



Inspecting policing
in the public interest

Responding to austerity

Suffolk Constabulary

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How well does the constabulary provide value for money?

Overall judgment

Suffolk Constabulary's response to the financial challenge of the spending review to date has been good. The force is on track to achieve the savings required by the end of the spending review period in March 2015. The force has made good progress in developing its collaboration over the last four years with Norfolk Constabulary, although HMIC has some concerns about the effect that a recent decision by Suffolk's Police and Crime Commissioner may have on the force's ability to meet its longer-term (three to five year) financial challenges while still maintaining the service it provides to the public.

Good

Summary

Suffolk Constabulary is on track to achieve the savings requirement of this spending review period. An important element of the force's plans has been collaboration with Norfolk Constabulary, which has provided both operational and financial benefits. Suffolk has also worked hard to reduce its costs, both pay and non-pay, making it one of the lowest cost forces.

The force undertakes regular reviews of the demands and challenges it faces. This informs allocation of staff and helps the force structure how it provides policing. The force is clearly focused on improving outcomes by managing the quality of the service it provides to the public. It has improved its response to calls from the public, achieved a greater rate of crime reduction over the spending review in comparison to other forces, and victims report higher levels of satisfaction.

However, with a material gap in its future budget, the financial outlook is less positive. For 2015/16 Suffolk expects to have a £2.8m gap in its budget with a worsening position in 2016 and beyond.

HMIC has some concerns about the effect of a recent decision by Suffolk's Police and Crime Commissioner not to support the introduction of a joint contact and control room at a single site and the creation of a shared service partnership for the provision of some business support functions with Norfolk. While the decision taken by the Police and Crime Commissioner has not been the subject of review by HMIC, we are concerned about the effect it may have on the force's financial position. Collaboration with Norfolk Constabulary forms part of Suffolk's future savings plan. HMIC's concern is that the Police and Crime Commissioner's decision may have jeopardised efforts to extend that collaboration, which in turn may have an adverse effect on the Chief Constable's ability to provide efficient and effective policing in the longer-term. As such, Suffolk Constabulary now needs to identify an alternative plan for achieving these savings and in doing so provide affordable policing in Suffolk while providing an effective policing service to the public.

To what extent is the constabulary taking the necessary steps to ensure a secure financial position for the short and long term?

To what extent has the constabulary an affordable way of providing policing?

To what extent is the constabulary efficient?

Requires improvement

Good

Good

Suffolk Constabulary has plans in place to achieve all of the £2.5m savings needed in 2014/15. However, at this time it cannot achieve the full savings required in 2015/16 and may have to reduce police officer and PCSO numbers beyond its original plans. The further loss of staff, police officers and PCSOs is of concern to HMIC as it may affect the service to the public.

Over the first three years of the spending review, the force's workforce structure has matched the needs of the organisation successfully, improving policing outcomes and meeting its savings requirements.

Suffolk's successful collaboration with Norfolk Constabulary continues to achieve financial and operational efficiencies. By

The force undertakes regular reviews of the demands and challenges it faces. This informs the allocation of staff and helps the force to structure how it provides policing. With a material gap in its future budget, this work will be critical in developing an affordable structure for providing policing to the people of Suffolk.

To what extent is the constabulary taking the necessary steps to ensure a secure financial position for the short and long term?

To what extent has the constabulary an affordable way of providing policing?

To what extent is the constabulary efficient?

Requires improvement

Good

Good

The force has started to develop outline savings plans beyond 2016. However, as the force moves to 2016, the impact of the loss of posts will make the current structures for providing policing no longer sustainable or affordable. HMIC is concerned about the size of the funding gap, given the scale of the challenge that Suffolk faces.

Although Suffolk Constabulary is working to identify further savings from within the force, without exploiting further collaboration opportunities, the force has few options to close the projected gap from 2016 without a considerable reduction in its police officer numbers.

extending this work over the period of the spending review it has identified or is developing projects to achieve the majority of the planned savings.

The robust change programme, using business improvement tools, has resulted in efficiencies and savings, enabling the force to retain its operational frontline throughout the spending review. This is commendable.

Suffolk has undertaken a number of initiatives to manage and reduce its demand, also seeking timely resolutions to problems with partners. Crime and demand profiles are analysed and staffing levels reviewed to ensure that the workforce is in the right place.

The force is clearly focused on improving outcomes by managing the quality of the service it provides to the public. It has improved its response to calls from the public, and achieved a greater rate of crime reduction over the spending review in comparison to other forces. In the 12 months to March 2014, victim satisfaction was higher than the figure for England and Wales.

The constabulary in numbers



Financial position

The constabulary's savings requirement

Requirement Gap

£18.8m

£0.0m



Providing policing

Planned change in police officer numbers 2010/11 – 2014/15

Suffolk England and Wales

-3%

-11%

Planned change in total workforce numbers 2010/11 – 2014/15

Suffolk England and Wales

-7%

-14%

Planned proportion of police officers on the front line 2014/15 vs 2010/11 (percentage points)

Suffolk England and Wales

+2.8

+3.0

Planned proportion of total workforce on the front line 2014/15 vs 2010/11 (percentage points)

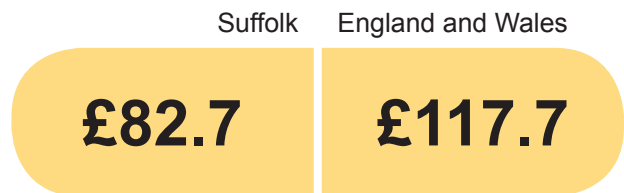
Suffolk England and Wales

+5.6

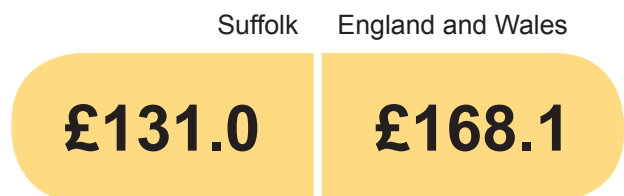
+3.7

Efficiency

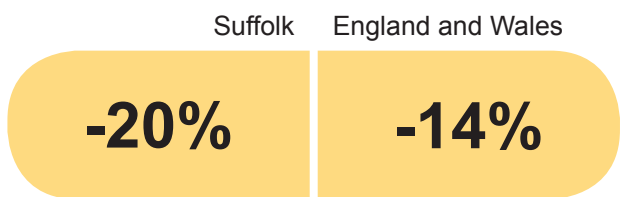
Police officer cost per head of population
2013/14



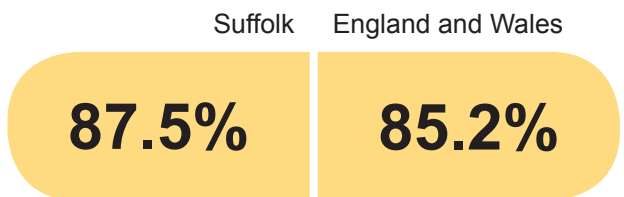
Workforce cost per head of population
2013/14



Change in recorded crime
2010/11 – 2013/14



Victim satisfaction 2013/14*



*Confidence intervals: ± 1.7% for Suffolk; ± 0.2% for England and Wales.

Introduction

In October 2010, the Government announced that central funding to the Police Service in England and Wales would reduce by 20 percent in the four years between March 2011 and March 2015.

HMIC's Valuing the Police Programme has tracked how forces are planning to make savings to meet this budget demand each year since summer 2011. This report identifies what we found in this, our fourth year.

Our inspection focused on how well the force is providing value for money. To answer this question we look at three areas:

- To what extent is the force taking the necessary steps to ensure a secure financial position for the short and long term?
- To what extent has the force an affordable way of providing policing?
- To what extent is the force efficient?

During our inspection we collected data and plans from forces, surveyed the public to see if they had noticed any changes in the service they receive from the police as a result of the cuts, and conducted in-force inspections. We also interviewed, where possible, the chief constable, police and crime commissioner and the chief officer leads for finance, change, human resources and performance in each force, and held focus groups with staff and other officers.

This provides the findings for Suffolk Constabulary.

To what extent is the constabulary taking the necessary steps to ensure a secure financial position for the short and long term?

HMIC looks at the saving plans forces have developed in order to meet the financial challenge of the spending review and for the year after 2015/16. It is also important that forces look to the future beyond 2016 in their planning, so we also explore how they are starting to prepare for further financial challenges.

Financial challenge

Suffolk Constabulary has identified that it needs to save £18.8m over the four years of the spending review (between March 2011 and March 2015). As a proportion of its overall budget, this savings requirement of 15 percent is lower than the 18 percent required across England and Wales.

The scale of the challenge

Suffolk still faces a challenge in achieving its required savings since it is a low-cost force with less scope to make savings than most forces. In addition, Suffolk Constabulary is a small force, and there are fewer opportunities to find the economies of scale from which larger forces benefit. Suffolk faces these challenges because it:

- spends less per head of population on policing than most other forces in England and Wales;
- has fewer police officers per head of population than most other forces in England and Wales; and
- has lower non-workforce costs than most other forces in England and Wales.

Savings plans for 2014/15 and 2015/16

Suffolk Constabulary has plans in place to achieve all of the £2.5m savings needed in 2014/15. However, for 2015/16 the financial position is increasingly challenging for the force. Suffolk identifies that it has a savings requirement of £6.6m with planned savings of £3.8m, leaving a gap of £2.8m. The force has identified that the decision not to progress the collaboration with Norfolk Constabulary for a joint contact and control room or work to develop a shared service partnership to provide business support functions will add a further £0.9m to the funding gap

In considering the decision not to proceed with a joint contact and control room and shared service partnership, HMIC is not expressing a view on whether it was the right decision for the force. However, HMIC is concerned about the ramifications of the decision, and its potential to affect the force's ability to progress other linked collaboration initiatives and achieve further savings. Without such opportunities, Suffolk must look to close the gap by

identifying savings from within the force. At present, Suffolk does not have an alternative plan that will enable it to achieve its savings requirement and close the gap for 2015/16. With so few other options available, Suffolk will need to look to staff reductions and it is understood that the force may have to further reduce police officer and PCSO numbers in order to balance its books. This is a considerable concern to HMIC as a further loss of staff is likely to impact on the effectiveness of the force's service to the public.

Outlook for 2016 and beyond

Suffolk Constabulary has made some predictions about future savings that will be required through to 2017/18, based on prudent assumptions in relation to likely grant reductions, cost increases and precept freezes. Based on these assumptions, the force has identified that it needs to make savings of £16.4m over the four years.

Through its change programme, the force has outlined plans to achieve £7.8m savings through 16 areas of business, leaving a residual budget deficit of £8.6m. In addition, the force has identified a number of opportunities that it will review to achieve additional savings to help reduce this gap. However, the scale of the deficit will inevitably require further reductions in staff should savings not be found elsewhere. The force estimates this could mean the loss of a significant number of police officer posts by 2017/18.

Suffolk Constabulary faces a challenging financial outlook. As a small force with a low spend, it does not benefit from economies of scale and has fewer opportunities to reduce its cost base. To date, the close collaboration with Norfolk Constabulary has enabled the force to meet much of its financial challenge over the spending review. Although Suffolk Constabulary is working to identify further savings from within the force, without exploiting further collaboration opportunities, the force has few options to close the projected gap from 2016 without a significant reduction in its police officer numbers.

Summary

Requires improvement

- Suffolk Constabulary has plans in place to achieve all of the £2.5m savings needed in 2014/15. However, at this time it cannot achieve the full savings required in 2015/16 and may have to reduce police officer and PCSO numbers beyond its original plans. The further loss of staff, police officers and PCSOs is of concern to HMIC as it may effect the service to the public.
- The force has started to develop outline savings plans beyond 2016. However, as the force moves towards 2016, the impact of the loss of posts will make the current structures for providing policing much harder to sustain. HMIC is concerned about the size of the future funding gap, given the scale of the financial challenge Suffolk faces.
- Although Suffolk Constabulary is working to identify further savings from within the force, without exploiting further collaboration opportunities, the force has few options to close the projected gap from 2016 without a significant reduction in its police officer numbers.

To what extent has the constabulary an affordable way of providing policing?

HMIC looks at how the force is structured to provide policing. We ask if this is affordable as the force responds to their financial challenge. We look at what the force is doing to reduce its costs, how it is protecting officers and staff engaged in fighting crime and keeping communities safe, and how it is making the required change through its change programme.

How the constabulary provides policing

The force undertook a comprehensive review of many of its key policing functions in 2011. It made reductions by revising the mix of officers, rather than overall frontline numbers, to achieve savings. It has retained its frontline officers within neighbourhood teams throughout the spending review, and this is commendable. The force has also made reductions in the number of police staff.

Suffolk undertook an extensive and ambitious programme of collaboration with its preferred partner, Norfolk Constabulary. The collaboration programme between the two forces remains one of the most ambitious and well planned in the country. One of the major elements of the collaboration saw the two forces introduce six police investigation centres (PICs) across their force areas (where arrested people are detained and where dedicated units complete the investigations). The partnership with Norfolk Constabulary has already successfully achieved savings through shared services, such as areas of specialist policing and business support, while other elements of the collaboration have provided non-cashable benefits (for example, PICs).

The force has always considered that, in order to sustain its current operating model, it needed to maintain a police officer establishment of 1,200, based on the professional opinion of the chief officer team. The force is currently planning for 1,207 officers by March 2015. While the current way in which Suffolk provides policing has served the area well through the current spending review, a revised model will be needed to meet the requirements of 2016 and beyond.

The force's approach for the future is to redesign its services. Within its change programme, it plans to do this by reducing demand and undertaking continuous improvement reviews to achieve more efficient ways of working. A review of how the force provides all aspects of policing is underway, including for local and specialist policing. This work is essential if the force is to meet its future financial challenge and provide effective policing to the people of Suffolk.

Collaboration

HMIC monitors forces' progress on collaboration because it offers the opportunity to provide efficient, effective policing and helps to achieve savings.

Suffolk Constabulary has worked with other forces across the eastern region to develop a more effective response to serious and organised crime. The Eastern Region Serious and Organised crime unit (ERSOU) was set up in 2010. Further opportunities from this collaboration are being pursued.

Suffolk Constabulary has successfully undertaken extensive collaboration with Norfolk Constabulary in order to save money and increase effectiveness. The force has continued to develop its close alliance and now has joint justice, specialist policing and business support services. At the time of the inspection Suffolk and Norfolk had 1,481 officers and staff working in joint units, which equates to £65m of spend across the two forces. Last year, collaboration achieved £2m savings for Suffolk.

The force has undertaken collaborative projects with other agencies, including the fire and rescue service, with which it is now sharing four premises in order to save money as well as developing further opportunities to share facilities. The force, with the Police and Crime Commissioner, has an ambition to develop stronger partnerships within Suffolk. The Police and Crime Commissioner is working to build relationships with partners in Suffolk and sees greater opportunity to collaborate with local councils, and fire and ambulance services.

The force has developed options to achieve further savings with Norfolk Constabulary in order to address its estimated funding gap. An important part of this was to develop a joint control room. However, the plans to develop the joint contact and control room and a shared service partnership have recently been stopped.

In 2014/15, the force expects to spend 34 percent of its net revenue expenditure on collaboration, which is considerably higher than the 11 percent figure for England and Wales. Collaboration is expected to contribute to 44 percent of the force's savings requirement, which is higher than the 10 percent figure for England and Wales.

Managing change

Reductions in police budgets have led to a shrinking workforce. HMIC expects forces to look at longer term transformation that can help to maintain or improve the service they offer to the public, and to prepare for future funding reductions.

Suffolk Constabulary has invested in a joint change programme team with Norfolk Constabulary; this team is led by a single chief officer who has the responsibility to advance the way that both forces respond to the reductions in funding. Over the first three years of the spending review, the change programme has enabled the force to achieve the majority of the savings achieved to date.

In 2012, the change programme team undertook preparatory work in anticipation of future financial challenges to identify opportunities for making savings in order to support each force in meeting its funding gap. This resulted in the change team identifying 16 areas of business, with overall potential savings of £7.8m.

The force identified that the main elements of its change programme during the spending review were:

- collaboration with other forces;
- restructuring how business support functions are provided;
- restructuring how specialist police functions are provided;
- restructuring how local policing is provided; and
- restructuring how functions that support operational policing are provided.

The force identified that the main elements of its change programme as it responds to future financial pressures will include:

- collaboration with other forces and the public sector;
- further restructuring how business support functions are provided;
- further restructuring how specialist police functions are provided;
- further restructuring how local policing is provided; and
- streamlining processes and reducing bureaucracy.

How is the force supporting its workforce to manage change and effective service provision?

In conjunction with Norfolk Constabulary, the force has recently written a joint statement of mission, vision and philosophy, which has been used to help align the cultures between the two forces. This is particularly important for those officers and staff working in collaborating units.

While the force has not undertaken a recent staff survey, HMIC found that the workforce is positive about how the force is managing its change programme, and also about the level of engagement with the chief officer team. Consultation with trade unions, heads of departments and staff associations has been at a good level throughout Suffolk Constabulary's change programme. Regular updates are provided to the workforce and staff are supportive of the approach, expressing the view that they have been genuinely involved with and consulted on the change programme.

The force has recently set up a performance improvement unit with Norfolk Constabulary. The unit is designed to aid managers by providing professional advice to support the development of staff. The force also has a wellbeing strategy and processes, which have assisted with reducing sickness levels.

How is the constabulary achieving the savings?

Because around 80 percent of a police budget (on average) is spent on staff costs, it is not surprising that forces across England and Wales plan to achieve most of their savings by reducing the number of police officers, police community support officers (PCSOs) and police staff employed.

However, we also expect forces to bear down on other costs (non-pay) such as the equipment they buy, the accommodation and vehicles they use and the contracts they enter for services (for example, cleaning). The force plans to make 21 percent of its savings from non-pay over the spending review; this is lower than the 29 percent of all England and Wales forces.

The force has, through the change team, worked with Norfolk Constabulary to harmonise contract dates, bringing contracts together to benefit from the resulting economies of scale (for example, the supply of uniforms). The two forces have also collectively outsourced their facility management, which has also reduced costs.

The force has a joint estates strategy with Norfolk Constabulary and it is currently undertaking a review of police buildings to ensure that it is making best use of these, while

cutting costs. It is also reducing energy costs through using the greater purchasing power of the local council.

The force has set an ambitious target of reducing variable year-on-year non-pay costs by 2.5 percent, while also absorbing 1 percent inflation each year for the next three years to achieve £1.5m cost reductions.

The Police and Crime Commissioner also intends to undertake an exercise to explore the opportunities of using a zero-based budget approach to evaluate the force and its structure; this is planned to take place later in 2014.

As with other forces, most of the savings come from reducing the workforce. Suffolk Constabulary made an early start on this in 2010, when it slowed its recruitment of new police officers and police staff, and reduced the number of existing police staff. The force plans to make 79 percent of its spending review savings requirement from its pay budget. This is higher than most other forces.

The following table shows the force's planned changes to workforce numbers over the spending review period, and compares these to the change for England and Wales.

Please note, these figures are rounded.

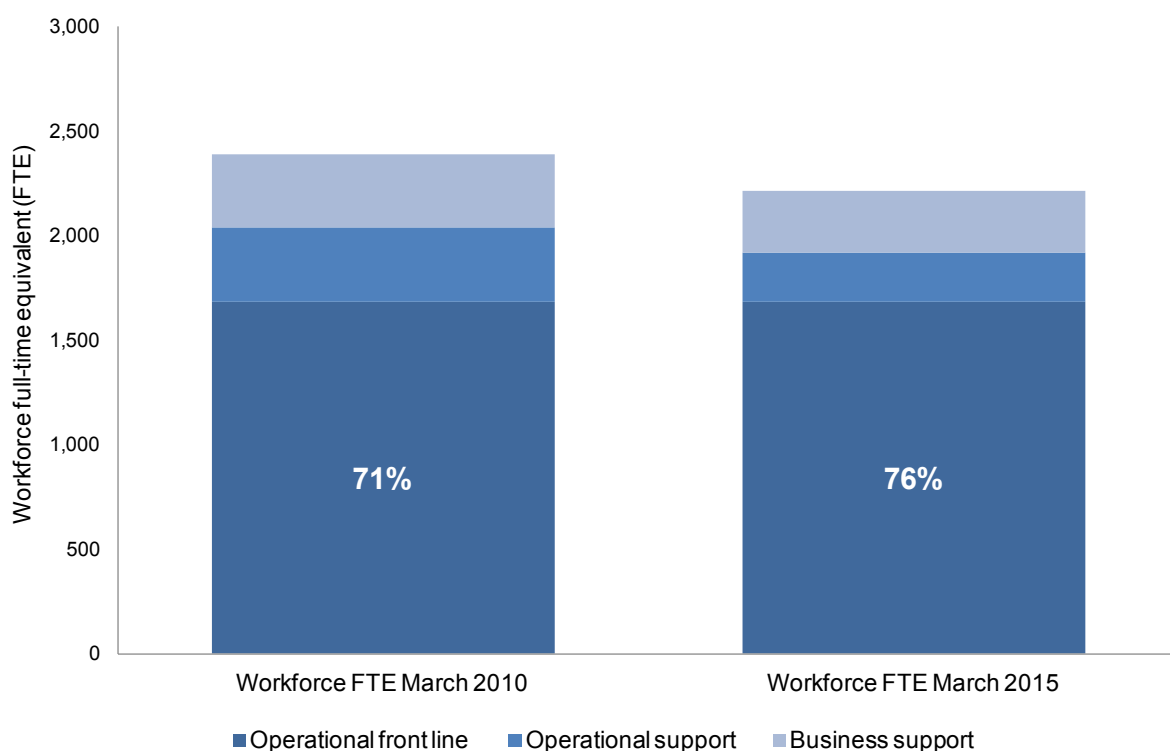
	31 March 2010 (baseline)	31 March 2015	Change	Force change %	Change for England and Wales %
Police officers	1,246	1,207	-39	-3%	-11%
Police staff	971	837	-134	-14%	-17%
PCSOs	173	169	-4	-2%	-22%
Total	2,390	2,213	-177	-7%	-14%
Specials	328	350	22	7%	44%

Overall, the proportion of the workforce Suffolk plans to lose is considerably lower than the figure for England and Wales.

It is important that as forces reconfigure their structures and reduce workforce numbers, they focus on maintaining (or, if possible, increasing) the proportion of people in frontline crime-fighting roles.

HMIC defines the people who work on the police front line as those who are in everyday contact with the public and who directly intervene to keep people safe and enforce the law.

The following chart shows the planned change in the workforce frontline profile in Suffolk Constabulary.



Note: England and Wales reports an increase in the proportion of workforce on the front line from 74 percent in March 2010 to 78 percent in March 2015.

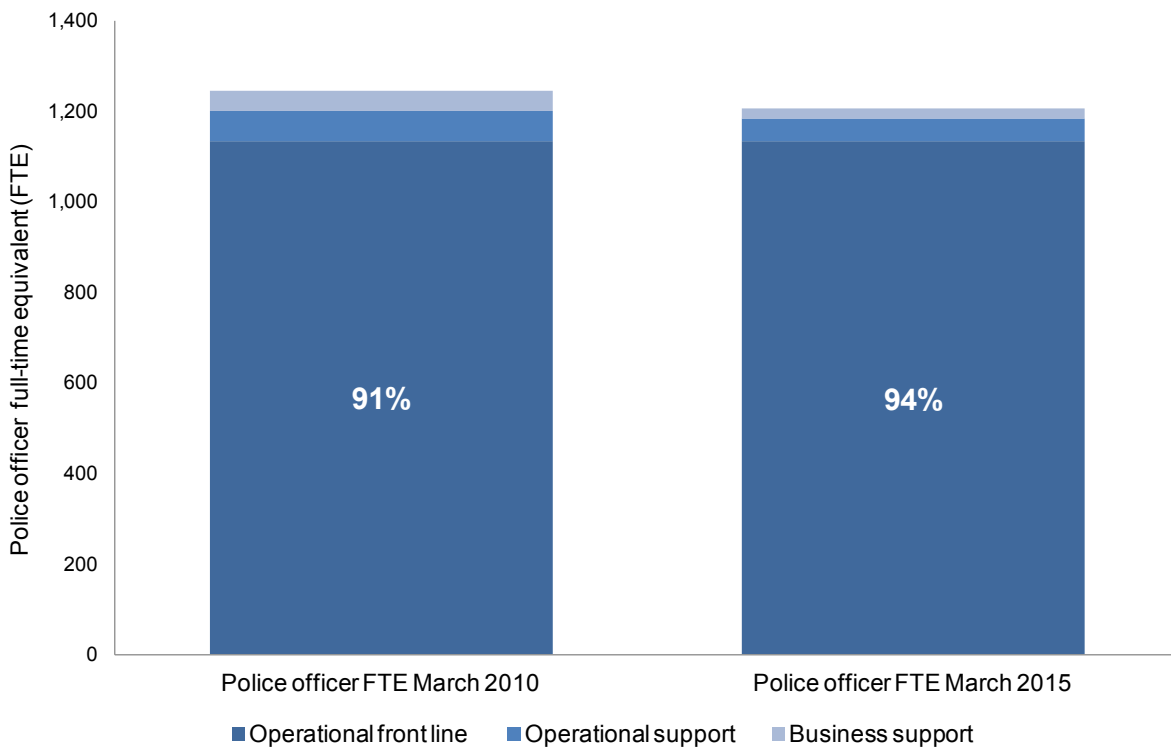
The number of officers, PCSOs and staff (i.e. of the force’s total workforce) working on the front line is projected to remain unchanged between March 2010 and March 2015 (at 1,685).

Over the same period, the proportion of Suffolk’s total workforce allocated to frontline roles is projected to increase from 71 percent to 76 percent. This compares with an overall increase across England and Wales from 74 percent to 78 percent.

The number of Suffolk’s police officers in frontline roles is planned to reduce by one from 1,133 in March 2010 to 1,132 by March 2015. The proportion of those remaining on the front line is projected to increase from 91 percent to 94 percent. This compares to an overall increase across England and Wales from 89 percent to 92 percent and shows that Suffolk

Constabulary is successfully protecting frontline crime-fighting roles as it makes these cuts. It is important though, that as the force achieves further reductions in 2015 and beyond, that it maintains this focus.

The following chart shows the planned change in police officers' frontline profile.



Note: England and Wales reports an increase in the proportion of police officers on the front line from 89 percent in March 2010 to 92 percent in March 2015.

Summary

Good

- Over the first three years of the spending review, the force’s workforce structure has matched the needs of the organisation successfully, improving policing outcomes and meeting its savings requirements.
- Suffolk’s successful collaboration with Norfolk Constabulary continues to achieve financial and operational efficiencies. By extending this work over the period of the spending review it has identified or is developing projects to achieve the majority of the planned savings.
- The robust change programme, using business improvement tools, has driven out efficiencies and savings, enabling the force to retain its operational front line throughout the spending review. This is commendable.

To what extent is the constabulary efficient?

HMIC looks at how the force understands the demands that it faces and how it allocates both financial resources and staff to meet these demands. We look at how these decisions are achieving effective results for the public in particular, that police are visible, attend promptly when called, fight crime and keep communities safe, and that victims are satisfied with the service they receive.

How well does the constabulary understand and manage demand?

Suffolk Constabulary undertakes regular reviews to ensure it understands the level of challenge it faces. The force has a joint performance and analysis department (with Norfolk Constabulary) that has undertaken a forward-looking assessment of the demands and force profile for the next five years. The force has a number of processes that allow better understanding of the challenges, risks and threats faced on a daily basis and that facilitate allocation of resources as appropriate.

Suffolk Constabulary last undertook a review of its operating model in 2011. It has recently commenced a review of the operating model specifically looking at the way local policing is provided across the county. As part of the review, the force is using software that will allow it to undertake a comprehensive analysis of the levels of demand on the force. The software analyses data as part of its assessment including calls for service, incidents of crime and anti-social behaviour, population, and road networks. The use of the data will support the force to ensure staff are working in the areas of highest risk and demand. While the force has commenced the review, it has not set a date for its completion.

The force has undertaken analysis to develop ways to meet and reduce demand more effectively. The force has recently done an evaluation to establish areas where there are significant deployments of resources (such as hospitals and retail stores). Each area has been assigned a plan owner to work in partnership to develop opportunities to prevent crime and anti-social behaviour, and as a result reducing future demand.

The force is keen to develop evidence-based policing and, together with Norfolk Constabulary, is identifying a suitable academic partner. The work that the force has planned in this area, along with the recent reviews and assessments, is developing the force's understanding of the totality of its demand. This in turn will enhance the force's understanding of need when allocating its resources.

How efficiently does the constabulary allocate its resources?

With its increasing understanding of the demands it will face in the future, as well as its existing demands, the force is currently reviewing and planning changes to the way it provides policing to ensure it allocates its workforce to the areas of greatest need. The force

recognises that dealing with those that suffer from mental health problems place a high level of demand on policing. In a quest for greater efficiency the force is trialling the use of patrolling jointly with mental health professionals. The force has also introduced partnership working with health and local authorities in Lowestoft to provide better and earlier support for those who place greater demand on public services. This project seeks to solve problems in partnership, avoiding duplication and leading to better outcomes for those who are supported. The introduction of operational partnership teams where police work jointly with other agencies to provide a coordinated response to problems, such as anti-social behaviour, is a positive step.

The force has recently moved resources in order to meet areas of business that are high risk and have increasing demand. This includes increasing the number of staff working within the integrated offender management unit, which has responsibility to monitor prolific offenders across the county. The force has also increased the levels of staffing in its protecting vulnerable people teams. The force is aware of the increasing challenge of cyber crime and is at the early stages of developing its response which includes training specialist staff.

The force has undertaken initiatives to reduce bureaucracy and thereby free up officers' and staff time (for example the increased force emphasis on providing out-of-court disposals, which have a restorative element). The force has also successfully bid to the Home Office innovation fund to develop and expand the use of automatic number plate recognition across the county, allowing the force to target its resources more efficiently.

While the force has done a lot to improve the use of IT for officers and staff, it does not currently benefit from the effective use of mobile data. The force is due to re-launch mobile data terminals during 2014. Despite this, the force has, through its IT strategy, managed to increase access to Norfolk and Suffolk databases across both counties. The force is also leading nationally on the use of digitalised criminal justice files.

HMIC has previously reported on the force's successful working with neighbouring Norfolk Constabulary to provide jointly a wide range of operational policing and support services, which were found to have achieved excellent efficiencies while limiting the impact of funding reductions on service provision.

How does the constabulary respond and keep its communities safe?

The challenge for forces is not just to save money and reduce their workforce numbers, but to ensure the choices they make in deciding how to achieve this do not have a negative impact on the service they provide to their communities. HMIC therefore looked for evidence that the way in which the force responds and keeps communities safe is at the heart of their choices.

Calls for service

HMIC examined whether Suffolk was taking longer to respond to calls for help as a result of its workforce reductions and other changes designed to save money. Forces are not required to set response times or targets and are free to determine their own arrangements for monitoring attendance to calls, so information between forces is not comparable.

We found that over the four years from 2010 to present, Suffolk Constabulary had maintained the same target response times of within 15 minutes for calls classed as 'emergency' (also known as grade 1) in urban areas and 20 minutes in rural settings. Over the same period, calls classed as 'priority' (also known as grade 2) had a target response time of within 60 minutes.

Calls for service	2010/11	2013/14
Percentage of urban emergency calls on target	93.0	90.1
Percentage of rural emergency calls on target	88.0	89.1
Percentage of priority calls on target	77.0	83.8

Over the spending review, attendance for emergency calls has seen a marginal change with improved attendance for priority calls.

Visibility

The work done by police officers and staff in visible roles (such as officers who respond to 999 calls, deal with serious road traffic collisions or patrol in neighbourhoods) represents only part of the policing picture. Chief constables need to allocate resources to many other functions in order to protect the public, such as counter terrorism, serious and organised crime, and child protection (to name just three).

That being said, research shows that the public value seeing visible police officers on patrol in the streets, and that those who see police in uniform at least once a week are more likely to have confidence in their local force. HMIC therefore examined how far the changes being implemented by the force had affected the visibility of the police in the Suffolk area.

In 2014, Suffolk Constabulary allocated 62 percent of its police officers to visible roles. This is 2.1 percentage points lower than the number allocated in 2010, but considerably higher than the figure for most other forces (which was 56 percent across England and Wales).

Police visibility is further enhanced by PCSOs, who principally support community policing. Looking at the proportion of police officers and PCSOs, Suffolk Constabulary allocated 67 percent of these staff to visible roles. This is 1.9 percentage points lower than it allocated in

2010, but above the 60 percent figure for England and Wales.

HMIC conducted a survey¹ of the public across England and Wales to assess whether the public had noticed any difference in the way their area is being policed. Of those people surveyed in a Suffolk, 10 percent said that they had seen a police officer more often than they had 12 months ago; this compares with the 12 percent across all survey respondents in England and Wales.

Of those surveyed in Suffolk, 86 percent of respondents said they felt safe from crime where they lived, this compares to 84 percent of respondents in England and Wales. Also, 9 percent said they felt safer from crime than they did two years ago, this compares to 9 percent of respondents in England and Wales.

Crime

In 2010 the Home Secretary set a clear priority for the police service to reduce crime. Between 2010/11 and 2013/14 (which includes the first three years of the spending review), Suffolk Constabulary reduced recorded crime (excluding fraud) by 20 percent, compared with 14 percent in England and Wales. Over this period, victim-based crime (crimes where there is a direct victim such as an individual, a group, or an organisation) reduced by 22 percent, compared with 14 percent in England and Wales.

Looking just at the last 12 months, recorded crime (excluding fraud) fell by 7 percent, which is a considerably larger reduction than the figure for England and Wales (1 percent).

By looking at how many recorded crimes occur per head of population, we can get an indication of how safe it is for the public in that police area.

¹ Sample sizes for each force were chosen to produce a confidence interval of no more than ± 6 percent and for England and Wales, no more than ± 1 percent. Forces' differences to the England and Wales value may not be statistically significant.

The table below shows recorded crime and anti-social behaviour rates in Suffolk (per head of population) compared with the rest of England and Wales.

12 months to March 2014	Rate per 1,000 population	England and Wales rate per 1,000 population
Crimes (excluding fraud)	49.8	61.1
Victim-based crime	43.3	54.3
Sexual offences	1.0	1.1
Burglary	5.4	7.8
Violence against the person	9.7	11.1
ASB incidents	32.4	37.2

It is important that crimes are investigated effectively and the perpetrator identified and where appropriate, brought to justice. When sufficient evidence is available to identify who has committed a crime, it can be described as a detection. Suffolk Constabulary's detection rate (for crimes excluding fraud) for the 12 months to March 2014 was 28 percent. This is higher than the England and Wales' detection rate of 26 percent.

We have chosen these types of crime to give an indication of offending levels in the Suffolk force area. For information on the frequency of other kinds of crimes in your area, go to www.hmic.gov.uk/crime-and-policing-comparator.

Victim satisfaction surveys

An important measure of the impact of changes to service provision for the public is how satisfied victims are with the overall service they receive when they seek police assistance.

In the 12 months to March 2014, 87.5 percent (± 1.7 percent) of victims were satisfied with the overall service provided by Suffolk Constabulary. This is higher than the England and Wales figure of 85.2 percent (± 0.2 percent).

Changes to how the public can access services

Forces are exploring different ways in which the public can access policing services. Over the spending review, the force is making changes to its estate and over the period expects to increase the number of police stations by one to 18. Although the number of front counters will reduce by four to 14, the force will open five shared access points with partners (for example, on NHS premises) where the public can access police services.

Suffolk Constabulary recognises that there are further potential savings to be achieved by reviewing the ways in which the public could access policing services in the future.

Summary



Good

- The force undertakes regular reviews of the demands and challenges it faces. This informs allocation of staff, and helps the force to structure how it provides policing. With a material gap in its future budget, this work will be critical in developing an affordable structure for providing policing to the people of Suffolk.
- Suffolk has undertaken a number of initiatives to manage and reduce its demand, seeking earlier resolutions to problems with partners. Crime and demand profiles are analysed and staffing levels reviewed to ensure that its workforce are in the right place.
- The force is focused on improving outcomes by managing the quality of the service it provides to the public. It has improved its response to calls from the public, achieved a greater rate of crime reduction over the spending review in comparison to other forces, and victim satisfaction is higher than the figure for England and Wales.

Our judgments

HMIC uses four categories for making judgments, two are positive and two are negative. The categories are:

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

Judgment is made against how well the force achieves value for money, it is not an assessment of the overall effectiveness of policing. In applying the categories HMIC considers whether:

- the way the force is achieving value for money is good, or exceeds this standard sufficiently to be judged as outstanding;
- the force requires improvement in the way it achieves value for money, and/or there are some weaknesses; or
- the constabulary's provision of value for money is inadequate because it is considerably lower than is expected.