



Inspecting policing
in the public interest

Responding to austerity

West Midlands Police

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How well does the force provide value for money?

Overall judgment

West Midlands Police has made excellent progress during challenging financial circumstances and has innovative plans to manage further austerity in the future.

Outstanding

Summary

West Midlands Police is on track to meet its financial challenge for the spending review period and also for the following financial year of 2015/16. Importantly, the force is also looking beyond this period and has ambitious plans for an innovation and integration partnership (IIP) that will enable the force to provide policing within the restrictions of further funding reductions and future financial pressures.

Overall, the force understands the issues facing it, and has a comprehensive and well-managed change programme in place to achieve the savings required. HMIC was reassured by the level of detail that underpins West Midlands' saving plans. It was also reassured by the leadership team's ability and determination to make future changes in partnership with a private sector innovation partner, while fighting crime and keeping its communities safe. HMIC's assessment is that the force is achieving the savings required currently, while planning for the future.

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

Outstanding

The force has ambitious plans for future arrangements to achieve longer-term savings.

It has clear plans in place to achieve £36m of the £47m savings required in 2014/15 and £24m of the £32m required in 2015/16 through planned savings, including the use of reserves to close any gaps.

There has been a conscious decision to use reserves that have built up over the last few years, including an underspend of £7m in 2013/14. In light of the challenge faced, the force has made a robust response to the funding challenge and will achieve the savings.

The force is pursuing an ambitious and innovative initiative working with the private sector to explore how policing services could be provided.

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

Outstanding

The way the force currently works and polices the West Midlands has successfully supported the achievement of savings for the spending review period.

The first six months of its innovation and integration partnership will be devoted to developing a new way for the force to provide policing in the future.

The force has forecast workforce numbers through to 2020 to ensure that the future workforce will be affordable and it has modelled the profile of the future workforce to match policing requirements.

To date, the force had achieved most of the required savings through reducing its pay costs, and although non-pay costs per head of population are already lower than for most forces, the force continues to reduce these costs.

To what extent is the force efficient?

Good

The force has carried out detailed analysis to understand demand, costs and the service levels required. More detailed analysis is planned when the IIP is implemented.

The force places a strong focus on preventative policing and intervenes early to stop crimes and incidents occurring.

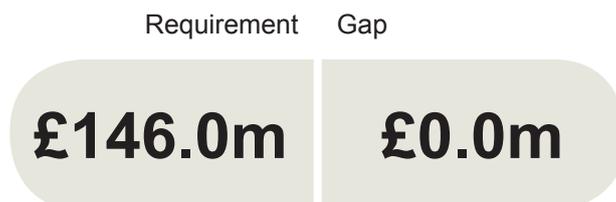
Although the force's IT has been adapted to meet its requirements, it needs updating. This will be a major part of the IIP.

Over the spending review period the force has achieved a greater reduction in crime than the figure for England and Wales. The last 12 months has seen an increase in crime in comparison to an overall reduction in England and Wales.

The force in numbers

Financial position

The force's savings requirement



Providing policing

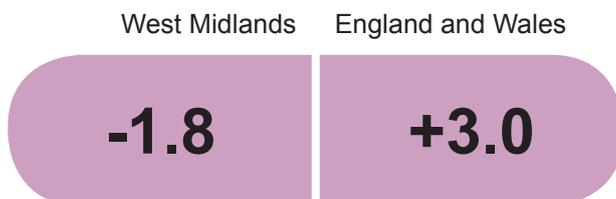
Planned change in police officer numbers 2010/11 – 2014/15



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



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



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





Efficiency

Police officer cost per head of population
2013/14

West Midlands

England and Wales

£132.7**£117.7**

Workforce cost per head of population
2013/14

West Midlands

England and Wales

£175.6**£168.1**

Change in recorded crime
2010/11 – 2013/14

West Midlands

England and Wales

-18%**-14%**

Victim satisfaction 2013/14*

West Midlands

England and Wales

83.7%**85.2%**

*Confidence intervals: $\pm 0.4\%$ for West Midlands; $\pm 0.2\%$ 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 looked at three areas:

- To what extent is the force taking the necessary steps to ensure a secure financial position in 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 West Midlands Police.

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

HMIC looked at the savings plans that 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 explored how they are starting to prepare for further financial challenges.

Financial challenge

West Midlands Police has identified that it needs to save £146.0m 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 22 percent is above the England and Wales total, and HMIC considers that West Midlands Police faces a particularly difficult challenge. It attracts a high central funding contribution, but lower local funding than many other forces, which means that central funding cuts have a more considerable impact on it compared with other forces. In addition, the central funding contribution is adjusted through a mechanism called 'damping' that means West Midlands receives less than the police funding formula would otherwise provide. (This force identifies that this equates to approximately £43m less in 2013/14 than the force would have received if the funding formula allocation alone were applied.)

The scale of the challenge

West Midlands Police faces a difficult challenge because of the scale of the financial savings that must be made. Although the force has more police officers per head of population than most other forces in England and Wales, other options to reduce costs are more challenging because:

- its non-pay costs per head of population are already lower than most other forces in England and Wales;
- its non-pay costs as a percentage of total staff costs is the second lowest in England and Wales; and
- it has fewer police staff per head of population than most other forces in England and Wales.

Savings plans for 2014/15 and 2015/16

The force has clear plans in place to achieve £36m of the £47m savings required in 2014/15 and will use reserves to meet the remaining £11m of savings required. The force has plans in place to achieve £24m of the £32m savings required in 2015/16 and will use reserves to meet the remaining £8m savings required. However, in 2013/14 the force had an under spend of £7m, which will be added to reserves.

The force has made a conscious decision to use reserves that have built up over the last few years and has now decided to use these reserves to smooth gaps pending the introduction of an innovation and integration partnership (IIP) with a private sector innovation partner. West Midlands predicts reserves of £72m remaining at the end of 2014/15. There is a plan to use a further £30m of reserves over the next five years, part of which will be used to fund the IT infrastructure required to provide policing services in the future.

Outlook for 2016 and beyond

While reductions to central funding beyond 2016 have not been confirmed at this time, should the current approach continue, forces are likely to experience reductions of between three and five percent to their central funding year-on-year.

West Midlands Police has made some predictions about future savings that will be required through to 2019/20, based on prudent assumptions about likely grant reductions, increased costs and council tax (precept) increases. It has plans in place to make the majority of the savings required through to March 2016. The force's plans for 2016/17 and beyond are ambitious and involve a strategic partnership, the IIP, to help achieve longer-term savings. The IIP contract will be self-funding, based on the partnership achieving savings of £121m over five years by reducing demand and improving supply.

The force is now focusing on the IIP with the selection of a private sector innovation partner in order to develop a fresh approach and explore other ways of working. The force feels that it has achieved considerable efficiencies so far and that it has the capability within the force (but not the capacity) to make changes on the scale that the IIP will be able to achieve. The selection of a partner with the necessary experience and expertise also reduces risk for the force. West Midlands has identified that it needs innovation to find ways of working with fewer people. The contract will be self-funding with costs met from savings.

Plans have been agreed jointly between the police and crime commissioner (PCC) and the force, with no constraints that would impact on the force's ability to achieve the savings plans. In light of the challenge faced, the force has made a robust response to the funding challenge and will achieve the savings required in the short term.

Summary



Outstanding

- The force has ambitious plans for a future strategic partnership to help achieve longer-term savings.
- The force has clear plans in place to achieve £36m of the £47m savings required in 2014/15 and £24m of the £32m required in 2015/16 through planned savings, using reserves to balance the budget.
- There has been a conscious decision to use reserves that have built up over the last few years, including an under spend of £7m in 2013/14.
- The force is taking a deliberate decision to use reserves to smooth gaps pending the introduction of the IIP and associated wholesale change and savings.
- In light of the challenge faced, the force has made a robust response to the funding challenge and will achieve the savings.

To what extent has the force 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 its 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 changes through its change programme.

How the force provides policing

West Midlands Police faces a difficult challenge because it is the second largest force in England and Wales, second only to the Metropolitan Police Service. It serves a densely populated, predominantly urban area, which has diverse needs. It is facing a funding reduction that is above that required of most other forces.

During the course of the spending review, the force has maintained the local provision of frontline services through Local Policing Areas (LPAs), although the number of LPAs has been reduced from 21 to 10. The force introduced the 5Ci Programme to improve the way in which it manages contact from the public; by improving structures and processes and introducing new technology. As a result, the force reduced the number of call handling centres from ten to two. The way the force currently works and polices the West Midlands has successfully supported the achievement of savings for the spending review period.

The way in which West Midlands will provide policing in the future will be determined by the IIP. During the first six months following its introduction, the IIP will focus on developing a new way for the force to provide policing with reduced resources that is sustainable for a five-year period, and beyond. A two-year programme of change will follow the six-month development phase. The IIP contract has been drawn up using commercial and legal advice, with appropriate safeguards and incentives in place.

The force has forecast workforce numbers through to 2020 to ensure longer term affordability and modelled the profile of that workforce to match policing requirements.

Three main governance groups oversee workforce and financial plans to ensure that they are aligned to change plans and support the implementation of the police and crime plan.

Collaboration

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

The force has established collaborative ways of working at local, regional and national levels, which have resulted in a number of policing services being provided in collaboration with other forces or organisations. This includes the central policing of motorways, which

provides a policing service for the motorways of the West Midlands, West Mercia and Staffordshire force areas.

The force also has collaborative working arrangements in place with Staffordshire Police for criminal justice services, including custody provision, witness care, crown court liaison, and road traffic investigation. To date, collaboration has not contributed significant savings for the spending review. However, the force is now focusing on the IIP as a means of achieving considerable savings in the future.

In 2014/15, the force expects to spend 5 percent of its net revenue expenditure on collaboration, which is lower than the 11 percent figure for England and Wales. Collaboration is not expected to contribute to the force's savings requirement, which is lower 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 maintain or improve the service they offer to the public, and to prepare for future funding reductions.

The force's Paragon change programme is a mature process that has been addressing the financial situation effectively. Over time, the Paragon change programme has developed in logical phases in order to meet savings requirements.

Strong governance arrangements are in place. Governance of change is provided by the Organisational Change Board (OCB) that includes the force's chief officer group. A commissioning process requires business leads to discuss proposals with all enabling departments such as HR and IT, prior to submission to the OCB. Business cases are agreed by the OCB, and all resource requirements are agreed through this governance process. Decisions are made on prioritisation, including decisions to pause or stop other change activity if required. Resources are dedicated to business benefits, not just those that achieve savings but those that secure enhanced services.

The force has applied priority based budgeting and continuous improvement methodologies to all areas of the business, with the exception of counter terrorism.

PricewaterhouseCoopers was engaged by the force to assist with the priority based budgeting exercise; this will now be used on a regular basis and the force will be going through similar processes for the next round of budget setting. The Paragon change programme, which has been in place since 2010, has worked using the principles of cutting costs while improving services and process quality.

The force has invested heavily in its internal change management methodology through

the Paragon change programme, with a considerable effort made to involve people closely throughout the implementation of change.

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

- business improvement methodologies;
- priority based budgeting;
- improved call management;
- using IT to streamline processes and reduce bureaucracy; and
- better alignment of resources to demand.

Moving into the next spending review, the force will be doing more work to understand and reduce demand, which will be included within the first phase of the IIP. This work will ultimately influence the future way in which the force will provide policing.

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

- working with the private sector;
- collaboration with other parts of the public sector;
- improved IT;
- better online services; and
- use of predictive technology.

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

The force is introducing innovative recruitment methods to meet its skills and diversity requirements for the policing of West Midlands in the future. It has opened up recruitment externally for 450 officer posts in three phases. Online situation judgment tests are used to assess values and cultural awareness as part of the drive to balance skills and diversity requirements. The force also plans to have community representatives on interview panels and it is currently going through a recruitment process.

The force is carrying out a cultural change programme, Pride in our Police, which seeks to improve personal standards. Staff we spoke to had knowledge of Pride in our Police from intranet briefings and posters. It was described as guidance on how to act in public

with integrity, along with advice on dress codes. There was a view that these were a basic reiteration of the code of ethics.

The force communicates change to their staff through blogs and the intranet. There is also a single point of contact for change in each local policing area. LPA commanders meet the force project team each week, and ensure that key messages are relayed back to their staff. The corporate communications team send out monthly Team Talk emails containing important messages. There are various Ask the Boss forums on the force intranet, where members of the force can ask questions of their senior leaders. Many projects within the change programme have also set up focus groups with officers and staff to listen to people and identify opportunities for change.

The force undertakes work to support officers and staff and to reduce the amount of time that they are absent from work. Attendance rates were quoted as 96 percent attendance for officers and 95.5 percent for staff. The number of police officers, police staff and community support officers absent from work due to long term sickness has reduced since 2010/11 and is less than most other forces. However, the occupational health team has been reduced and the force acknowledges that occupational health provision could be better and that it wants a more proactive approach. Birmingham City Council provides occupational health services to the force, and work is being carried out to increase this.

West Midlands is planning a communications strategy to convey important messages about the IIP once the main decisions have been made. To date, the IIP has awaited several major decisions that have involved a necessary level of commercial confidentiality. Staff interviewed felt that there had been good engagement during the Paragon change programme; however, they felt less well informed regarding future programmes.

How is the force 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 their other costs (non-pay) such as the equipment they buy, the accommodation and vehicles they use and the contracts they enter for services (such as cleaning). The force plans to make 25 percent of its savings from non-pay, which is lower than the 29 percent figure for England and Wales.

However, non-pay costs per head of population are already lower than for most forces and the force continues to further reduce these costs. For example, more effective analysis of estates costs is achieving efficiencies and controlling demand with an approach based

upon what is needed rather than what is wanted. This is supported by a simplified business case process that has halved the minor works budget of £2.7m. On 1 April 2014, fleet, facilities and property were brought together under a single corporate asset management department and non-pay costs will be further reduced.

The nature of the estate is such that the force cannot derive any capital receipts from sales and so the force plans to reduce revenue costs. The New Ways of Working (NWOW) programme includes a £30m refurbishment of the force headquarters to make the wider estate more efficient, along with the introduction of more flexible working. NWOW programmes are also being adopted in Walsall, Coventry and Birmingham, which includes sharing some of the estate with local councils. The force is supporting the way it provides policing by building two new custody centres in Birmingham and the Black Country.

As with other forces, most of the savings comes from reducing the workforce. The force plans to make 75 percent of its spending review savings requirement from its pay budget. This is a higher proportion than for England and Wales.

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	8,626	7,187	-1,439	-17%	-11%
Police staff	3,667	3,113	-554	-15%	-17%
PCSOs	811	669	-142	-18%	-22%
Total	13,104	10,969	-2,135	-16%	-14%
Specials	591	379	-212	-36%	44%

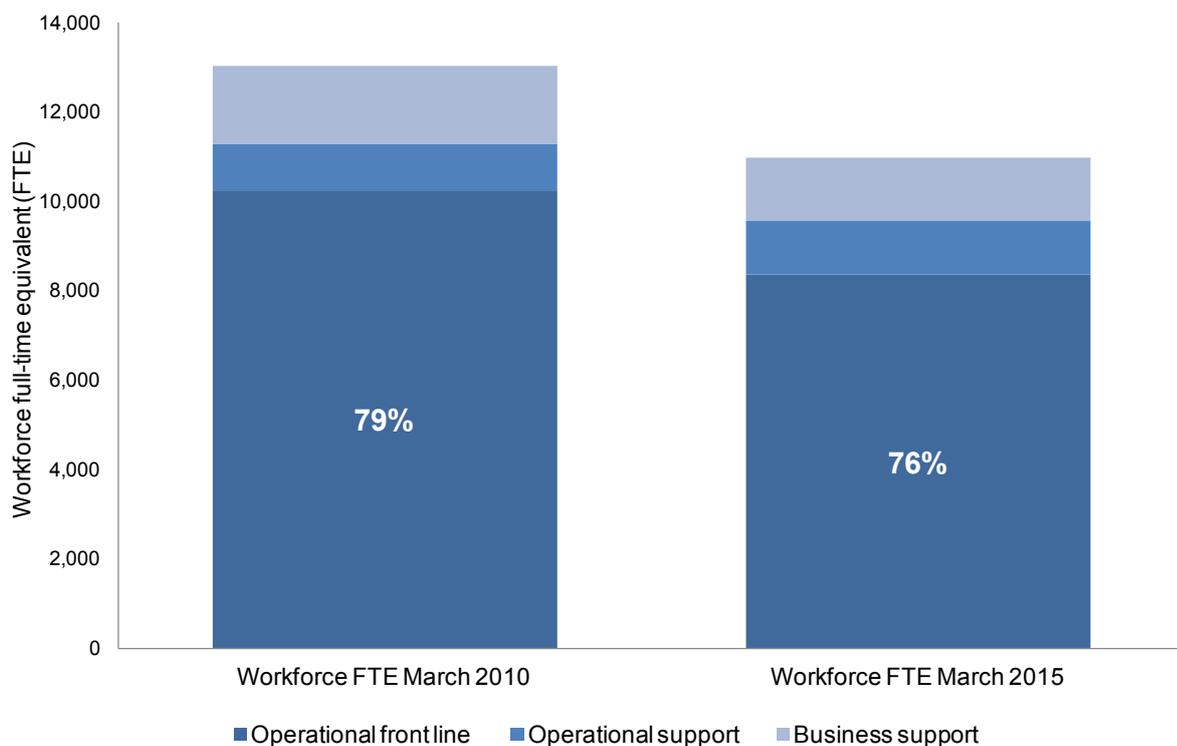
The force plans to have a larger percentage reduction in police officer numbers compared with England and Wales, but smaller reductions in police staff and community support officers. The force faces some particular challenges as it has more police officers per head of population than most other forces in England and Wales but fewer police staff per head of population, which makes the achievement of savings heavily dependent on police officer reductions.

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 West Midlands Police.



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.

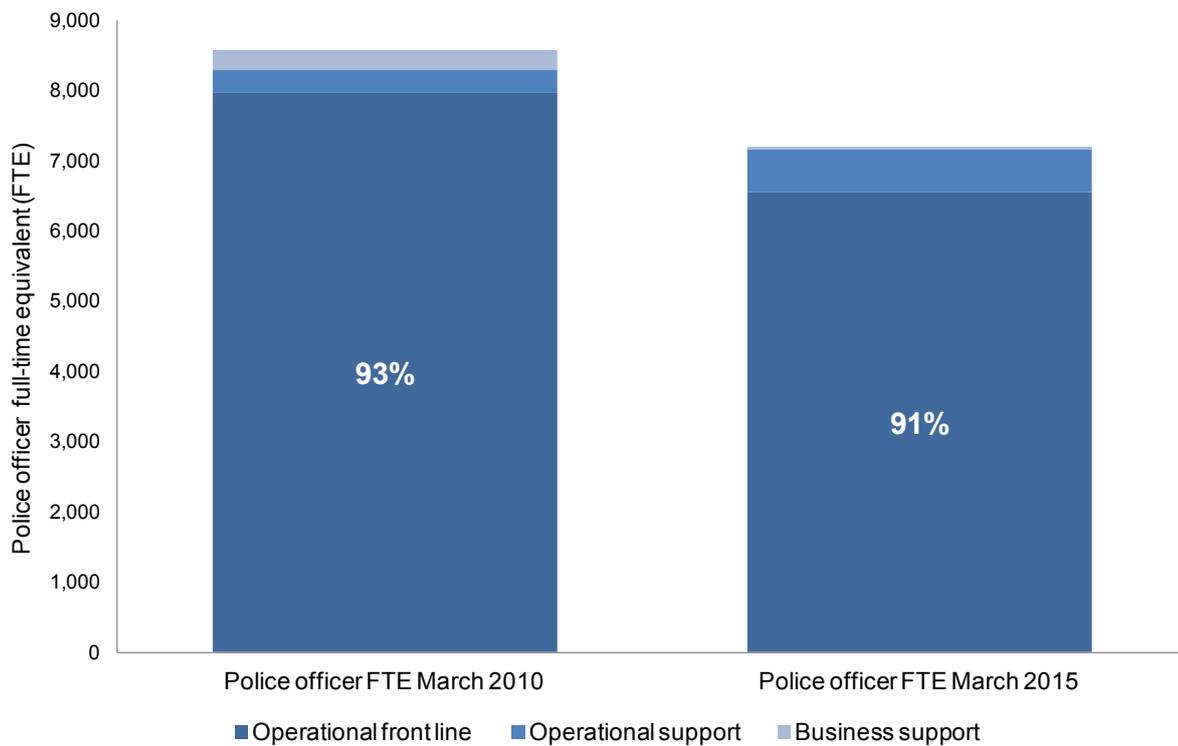
The number of officers, PCSOs and staff (i.e., of the force’s total workforce) working on the front line is projected to reduce from March 2010 by 1,907 to 8,347 by March 2015.

Over the same period, the proportion of West Midlands total workforce allocated to frontline roles is projected to reduce from 79 percent to 76 percent. This compares with an overall increase across England and Wales from 74 percent to 78 percent.

The number of West Midlands police officers in frontline roles is planned to reduce by 1,411 from 7,966 in March 2010 to 6,555 by March 2015. The proportion of those remaining on the

front line is projected to reduce from 93 percent to 91 percent. This compares to an overall increase across England and Wales from 89 percent to 92 percent.

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



Outstanding

- The way the force currently works and polices the West Midlands has successfully supported the achievement of savings for the spending review period.
- The first six months of the innovation and integration partnership will be devoted to developing a new way for the force to provide policing in the future.
- The force has forecast workforce numbers through to 2020 to ensure that the future workforce will be affordable and it has modelled the profile of the future workforce to match policing requirements.
- To date, the force had achieved the bulk of the required savings through reducing its pay costs, and although non-pay costs per head of population are already lower than for most forces, the force continues to reduce these costs.

To what extent is the force 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 leading to effective results for the public; in particular, that police are visible and that they attend promptly when called, that they are fighting crime and keeping communities safe, and that victims are satisfied with the service they receive.

How well does the force understand and manage demand?

The force has carried out detailed analysis to understand both the cost and effectiveness of most areas of business. This work has provided a detailed understanding of the demand, costs and service levels required. Examples include an assessment of response officers' activity through a 'week-in-the-life' study and analysis of call handling processes, which resulted in sophisticated modelling of call demand and a change in shift patterns. The force has planned to conduct further detailed demand analysis when the IIP is implemented later this year.

West Midlands monitors daily demand through 'signals for noise', an IT solution to monitor variances in calls for service or changes in crime types and trends; the force then moves resources to respond to these variances.

The force has an in-depth understanding of response officers' work from assessing their activity during the 'week-in-the-life' study. This identified the barriers that hindered them and a group was set up to remove these barriers. As a result, this had tangible results, freeing up a further two hours of deployment availability for each officer during a single tour of duty.

A strong focus is put on preventative policing, and West Midlands uses the term 'pre-emptive policing' to describe this type of activity. The force has a central team of trained officers and crime prevention design advisors. The team lead on crime prevention and reduction, ensuring the force meets its legal and strategic partnership obligations. It is required to support the force in preventing and reducing crime on a sustainable basis, and geographic areas of responsibility are aligned to each LPA.

The force engages in partnership work by providing courts with alternative disposals for selected offenders. These alternatives are conditional on offenders taking part in programmes to understand and change their offending behaviour, during which they are monitored for compliance. Restorative justice processes have been introduced, such as working with voluntary organisations to mentor offenders, and working with young people on the periphery of offending with the aim of deterring them from committing crime. Neighbourhood and response officers have been trained to carry out restorative justice.

How efficiently does the force allocate its resources?

As mentioned above, the force has carried out analysis of call handling processes, which resulted in sophisticated modelling of call demand and a change in shift patterns. GMT Planner software is used to ensure that a resource is accurately assigned to demand. Staff can be assigned flexibly to match demand in the call handling function, thus increasing resilience across the force.

West Midlands measured the demand reduction following the changes to many of their processes and realigned the workforce. They reduced the number of response officers, and continue to review their performance. The force can demonstrate that response officers are attending fewer incidents, but with fewer officers, and they are still meeting response times. However this was not corroborated in the views of the small number of LPA staff interviewed by HMIC, who felt less effective and under greater pressure to meet response times under the new model.

The force's IT has been adapted to meet its requirements, but it needs updating. This has been identified as a major part of the IIP and it will be a priority for action when the partnership is in place. The lack of investment in IT is frustrating for the workforce, in particular the need for integrated databases and effective mobile data.

How does the force respond and keep its communities safe?

The challenge for forces is not just to save money and reduce their workforce numbers, but also to ensure the choices they make do not have a negative impact on the service they provide to their communities. HMIC looked for evidence that keeping the communities safe is at the heart of the force's decision.

West Midlands reacts to crime, but it also intervenes early to stop crimes and incidents occurring by investing in pre-emptive work to tackle gang violence, and to reduce the reoffending of the most prolific offenders in the community. There are a number of specialist teams, including community actions and priorities teams (CAPT) and integrated offender management (IOM) teams whose objectives are to reduce crime and the offending of prolific offenders. The use of custody investigation teams and telephone resolution of crimes in the contact centre create more opportunity for frontline officers to be visible and accessible to the local community. Response teams have allocated areas to patrol in defined crime or anti-social behaviour hotspots.

The force effectively manages the performance of staff, but it no longer uses numerical targets as an indicator of performance; individual performance and development is monitored through an electronic development record (EDR). The force is keen to measure

the quality of the service provided and every supervisor has a responsibility to contact two randomly selected callers each month and assess the quality of service provided, offering feedback on any good or poor service.

West Midlands’ approach to implementing new practices and improvements is both innovative and effective. HMIC found several examples where the force was working with universities and using evidence-based policing including:

- Operation Savvy, to identify the most effective patrol strategy for PCSOs;
- Operation Swordfish, to target patrols close to burglary victims;
- PredPol, the use of a formula for predictive policing and to produce hotspots and patrol plans; and
- business crime initiatives that involve working with the business industry, using new systems such as the Facewatch system.

Calls for service

HMIC examined whether West Midlands Police 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 since 2010, West Midlands had maintained the same target response times of 15 minutes for calls classed as ‘emergency’ (also known as Grade 1. Over the same period, calls classed as a ‘priority’ (also known as Grade 2) had a target response time of within 60 minutes.

The following table compares the forces performance in 2010/11 to 2013/14.

Calls for service	2010/11	2013/14
Percentage of emergency calls on target	87.0	89.1
Percentage of priority calls on target	74.0	86.0

Over the spending review, attendance within target for both emergency and for priority calls has declined.

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 a 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 said, research shows that the public value seeing visible police officers on patrol in the streets, and 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 West Midlands area.

In 2014, West Midlands Police allocated 49 percent of its police officers to visible roles. This is 15.6 percentage points lower than the number allocated in 2010, and lower than the figure for England and Wales (which was 56 percent).

Police visibility is further enhanced by PCSOs, who mainly support community policing. Looking at the proportion of police officers and PCSOs, West Midlands Police allocated 53 percent to visible roles. This is 14.4 percentage points lower than it allocated in 2010, and lower than 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 the West Midlands, 16 percent said that they have seen a police officer more often than they had 12 months ago; this compares to 12 percent of respondents in England and Wales.

Furthermore, 76 percent of respondents in the West Midlands said they felt safe from crime where they lived, compared to 84 percent of respondents in England and Wales. Finally, 7 percent said they felt safer from crime than they did two years ago, compared 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), West Midlands Police reduced recorded crime (excluding fraud) by 18 percent, compared with a reduction of 14 percent in England and Wales.

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.

Over this period, victim-based crime (i.e. crimes where there is a direct victim such as an individual, a group, or an organisation) reduced by 19 percent, compared with a reduction of 14 percent in England and Wales.

Looking just at the last 12 months, recorded crime (excluding fraud) rose by 3 percent, compared with a 1 percent reduction across England and Wales.

By looking at how many crimes occur per head of population, we get an indication of how safe it is for the public in that police area. The table below shows crime and anti-social behaviour rates in the West Midlands (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)	63.2	61.1
Victim-based crime	57.1	54.3
Sexual offences	1.1	1.1
Burglary	8.7	7.8
Violence against the person	12.0	11.1
ASB incidents	25.7	37.2

It is important that crimes are effectively investigated and that the perpetrator is identified and brought to justice. When sufficient evidence is available to identify who has committed a crime, it can be described as a detection. West Midlands Police’s detection rate (for crimes excluding fraud) for the 12 months to March 2014 was 22 percent. This is lower 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 West Midlands 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, 83.7 percent (± 0.4 percent) of victims were satisfied with the overall service provided by West Midlands Police. This is lower 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. The force has closed five front counters since 2010/11, but is introducing revised arrangements for the public to access policing services.

The force seeks the views and support of the community and partners to provide a police service that meets their needs. A front office project has been commissioned to look at the range of channels available to the public for making contact and the project is currently carrying out research. It has found that the number of people visiting police stations is low, except at those stations that have custody facilities.

West Midlands is exploring other ways of receiving public contact and it has opened two shared access points, a front counter in a shopping centre and one in a local authority office. However, the force is committed to maintaining safe places for victims of domestic abuse and sexual assault to report crimes in person. The force is exploring the use of internet-based crime reporting, known as 'track my crime' along with web chat as a means of public contact. In addition, the force is considering changing its website so that it is mainly used for public contact, rather than as a public relations channel.

Summary

Good

- The force has carried out detailed analysis to understand demand, costs and the service levels required.
- The force has planned to conduct more current detailed demand analysis when the IIP is implemented later this year.
- The force places a strong focus on preventative policing and intervenes early to stop crimes and incidents occurring.
- The force implements innovative and effective ways of working; however, although the force's IT has been adapted to meet its requirements, it needs updating.
- Over the spending review period the force has achieved a greater reduction in recorded crime than the figure for England and Wales. However, the last 12 months has seen performance decline with an increase in crime in comparison to an overall reduction in England and Wales. The force's detection rate and victim satisfaction are both lower than the figures 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 force's provision of value for money is inadequate because it is considerably lower than is expected.