



Inspecting policing  
in the public interest

## Responding to austerity

Essex Police

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# How well does the force provide value for money?

## Overall judgment

Essex Police has responded well to the financial challenge of this spending review. The force is looking beyond this period and is planning for future funding reductions so that it is best placed to be able to continue to provide an effective police service.

Good

## Summary

Essex Police is on track to achieve its required savings of £47.3m over this spending review period. It also has detailed plans to achieve most of the required savings required for 2015/16 and is finalising work to close the remaining gap. Overall, the force understands the issues facing it and has a well-managed change programme in place to ensure that it implements savings required while making improvements to the way policing is provided locally.

Sophisticated analysis of demands and implementation of a new IT system provide the force with opportunities in the coming year to work more efficiently and effectively. Along with its continued commitment to collaboration with Kent Police this is likely to form the basis of an affordable way of providing policing across the County in the future.

HMIC is reassured by the level of detail underpinning the force's savings plans for the next two years. It has identified opportunities to make further efficiencies while protecting, as far as it can, its crime-fighting capacity in its endeavour to keep the communities in Essex safe.

The long-term financial position of the force will be greatly improved if it can successfully develop effective policing structures which are affordable within the force's projected budget without using reserves.

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

**Good**

The force has sound plans to achieve savings in 2014/15 thereby achieving the £47.3m savings required over the spending review. It is progressing plans to achieve a further £9.5m of savings in 2015/16.

The force has assessed future savings requirements to 2017 and has started to develop plans to meet this challenge.

The force needs to invest in its infrastructure to support the way it will provide policing in the future.

The force needs to plan to achieve future savings without over reliance on reserves. Investing in its infrastructure will help the force to meet longer-term challenges.

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

**Good**

The force plans to increase the proportion of the workforce allocated to frontline roles while meeting its savings requirement over the spending review.

After a shaky start at the beginning of the spending review the force is now developing better plans for providing local policing. This will see 500 officers from response, patrol and other specialist functions aligned to local policing.

The force's collaboration with Kent Police is strong, it has achieved savings with opportunities to extend it further.

The force is bearing down on non-pay and is successfully protecting frontline police officer crime-fighting roles while also making the necessary savings.

**To what extent is the force efficient?**

**Good**

The force has made a comprehensive assessment of demand and of the challenges it faces. There is strong evidence of resources being allocated to match policing priorities.

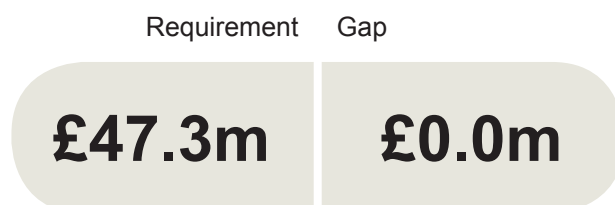
The force successfully reversed some of the adverse effects on the service they provide arising from changes made early in the spending review. However, there is scope to further improve the quality of service by working smarter.

Since 2010/11, the force has reduced crime but not to the levels achieved by other forces. The level of victim satisfaction in Essex remains steady throughout this period. However, the force continues to achieve lower overall crime levels than elsewhere in England and Wales.

# The force in numbers

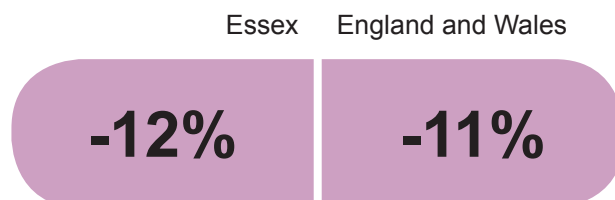
## Financial position

The force's savings requirement

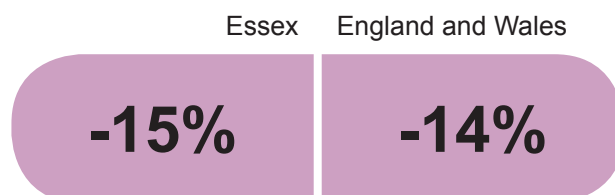


## Providing policing

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



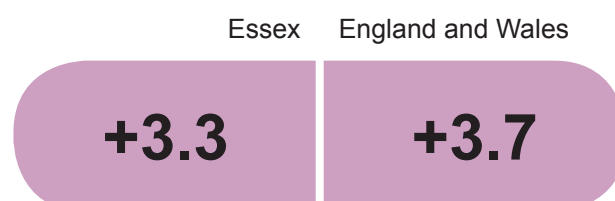
Planned change in total workforce numbers 2010/11 – 2014/15



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

Essex	England and Wales
<b>£97.3</b>	<b>£117.7</b>

Workforce cost per head of population  
2013/14

Essex	England and Wales
<b>£137.0</b>	<b>£168.1</b>

Change in recorded crime  
2010/11 – 2013/14

Essex	England and Wales
<b>-2%</b>	<b>-14%</b>

Victim satisfaction 2013/14\*

Essex	England and Wales
<b>82.5%</b>	<b>85.2%</b>

\*Confidence intervals:  $\pm 1.6\%$  for Essex;  $\pm 0.2\%$  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 Essex 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

Essex Police has identified that it needs to save £47.3m 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 the value for England and Wales.

## The scale of the challenge

Although Essex has a smaller savings requirement than most other forces it does nonetheless face challenges in identifying efficiencies as it is already a low cost force. Overall:

- workforce costs are lower than most other forces in England and Wales;
- it has lower numbers of police officers and police staff per head of population than most other forces in England and Wales; and
- it has reduced its non-workforce costs over the last four years, whereas non-workforce costs have risen in England and Wales.

## Savings plans for 2014/15 and 2015/16

Essex Police has a good track record of meeting financial challenges. It met its savings targets in each of the last three years of the spending review. In the first three years, the force has achieved 81 percent of its overall savings requirement. In 2013/14 the force had an under spend of £6.0m, primarily through vacancies across the force. Most of this under spend has been transferred to reserves to improve the long-term prospects of the force.

In 2014/15 the force has a savings requirement of £8.9m and has plans to achieve all of this. In 2015/16 Essex Police has a further savings requirement of £9.6m with plans in place to save £9.5m of this. This small gap is not of concern and will be closed as plans are finalised.

## Outlook for 2016 and beyond

Based on a prudent set of assumptions about likely grant reductions, cost and precept increases, Essex Police has identified that it needs to make savings of £34.1m over the three years to 2016/17. Currently, the force has yet to look beyond this timeframe.

The force has made an assessment of its future savings requirements based on a number of possible scenarios and this has helped inform its plans through to 2016/17.

The force plans to achieve its future savings by changing the way it provides policing so that it can maintain the quality of the service it provides to the public with fewer people. This programme is taking an incremental approach to change which will allow it to adapt its proposals as the detail of future funding reductions become clearer.

The force has assessed that it faces future challenges including that the cost of much needed improvements to the infrastructure (both estates and IT), could exceed the reserves that are available. This makes it even more important that the force achieves its savings plans without over reliance on reserves, if it is to improve its financial position into the long-term.

### Summary



Good

- The force has sound plans to achieve savings in 2014/15 thereby achieving the £47.3m savings required over the spending review. It is progressing plans to achieve a further £9.5m of savings in 2015/16.
- The force has assessed future savings requirements to 2017 and has started to develop plans to meet this challenge.
- The force needs to invest in its infrastructure to support the way it will provide policing in the future.
- The force needs to plan to achieve future savings without over reliance on reserves. Investing in its infrastructure will help the force to meet longer-term challenges.

# 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 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 changes through its change programme.

## How the force provides policing

During the early part of the spending review Essex Police made significant organisational and structural changes. This included the centralisation of many policing functions, as well as the creation of a number of local policing areas. There were a number of problems with this new local policing model; some had an adverse impact on the force's ability to prevent and detect crime. The force realised its mistakes and has now made a number of changes to the way it provides local policing. For example, responsibility for investigating less serious, local crime has been reassigned to neighbourhood teams to increase the capacity in this area, and the locations of some of the bases that officers responding to emergency calls and neighbourhood patrol teams operated from have been changed.

Following these changes, Essex Police has been able to provide a reasonably effective service while making the required savings over the spending review. However, to ensure that it can meet future financial challenges while still providing a good service to the public, the force is conducting a fundamental review of the way it provides neighbourhood policing. The added contribution that PCSOs and special constables can make in the future will be considered too.

The force has a large estate, much of which is aging and becoming increasingly unsuitable to meet future needs. There has been long-term under investment in the forces premises. A comprehensive, long-term estates strategy is needed as a matter of urgency to consider disposal, modernisation and, wherever possible, co-location with other public sector agencies. The force recognises this need and at the time of the inspection, a new head of estates for Essex and Kent had just been appointed.

Looking to 2016 and beyond, the force will need to reduce the size of its workforce further. It has undertaken a sophisticated review of demands placed on local policing and will look find new, more efficient ways of providing policing in the future. The force is also reviewing how its infrastructure (IT, fleet and estates assets) can better support the needs of the organisation in the future.

## Collaboration

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

The force has a well-developed programme of collaboration, primarily with Kent Police. The Essex and Kent Serious Crime Directorate (SCD), which tackles serious and organised criminality across the counties, has been in existence for four years. As well as enhancing operational effectiveness and resilience, the SCD continues to achieve savings year on year. More recently, the two forces established a joint Support Services Directorate which encompasses business support and asset management functions. This is also helping to achieve savings and efficiencies.

The force has identified further opportunities to achieve more through collaboration, recognising that in some cases geographical constraints may limit the benefits of further collaboration. However the forces are also identifying further savings that can be driven out of existing collaboration. The implementation of a new web-based IT system, Athena, is scheduled to be implemented across Essex and Kent in 2015 and will replace a number of different IT systems (custody, case preparation, intelligence and crime recording) across the counties yielding financial and operational benefits.

Although most of Essex's serious and organised crime capability is managed through its SCD with Kent it continues to collaborate with Eastern Region forces in some specialised areas, such as counter terrorism and asset recovery. Its strong collaborative partnership with Kent does not preclude it from exploring collaborative opportunities elsewhere too. The force is having exploratory discussions with Essex Fire and Rescue Service about the potential benefits of collaborating in a range of areas to achieve savings and improve service provision. No savings have been identified at this early stage.

Collaboration has brought operational benefits to Essex over the spending review as well as financial savings, evident by the significantly higher levels of savings that Essex achieves through collaboration when compared with other forces across England and Wales. The force has provided much of its specialised policing and now business support work through collaborated units and collaboration will continue to be an important part of its service provision across the county into the future. This is commendable.

The force plans to spend 20 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 21 percent of the forces savings requirement, which again is considerably 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 which can help maintain or improve the service they offer to the public and prepare for future funding reductions.

The review of the way policing is provided in the future is being undertaken through the force's change programme which is known as 'Evolve', having adopted an incremental approach to managing change.

The force is planning to make a number of changes to the way it provides neighbourhood policing in the future. Approximately 500 police officers and staff will move into local policing in the first phase. This change is intended to provide a more accessible and responsive policing service well connected to the local neighbourhoods. The majority of those moving into local policing will come from a number of functions that are currently centrally managed, such as response and patrol. Although the force has no plans to change the local policing areas the changes provide the three local policing commanders with direct management responsibility for, and oversight of, more resources to tackle priorities and improve the policing service the public receives. Coupled with a proposed change in shift patterns, the force hopes that this will improve in performance and provide a better, more consistent service.

The force has introduced a number of improvements to the way it manages the change programme. For example automated HR and finance information is now better aligned and more reliable; and business support systems are being updated. Also the principles of change have been agreed with the chief constable and the police and crime commissioner providing an overarching framework within which policing will be provided in the future. Robust governance arrangements are in place to oversee the change programme led by the deputy chief constable.

After a shaky start at the beginning of the spending review period the force has improved how it assesses demand, manages change and reduces cost. This gives HMIC increasing confidence that the force, under the leadership of the relatively new chief constable, will reconfigure its internal organisation so that it can meet its future funding reductions while continuing to provide an effective and efficient policing service to the public.

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

- changes to the way local policing is provided;
- changing the way that business support, such as human resources and finance, is provided;
- improved procurement and contract re-negotiation;
- reducing non-pay costs; and
- improved IT.

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

- changing the way protective services are provided;
- changing the way that business support, such as human resources and finance, is provided;
- improving IT to streamline processes and reduce bureaucracy
- development of mobile data applications to improve efficiency on the front line;
- improved call management.

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

Staff are very positive about the regular blog the chief constable publishes on the force intranet. It is used to keep staff informed about the major changes that the force is planning. However, feedback recently received from the first staff survey conducted in a number of years, has confirmed that most other communication channels, such as the change programme updates, are not effective. At the time of the inspection the chief constable was about to embark on a 'road show' as part of the process of communicating with and involving staff better. The force has also appointed a communication specialist to co-ordinate up-to-date and consistent messages to staff on the change programme.

The force is looking to understand and address the underlying causes of the high rates of sickness absence. There is a particular concern about long-term police officer sickness and high sickness levels among staff in the force control room. There has been an under-investment in occupational health, and the referral mechanism was seen as being too restrictive. This has now been changed.

The introduction of improvements to the welfare of the workforce is important, particularly with continuing changes planned and the additional stress this can introduce.

Rightly, the chief constable is clear that the overriding purpose of the change programme is to improve the service to the public. There remains a risk that the workforce will not feel 'bought-in' to the process and this may ultimately impact on the service they provide to the public. The force recognises that the involvement of staff in the change programme requires improvement.

## 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 do expect forces to also 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 28 percent of its savings from non-pay over the spending review. While this is broadly in line with other forces, Essex Police spends the least per head in the country on non-pay costs, so the opportunities to achieve further savings in these areas are limited.

Despite this the force plans to focus on achieving savings over the next three years by cutting its non-pay costs. Kent and Essex have a joint procurement function and there are plans to achieve further non-pay savings by April 2016, for example through contract renegotiations. The force also plans to achieve future savings by reducing the size of its fleet and by disposing of parts of its estate. Essex and Kent Police are reviewing options to centralise some of their training provision which would achieve further savings.

As with other forces most of the savings come from reducing the workforce. Essex Police made an early start on this in 2010 when it slowed its recruitment of new police officers and police staff. The force plans to make 72 percent of its spending review savings requirement from its pay budget. This is broadly in line with 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.

	<b>31 March 2010 (baseline)</b>	<b>31 March 2015</b>	<b>Change</b>	<b>Force change %</b>	<b>Change for England and Wales %</b>
Police officers	3,606	3,171	-435	-12%	-11%
Police staff	2,152	1,835	-317	-15%	-17%
PCSOs	445	263	-182	-41%	-22%
Total	6,202	5,269	-933	-15%	-14%
Specials	682	438	-244	-36%	44%

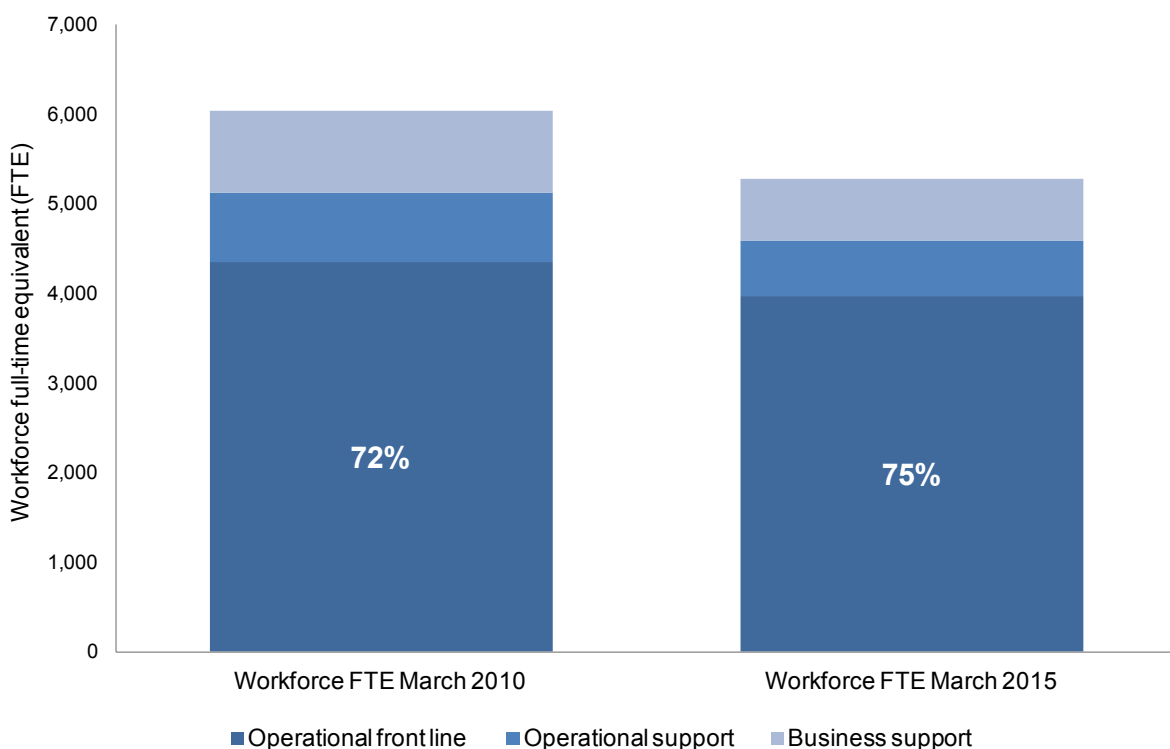
Over the spending review the force plans to lose a similar number of its workforce to other forces. One of the planned areas of reduction is expected to come from PCSOs. Currently, Essex Police funds, with local authorities, a number of PCSOs. It has assessed these roles and will offer local authorities the opportunity to fully fund them. The force plan to lose a greater number of specials than other forces.

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 change in the workforce frontline profile in Essex 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 Essex’s front line is projected to reduce by 375 between March 2010 and March 2015 (from 4,350 to 3,975).

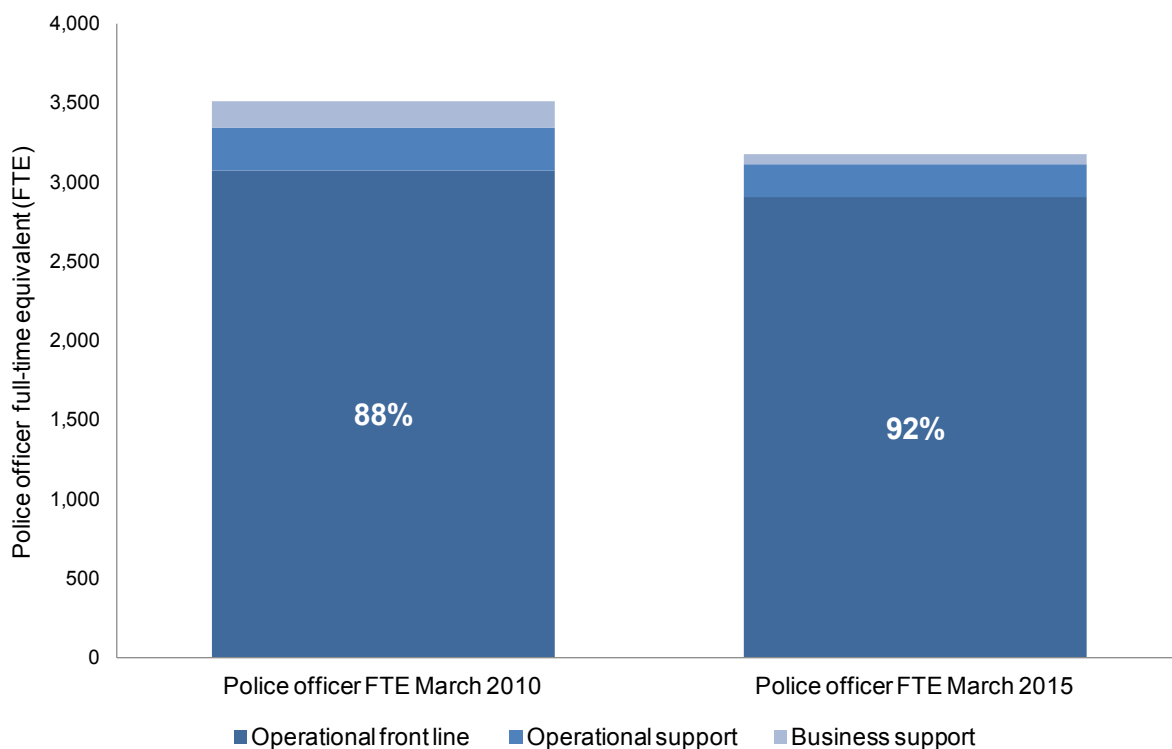
Over the same period, the proportion of Essex’s total workforce allocated to frontline roles is projected to increase from 72 percent to 75 percent. This compares with an overall increase across England and Wales from 74 percent to 78 percent.

As Essex Police collaborates on business support services with Kent Police and shares staff, there is an impact on these workforce proportions which makes direct comparison with other forces difficult.

The number of Essex’s police officers in frontline roles is planned to reduce by 168 from 3,075 in March 2010 to 2,907 by March 2015, as the following chart shows. The proportion of those remaining on the front line is projected to increase from 88 percent to 92 percent. This compares to an overall increase across England and Wales from 89 percent to 92

percent and shows Essex Police is now in line with other forces and indicates that the force is successfully protecting frontline crime-fighting roles as it makes its cuts. This is commendable.

The following chart shows the 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

- The force's plans to increase the proportion of the workforce allocated to frontline roles while meeting its savings requirement over the spending review.
- After a shaky start at the beginning of this spending review period the force is now developing better plans for providing local policing effectively in the future. The force is completing a further review which will transfer 500 officers to local policing roles from centralised functions and there will also be a change to shift patterns.
- The force's collaboration with Kent Police is strong and has contributed to its savings, including the notable collaboration of support services. The force has identified opportunities for further collaboration in the future.
- A robust change programme has made use of business improvement tools to achieve efficiencies and savings. A number of improvements have been introduced to ensure that benefits are realised. Further opportunities to work more effectively have been identified.
- Essex has achieved 28 percent of savings by reducing non-pay costs over the spending review. It has plans to further reduce these over the next three years through its collaborated procurement capability and rationalising assets, such as estates and fleet.
- The force is successfully protecting frontline police officer crime-fighting roles while making the necessary spending review savings.

## 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 an annual planning cycle in place which is informed by an assessment of demand. As part of the force's change programme process, the force has assessed demand and the management of risk when reviewing the following functions: response and patrol, PCSOs, a number of specialised policing units (such as roads, firearms and dogs) and operational support. As a result of these assessments, decisions were made to reduce significantly the size of the specialist firearms team and the operational support unit. The force now has a better understanding of demand in relation to domestic abuse and its custody services. There has also been a review demand in respect of serious and organised crime which has contributed to further savings being achieved through the SCD collaboration.

The force has been working with an external organisation to assist it in developing a more sophisticated analysis of demand. This has helped the force to better understand, for example, the length of time officer spend dealing with a range of different types of incidents. However this work has been limited to demand associated with incidents reported by the public to the force control room. It has not captured other sources of demand or requests for service, for instance through cases reported by local authority partners to a safeguarding unit or directly to officers on patrol.

Although a number of pieces of work relating to assessing demand are taking place the force is not currently drawing all the information together so that it has a clear and coherent picture of overall demand. The force recognises that this is the next step that it needs to take.

### How efficiently does the force allocate its resources?

The force has already identified that improvements need to be made to the shift patterns of operational staff to better match the needs of the public. It has plans to streamline the process by which calls to the force control room are managed. At present, a number of different teams spend a significant proportion of their time endeavouring to keep the list of open incidents on the force's command and control system at a manageable level. This process is inefficient and there are examples of staff regularly being drawn away from prevention and engagement activities with communities.

Chief officers have identified a number of posts which are considered critical in order to meet force priorities. These posts are reviewed at monthly resourcing panel meetings to minimise vacancies. Requests from district leads for more resources are considered and decisions to allocate resources made based on the needs of the whole force.

Operation Insight is a policing initiative that has taken a predictive approach to tackling domestic burglaries in the County. The results have been encouraging and the force is currently considering how a similar approach might be applied to tackle a range of other issues.

In some districts, the force has established multi-agency teams where police work jointly with partners such as the local authority, housing agencies and the Department for Work and Pensions. These teams are being used to pilot the concept of 'community hubs' with a view to establishing similar arrangements across the force area. This will include a review of how the force engages with local communities.

Although discussions have taken place at a senior level with health partners, the force has not yet established the type of joint working arrangements to deal with mental health issues that we have seen in other forces.

The force's deployment process is not as efficient as it could be. It aims to attend priority-graded calls within an hour. However the force is now maintaining that it classifies too many calls as priorities which makes it difficult to manage the response to them effectively. The force's process for managing scheduled appointments is unnecessarily complex. Victims often have to repeat their account of events to several different people as they are passed from department to department. The force has recognised that it needs to improve the way it deals with calls of this nature. These issues are frustrating staff who feel that they are unable to use their discretion in dealing with a range of incidents.

A relatively small proportion of the workforce in Essex use mobile data terminals, but those who do are fairly positive about the benefits they bring, enabling more efficient working. However the wider use of new mobile devices has taken a lower priority due to the impending launch of Athena, a new integrated computer system. This will bring together a number of applications designed to better support frontline policing and criminal investigations while significantly reducing duplication. The force will not have the capacity to progress the roll-out of mobile devices until Athena is successfully implemented at the beginning of 2015. The force has introduced body-worn cameras which has already led to an increase in the number of cases where the defendant pleads guilty at court. The force has made a bid to the Home Office innovation fund to support rolling out body-worn cameras more widely.

The investment that the force has made in improving its understanding of demand provides it with opportunities to make more informed decisions about the way it deploys resources to work more efficiently and effectively.

## 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.

### Calls for service

HMIC examined whether Essex 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, Essex Police had maintained the same target response times of: within 15 minutes for calls classed as ‘emergency’ (also known as Grade 1) in urban settings and within 20 minutes in rural settings. Over the same period, calls classed as a ‘priority’ (also known as Grade 2) had a target response time of within 60 minutes.

Over that period, the force met its target response time for urban ‘emergency’ calls 88.3 percent of the time in 2010/11, and 91.4 percent of the time in 2013/14. The force also met its target response time for rural ‘emergency’ calls 85 percent of the time in 2010/2011, and 90.9 percent of the time in 2013/14. In respect of ‘priority’ calls, the force met its target 90 percent of the time across 2010/11 and 77.6 percent in 2013/14.

The following table compares the force’s performance in 2010/11 to 2013/14.

<b>Calls for service</b>	<b>2010/11</b>	<b>2013/14</b>
Percentage of urban emergency calls on target	88.3	91.4
Percentage of rural emergency calls on target	85.0	90.9
Percentage of priority calls on target	90.0	77.6

Over the spending review, attendance for emergency has improved although response to priority calls attended in target 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 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 Essex area.

In 2014, Essex Police allocated 53 percent of its police officers to visible roles. This is 5.6 percentage points lower than the number allocated in 2010, and broadly in line with 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, Essex Police allocated 57 percent of these staff to visible roles. This is 6.0 percentage points lower than it allocated in 2010, and also below the 60 percent figure for England and Wales.

HMIC conducted a survey<sup>1</sup> 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 Essex, 6 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, 82 percent of respondents in Essex said they felt safe from crime where they lived, compared to 84 percent of respondents in England and Wales. Finally, 4 percent of Essex respondents 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 2010/12 and 2013/14 (the first three years of the spending review), Essex Police force reduced recorded crime (excluding fraud) by 2 percent, compared with 14 percent in

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

England and Wales. Over this period, victim-based crime (that is, crimes where there is a direct victim – an individual, a group, or an organisation) reduced by 2 percent, compared with 14 percent in England and Wales.

Looking just at the last 12 months, recorded crime (excluding fraud) rose by 0.7 percent, in comparison to a reduction of 1.3 percent for 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 recorded crime and anti-social behaviour rates in Essex (per head of population) compared with the rest of England and Wales.

<b>12 months to March 2014</b>	<b>Rate per 1,000 population</b>	<b>England and Wales rate per 1,000 population</b>
Crimes (excluding fraud)	57.1	61.1
Victim-based crime	51.5	54.3
Sexual offences	1.1	1.1
Burglary	7.9	7.8
Violence against the person	11.2	11.1
ASB incidents	30.9	37.2

While crime rates in Essex are lower than those across England and Wales the force recognises that it has more to do to improve its comparable performance and is aiming for improvements in its own performance year on year.

It is important that crimes are investigated effectively and the perpetrator brought to justice. When sufficient evidence is available to identify who has committed a crime, it can be described as detected. Essex Police’s detection rate (for crimes excluding fraud) for the 12 months to March 2014 was 26 percent. This is in line with the England and Wales’ sanction detection rate of 26 percent.

We have chosen these types of crime to give an indication of offending levels in the Essex 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](http://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, 82.5 percent ( $\pm$  1.6 percent) of victims were satisfied with the overall service provided by Essex Police. This is lower than the figure for England and Wales of 85.2 percent ( $\pm$  0.2 percent).

## Changes to how the public can access services

Forces are exploring different ways in which the public can access policing services.

Essex currently has twenty-five police stations, eight of which are classed as 'Tier 1', open between 08:00 - 00:00 and seventeen are classed as 'Tier 2', open between 12:00 - 18:00.

The force is developing options on future opening hours and police stations with a view to moving towards a profile of stations and opening hours that are more suited to public demand. However changes are not planned until alternative public access routes are made available. There are some examples of the force co-locating with partners, although it recognises that there are opportunities to increase these numbers in the future.

## Summary



**Good**

- The force has made a comprehensive assessment of demand, and of the challenges it faces.
- There is strong evidence of resources being allocated to match policing priorities. Shift patterns are being reviewed so that resources better match demand, but progress in achieving greater efficiency is hindered by the force's current IT systems, which will be replaced soon.
- The force has been successful in reversing some of the adverse effects on service provision that resulted from changes made early in the spending review period. However there is scope to further improve the quality of service the public by working smarter.
- Although the force has achieved a reduction in crime over the spending review this is lower reduction than that achieved by other forces. The levels of victim satisfaction in Essex are lower too. However, the force continues to achieve lower overall crime levels than elsewhere in 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.