it shares information with the rail industry; it should explain some of its functions, policies and procedures more, which will help the industry better

- understand important functions such as counter-terrorism;
- raise awareness among police forces of the effects of police-related disruption and the importance of returning the railway network to normal as quickly as possible;
- review its deployment model to make sure it can achieve the objectives of its National Policing Plan; and
- make available its training for police-related disruption, which is excellent, to more representatives from the rail industry and to police officers from other forces.

Roads policing

For over 30 years, the number of people killed on the roads in England and Wales was in steady decline. However, in 2013, that trend changed and began to show a gradual increase. In 2018, 1,624 people were killed and 23,931 suffered serious, often life-changing, injuries because of road traffic collisions.

This change coincided with a 34 percent cut (or £120m) in spending on roads policing. This meant that there were fewer dedicated roads policing officers and a substantial decrease in police enforcement work. Police were less able to target, in particular, offences known to cause road deaths - the 'fatal four' of drink and drug driving, not wearing a seat belt, excess speed

and driving while distracted (by, for example, mobile phones).

In respect of the forces inspected, fewer than half of the relevant police and crime plans listed roads policing or road safety as priorities. With protection of life being the paramount objective, we sought to determine what forces were doing about this tragic loss of life on our roads.

Our findings

Strategy

Some forces adopted only parts of the national roads policing strategy, such as denying criminals use of the road. Some couldn't show adequate evidence of a strategic approach to reducing road deaths.

Partnership working

Other public sector bodies – particularly local authorities – aren't often involved in police road safety initiatives.

This has resulted in a disjointed and inefficient approach to road safety. In too many respects, best practice, such as problem-solving approaches to reducing serious collisions, is not being disseminated effectively.

Engaging with those most at risk

On the roads, people older than 85 have the highest fatality rate of all age groups, and are more likely to be killed on the roads as pedestrians. Those in the 17 to

24 age group are more likely to be killed as vehicle occupants. Motorcycle users account for just 0.8 percent of vehicular traffic, but make up 26 percent of all those killed or seriously injured. In too many cases, forces fail sufficiently to engage with these groups to educate them.

Reduced capacity

Between 2012/13 and 2019/20, annual expenditure on roads policing in England and Wales fell by about 34 percent in real terms. As a result, forces reduced their roads policing capability and capacity, whilst requiring the remaining roads policing officers to do other work, including responding to calls for assistance unrelated to roads policing.

Local response officers told us they are seldom briefed on, or directed towards, roads policing issues.

Some feel discouraged from being proactive because it is seen as a distraction from their central role of responding to incidents. One officer told us that “No-one thanks you for being tied up with a drink-drive prisoner for two hours.” This culture has a negative effect on officers’ development. We were told that student officers usually complete their two-year probationary periods without getting much experience of basic roads policing work, such as making arrests for drink driving.

This is reflected in police enforcement of the four offences that are the prevalent causes of road deaths. As the visibility of road traffic police has reduced, so

has the fear of being caught, which has led to more offending, collisions and deaths.

Enforcement

Most forces cannot sufficiently show that their enforcement work is based on a sound understanding of the causes of deaths and serious injury on the roads in their areas.

- Between 2015 and 2018, the number of breathalyser tests carried out in England and Wales dropped by 25 percent, from 425,300 to 321,000. Since 2014, there has been a corresponding rise in people killed or seriously injured in road traffic collisions where the driver was over the legal blood alcohol limit.
- The number of roadside drug tests carried out as part of national campaigns has fallen. But, like breathalyser test data, the percentage of those failing the test has increased since 2016.
- Between 2011 and 2017, the number of fixed penalty notices issued for using a handheld mobile phone while driving dropped by just over 76 percent, from around 162,400 tickets to around 38,600.
- In 2013, just under 20 percent of car occupants killed in collisions were found not to have been wearing a seatbelt. By 2018, this figure had risen to almost 26 percent. Over the same period, the number of fixed penalty notices issued for not wearing a seatbelt reduced by 75 percent, from 86,300 to around 21,600.

Dataset 3: Fixed penalty tickets issued for traffic offences in England and Wales, 2011 to 2018

The categories of fixed penalty notices are: use of handheld mobile phone while driving; seat belt offences; neglect of traffic signs and directions and of pedestrian rights; obstruction, waiting and parking offences; vehicle test and condition offences; and licence, insurance and record-keeping offences. Between 2011 and 2018, there was an overall decrease in all categories, except for licence, insurance and record-keeping offences. These decreased between 2011 and 2015, before increasing again between 2016 and 2018.

Source: Home Office

Motorway patrols

The cost of all road traffic collisions is around £36 billion per year. Incidents or collisions on the road network can have severe economic consequences. In 2011 alone, the estimated cost of motorway closures due to road accidents was £1 billion. We found that motorway patrols have diminished, and some forces only enter the motorway to deal with collisions rather than to patrol to prevent them.

Criminals on the road

Targeting criminals using the road network and disrupting their activities is part of the national strategy. However, in too many respects criminals engaged in county line drug dealing have not been denied the use

of motorways because many police patrols have been withdrawn.

Partnership working

In several force areas, the partnership approach to road safety is poor. (The partnership approach is a co-operative arrangement between the police and other public authorities, such as the Highways Agency.) This is often because the force and other agencies have different, or even contradictory, priorities and objectives. There is little evidence of data and analysis being used for problem solving with other agencies, or of engaging with them to reduce risk.

Skills to deal with heavy goods vehicles

Heavy goods vehicles (HGVs) are involved in 28 percent of collisions that involve serious injury or death. In several forces, there was no sufficient evidence of effective succession planning or training in dealing with HGVs.

Training

There is no accredited national training programme for roads policing officers. The College of Policing has a range of modules, but they are not mandatory, and some forces have developed their own approaches. As a result, there is often inconsistency in how, when, and to what levels officers are trained. There is not enough continuing professional development of officers, and it is inconsistent.

Not all forces fully exploit developments in collision investigation, such as digital evidence available in vehicles, because staff are not adequately trained.

Welfare of roads policing officers

Roads policing officers are exposed to more death than any other police specialism. But in too many respects welfare provision for them is inadequate, particularly for liaison officers for bereaved families.

Our recommendations

We recommended the following:

- The Department for Transport and the Home Office should publish a road safety strategy for the police, local authorities, highway agencies and other strategic agencies.
- The Home Office should revise the Strategic Policing Requirement to include roads policing.
- The Home Office should require reference to roads policing in all police and crime plans.
- Roads policing should be included in forces' strategic threat and risk assessments.
- The role and structure of national roads policing operations and intelligence should be reviewed to better co-ordinate national roads policing campaigns.
- Forces should have enough analytical capability to inform tactics to reduce collisions and evaluate their effectiveness.

- Speed cameras should, in line with guidance, be located where there is risk of speed-related collisions. Forces or local road safety partnerships should publish how revenue from speed cameras is used for road safety initiatives.
- Forces should have the resources to deal with dashcam recordings of offences submitted by the public.
- Forces should have enough patrols of motorways and main roads. They should have effective co-operative arrangements including intelligence sharing with highways agencies.
- The College of Policing should include a serious collision investigation module in its Professionalising Investigation Programme. This should include:
 - minimum national training standards; and
 - certification for all serious collision investigators.
- Forces should have suitable welfare support for specialist investigators and family liaison officers involved in investigating fatal road traffic collisions.
- The College of Policing and the NPCC should establish role profiles for specific functions in roads policing, and identify training requirements.

Areas for improvement

Forces should be better represented in national roads policing operations.

- Collision data should be exchanged more effectively with other bodies.
- Changes in the Professionalising Investigation Programme should be communicated better.

Pre-charge bail and released under investigation: Striking a balance

The Policing and Crime Act 2017 established the presumption that the police should release detainees without bail; this practice is referred to as 'released under investigation' (RUI). Before this, suspects could be bailed for very long periods before they were charged or the investigation was ended without further action.

Pre-charge bail can still be used when it is necessary and proportionate. But the length of time suspects can spend on bail is limited, and requires extra authorisation (either by police officers at the rank of inspector or above, or magistrates if it is for more than three months).

In all police forces, these changes resulted in a huge reduction in the number of suspects who were released on pre-charge bail. This included suspects in cases of domestic abuse, and other high-risk crimes.

In late 2019 and early 2020, we carried out an inspection of the use of pre-charge bail and RUI. The inspection was done jointly with Her Majesty's

Crown Prosecution Service Inspectorate. The report was published in December 2020.

Our findings

We found that the 2017 legislative changes had been brought in too quickly. One result of this was that forces were not given adequate guidance, which resulted in a range of interpretations of the legislation across England and Wales.

Guidance from the NPCC in January 2019 went some way to addressing this problem. It advised forces what they should do when they release suspects under investigation or on bail. But we found that, even 12 months later, many officers were unaware of the guidance. We found that in many cases of domestic abuse and stalking, suspects were released under investigation instead of being formally bailed with conditions (such as requiring them to stay away from certain people or places). This was very worrying because of the high harm and risk associated with these types of crime, and it was clear through our research that victims of domestic abuse felt less safe since the changes were made.

The legislation was introduced to remedy the problem of suspects being on bail for long periods of time. But we found that investigations involving suspects released under investigation tended to take longer and were subject to less scrutiny than ones involving bail. And, when investigations ended without a charge,

suspects weren't always told that there would be no further action.

We also found that there was no accurate national data about the use of bail and RUI, because forces recorded these things in different ways. This meant that in too many respects the police did not fully understand how many people were released under investigation.

We found that Crown Prosecution Service lawyers were often unaware that a suspect had been released under investigation, which adversely affected the advice prosecution lawyers were able to give.

Our recommendations

We made two recommendations that were specific to police forces:

- Forces should develop processes and systems to clearly show whether suspects are on bail or released under investigation. This will help them to better understand the risk a suspect poses to victims and the wider community, and will help to increase safeguarding.
- Forces should record whether a suspect is on bail or released under investigation on the MG3 form when it is submitted to the Crown Prosecution Service. This should be regularly checked and any changes in bail or release under investigation passed to the Crown Prosecution Service. The Crown Prosecution Service should work with the police to make sure that they get this information.

We made further recommendations for the Home Office, the College of Policing, the Crown Prosecution Service and the NPCC:

- The Home Office should work with the police and the College of Policing to review the legislation for bail and release under investigation.
- The Home Office should work with police and the College of Policing to make sure that forces have enough time and adequate resources to prepare for any future changes to the legislation which arise from the recent Home Office consultation on the use of bail. They should also give police forces comprehensive guidance and protocols on the changes.
- The Home Office and the NPCC should work together to develop and put in place data collection processes to give an accurate national picture of release under investigation and pre-charge bail.
- The Home Office should work with police forces and the College of Policing to develop and implement monitoring arrangements to make sure that changes resulting from the Home Office's bail consultation are effective.
- The Home Office should work with the NPCC, the Crown Prosecution Service and the College of Policing to make sure that any changes to the legislation secure improvements for victims of crime.
- The College of Policing should work with the NPCC to develop clear guidance for officers on updating

suspects who are released under investigation about the progress of their cases.

- The College of Policing and the NPCC should work together to develop clear guidance for police forces so that all cases involving serious harm and risk, such as domestic abuse and stalking, are subject to bail with conditions to protect victims. The guidance should also require a new risk assessment before a suspect's bail status changes.
- The Crown Prosecution Service and the NPCC should work together to review their service level agreements and make sure that cases can be charged at the earliest opportunity.
- We are monitoring the implementation of our recommendations. The Home Office has recently announced proposed changes to the legislation, which will likely be introduced in 2022/23.

An inspection of the effectiveness of regional organised crime units

The purpose of this inspection was to assess how effectively and efficiently the regional organised crime units (ROCUs) tackle the threat from serious and organised crime.

We wanted to establish how well ROCUs led the response to serious and organised crime while working with local police forces and other law enforcement agencies.

The inspection began in February 2020 but wasn't completed until November 2020 because of the pandemic.

We found evidence of some good work, but we also found inconsistencies across England and Wales in the resourcing, leadership and operation of ROCUs.

The major finding from this report was the lack of a clear and sustainable funding model to make sure that the ROCUs are a central part of the Government's Serious and Organised Crime Strategy 2018.⁷

In 2015, we highlighted the ROCU funding model as a problem; the National Audit Office highlighted similar problems in its 2019 report on tackling serious and organised crime.⁸ This long-running problem needs to be resolved.

The report grouped our findings into three areas:

A single, whole-system approach

In general, we found that ROCUs had good access to intelligence and performed well, despite dealing with many disparate ICT systems. They remained focused on the pursue (prosecution and disruption) strand of the Serious and Organised Crime Strategy 2018. Each ROCU had developed performance regimens and was working to create a management information system to improve recording performance data.

⁷ [Serious and Organised Crime Strategy 2018](#), Home Office, 1 November 2018

⁸ [Tackling serious and organised crime](#), National Audit Office, 28 June 2019

Accountability and oversight

We found no effective national oversight framework capable of mandating what the ROCU network should do. There were inconsistencies in many areas of ROCU activity. All units had similar regional governance structures but they were inconsistently applied. This had the potential to undermine the national and regional tasking and co-ordination arrangements. We found that some ROCUs were dealing with lower-level threats than some police forces.

More needs to be done at the national and regional levels to make sure that the structure and leadership of the ROCU network are consistent and can effectively tackle the threat from serious and organised crime.

We found some examples of innovative work locally and between specialist officers. More could be done to make sure that ROCUs implement good practice nationally.

Across the ROCU network, we were troubled by the lack of awareness or evidence of counter-corruption measures. Some ROCUs had plans to tackle corruption but they weren't consistent across England and Wales.

We said there needed to be a more consistent approach to co-ordinate national messages to the public about serious and organised crime. This would help raise public awareness of the threat. The ROCU network could contribute to this by spreading consistent

messages across all regions, adopting a similar approach to the one used for policing terrorism.

Resourcing, capacity and workforce

Given ROCUs' importance in the fight against serious and organised crime, we were disappointed that there was no long-term funding model for them. The lack of a sustainable funding plan made the ROCU network less effective than it could have been.

Despite the problems with funding and the need for greater co-ordination and collaboration, ROCUs have made substantial progress since our last inspection.

We published our report in February 2021. We made six recommendations and raised one cause of concern to further improve the effectiveness of the ROCU network.

Policing public protest

Introduction

Protests are an important part of our vibrant and tolerant democracy. Under human rights law, we all have the right to gather and express our views.

There have been long-running demonstrations against, for example, the badger cull, companies involved in fracking (a method of onshore oil and gas production), and the construction of the high-speed rail line HS2. Since the murder of George Floyd in the USA, Black Lives Matter protesters have taken to the streets in

many British cities, sometimes meeting with counter-protests.

In recent years, increasing amounts of police time and resources have been spent dealing with protests.

These protests have brought parts of some of Britain's busiest cities to a standstill, disrupted commercial activity and even toppled a statue. But a fair balance should be struck between individual rights and the general interests of the community.

Our inspection

Between October and December 2020, we inspected ten police forces in England and Wales and, alongside Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary in Scotland (HMICS), gathered evidence from Police Scotland.

The inspection took place during the pandemic.

We examined the extra challenges that policing protests under the health protection (lockdown) regulations had brought.

Our findings

We found that the police generally attempt to balance the rights of protesters with those of the businesses and communities whose daily activities are disrupted.

This balance is a difficult one to strike. Having reviewed the evidence, our conclusion is that the police do not strike the right balance on every occasion. The balance may tip too readily in favour of protesters when – as is

often the case – the police do not accurately assess the level of disruption caused, or likely to be caused, by a protest.

We separated our inspection into five areas:

- How well the police manage intelligence about protests.
- How well the police plan and prepare their response to protests.
- How well the police collaborate in relation to protests.
- How effective are decision-making processes and how they affect the police response to protests.
- The extent to which current legislation gives the police the powers they need to deal effectively with protests.

How well do the police manage intelligence about protests?

The police need intelligence to assess protest-related risks and prepare plans to make sure that protests are safe.

Protest-related risks are recorded by each force and region in public order public safety strategic risk assessments.

Despite the high level of protest seen in 2020, only three of the ten forces included in these strategic risk assessments the intelligence from protests they had recently policed.

Managing protest-related intelligence at force level

Forces' intelligence units deal with many issues besides protest, including serious organised crime, modern slavery and child sexual exploitation. Intelligence units generally balance these competing priorities with the need for protest intelligence, and work closely with operational planning teams.

Covert sensitive intelligence-gathering methods

The police can use covert sensitive intelligence-gathering methods to prevent protest-related crime and disorder if they meet stringent legal requirements. The police use most of these methods, such as directed surveillance, in a limited way.

Until September 2020, counter terrorism policing was responsible for managing protest-related covert human intelligence sources (CHIS). Since then, this responsibility has passed to forces. We have concerns about how well this will work without central co-ordination and whether forces will meet the demand. Local forces haven't managed protest-related CHIS since the 1990s.

How well do the police plan and prepare their response to protests?

Police planning teams are usually skilled, experienced and effective at preparing for their response to protest.

Unsurprisingly, we found the forces that regularly deal with protest tend to have the best planning practices.

Working with organisers and others

Forces work with the companies and organisations affected by protest to help plan the police response. They also work with protest organisers, most of whom collaborate with the police to make sure that protests are safe. But this isn't always the case. Organisers who don't notify the police about a protest can jeopardise the safety of those involved and hamper the police's ability to plan. They also miss an opportunity to agree with the police on an acceptable level of disruption.

Specialist training

The police have developed a range of specialist roles relating to protest. For example, protester removal teams are trained to remove protesters from lock-on devices.

But forces don't have a consistent way of identifying how many trained officers they need. As a result, the number of specialists available varies widely across England and Wales.

We heard that not enough officers put themselves forward for training in specialist protest policing roles. Frequent weekend working, exposure to risky operations, and the relentless insults and abuse officers often face when dealing with protests deter them. Interviewees told us about the extra stress caused by footage or photographs being posted on social media. Some officers fear this might put their families at risk.

Guidance and advice

The College of Policing's authorised professional practice has 30 tactical options for public disorder and protests. But it is out of date and doesn't include recent relevant case law or information on certain new and emerging tactical options.

We are pleased that the NPCC and the College of Policing have produced comprehensive and detailed operational advice for protest policing. But we found problems with some of its legal explanations, particularly how it sets out the police's obligations under human rights law. We raised these points with the NPCC.

Using equipment and technology

The police use equipment and technology well in relation to protest. Drones have significantly improved police commanders' ability to monitor protesters and deploy officers accordingly. We were impressed by the work of protester removal teams in dealing with the very complex lock-on devices used by some protest groups.

The police's use of facial recognition technology divides opinion. Opponents point to its potential to violate human rights; supporters believe it could help the police to identify those intent on causing crime, significant disruption and disorder. A recent Court of Appeal judgment has helped to clarify what steps the police must take to ensure that they eliminate discrimination (under the Equality Act 2010) and that applying it

doesn't interfere with a person's right to privacy by law. But more policy development work is needed.

How well do the police collaborate in relation to protests?

The police generally collaborate well in relation to protests. But we found some problems with the processes that forces use to learn from experience and exchange knowledge with other forces.

Mutual aid and collaboration between forces

Mutual aid arrangements usually work well. Resources and specialists regularly move across force boundaries to deal with protests. The police regularly test how they mobilise resources nationally and they identify opportunities for improvement.

Larger forces tend to have their own trained and equipped specialist resources. For economy, smaller forces tend to have a collaborative agreement with neighbouring forces or arrangements to buy in resources from larger forces.

Debriefing and learning from experience

Forces don't always pass on information from protest-related debriefs as effectively as they should. Internal debriefs after controversial or high-profile protests are generally good but forces often don't debrief after smaller or lower-profile protests.

The College of Policing and the National Police Coordination Centre have set up what should be an

effective process for submitting and passing on information from debrief forms.

But forces often don't comply properly with this process.

Working with other organisations

Forces usually work well with other organisations and individuals to police protests. These include local authorities, fire and rescue and ambulance services, other public services and other police forces, councillors and community representatives.

Forces involve these parties at the early stages of protest planning and continue working with them throughout the event. They also encourage representatives from these organisations to work alongside police gold or silver commanders during events. Local authorities often provide facilities during protest, such as for road closures or barriers, water and toilets for protesters, lighting, advice and information, and access to CCTV networks.

How effective are decision-making processes and how do they affect the police response to protests?

It is no easy task for the police to strike the right balance between the rights of protesters and those of local residents and businesses in responding to protests. The police inevitably attract criticism both for being too soft on protesters and too hard on them by unacceptably restricting the right to protest.

Human rights legislation and case law

In deciding how to respond to a protest, public order commanders must consider UK human rights legislation.

And they must also consider European case law, which has established precedents on issues such as how long protests can reasonably go on for and the level of disruption that is acceptable.

Although police commanders generally showed a grasp of human rights legislation, we didn't see evidence that they consistently consider the wider legal picture.

For example, the European Court of Human Rights has ruled that police have a wider margin of appreciation when protesters deliberately set out to cause disruption. This means that the police can – and in our view should – take into account protesters' intentions when deciding the proportionate extent (if any) to which a protest should be restricted.

Our public survey

On our behalf, YouGov surveyed public perception of the policing of protests. Between 27 and 29 November 2020, it surveyed 2,033 adults in England and Wales (on a sample of this size, random sampling error is up to 2 percent).

Most respondents felt it was unacceptable for protests to involve violence or serious disruption to residents and businesses. But their views were more divided when protest causes only minor inconvenience to

people locally. The survey showed less support for police use of force when protesters aren't violent.

Dataset 4: Public perceptions of protest activity. Respondants were asked 'Thinking about protests in the UK, to what extent, if at all, do you think each of the following are acceptable or unacceptable?'

Here are a series of bar charts showing the results to HMICFRS' public survey on public protest for the following: Protesters using violence, Protesters causing a minor inconvenience to people locally, The police using force to deal with violent protesters and The police using force to deal with non-violent protesters. 69% of those surveyed found protesters using violence completely unacceptable. There was a mixed response to protesters causing a minor inconvenience to people locally; however, 44% found this fairly or completely unacceptable versus 33% finding this fairly or completely acceptable. 77% of respondents found police using force against violent protests to be either fairly or completely acceptable. This is in contrast to the use of police force against non-violent protesters which received a response of 60% of either fairly or completely unacceptable.

Source: HMICFRS survey of 2033 adults in England and Wales carried out by YouGov between 27 and 29 November 2020

Briefing and communicating

Forces usually have good protest-related briefing processes. But their plans often don't set out the limits of acceptable behaviour on the parts of protesters. Better explanations of these limits would help officers to understand what is expected of them. Many, particularly those with less training or experience, lack sufficient confidence in using police powers.

Some officers are anxious about attracting complaints and being filmed in protest situations. It is important that forces provide good-quality training and briefing before deploying officers into these situations.

Assessing the effect of protests

Forces should make better use of community impact assessments to evaluate the effects of protests on those who live in, work in or visit the area in question. We found little evidence that forces sufficiently consider the degree of disruption experienced by people not involved in a protest and the adverse financial effect of protest on affected businesses.

Does the current legislation give the police the powers they need to deal effectively with protests?

We found a wide range of views within the police on whether current legislation is adequate to deal effectively with protests. For many protests, the police don't have to resort to enforcement. Forces that have experienced significant disruption, confrontation and civil disobedience consider the current legislation

inadequate. This is particularly the case for the Metropolitan Police Service because most large-scale protests take place in London. The Metropolitan Police uses its enforcement powers at protests more often than any other force.

The effectiveness of the criminal justice system in dealing with protest

We found evidence to support the view expressed by many officers that the criminal justice system is ineffective in dealing with the challenges presented by protests.

Some believe that the current sentencing, sanctions and penalties are ineffective, with little or no deterrent value, and could encourage unlawful behaviour at protests.

However, we also found significant evidence of the Crown Prosecution Service bringing protest-related cases to court. These include fracking cases (mainly in Lancashire and Greater Manchester) and, more recently, cases from Extinction Rebellion, Black Lives Matter and public health protests.

Five proposals for new legislation

In recent years, protest-related legislation has attracted considerable scrutiny and debate in Parliament, the Home Office and across the police service. As part of our inspection, we were asked to review and offer an opinion on five areas for legislative change proposed by the Home Office. We concluded that, with some

qualifications, all five proposals would improve police effectiveness without eroding the right to protest.

The proposals are to:

1. widen the range of conditions that the police can impose on assemblies (static protests), to match existing police powers to impose conditions on processions;
2. lower the fault element for offences relating to the breaching of conditions placed on a protest of either kind (assembly or procession);
3. widen the range of circumstances in which the police can impose conditions on a protest of either kind;
4. replace the existing common law offence of public nuisance with a new statutory offence, as recommended by the Law Commission in 2015; and
5. create new stop, search and seizure powers to prevent serious disruption caused by protests.

Our recommendations

Our 12 recommendations and four areas of improvement were designed to:

- improve national co-ordination of protest-related intelligence;
- review and align national guidance, professional practice and continuing professional development;
- improve post-protest debriefs, and the exchange of lessons and good practice between forces;

- improve the police assessment of the effect of protests on others; and
- make clear our views on current and proposed legislation.

The Sarah Everard vigil

After the murder of Sarah Everard in March 2021, people wanted to pay their respects and raise awareness of the problem of violence against women and girls.

A vigil was planned for Clapham Common on 13 March 2021. The organisers held meetings with the Metropolitan Police Service and the local authority to discuss the legality of the vigil in the context of the pandemic lockdown regulations. Faced with the prospect of significant fines, the organisers reluctantly cancelled the vigil.

Despite this, on 13 March 2021 people gathered on Clapham Common to lay flowers and pay their respects. The event passed peacefully until the evening, when a rally began. The Metropolitan Police started to enforce the lockdown regulations and made nine arrests. Photographs and video footage of police arresting women were widely circulated online, and extensively covered by newspapers and television. Widespread condemnation of the police quickly followed, including from senior politicians.

Shortly after, the Home Secretary and the Mayor of London separately commissioned us to inspect how the Metropolitan Police had handled the policing of the vigil.

Our findings

Overall, we found that the Metropolitan Police were justified in adopting the view that the risks of transmitting the virus at the vigil were too great to ignore.

We reviewed hundreds of documents, hours of body-worn video from police officers, and video footage taken by those attending the vigil. We interviewed police officers, the vigil organisers, some of those who were at the vigil, and politicians. We found that police officers at the vigil:

- did their best to peacefully disperse the crowd;
- remained calm and professional when subjected to abuse; and
- did not act inappropriately or in a heavy-handed way.

However, we found that there wasn't enough communication between police commanders about changing events on the ground.

In our inspection, we addressed four fundamental questions about the Metropolitan Police's handling of the event:

- Did the force's desire to maintain consistency of approach to policing lockdown restrictions justify its stance towards the vigil?

- Should the force have done more work with Reclaim These Streets organisers or Lambeth Council to plan the vigil, particularly after the decision of the High Court in the relevant litigation?
- Were police actions at the event proportionate?
- What factors contributed to this event?

Did the force's desire to maintain consistency justify its stance towards the vigil?

Any blanket ban on gatherings, in the context of the lockdown regulations in force at that time, is incompatible with human rights. Decisions must be taken on the specific facts of each event.

We concluded that the Metropolitan Police acted appropriately in taking as its starting point the desire to achieve consistency in the policing of mass gatherings during lockdown. But, in order to adopt a lawful approach, it was essential for the Metropolitan Police to go beyond that starting point and to consider the specific facts regarding the events planned for 13 March 2021, and then the events as they unfolded on the day. The analysis and actions of the Metropolitan Police satisfied this requirement.

Should the force have done more work with Reclaim These Streets organisers or Lambeth Council to plan the vigil, particularly after the High Court case?

A vigil on Clapham Common could have been lawful because the right to protest remains during the

pandemic. But we found in this case that holding a COVID-friendly event was not realistic because of:

- the high number of people expected to attend;
- the limited time available to plan the event; and
- the possibility that protest groups may attend (which would mean planning for civil disobedience and for a failure to observe social distancing).

Were police actions at the event proportionate?

The '4Es' approach (engage, explain, encourage, enforce) is a well-publicised framework used by police forces to respond proportionately to breaches of the lockdown regulations. In most cases, enforcement is used as a last resort. From our inspection, the evidence is clear that the officers on duty at Clapham Common did their level best to peacefully engage with those present, explain the regulations and encourage the crowd to disperse. They only took enforcement action when the number of people present and the public health risks were too great for the crowd to be safely allowed to remain in place.

We found evidence that officers were patient and professional in the face of severe provocation and in difficult circumstances. We found nothing to suggest that officers acted inappropriately or in a heavy-handed manner.

What factors contributed to this event?

In our view, there are four factors that contributed to a loss in confidence in the police because of the vigil.

The first factor relates to some of the decisions taken by the police. We observed that their case for officers' actions at Clapham Common made little favourable impression on public confidence when set against the effect of the images of women under arrest that were rapidly published on social media. Had the Metropolitan Police issued a more conciliatory response after the event, it might have been received better by the public.

The second factor relates to the law. It needs to establish rules that can be readily understood and consistently applied. Only then will the law attract a high degree of public acceptance and voluntary compliance.

The third factor is the behaviour of a minority of those present at the vigil. While most people at Clapham Common were dignified and respectful, after 6.00pm a few in the crowd became aggressive and abusive, and vented their hostility towards the police.

The fourth factor is the unwarranted condemnation of the actions of the police from those in authority without a full understanding of the facts.

After reviewing a very large body of evidence – rather than the snapshot seen in the newspapers, on television and on social media – we concluded that the police could have done some things better. However, we found no evidence to suggest that police officers

acted in anything but a measured and proportionate way in difficult circumstances.

An inspection of the National Crime Agency's criminal intelligence function

In our sixth National Crime Agency (NCA) inspection,⁹ we examined the effectiveness of its criminal intelligence function, one of its two principal responsibilities.

We inspected its:

- current capabilities;
- resourcing;
- alignment with the Serious and Organised Crime Strategy and the National Strategic Assessment;
- ability to provide a single, authoritative, strategic assessment of the threat from serious and organised crime; and
- compliance with national intelligence standards and legislation.

Our findings

We found that the NCA has the capability to discharge its criminal intelligence function. But there are areas it should improve, including how it:

- receives, collates and assesses intelligence; and

⁹ [National Crime Agency inspection: An inspection of the National Crime Agency's criminal intelligence function](#), HMICFRS, 14 July 2020

- communicates intelligence within and beyond its organisation.

To meet these challenges, we recommended further investment in premises, staff training for managing sensitive intelligence, and intelligence systems.

Previous problems getting access to the Police National Database (PND) have been resolved after the NCA reviewed its PND licences.

The NCA has problems recruiting and retaining staff in all departments. It has made a large effort to make sure that new units such as the National Targeting Centre and National Data Exploitation Centre (NDEC) are properly staffed.

The NCA is aligning its intelligence management capability and structures to meet the requirements of the 2018 Serious and Organised Crime Strategy. It is putting more resources into core intelligence units, including the National Targeting Centre and NDEC, in response to the National Strategic Assessment.

The NCA is effective at providing a single, authoritative assessment of the threat from serious and organised crime. It has strong links with ROCUs, police forces and other national agencies. It uses information and intelligence from them when producing the National Strategic Assessment of the national threat from serious and organised crime. We recommended better co-ordination of the process to make sure regional assessments can inform the national picture quickly.

We found that, overall, the NCA's intelligence processes are good. They comply with national intelligence standards and current legislation.

Inspection of the police response to the pandemic

The pandemic had a significant and unprecedented effect on policing. HMICFRS had a role in assessing the police response as the pandemic evolved. We coordinated with other bodies with similar aims, such as the NPCC and the College of Policing, and we decided to conduct a thematic inspection of the national and local policing response from March to November 2020.

The inspection was developed and completed very quickly to be as relevant and helpful to policing as possible.

In December 2020, soon after the inspection, we issued a bulletin of findings and suggestions to policing bodies. We published our full report in April 2021.

Our findings

We recognised and paid tribute to all those in policing who had shown commitment and dedication in these extraordinary times.

Overall, the police service responded well to the challenge of policing the pandemic. Policing managed effectively to balance the safety of officers and staff with minimising any effect on service standards. Forces were adaptable in their working methods but also highly

resilient – stepping in where, on some occasions, other agencies stepped back.

The pandemic highlighted the importance of co-operation between the government and police leaders. This was recognised very early on by the NPCC, which set up Operation Talla to work closely with the Home Office on the pandemic response. We identified some regional variation in co-operation and areas where it could be further enhanced.

Policing generally didn't feel well consulted and found the short notice they were given about changes in the lockdown regulations extremely challenging.

The evolving nature of the regulations, geographical variations, and confusion about which government announcements were enforceable in regulations and which were unenforceable guidance made things worse.

However, in general, lockdown measures were effectively policed. On the rare occasions where police decision-making has been criticised, we are confident that the appropriate lessons were learned.

Operation Talla and the NPCC quickly developed a national approach for enforcing regulations. This was known as the '4Es' (engage, explain, encourage, enforce) and was adopted across England and Wales. Forces made strong efforts to communicate their approaches and the changing requirements to their communities, and thereby to retain public support.

Changes to policing brought about by its pandemic response have the potential to improve policing permanently.

Forces now need to review all the changes to see which will be beneficial in the future. In particular, the pandemic has accelerated the use of technology by police forces and other public sector agencies, including local authorities, health authorities and criminal justice bodies. In many cases, these are welcome changes, such as those enabling quicker interventions and promoting more cost-effective practices.

When innovations alter the way that the police respond to the public, there is a risk that service standards will be affected. These changes will have been necessary during the pandemic but must be reviewed and assessed before they can be adopted in the long term.

Our recommendations

Our report made five recommendations to police forces.

Managing registered sex offenders

Forces must immediately make sure that officers understand and correctly implement the guidance for managing registered sex offenders during the pandemic.

Legislation and guidance

Forces must immediately make sure they can manage their responses to changes in coronavirus-related legislation that are enforceable. They must be clear about the difference between legislation and guidance.

Test, track and trace

Forces must immediately put in place a policy to make sure that they follow the guidance and self-isolation directions when members of the workforce come into contact with someone with coronavirus symptoms.

Custody records

Forces must immediately make sure that they clearly and consistently record on custody records information about how, when and if detainees are informed of the temporary changes to how they can exercise their rights to legal advice and representation.

Overall scale and impact of changes

Within six months, forces must assess the sustainability of any temporary measures introduced during the pandemic that change the way they work.

We also made two recommendations to national bodies and gave each force learning points to consider, based on best practice we had encountered.

Next steps

The recommendations from this inspection are largely specific to the pandemic response and therefore will, it is hoped, soon be historical.

An inspection of the National Crime Agency's relationship with regional organised crime units

The NCA is a national law enforcement agency in the UK. It is the UK's lead agency against organised crime, human trafficking, weapon and drug trafficking, cybercrime and economic crime that crosses regional and international borders.

Our inspection established how effectively the NCA works with one of its most important partners, the ROCU network, to tackle serious and organised crime.

Our terms of reference were to consider how well the NCA works with the ROCU network to reduce the impact of serious and organised crime on the UK and its communities.

Our findings

The NCA and ROCUs have an effective meeting structure that we found helped maintain strong organisational links. In some regions, this is reinforced by local meetings, informal relationships and effective regional organised crime co-ordinator (ROCC) engagement. But we found in both the NCA and in

ROCUs there were significant difficulties in recruiting and retaining staff.

We recommended a change to legislation which will allow the Director General of the NCA to formally commission the ROCUs and set appropriate priorities.

ROCCs will play an important part in the NCA tasking process, when fully developed. Past under-investment in this role will need to change if this is to work effectively. We recommend revising and publishing the job description of the ROCC to make sure they contribute fully to the serious and organised crime system.

Local policing bodies (PCCs and their mayoral equivalents) and chief constables hold ROCUs to account and are responsible for their main funding. ROCUs therefore face pressure to operate to local rather than national priorities. Funding is complex, with ROCUs also receiving national funding. This sometimes creates a tension between the NCA's work and that of the ROCU network. We recommended the Home Office reviews ROCU funding arrangements and increases the emphasis local policing bodies and chief constables place on serious and organised crime.

The NCA provides specialist services to the ROCU network, such as witness protection and responding to cases of kidnap and extortion. Generally, these services couldn't be provided effectively or efficiently at a force or regional level.

The NCA and ROCUs have different ways of defining threat.

A common definition would help the two organisations to prioritise work and to allocate the right resources for operations and investigations.

We found that the teams are generally better integrated when they are co-located, but this wasn't always the case. We believe that co-location can make integration easier.

But good professional relationships and strong leadership can achieve good operating integration even when co-location isn't practical.

Our specialist rolling inspections

Criminal justice joint inspection rolling police custody programme

Our rolling custody inspection programme

We inspect police custody suites jointly with HM Inspectorate of Prisons. We do this as a member of the UK's National Preventive Mechanism (NPM). Members of NPM monitor and inspect places of detention, in compliance with the UK's obligations under the Optional Protocol to the UN Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment. Our inspections take place on a rolling programme so that all police custody suites are visited regularly.

In March 2020, our custody inspections stopped when we decided that we wouldn't carry out any inspection work that required appreciable contributions from police forces. This was to allow forces to turn their full attention to responding to the pandemic.

When the pandemic restrictions were relaxed, we considered how to resume custody inspections. Some of our activities, such as interviews and focus groups, could be conducted virtually. But, to meet our obligations under the NPM, we must visit custody suites to see the facilities and observe how detainees are treated. Because of the continuing pandemic restrictions, we couldn't visit forces for this work. This prevented us from resuming our rolling inspections during 2020/21. We will start again during 2021 and 2022.

In April and May 2020, we published the last two police custody inspection reports from our 2019/20 programme. Our findings continued to reflect those we reported on in our 2019/20 annual report.

Follow-up visits to forces

One year after we have inspected them, we make follow-up visits to forces to assess their progress in response to our findings. Between April 2020 and March 2021, we made eight visits remotely by holding discussions with forces.

Our findings showed that forces continued to improve their custody services. Most were progressing well with

our recommendations and, when improvements could be made quickly, many forces did so. Forces continued to work and engage well with their health and local authority counterparts. But we weren't seeing much improvement in outcomes for detainees. Children often still stayed in custody when they were remanded rather than being moved to local authority accommodation. And, too often, detainees who needed mental health assessments still waited too long. The capacity of other agencies to help forces meet the needs of detainees, and meet their own statutory responsibilities, remained a difficult problem.

All forces are committed and work hard to improve their custody services and outcomes for detainees. We were generally pleased with the progress made. Pandemic custody inspection

Custody services was one of the themes of our wider thematic inspection of Policing in the pandemic: The police response to the COVID-19 pandemic.¹⁰ We published our custody report along with this in April 2021.

We did as much inspection work as possible remotely.

We examined self-assessments and documents from all 43 forces and did fieldwork in five (Gloucestershire, Lancashire, Metropolitan Police Service, Norfolk and South Wales Police), which included examining cases

¹⁰ [*Policing in the pandemic: The police response to the coronavirus pandemic during 2020*](#), HMICFRS, 20 April 2021

and interviewing and holding focus groups with officers. We also asked staff in four forces to complete a survey.

Our findings

We found that:

- detainee care continued as it was before the pandemic and forces have made custody suites as virus-safe as possible;
- forces generally identified the virus-related risks for detainees well;
- changes to the ways in which legal advice and representation were provided weren't always implemented with the best interests of the detainee in mind;
- more detainees were released on pre-charge bail because their cases could not be dealt with while they were in custody;
- virtual remand hearings worked well but forces had withdrawn them because they could not afford to support them; and
- forces did not collect enough information to show how the pandemic had affected custody services.

In many ways, custody work carried on as usual during the pandemic. Fewer detainees than usual entered custody during the first lockdown. But detainee numbers later returned to normal. The pandemic led to some important changes.

Caring for detainees

Caring for detainees and looking after their welfare needs continued very much as before the pandemic. Support from mental health services to help detainees with mental health problems was also largely the same, despite increasing demand. Some forces told us that the pandemic had led to better joint working with other organisations.

Making custody suites virus-safe

Forces invested in their custody suites to make them as virus- safe as possible for staff, detainees and visitors. They changed some suites by, for example, installing plastic screens, and made custody procedures safer. Cleaning was to a much higher standard. Social distancing remained the main problem for example, when taking fingerprints from detainees. And, in some circumstances, it wasn't possible.

Managing risks from detainees

Forces were generally good at managing virus-related risks from detainees. Risk assessments got better so that, if a detainee had or might have had the virus, spread of the virus was minimised. Detainees were kept as isolated as possible in the custody suite and looked after safely.

Forces also tried to release detainees safely. But we and they worried that, if detainees refused to co-operate with arrangements made, there was little choice but to

release them with a mask and tell them to go home and self-isolate.

Legal advice and representation

The pandemic meant that forces had to manage some significant custody changes. Forces adopted the temporary protocol (agreed by the NPCC, the Crown Prosecution Service, the Law Society, the Criminal Law Solicitors' Association and the London Criminal Courts Solicitors' Association) to allow detainees' legal advice and representation to be provided virtually.

But the way the protocol was being implemented varied. The records we examined didn't clearly show how detainees had been told about the custody changes or that they had agreed with how they were to get legal advice and representation. We were worried that the arrangements weren't always made with the best interests of detainees in mind.

Pre-charge bail

The use of pre-charge police bail increased significantly. Forces struggled to get Crown Prosecution Service advice on investigating cases while a detainee was in custody, and in too many cases they could only get charging decisions when they wanted to remand the detainee in custody for the next available court. We were also told that greater use of prepared statements meant that more detainees were released on bail to return for interview later.

This was troubling because, if greater use of pre-charge bail meant that some cases weren't completed in time, the bail period ran out along with any bail conditions placed on the suspect. This was a problem, especially regarding safeguarding victims in domestic abuse cases.

Virtual remand hearings

Faced with court closures, most forces introduced or extended virtual remand hearings so that detainees could have these hearings from the custody suite. However, these hearings generated significant extra costs for forces, which told us they could not afford to maintain this way of working.

Most forces have stopped virtual remand hearings since our inspection. The exception is for detainees who have, or might have, the virus. We found little planning throughout the wider criminal justice system about managing these arrangements in future. There are advantages and disadvantages to remote hearings.

We recommended that forces evaluate their use of virtual remand hearings better to inform working arrangements throughout the criminal justice system.

Monitoring the effect of the pandemic

Forces did not collect enough of the right information to help them manage demand on custody services in the conditions created by the pandemic. They should have recorded the number of detainees entering custody who had, or were suspected of having, the virus, and how

many detainees had been provided with their legal rights and representation virtually rather than having had solicitors attend in person.

We recommended that forces improve the information they gather. This would have helped them decide what resources they needed to manage custody services during the pandemic. It would also have helped them better understand how detainees were affected by the changes to the provision of legal advice and representation.

Our inspections of non-Home Office forces

Royal Gibraltar Police

In 2019, the Gibraltar Police Authority commissioned us to inspect the Royal Gibraltar Police (RGP). We examined the progress the RGP had made since our 2016 inspection, and we reviewed ethical and lawful behaviour.

Our findings

Gibraltar is a relatively safe place and the RGP offers a good level of service to the public. But there are areas where it could improve. It has made some progress in meeting the areas for improvement we highlighted in 2016. Limited resources and poor-quality technology and infrastructure have delayed progress, as have competing demands. However, when we revisited in

2019 we expected to see that rather more had been achieved.

We expected the force to have done more to assess and understand demand, risk and vulnerability. We also expected it to be better at supervising investigations and managing capacity. We made five new recommendations relating to these problems.

The second part of the report was a new inspection of the force's legitimacy (how it treats the public and its own workforce). It included eight areas for improvement and made five recommendations intended to help the force better promote ethics, fairness and openness.

St Helena Police Service

In 2019, His Excellency The Governor of St Helena, Ascension and Tristan da Cunha commissioned us to inspect the St Helena Police Service. We examined the force's arrangements, policies and practice for:

- armed policing;
- detention and custody;
- investigation and victim care/support; and
- neighbourhood and community policing, public engagement and communication.

Our findings

St Helena Police provides its community with a very good investigatory service. It investigates all reported crimes and conducts thorough investigations into most

of them. However, there are areas for improvement. The force can do more to increase the effectiveness of its investigatory processes, and to give even better care to victims and vulnerable people.

Some of the force's armed policing structures and practices work well. Armed officers are professional and mostly make the best of the situation in which they operate. However, we did identify several areas for improvement.

St Helena doesn't have a dedicated custody suite; custody facilities are located within Her Majesty's Prison (HMP) Jamestown (the island's only prison). Built in 1827, HMP Jamestown was first condemned in 1850. It has been repeatedly condemned ever since.

The police and the prison service are acutely aware that the prison isn't fit for purpose. They have worked hard to make 60 improvements to the facility and to secure funding for a new prison and a separate custody facility. However, the new custody facility wasn't due to be open until early 2021.

The Police Service of Northern Ireland

Section 41(2) of the Police (Northern Ireland) Act 1998 requires us to inspect and report to the Department of Justice (Northern Ireland) on the efficiency and effectiveness of the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) each year.

In accordance with the Act, in 2020, we were commissioned to inspect the service. We were asked

specifically to examine how much the service inspires confidence among its workforce and the people it serves.

We carried out our inspection of PSNI in January 2020. We asked three main questions, supported by seven subsidiary questions:

Does the service inspire public confidence?

We asked: Does the service treat the public with fairness and respect? Does the service use its powers, particularly use of force and stop and search powers, fairly and proportionately?

Is the behaviour of the service's workforce ethical and lawful?

We asked: Does the service foster an ethical culture? How effectively does it tackle corruption?

Does the service inspire the confidence of its workforce?

We asked: How effectively does the service identify and resolve unfairness at work? Does it support the wellbeing of its employees? How fairly and effectively does it monitor staff performance, and conduct recruitment?

We were also asked to inspect the effectiveness and efficiency of the service. Our findings were produced in Annex A of our report.

We identified the following areas for improvement:

- Officers are not consistently submitting the correct form after incidents where they have used force. This means that the service is not recording its use of force accurately. It needs to establish and operate a system that identifies when a form is missing and prompts officers to submit one.
- The service should consult widely on making conducted energy devices (such as Tasers) available to more frontline uniformed officers.
- The service should improve its recording of stop and search data and the quality of its scrutiny, particularly external scrutiny, into the use of this power and its effect on communities.

Is the behaviour of the service's workforce ethical and lawful?

We assessed the behaviour of the PSNI workforce as good. We found the service has a strong culture of ethical and lawful behaviour. Officers and staff understand the importance of ethical behaviour.

The service has a good learning culture.

Decisions about workforce conduct are balanced and appropriate. The service has a well-organised vetting procedure and a counter-corruption strategic threat assessment. The anti-corruption unit is well resourced and run by properly trained staff. PSNI recognises that abuse of position for a sexual purpose is serious corruption.

We found that the workforce had a good understanding of the seriousness of that type of corruption.

We identified the following areas for improvement:

- The service should make better use of its computer monitoring software.
- The service should develop a process, such as a People's Intelligence Board, of the kind that some other forces use. That process would deal with welfare and performance matters, and act on intelligence about personnel who may be at risk of corruption.
- The service should consider giving briefings about abuse of position for a sexual purpose to existing supervisors, not just those who have been promoted recently.

Does the service inspire the confidence of its workforce?

We found that PSNI treats its workforce fairly. That inspires the confidence of the workforce. We found that PSNI works hard to identify and resolve problems or perceptions of unfairness. The service analyses a wide range of data to understand its workforce's perceptions about fairness at work. It has made considerable efforts to create a more representative police service for Northern Ireland. The work the service has done in this area is impressive. It seeks to understand the wellbeing of its workforce using a range of methods. It has looked to other organisations for

good practice and has commissioned a university in Northern Ireland to identify barriers to wellbeing that exist within PSNI.

We identified the following areas for improvement:

- The service should provide its workforce with better information about its grievance procedures.
- The service should introduce a more consistent process for managing poor performance.
- The service should seek to reduce waiting times for mental health support.

Efficiency and effectiveness

Our report largely focuses on how well PSNI inspires confidence in its workforce and the people it serves. But various sections also contain material relevant to efficiency (understanding demand and planning for the future) and effectiveness (preventing and investigating crime, protecting the vulnerable, and tackling serious and organised crime).

Other work

Impact of the pandemic on the criminal justice system

A joint view of the Criminal Justice Chief Inspectors on the criminal justice system's response to the pandemic

In January 2021, the Chief Inspector of Constabulary joined the chief inspectors of prosecution, prisons and

probation in a report on the criminal justice system's response to the pandemic.

The report was a cross-system view of how the criminal justice system responded to the first national lockdown (23 March to 10 May 2020), and of how the system had managed since.

This was the first joint Criminal Justice Chief Inspectors report since 2015. It was followed by the chief inspectors appearing together at a hearing of the House of Commons Select Committee on Justice on 18 January 2021.

Our findings

Our contribution to the report was based on what we found in our inspection into the police response to the pandemic.

We praised the determined efforts and commitment of the police and everyone who works in the criminal justice system. Decisions were swift and substantially effective. There was a focus on the health and safety of people working in, with or being dealt with in the system.

Unsurprisingly, the pandemic had had an adverse effect on victims, witnesses and defendants alike. We gave our condolences to the families and friends of those in the criminal justice system who had died from the virus.

Our main finding was that the pandemic had resulted in significant backlogs in the Crown Court in particular,

and that these delays were having an adverse consequential effect on all parts of the system. The problems were compounded by the criminal justice system already being excessively fragmented and under-resourced.

All criminal justice agencies should take stock, individually and together, and review the changes they have made and the lessons which have been learned. This will help make sure the innovations they wish to retain (or further expand) can be properly evaluated, and the resources and training needed to sustain them can be worked out and planned for.

The report recommended that all agencies should work together so the criminal justice system can recover from the extreme pressures caused by the pandemic. We also urge the Government to provide the funding, time and resources that will be needed to achieve this.

Super-complaints

Super-complaints are complaints about a feature, or combination of features, of policing in England and Wales by one or more than one police force which is, or appears to be, significantly harming the interests of the public.

The police super-complaints system came into effect on 1 November 2018. For the evaluation and investigation of super-complaints, it brings together the inspectorate, the College of Policing and the Independent Office for

Police Conduct (IOPC). Each body contributes its expertise and experience.

The system is not designed to handle complaints about the actions of individual police officers; it does not replace the existing police complaints systems. Nor is it a way to investigate complaints from those systems. It instead focuses on systemic problems of local, regional or national significance, which may not be addressed elsewhere.

Super-complaints can be made about:

- any one or more of the 43 police forces in England and Wales;
- the National Crime Agency;
- the Ministry of Defence Police;
- the Civil Nuclear Constabulary; and
- the British Transport Police.

First super-complaint report published

In December 2018, Liberty and Southall Black Sisters submitted a super-complaint about the treatment of victims of crime and witnesses with insecure or uncertain immigration status. It focused on how information about these people is passed to the Home Office for immigration enforcement purposes. It also focused on a culture of policing that was said to prioritise immigration enforcement over the investigation of crime and safeguarding.

In December 2020, the inspectorate, the College of Policing and the IOPC published a joint report¹¹ on the investigation of this super-complaint.

The investigation found that there are inconsistent approaches to information sharing between police and the Home Office about victims and witnesses to crime.

The investigation's recommendations included:

- Where officers only have concerns or doubts about a domestic abuse victim's immigration status, they should immediately stop passing that information to Home Office immigration enforcement.
- The Home Office should review the relevant legal framework and policy to establish sound and fair priorities regarding migrant victims of crime and migrant witnesses to crime with insecure or uncertain immigration status.
- The Home Office and the NPCC should establish a safeguarding protocol about the police approach to migrant victims and witnesses of crime.
- The police should establish safe reporting pathways for all migrant victims and witnesses of crime.

The inspectorate, the College of Policing and the IOPC may individually, or as a group, monitor the extent to which these recommendations are implemented and, within the limits of their powers, take further steps if

¹¹ ['Safe to share? Report on Liberty and Southall Black Sisters' super-complaint on policing and immigration](#), College of Policing, HMICFRS and IOPC, December 2020

they consider a feature of policing continues to cause harm.

Current super-complaint investigations

On 19 March 2019, we received a super-complaint from the Centre for Women's Justice about police use of protective measures in cases of violence against women and girls.

The Centre for Women's Justice is concerned about the police's use of bail conditions, their treatment of breach of non-molestation orders, and their use of domestic violence protection notices and orders and restraining orders.

On 25 March 2019, we received a super-complaint from Hestia, a charity supporting people in crisis. It focuses on how police treat victims and survivors of modern slavery and human trafficking.

On 6 March 2020, we received a second super-complaint from the Centre for Women's Justice. It sets out concerns about forces' response to alleged domestic abuse perpetrated by police officers or staff.

On 7 August 2020, the Tees Valley Inclusion Project submitted a super-complaint about the police's treatment of BAME victims of sexual abuse where the perpetrator is also from the BAME community.

Super-complaint investigations usually gather information from a variety of sources, fieldwork in forces, policy reviews, data analyses and expert views.

Each super-complaint is different, and how best to investigate each needs individual consideration. Throughout every investigation, we maintain regular contact with the designated body that made the super-complaint.

The system is still relatively new. We are using our collective experience so far to inform current and future work, and we are continually evaluating the process.

There is up-to-date information about police super-complaints on GOV.UK.¹²

Future super-complaints

We expect to receive further super-complaints in 2021/22. We will continue to work with the IOPC and the College of Policing to establish the eligibility of super-complaints and to allocate responsibility for their investigation.

The Rape Monitoring Group

The Rape Monitoring Group is a multi-agency group in England and Wales. It was established to promote improvements in the response to rape across all the agencies that make up the criminal justice system.

We publish criminal justice system data on rape on the group's behalf. This shows the number of rapes reported, arrests made, prosecutions brought and

¹² [Police super-complaints](#), GOV.UK (Independent Office for Police Conduct, HM Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services, and College of Policing)

successful convictions for each force, as well as other relevant data. We want those who are involved in preventing rape and supporting victims to use this data to understand better what improvements they should focus on within their local areas.

Special grants

Forces should include reasonable contingencies in their policing and budget plans for unexpected events. However, from time to time there may be exceptional events that could threaten a force's financial position. In these cases, local policing bodies can apply to the Home Office for special grant funding to ease the financial burden.

The Home Office may refer applications to us to assess. We are normally asked to determine whether the resources deployed were reasonable and proportionate to the aims of the operation or investigation and its associated risks.

Our reports aren't published but, based on our findings, Home Office officials advise ministers, who then make the final decision about funding.

Special grants work in 2020

In 2020, we produced six reports on applications for funding from six forces. These involved major or critical incidents and serious criminal offences, such as policing protests, child sexual exploitation, investigating

the deaths of immigrants in a lorry container, and investigating deaths in hospitals.

Value-for-money profiles

Every year since 2009, the inspectorate has produced and published a value-for-money profile for each force. Every profile contains a set of comprehensive information about:

- the force's overall expenditure according to personnel (police officers, police staff, and police community and support officers), and non-staff costs (land and buildings, vehicles, ICT, forensics, equipment, horses, dogs, aircraft and professional services);
- the force's income from its central government grant, council tax and reserves, and private sources for services such as policing sporting events, and how that funding has changed over time;
- the force's costs of individual, specific policing functions such as call-handling, response, investigation, neighbourhood policing, serious and organised crime,
- public order and corporate functions (sometimes known as back-office functions);
- the composition of the workforce according to numbers of police officers (including their ranks) and other personnel, their spans of control and responsibility, length of service, sickness rates and turnover;
- the volumes of crime, classified according to type, such as homicide, violence with injury, violence without injury, rape, other sexual offences, robbery,

burglary, vehicle offences, shoplifting, theft from a person, bicycle theft, shoplifting and other theft offences, criminal damage and arson, drug trafficking, possession of drugs, possession of weapons, public order offences and other crimes against society;

- the results of police action, for example offences charged, out-of-court disposals (such as cannabis warnings), and offences taken into consideration; and
- circumstances in which no police action is taken, for example because of evidential difficulties (such as a decision of the complainant not to co-operate), and determinations by the Crown Prosecution Service that a prosecution is not in the public interest.

The principal purpose of the profile is the presentation of information which permits the inspectorate and others to make comparisons. The comparisons, in the main, are made according to the relevant costs or other numbers per 1,000 of the force area's resident population.

The comparisons are made between comparator forces which are members of the most similar group (MSG) of forces. MSGs are groups of forces that have been found to be the most similar to each other using statistical methods based on demographic, economic and social characteristics which relate to crime. Areas which have similar demographic, social and economic characteristics will generally have reasonably comparable levels of crime.

So, for example, in the case of the Metropolitan Police, the comparator forces (i.e. members of the relevant MSG) are Greater Manchester Police, West Midlands Police and West Yorkshire Police. Similarly, Norfolk Constabulary's MSG members are Suffolk, North Wales, North Yorkshire, West Mercia, Devon and Cornwall, Lincolnshire and Wiltshire. Bedfordshire's MSG includes Leicestershire, Nottinghamshire, Hertfordshire, Kent, Hampshire, Essex and South Yorkshire.

In other words, the comparisons are made so that like cases are treated alike. Making comparisons in this way provides the best indicators of where and to what extent forces deviate from the MSG in the relevant respects (i.e. costs, funding, workforce, crimes and outcomes).

Part 3: Our reports

Our reports

Between 31 March 2020 and 31 March 2021, we published 37 reports, which are all available on our website.

As well as our work with the 43 Home Office forces, and the other inspectorates, we carried out various other inspections. These are part of our statutory duties to inspect non-Home Office police forces and certain other law enforcement agencies. We gave our reports for these inspections to the relevant Secretaries of State. Except where national security considerations precluded it, these were then published on our website.

Information sources

The Inspectors of Constabulary obtain information about police forces in seven principal ways:

- in the police and crime plan in respect of each force, to enable them to understand the priorities of the local policing body;
- through in-force inspections (otherwise referred to as fieldwork), and the work which forces do to prepare for in-force inspections;
- through regular monitoring of and liaison with forces, primarily through the inspectorate's force liaison staff and the contacts maintained by Inspectors of

Constabulary and force liaison leads with chief officers, local policing bodies and others;

- through the formal provision of information and documents requested of forces for the purposes of inspection (including their data returns to the inspectorate and their force management statements);
- from their annual data returns to the Home Office;
- from information provided by forces to the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy in relation to the costs of individual and specific police functions such as investigations, call-handling, response and corporate support;
- from information and intelligence available from sources outside policing, including in media reports, reports of proceedings in Parliament and local institutions, other regulatory bodies or inspectorates concerned with safeguarding and the prevention of crime and disorder or their consequences, academic bodies, public policy institutions (such as think tanks) and commentators, and official publications such as the Crime Survey of England and Wales.

Over the next few pages, we have listed our reports, along with:

- a short description of the inspection's focus;
- the names of the other inspectorates, if it was a joint inspection;
- the publication date; and

- the name(s) of Her Majesty's Inspector(s) (HMI) responsible for the inspection.

Reports published

31 March 2020 to 31 March 2021

PEEL inspections

A Call for Help: Police Contact Management Through Call Handling and Control Rooms in 2018/19

Published: 9 July 2020

Inspection of how police control rooms handle calls and manage contact from the public.

Lead HMI: Phil Gormley

PEEL Spotlight Report: The Hard Yards – Police to Police Collaboration

Published: 21 July 2020

Inspection of how forces collaborate in order to provide better, more efficient services to the public.

Lead HMI: Matt Parr

The Police Service of Northern Ireland – an Inspection of How Well the Service Treats Its Workforce and the People of Northern Ireland

Published: 10 September 2020

Inspection of the legitimacy of the Police Service of Northern Ireland, with an update on its effectiveness and efficiency.

Lead HMI: Matt Parr

[An Inspection of the National Crime Agency's Relationship With Regional Organised Crime Units](#)

Published: 12 November 2020

Inspection of how effectively the National Crime Agency works with the regional organised crime unit network to tackle serious and organised crime.

Lead HMI: Matt Parr

Child protection inspections

[National Child Protection Inspections](#)

Published: 17 March 2020 – 24 March 2021

Inspections, re-visit inspections and post-inspection reviews of how the police protect children, in six forces.

Lead HMI: Wendy Williams

[Joint Targeted Area Inspection of the Multi- Agency Response to Children's Mental Health in East Sussex](#)

Published: 14 April 2020

Inspection of the multi-agency response to children's mental health in East Sussex.

Joint inspection with Ofsted, the Care Quality Commission and HMI Probation

Lead HMI: Wendy Williams

Joint Inspection of Child Protection Arrangements in Newport

Published: 2 September 2020

Inspection of the multi-agency response to abuse and neglect, including how local services responded to child exploitation.

Joint inspection with Care Inspectorate Wales, Healthcare Inspectorate Wales, HMI Probation and Estyn

Lead HMI: Wendy Williams

Specialist inspections

Unannounced Inspections of Police Custody Suites

Published: 21 April 2020

Inspections of police custody suites to evaluate strategy, treatment and conditions, individual rights and healthcare of people in custody. We inspected one force area and the British Transport Police.

Joint inspection with HMI Prisons

Lead HMI: Wendy Williams

An Inspection of British Transport Police's Ability to Minimise Disruption on the Rail Network

Published: 27 April 2020

Inspection of how well British Transport Police aligns its priorities with the rail industry and minimises the disruption caused by police matters such as trespassing or fatalities.

Lead HMI: Matt Parr

[The Royal Gibraltar Police Inspection 2020](#)

Published: 11 May 2020

Inspection of the Royal Gibraltar Police's progress since 2016, and a new inspection of its legitimacy, including its ethical behaviour.

Lead HMI: Matt Parr

[Crime Data Integrity Inspections](#)

Published: 24 July 2020

Inspections of forces' progress against recommendations we made in our 2014 Crime Data Integrity inspections. We inspected four forces.

Lead HMI: Matt Parr

[An Inspection of St Helena Police](#)

Published: 25 September 2020

Inspection of the St Helena Police Service, including its arrangements, detention, custody, investigation, victim care and public engagement.

Lead HMI: Matt Parr

An Inspection of the Service Provided to Victims of Crime by Greater Manchester Police

Published: 10 December 2020

Inspection of the extent to which Greater Manchester Police provides a good service to victims of crime.

Lead HMI: Zoë Billingham

Impact of the Pandemic on the Criminal Justice System: A Joint View of the Criminal Justice Chief Inspectors on the Criminal Justice System's Response to COVID-19

Published: 19 January 2021

Joint inspection of the criminal justice system's response to COVID-19.

Joint inspection with HM Crown Prosecution Service Inspectorate, HMI Prisons and HMI Probation

Lead HMI: Wendy Williams, Sir Thomas Winsor

An Inspection of the Effectiveness of the Regional Organised Crime Units

Published: 10 February 2021

Inspection of how effectively and efficiently the Regional Organised Crime Units tackle the threat from serious and organised crime.

Lead HMI: Matt Parr

Integrated Vulnerability Inspection Post- Inspection Review: Cleveland Police

Published: 19 February 2021

Inspection of how Cleveland Police responds to, assesses, safeguards, investigates and protects vulnerable victims.

Lead HMI: Wendy Williams

Disproportionate Use of Police Powers – A Spotlight on Stop and Search and the Use of Force

Published: 26 February 2021

Inspection of the police's use of force and stop and search, focusing on disproportionality towards Black, Asian and minority ethnic people.

Lead HMI: Wendy Williams

Getting the Balance Right? An Inspection of How Effectively the Police Deal With Protests

Published: 11 March 2021

Inspection of how the police manage protests, assessing whether the police use their powers effectively and whether they have the right powers to respond to protests.

Lead HMI: Matt Parr

An Inspection of the Metropolitan Police Service's Policing of a Vigil Held in Commemoration of Sarah Everard

Published: 30 March 2021

Inspection of how the Metropolitan Police Service handled the policing of the vigil in memory of Sarah Everard on Clapham Common on Saturday 13 March 2021.

Lead HMI: Matt Parr

Non-inspection publications

State of Policing – the Annual Assessment of Policing in England and Wales 2019

Published: 2 July 2020

Report on our inspections under section 54(4A) of the Police Act 1996 (as amended by the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011), including Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Constabulary's assessment of the efficiency and effectiveness of police in England and Wales for 2019.

Lead HMI: Sir Thomas Winsor

Research into Victim and Suspect Experiences of Changes to the Police and Crime Act 2017

Published: 8 December 2020

HMICFRS commissioned BritainThinks to research victims' and suspects' experiences of changes made as a result of the Policing and Crime Act 2017.

Lead HMI: Wendy Williams

[Safe to Share? Liberty and Southall Black Sisters' Super-Complaint on Policing and Immigration Status](#)

Published: 17 December 2020

Report investigating a super-complaint about how the police treat victims of crime and witnesses with insecure immigration status.

Lead HMI: Sir Thomas Winsor

[Policing Inspection Programme and Framework 2020/21](#)

Published: 25 March 2021

HM Chief Inspector of Constabulary's 2020/21 Inspection Programme and Framework – prepared under Schedule 4A to the Police Act 1996.

Lead HMI: Sir Thomas Winsor

Annexes

Annex A: Police force areas

The 43 territorial police forces of England and Wales are:

- Avon and Somerset
- Bedfordshire
- Cambridgeshire
- Cheshire
- City of London
- Cleveland
- Cumbria
- Derbyshire
- Devon and Cornwall
- Dorset
- Durham
- Dyfed-Powys
- Essex
- Gloucestershire
- Greater Manchester
- Gwent
- Hampshire
- Hertfordshire
- Humberside

- Kent
- Lancashire
- Leicestershire
- Lincolnshire
- Merseyside
- Metropolitan
- Norfolk
- North Wales
- North Yorkshire
- Northamptonshire
- Northumbria
- Nottinghamshire
- South Wales
- South Yorkshire
- Staffordshire
- Suffolk
- Surrey
- Sussex
- Thames Valley
- Warwickshire
- West Mercia
- West Midlands
- West Yorkshire
- Wiltshire.

Annex B: About us

Our history

Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary was established in 1856, under the same statute that required every county and borough that hadn't already done so to set up and maintain a permanent salaried police force (the County and Borough Police Act 1856).

Under the 1856 Act, three Inspectors of Constabulary in England and Wales were appointed. It was their duty to "inquire into the state and efficiency of the police" (section 15). The Act also introduced the concept of annual inspection.

The first Chief Inspector of Constabulary (HMCIC) was appointed in 1962, as part of a major package of reforms to improve police governance and expand the role of the inspectorate.

Our role and influence have evolved over the last century and a half. Most of our current functions are set out in the Police Act 1996 (as amended by the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011 and the Policing and Crime Act 2017).

We are independent of both the police service and the Government. Both our independence and inspection rights are vested in Her Majesty's Inspectors, who are Crown appointees (section 54(1), Police Act 1996).

Our statutory responsibilities

Inspecting territorial police forces in England and Wales

We must inspect and report on the efficiency and effectiveness of every police force maintained for a police area (section 54(2), Police Act 1996).

The Secretary of State may at any time direct us to carry out an inspection of a police force in any police area (section 54(2B), Police Act 1996).

From time to time, the Home Secretary may also direct us to carry out other duties to help improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the police (section 54(3), Police Act 1996).

The local policing body for a police area may at any time ask us to carry out an inspection of a police force in that area (section 54(2BA), Police Act 1996).

Inspecting other police forces and agencies

We also have statutory duties to inspect other police forces and agencies, whose remits are not limited to a particular territorial area. Instead, they police specific areas of infrastructure or particular types of crime. In these cases, we give our report to whichever government body is responsible for what the force or agency does.

We have a duty to inspect:

- Armed Forces Police – Royal Navy, Royal Military and Royal Air Force Police (section 321A, Armed Forces Act 2006);
- British Transport Police (section 63, Railways and Transport Safety Act 2003);
- Civil Nuclear Constabulary (section 62, Energy Act 2004);
- HM Revenue & Customs (section 27, Commissioners for Revenue and Customs Act 2005, and the Revenue and Customs (Inspections) Regulations 2005 (SI 2005/1133));
- Ministry of Defence Police (section 4B, Ministry of Defence Police Act 1987);
- Police Service of Northern Ireland (section 41, Police (Northern Ireland) Act 1998, subject to appointment by the Department of Justice, Northern Ireland);
- National Crime Agency (section 11, Crime and Courts Act 2013); and
- Customs functions (section 29, Borders, Citizenship and Immigration Act 2009, and the Customs (Inspections by Her Majesty's Insp of Constabulary and the Scottish Inspectors) Regulations 2012 (SI 2012/2840)).

In summer 2017, we took on inspections of England's fire and rescue services, assessing and reporting on their efficiency, effectiveness and people. To reflect this new role, our name changed to Her Majesty's

Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS).

Collaborative working

The long history of collaborative working between the criminal justice inspectorates – of Constabulary, the Crown Prosecution Service, Prisons and the National Probation Service – was enshrined in law through the Police Act 1996.

Schedule 4A to the 1996 Act says that the Inspectors of Constabulary:

- must co-operate with other inspectorates, where appropriate, so they can operate efficiently and effectively (paragraph 4);
- must draw up a joint inspection programme with other inspectorates (paragraph 5); and
- may tell certain other inspectorates not to carry out an inspection, or not to do so in a particular way, if HMCIC believes the inspection would impose an unreasonable burden (paragraph 3).

Publishing reports

We must publish the reports we prepare under section 54 of the Police Act 1996 (section 55(1), Police Act 1996).

We must not publish anything the Inspectors believe would be against the interests of national security or might put anyone in danger (section 55(2), Police Act 1996).

We must send a copy of every published report to the Secretary of State, the local policing body maintaining the police force the report is about, the chief officer for that police force and the police and crime panel for that police area (section 55(3), Police Act 1996).

HMCIC must each year give the Secretary of State a report on our inspections. HMCIC must lay a copy of this report before Parliament (section 54(4), Police Act 1996). The report must include his assessment of the efficiency and effectiveness of policing in England and Wales for that year (section 54(4A), Police Act 1996). This is our State of Policing report.

Producing the HMICFRS inspection programme and framework

HMCIC must prepare, consult on and publish an inspection programme and framework (paragraph 2 of Schedule 4A to the Police Act 1996). He must gain the Home Secretary's approval of the inspection programme and framework.

He must then lay the inspection programme and framework before Parliament (paragraphs 2(2A)–(2B) of Schedule 4A to the Police Act 1996).

Complaints and misconduct

HM Inspectors (HMIs) inspecting a police force must make sure they stay informed about all complaints and misconduct matters relating to that force (section 15(1), Police Reform Act 2002).

Super-complaints

The Policing and Crime Act 2017 established a new system of police super-complaints. The system considers complaints that “a feature, or combination of features, of policing in England and Wales by one or more than one police force is, or appears to be, significantly harming the interests of the public”.

Only bodies designated by the Home Secretary can make a super-complaint. In June 2018, 16 bodies were designated.

Super-complaints must be made in writing to Her Majesty’s Chief Inspector of Constabulary. They are considered by HMICFRS, the College of Policing and the Independent Office for Police Conduct, who together decide what (if anything) needs to happen as a result of the super-complaint.

Participating in misconduct proceedings

In misconduct proceedings for chief constables and other senior officers above the rank of chief superintendent, HMCIC, or an HMI he nominates, will sit on the panel for misconduct meetings and misconduct hearings (Police (Conduct) Regulations 2012 (SI 2012/2632), regulation 26). For all chief officer ranks (including chief constables), HMCIC, or an HMI he nominates, will sit on any police appeals tribunal (Police Act 1996, Schedule 6, paragraph 1).

Acting as a check on the removal of senior officers

If a police and crime commissioner is proposing to call on a chief constable or other senior officer to retire or resign, they must invite HMCIC to give his written views on the proposed removal. HMCIC must then give his views and the police and crime commissioner must consider them (Police Regulations 2003 (SI 2003/527), regulations 11A and 11B).

The police and crime panel may consult HMCIC before making a recommendation to the police and crime commissioner on dismissing a chief constable (Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011, Schedule 8, paragraph 15).

Our powers

Amendments made by the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011 to the Police Act 1996 have strengthened our role as a policing body independent of both the Government and the police. This makes us more fully accountable to the public and to Parliament.

Access to documents and premises

The chief officer of police must give Inspectors information, documents, evidence or other things the Inspector needs to carry out the inspection (paragraph 6A of Schedule 4A to the Police Act 1996). The chief officer must also give Inspectors access to the force's premises, and to documents and other things on those

premises that we need to carry out the inspection (paragraph 6B of Schedule 4A to the Police Act 1996).

Power to delegate functions

An Inspector has the power to delegate any of his or her functions to another public authority (paragraph 1 of Schedule 4A to the Police Act 1996).

Power to act jointly with another public body

We can act jointly with another public body where appropriate, to work efficiently and effectively (paragraph 5(1) of Schedule 4A to the Police Act 1996).

Power to provide assistance to any other public authority

HMCIC may, if he thinks it is appropriate, help any other public authority carry out its role. HMCIC can do this on reasonable terms, including payment terms (paragraph 6 of Schedule 4A to the Police Act 1996).

Who we are

[Biographies for each of the Inspectors of Constabulary are on our website.](#)

Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Constabulary

Sir Thomas Winsor

In October 2012, Sir Thomas was appointed as Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Constabulary. He is the first holder of that office to come from a non-policing background.

Her Majesty's Inspectors of Constabulary

Zoë Billingham

Zoë Billingham is Her Majesty's Inspector for the Eastern Region.

Andy Cooke

Andy Cooke QPM is Her Majesty's Inspector for the Northern Region.

Matt Parr

Matt Parr CB is Her Majesty's Inspector for the National and London Regions. He is also

Her Majesty's Inspector for Bedfordshire Police and Merseyside Police.

Wendy Williams

Wendy Williams CBE is Her Majesty's Inspector for the Wales and Western Region.

How we are accountable

The first Inspectors of Constabulary were appointed under the County and Borough Police Act 1856.

The Act required them to inspect and report on the efficiency and effectiveness of most of the police forces in England and Wales.

Our main role hasn't changed materially since then, except that our remit now covers the 43 forces in England and Wales, and several other forces and

agencies. Our main empowering statute is now the Police Act 1996.

There are five Inspectors of Constabulary. They are neither civil servants nor police officers, and are appointed by the Crown for fixed terms of up to five years. That means we are independent of the police, Government, police and crime commissioners (and their equivalents), other agencies in the criminal justice system and all outside parties.

However, independence doesn't mean a lack of accountability. We are accountable in these ways:

- our statutory duties, enforceable through judicial review or by action for breach of statutory duty;
- our obligation to submit an annual report to the Home Secretary under section 54 of the Police Act 1996; each report must be published and laid before Parliament: section 54(4), Police Act 1996;
- our obligation to lay before Parliament a copy of each inspection programme and inspection framework: Police Act 1996, Schedule 4A, paragraph 2(2A)(a);
- written Parliamentary questions;
- our obligation to give written and oral evidence to Committees of Parliament, including the Home Affairs Select Committee, the Public Accounts Committee and any other select committee which may call on us to give evidence;

- our obligation to carry out other duties the Home Secretary directs us to: section 54(3), Police Act 1996; and
- our obligation to comply with the rules of administrative law and the rules of good public administration, enforceable in the High Court by judicial review.

As a public body, we are also subject to the legal obligations imposed on public authorities, including:

- Official Secrets Acts 1911 and 1989;
- Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974;
- Data Protection Act 2018 and the General Data Protection Regulation (2016/679/EU);
- Human Rights Act 1998;
- Freedom of Information Act 2000; and
- Equality Act 2010.

How we work with other organisations

We are mostly funded by the Home Office and are accountable to the Home Office for our spending, even though we are neither a subsidiary nor a part of the Home Office.

We have three concordats with others which set out the relationship or working arrangements between us.

These are:

- a concordat with the Home Office which explains the material parts of the relationship between our two organisations. The concordat sets out our respective

roles, and the responsibilities of the main people involved in running, sponsoring and overseeing our affairs. The concordat is published on our website;

- a concordat with the College of Policing. As we have complementary purposes and different powers by which we aim to achieve those purposes, the concordat sets out our respective roles and responsibilities, and how we work with each other;
- a concordat with the College of Policing and the Independent Office for Police Conduct. The concordat sets out our respective roles and responsibilities, and how we work with each other.

We also have a statutory duty to co-operate with the other criminal justice inspectorates, namely those concerned with the Crown Prosecution Service and the probation and prisons services, and the other named inspectorates set out in paragraph 4, Schedule 4A, Police Act 1996.

Our obligations relating to joint inspections are set out in paragraphs 2–5 of that Schedule and we cover those inspections in this report.

Our regions

Our four geographic regions are the Northern, Eastern, National and London, and Wales and Western regions.

The National and London regions' responsibilities include:

- Metropolitan Police Service

- City of London Police
- National Crime Agency
- British Transport Police
- Civil Nuclear Constabulary
- Ministry of Defence Police
- Armed Forces Police
- Guernsey Police
- Royal Gibraltar Police
- States of Jersey Police
- Isle of Man Constabulary
- HM Revenue & Customs
- Police Service of Northern Ireland
- others by invitation.

Our purpose, values and objectives

Our purpose is to promote improvements in policing and fire and rescue services to make everyone safer.

Our values of respect, honesty, independence, integrity and fairness are at the heart of how we work. They act as a touchstone to help us make decisions – both as individuals and as an organisation.

Our objectives are to:

- Demonstrate our values in everything we do;
- Conduct informed, independent and evidence-based inspections;
- Provide value for money;
- Work with others to promote improvements in policing and fire and rescue services;
- Report our inspection findings/analysis in a clear and compelling way; and
- Ensure that our staff have the skills, knowledge and support to do their jobs.

Annex C: Peelian principles

1. The basic mission for which the police exist is to prevent crime and disorder.
2. The ability of the police to perform their duties is dependent upon public approval of police actions.
3. Police must secure the willing co-operation of the public in voluntary observance of the law to be able to secure and maintain the respect of the public.
4. The degree of co-operation of the public that can be secured diminishes proportionately to the necessity of the use of physical force.
5. Police seek and preserve public favour not by pandering to public opinion but by constantly demonstrating absolute impartial service to the law.
6. Police use physical force to the extent necessary to secure observance of the law or to restore order only when the exercise of persuasion, advice and warning is found to be insufficient.
7. Police, at all times, should maintain a relationship with the public that gives reality to the historic tradition that the police are the public and the public are the police; the police being only members of the public who are paid to give full-time attention to duties which are incumbent on every citizen in the interests of community welfare and existence.

8. Police should always direct their action strictly towards their functions and never appear to usurp the powers of the judiciary.
9. The test of police efficiency is the absence of crime and disorder, not the visible evidence of police action in dealing with it.

Annex D: Our finances and our workforce

Our finances

We are funded mainly by the Home Office. We also receive funding for inspections commissioned by others (such as the National Crime Agency).

– We spend 85 percent of our funding on our workforce, with the rest spent on travel, subsistence, accommodation and other expenses.

Expenditure breakdown 2019/20 (£m)

21.9 million (85% of our funding) on staffing costs including associates

2.1 million (8% of our funding) on travel and subsistence

0.6 million (2% of our funding) on IT and telephony

0.6 million (2% of our funding) on surveys and inspection services

0.5 million (2% of our funding) on office expenditure and other costs

0.1 million (0.6% of our funding) on accommodation

Note: numbers may not add up to 100% due to rounding

Our workforce

Our workforce comprises the Inspectors of Constabulary, civil servants, seconded police officers and staff, and secondees from fire and rescue services. We also have a register of associates who provide specialist resource and skills.

Staffing breakdown 2019/20

184 permanent staff (68% of our workforce)

41 police secondees (15% of our workforce)

17 fire and rescue secondees (7% of our workforce)

15 fixed-term appointments (6% of our workforce)

7 people from other government departments or on loan (3% of our workforce)

3 fire staff (1% of our workforce)

2 sandwich students (0.7% of our workforce)

1 police staff (0.4% of our workforce)

Note: numbers may not add up to 100% due to rounding

Annex E: Our inspections by force

31 March 2020 to 31 March 2021

The 43 territorial police forces of England and Wales are:

- Avon and Somerset
- Bedfordshire
- Cambridgeshire
- Cheshire
- City of London
- Cleveland
- Cumbria
- Derbyshire
- Devon and Cornwall
- Dorset
- Durham
- Dyfed-Powys
- Essex
- Gloucestershire
- Greater Manchester
- Gwent
- Hampshire
- Hertfordshire
- Humberside
- Kent

- Lancashire
- Leicestershire
- Lincolnshire
- Merseyside
- Metropolitan
- Norfolk
- North Wales
- North Yorkshire
- Northamptonshire
- Northumbria
- Nottinghamshire
- South Wales
- South Yorkshire
- Staffordshire
- Suffolk
- Surrey
- Sussex
- Thames Valley
- Warwickshire
- West Mercia
- West Midlands
- West Yorkshire
- Wiltshire.

PEEL inspections

A call for help: Police contact management through call handling and control rooms in 2018/19

Inspected forces: All 43 territorial police forces of England and Wales

PEEL spotlight report: The Hard Yards – Police to police collaboration

Inspected forces: All 43 territorial police forces of England and Wales

The Police Service of Northern Ireland - An inspection of how well the service treats its workforce and the people of Northern Ireland

Inspected force: Police Service of Northern Ireland

An inspection of the National Crime Agency's relationship with regional organised crime units

Inspected force: National Crime Agency

Child protection inspections

National Child Protection Inspections

Inspected forces: City of London, Durham, Gwent, Hertfordshire, Lincolnshire and Northamptonshire

Joint Targeted Area Inspection of the Multi-Agency Response to Children's Mental Health in East Sussex

Inspected force: Sussex

Joint Inspection of Child Protection Arrangements in Newport

Inspected force: Gwent

'Feeling Heard': Partner Agencies Working Together to Make a Difference for Children With Mental Ill Health

Inspected forces: Devon and Cornwall, Hampshire, Merseyside, Metropolitan, Sussex and Thames Valley

Super-complaints

Safe to Share? Liberty and Southall Black Sisters' Super-complaint on Policing and Immigration Status

Inspected forces: All 43 territorial police forces of England and Wales

Specialist inspections

Unannounced Inspections of Police Custody Suites

Inspected forces: Leicestershire and British Transport Police

An Inspection of British Transport Police's Ability to Minimise Disruption on the Rail Network

Inspected force: British Transport Police

The Royal Gibraltar Police Inspection 2020

Inspected force: Royal Gibraltar Police

An Inspection of the National Crime Agency's Criminal Intelligence Function

Inspected force: National Crime Agency

Roads Policing: Not Optional – An Inspection of Roads Policing in England and Wales

Inspected forces: All 43 territorial police forces of England and Wales

Crime Data Integrity Inspections

Inspected forces: Avon and Somerset, Dorset, Northamptonshire and South Yorkshire

An Inspection of St Helena Police

Inspected force: St Helena Police

Pre-Charge Bail and Released Under Investigation: Striking a Balance

Inspected forces: All 43 territorial police forces of England and Wales

An Inspection of the Service Provided to Victims of Crime by Greater Manchester Police

Inspected force: Greater Manchester

Impact of the Pandemic on the Criminal Justice System – A Joint View of the Criminal Justice Chief Inspectors on the Criminal Justice System's Response to COVID-19'

Inspected forces: All 43 territorial police forces of England and Wales

An Inspection of the Effectiveness of the Regional Organised Crime Units

Inspected forces: All 43 territorial police forces of England and Wales

Integrated Vulnerability Inspection Post-Inspection Review: Cleveland Police

Inspected force: Cleveland

Disproportionate Use of Police Powers – A Spotlight on Stop and Search and the Use of Force

Inspected forces: All 43 territorial police forces of England and Wales

Getting the Balance Right? An Inspection of How Effectively the Police Deal With Protests

Inspected forces: All 43 territorial police forces of England and Wales, and British Transport Police, Civil Nuclear Constabulary, Ministry of Defence Police and Police Service of Northern Ireland

An Inspection of the Metropolitan Police Service's Policing of a Vigil Held in Commemoration of Sarah Everard

Inspected force: Metropolitan

Promoting improvements in policing and fire and rescue services to make everyone safer

Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) independently assesses the effectiveness and efficiency of police forces and fire and rescue services – in the public interest.

In preparing our reports, we ask the questions that citizens would ask, and publish the answers in accessible form, using our expertise to interpret the evidence and make recommendations for improvement.

We provide authoritative information to allow the public to compare the performance of their police force or fire and rescue service against others. Our evidence is used to bring about improvements in the services they provide to the public.

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