His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary
and Fire & Rescue Services

Police performance

Getting a grip

PEEL spotlight report

Contents

Foreword

This report brings together the findings from our police effectiveness, efficiency and legitimacy (PEEL) 2021/22 inspection programme, which is our broadest assessment of the performance of all 43 police forces in England and Wales.

Put simply, too often and in too many forces, the public is being failed, either at the first point of contact in the response to a call for help or in the service a victim of crime receives.

In my view there are two fundamental issues that policing needs to address to support improvements.

Firstly, chief constables and senior police leaders must improve the way they run their force. Governance and performance management often lack grip. Too many forces make decisions based on poor data or insufficient analysis of data. And forces' financial and strategic planning is often short-term and short-sighted, creating avoidable problems.

Secondly, there must be greater investment in first-line supervisors. They are critical to improving performance and developing the right culture. But they are often being let down.

As I set out in the *State of Policing 2022* report, the public's trust and confidence in the police are at an all-time low. The police must focus on doing what matters most and doing it well.

While this report rightly highlights areas where improvements are needed, it also includes areas where we have found the police are getting things right. Forces must learn from each other, and they should consider if the positive practice described in this report can be applied in their own area.

Andy Cooke QPM DL
His Majesty's Chief Inspector of Constabulary

Summary

Poor performance management is leading to poor service delivery

Our inspections found that too many forces were failing to properly understand and manage their own performance.

Without a full understanding of performance data, and a robust and purposeful performance framework and governance processes, forces can't do the following:

- Become more effective. Many forces don't understand what issues are most important to tackle, how their performance can be measured, how they should change and what works in tackling issues.

- Become more efficient. Forces struggle to explain what they have to do to improve, and how much it costs. This prevents them from using limited resources efficiently and hinders them when they ask for local or national (England and Wales) policy changes or seek increases in funding.

- Conduct performance analysis, identifying the underlying problems leading to underperformance. Without this information, forces can't plan for effective changes to improve their service.

- Be confident in the legitimacy of policing. In too many areas, forces don't understand whether there is disproportionality or not. Without an understanding of if, where and how they might be treating people unfairly, forces can't give explanations when concerns are raised.

If forces fail to recognise the importance of meaningful performance frameworks, they will be unable to provide the high-quality service the public deserves.

Poor use of data is leading to poorly informed decisions

We found the police weren't collecting data about all the things they should be, and where they did, they weren't accurately and consistently analysing it. This issue was highlighted in the _State of Policing 2022_ report.

Police forces complete many national (England and Wales) data returns, including annual data returns to the Home Office. Yet too many police forces made major strategic and operational decisions based on poor and often simplistic data and analysis. They failed to consider the context of the data, the quality of the data,

the risk it carries and the potentially significant unintended consequences of their decisions.

No organisation can plan well for the future without good, accurate data and a clear understanding of what the data means, and how it can be used to make improvements.

Inadequate understanding of demand means some forces operate in crisis mode

In too many forces, we found planning had become short-term and unsustainable. At times we found an over-reliance on seeking an increase in the council tax precept to offset optimistic but often unrealistic savings plans.

Some forces looked at demand only at a high level using basic data. As a result, they were continually in crisis mode. This resulted in personnel being taken from their usual duties to cover gaps, with no clear plan to address these issues longer-term. And this was often done without full consideration of the consequences.

It is critical that forces understand their demand so they can make best use of their resources to, for example, answer calls for service or so they have enough officers and staff to conduct effective investigations.

The workforce is increasingly under-resourced and under-skilled

Forces told us that they were regularly at minimum staffing levels. Many forces also had difficulties recruiting and retaining officers and staff. Forces' ability to have the right people available is being hindered by the increase in the number of young-in-service officers. These officers, while dedicated, lack experience, and they need training while they build their skills.

This can lead to non-emergency calls for help from the public waiting days for a response, or investigations failing because key lines of enquiry have been missed. And it can result in high-risk offenders being poorly managed, which puts the public at risk of harm.

We found similar problems with police staff. Some specialist roles, such as analyst posts, can be hard to recruit.

Our inspections also found some strategic leaders were unfamiliar with the areas of work under their management. Due to insufficient operational knowledge, they were less able to properly lead, support, develop and challenge their specialist teams. This further reduces forces' ability to work effectively in high-risk areas of policing.

In too many cases, there was a lack of recognition of this issue and any plans to address it.

Already scarce resources shouldn't be focused on non-police activity and 'failure demand'

Our inspections have shown that officers were spending a high proportion of their time responding to demand that was unrelated to policing and better addressed by other organisations. This was particularly the case for mental health.

'Failure demand' – where a member of the public calls many times because their issue wasn't resolved at the first contact – was also affecting call volumes. This type of demand is preventable through better-quality initial responses and targeted partnership working.

While some forces have a clear understanding of demand and make well-considered multi-agency plans to address it, this is not widespread. This can have a significant impact on the quality and timeliness of response to the public.

First-line supervisors are being let down

First-line supervisors are critical to the service the public receives and to managing the performance and well-being of their teams. We found supervisors frequently had high workloads, particularly in specialist teams, which made good supervision more difficult. And they were often inexperienced (and managing inexperienced teams). They often lacked sufficient training, didn't always have access to the right technology and could be unaware of the importance of collecting data and using information to help manage workloads and performance.

Our crime file reviews found too many examples of investigations with no supervisor oversight. Where it did exist it often lacked direction to help the investigation progress. We found supervisors signed off poor investigation plans and inadequate risk assessments. Most concerningly we saw investigations being agreed by supervisors as closed when there were still open lines of enquiry. Given the unacceptably low positive crime outcome rates, this must improve.

Forces are often failing to invest in these critical first-line supervisors and support them in performing their vital role well.

The public is too often being failed at the first point of contact

Our inspections found that too often there were long delays in calls from the public being answered. This was particularly true for non-emergency 101 calls.

In too many cases vulnerability and repeat victims weren't identified. Good-quality risk assessments that support the most appropriate response weren't completed or recorded for others to see.

And there was a lack of consistency in the advice given to callers on keeping themselves safe and preserving evidence.

The public has a valid expectation that when it calls the emergency services, the call will be answered in a reasonable time and dealt with appropriately.

All forces need to make significant improvements in this area, or it will further undermine public trust and confidence in policing.

Introduction

Background

This report focuses on the findings from our police effectiveness, efficiency and legitimacy (PEEL) 2021/22 inspection programme, which assesses the performance of the 43 police forces in England and Wales.

The report is written in two parts:

- Part 1 examines national themes, both positive and negative.
- Part 2 explores a problem with performance management, which underpins some of the themes described in part 1.

We set out how a sharper focus on performance management and better use of data improves the service that police forces give to victims of crime and the communities they serve. The report considers what forces in England and Wales need to get right to improve, and the effect on the public and their own personnel if they don't.

Importantly, throughout this report we highlight some of the positive practice that we have found. We use the following definitions, which are aligned with the College of Policing's practice bank:

- 'Promising practice' describes the activities a force carries out that we have found make it work more efficiently and effectively in certain aspects of policing.
- 'Innovative practice' describes new ways of working that may not have been formally evaluated but have the potential to make the force work more efficiently and effectively in certain aspects of policing.

In this report, 'national' means applying to England and Wales.

What is performance management?

Performance management is a complex idea to define. A 2019 report by the Police Foundation found a lack of commonly agreed definitions for terms such as 'performance', 'outcomes', 'effectively' and 'efficiency'. The lack of collective understanding may be contributing to some of the problems we will go on to describe.

In this report we use the term 'performance management' to mean how police forces measure what they are doing, to better understand the quality of service they provide to the public so they can improve it.

Measuring performance is not the same as setting targets. Targets can be useful and there are a range of national police performance measures, including the Government's national crime and policing measures, contained in its *Beating crime plan*. However, if used in isolation, focusing on targets can lead to undesirable outcomes. For example, a target for arrests can result in people being arrested when this isn't justified, or where alternative resolutions may be better for the victim, offender or community.

Similarly, measuring performance isn't only about counting things – the number of arrests, convictions, etc. This quantitative data is important, but it is only one part of the picture. Qualitative data is also needed. This describes why something happens, what risk there might be, and how people, such as victims of crime, feel about it.

What is demand?

In this report we also use the term 'demand'. We use this term to refer to not only the amount of policing work, such as the number of calls for service and crime investigations, but also the complexity of the work and the risk it represents. This is because understanding demand is critical to managing performance.

What are data, information, knowledge and wisdom?

We also use the terms 'data', 'information', 'knowledge' and 'wisdom'. But what do those terms mean?

Data is a term used to describe facts and observations. For example, stop and search data includes the ethnicity of the person stopped, the names of those conducting the search, the reasons for the search, etc. Usefulness of data is limited until it is shaped into information that we can understand. Continuing our example, the stop and search data is then compared to other data, such as the ethnic makeup of the community, crime rates, etc. It gives the data context.

If we combine that information with expert opinion such as that from academia and victim experience, it increases our **knowledge** about an issue or subject. It helps us to understand what issues or trends might exist – for example, concerns about disproportionate use of stop and search powers on certain groups of people. This allows strategies to be developed and actions to be planned. It also helps to highlight the need for further data.

Wisdom is where the knowledge we have built in one or more policing areas is applied to another situation or a predicted problem. For example, are issues with stop and search the same as issues with police use of force, traffic stops or deaths following police contact? Is there a solution that would support improvements in all those areas? Can multiple problems be solved with a single approach? In this report we refer to wisdom through terms such as 'improvement' and 'learning'.

About us

His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) independently assesses the effectiveness and efficiency of police forces and fire and rescue services, in the public interest. In preparing our reports, we ask the questions the public would ask, and publish the answers in accessible form. We use our expertise to interpret the evidence and make recommendations for improvement.

Methodology

When producing this report, we used evidence from a range of sources including:

- our PEEL 2021/22 inspection programme, which assesses the performance of police forces in England and Wales (comprising all 2021/22 PEEL inspections);

- force management statements; and

- other sources, such as emerging and established academic research and guidance from the College of Policing and other national bodies and groups.

For more information on data sources, see Annex A.

Part 1 – National themes from PEEL 2021/22

Summary of grades

The police effectiveness, efficiency and legitimacy (PEEL) inspection programme is our rolling assessment of police forces in England and Wales. We use inspection findings, data analysis and our professional judgment to assess a force in several areas of policing. Each area of policing is given one of five grades – outstanding, good, adequate, requires improvement or inadequate.

Figure 1: HMICFRS judgment grades assigned to forces across England and Wales during PEEL 2021/22 inspections
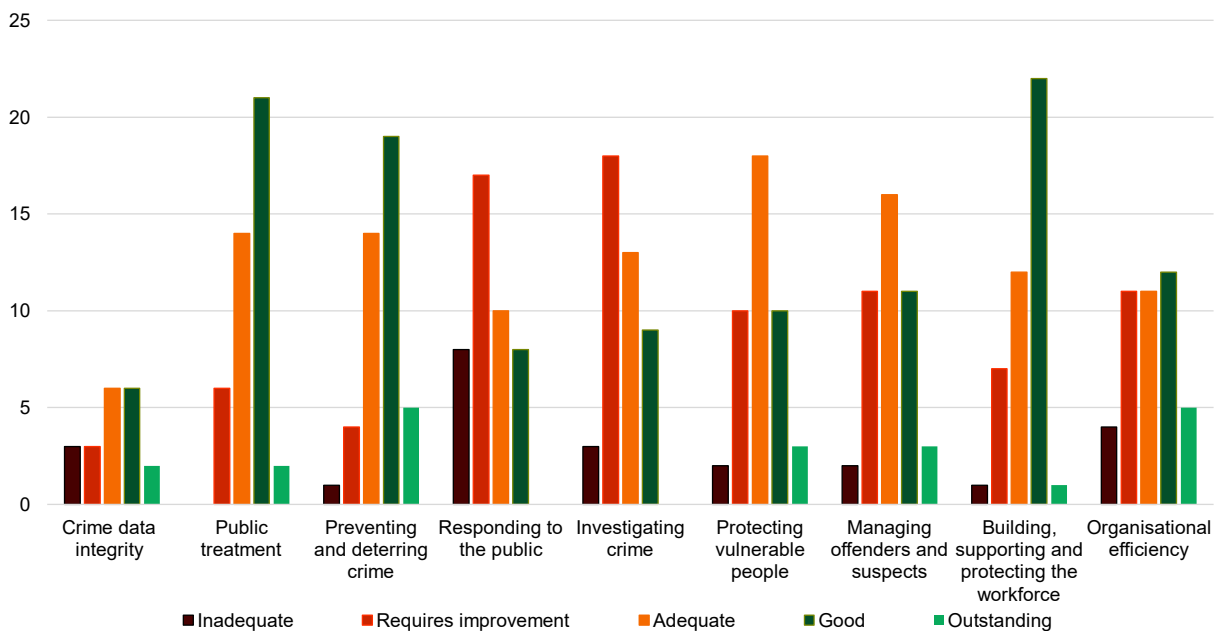
Source: PEEL data collection, HMICFRS

Figure 1 shows the spread of grades across the areas we inspected. (Crime data integrity isn't assessed for each force in each round of PEEL, which explains the lower numbers.) Of the 364 grades shown we gave the following gradings:

- outstanding: 6 percent
- good: 32 percent
- adequate: 31 percent

- requires improvement: 24 percent
- inadequate: 7 percent.

Our website provides more details on these inspections, including reports on individual forces.

Crime data integrity

Too often, forces fail to record crime involving antisocial behaviour

Forces must correctly record crimes following the National Crime Recording Standard. This is essential to providing a good service to victims and keeping the public safe. Unrecorded crimes are usually not investigated, which prevents offenders being brought to justice.

Progress since the start of the HMICFRS crime data integrity programme in 2014 has been positive. In 2014, we estimated that 80.5 percent of all crime (excluding fraud) was being recorded in England and Wales. Of particular concern, we also estimated that only 66.9 percent of violent crime and 74.2 percent of sexual offences were recorded. By the end of our 2021/22 inspections, we estimated that crime recording had improved to 92.4 percent for all crime (excluding fraud), 89.6 percent (with a confidence interval of +/- 0.5 percent) for violent crime and 95.7 percent (with a confidence interval of +/- 0.5 percent) for sexual offences.

Although progress continues to be made, there are still areas where significant improvements are needed. In too many forces we found antisocial behaviour (ASB) was still poorly recorded. Across our inspections we reviewed 1,336 incidents when a victim reported they had been targeted by ASB (termed 'personal ASB'). We found 509 reports of crime within these incidents, of which only 240 were recorded. This must improve.

Forces that performed well in crime recording had a culture of recording crime without hesitation, which tends to lead to better outcomes for victims. These forces had directly involved chief officers and were good at analysing available data to improve their knowledge and deliver a better service to the public.

> **Promising practice: Training in recording crimes**
>
> South Yorkshire Police has an incident management team that has full oversight of crime, antisocial behaviour, public safety, and domestic and hate incidents. This team provides training to officers on the National Crime Recording Standard. The team performs analysis of all errors in crime recording across the force, and individuals who make repeated errors are given one-to-one training. The team has also provided National Crime Recording Standard training online, with a 90 percent pass mark required.
>
> The force has found that this approach has reduced repeated errors.

Public treatment

Policing in the UK is based on a model of consent, where the public plays a critical role in supporting the police, and the police are a key part of communities. Some of the most intrusive police powers are those allowing the police to stop and search people without arresting them and, when necessary, to use force on people. It is critical that the police use these important powers fairly.

Understanding of the disproportionate use of police powers varies between forces

Stop and search and use of force are important, legitimate tactics, vital to the police's ability to fight crime. However, they are also some of the most intrusive. When the police use their powers disproportionately – in differing proportions on different ethnic groups – it causes suspicion among some communities that they are being unfairly targeted.

Forces that performed well in this area monitored these tactics closely. They made best use of available data to develop their knowledge of trends, and identified good practice and lessons learned. It is important that forces understand their use of these powers and the implications of their use, and that individual officers, teams and supervisors feel confident in using them. For the public, this level of analysis is important for trust and confidence.

We found that some forces monitored use of these powers closely, while other forces had data available but their review processes were superficial. These forces didn't consider detailed information on offenders, locations, officers and outcomes, nor could they explain disproportionality. Where there is incorrect or incomplete data, forces can't make fully informed decisions on how to improve their use of powers.

Our inspections found the collection and analysis of stop and search data had improved since our last reporting of it. However, further improvements must be made. We were disappointed to find many examples of data on ethnicity and disability for use of force not being collected. We made a national recommendation about ethnicity data

in our 2021 report *Disproportionate use of police powers – A spotlight on stop and search and the use of force*.

Data for use of force is often less developed and of a poorer quality than stop and search data. Additionally, there are continued problems with the failure to submit and record all use-of-force incidents, especially those when handcuffs are applied and the suspect is compliant. This is particularly concerning given the importance of understanding the officer's decision to use this intrusive tactic. We estimate that the use of force is under-recorded in most forces. This is based on there being more arrests than use-of-force reports submitted. (In the year ending 31 March 2022, 663,036 police-recorded arrests and 608,164 police-recorded use-of-force incidents.) The collection and understanding of data is essential to improving use of these powers and the community perceptions of the police.

Forces must improve their use of data on these police powers if they are to build public trust and confidence.

Openness and community involvement could be improved and in turn could improve policing

Most forces use a range of methods to work with and consult their communities. In some forces we found good use of independent advisory groups and external scrutiny groups to do this. These were often – but not consistently – chaired by a person independent of the police. The groups can provide advice on stop and search and the use of force and make recommendations for the police to consider.

We found that in some forces these groups were given no detail about how the force monitors stop and search and the use of force, or they didn't have the data sufficiently explained to them. Some forces also didn't share the findings of external scrutiny meetings with the public.

Promising practice: External scrutiny of stop and search powers

Bedfordshire Police has a community stop search scrutiny panel. This panel is supplied with comprehensive data including volume of searches, percentage where police action results from a search, percentage of drug-related searches, reasons for searches, locations, and ethnicity data and disproportionality ratios.

The scrutiny panel has challenged the force on issues such as insufficient recording of reasonable grounds for a search, not following its own policies, and concerns over some body-worn video footage. Actions are recorded and feedback provided to individual officers.

The panel has had an impact on the force training in this area and has referred some incidents to the force professional standards department for further investigation.

We encourage forces to improve the independent challenge of the use of intrusive tactics. This should include challenge from the public about the quality of the data that was collected by the force, the evaluation of the value of those tactics and opportunities to improve outcomes.

Independent challenge can also help the police better understand how specific groups are affected by policing, such as young people, ethnic minority groups and those from the LGBTQ+ community. However, some forces didn't have sufficient representation or any representation on their panels from these groups. We encourage forces to review their panels to make sure they are sufficiently representative and independent.

Promising practice: Seeking scrutiny from the youth community

Essex Police youth scrutiny panel is made up of 15–16-year-old students who have been excluded from mainstream schools. Many of the young people on the panel wouldn't normally seek involvement with the police.

Students are given redacted footage from body-worn video to watch before commenting on the actions of the officers involved. The force records this feedback on a report form and feeds it back to the stop and search co-ordinator. The co-ordinator then provides feedback to the individual officers and their supervisors. Learning from this panel is combined with learning from other panels and fed into the internal scrutiny panel for further improvements to be made.

To maximise the benefit of external scrutiny, forces must make sure they provide members with necessary data and information, including access to body-worn video. Recommendations made by the panels should be actioned, and the results fed back to them and the wider community. This will help build trust and confidence by providing openness and accountability to the public.

The use and review of body-worn video varies between forces

Body-worn video (BWV) improves safety for both officers and the public. It is important officers use this when using intrusive tactics, including the lead-up to them.

Our inspections found much more widespread use of BWV in all forces since our last cycle of PEEL inspections. But the way the equipment was used varied. In some forces there was either no policy on the use of BWV, or policies weren't comprehensive, or not enforced and monitored. For example, we found incidents where the BWV camera wasn't used despite policy and guidance suggesting it should have been.

If forces don't monitor compliance with policy, or regularly review available footage, they miss opportunities to review the reality of how encounters are being conducted. They cannot assess whether officers are treating the public fairly and with respect, or improve use of these powers to maintain public trust and confidence.

Promising practice: Specifying when and how to use body-worn video

Kent Police's policy for body-worn video (BWV) highlights that officers must use it when exercising any police power, including use of force, stop and search, making an arrest and when attending domestic incidents. If BWV isn't used in these circumstances, the policy requires officers to document the reasons why.

Users are encouraged to obtain as much evidence as possible, provide additional commentary if possible and begin recording at the earliest opportunity. There is clear guidance on the evidential value of BWV in criminal cases – for example, for recording the location of objects and evidence at the scene of a crime or during the search of premises. However, the force makes sure that staff don't see a video recording as a replacement for a written record of incidents.

Training in the use of intrusive tactics remains poor in many forces

Training can support officers in using police powers fairly and effectively.

Although we previously reported – in our *Disproportionate use of police powers report* – that training on stop and search has improved, during our recent PEEL inspections we found a decline in regular, timely refresher training. And we found there were gaps in too many officers' skills and knowledge. Forces must make sure that personnel are trained regularly on the use of stop and search, and that training courses are updated and reflect the latest practice.

The College of Policing introduced new, scenario-based, Officer Safety Training during our inspections, with a requirement for all forces to adopt it by April 2024. Those who have completed it have given positive feedback on this approach, and the College of Policing is in the process of conducting a peer review.

Promising practice: Training on handcuffing

Essex Police provides training on handcuffing to every student officer during both initial and refresher personal safety training.

This training reinforces the fact that any intentional application of force to a person, including handcuffing, is unlawful unless it can be justified. The training explains that justification comes not only from establishing a legal right to use handcuffs, but also by identifying good objective grounds for doing so. Officers are given clear guidance and advice, not only regarding the initial arrest but also on how long handcuffs are applied for.

Training is designed to make officers feel confident in identifying when handcuffs can or should be used. Officers are taught to always use the national decision model and police Code of Ethics alongside impact factors including the individual's age, strength and size, and the seriousness of the offence.

Learning isn't always used to improve use of powers

Better performing forces used data and external reviews to identify individuals – both officers and members of the public – who were involved in stop and search and the use of force more frequently. This helped them to understand if people are being unfairly targeted, and to check that officers are conducting searches well and for good reason.

We found many forces used supervisors to dip sample forms for stop and search and use of force, as well as BWV recordings, to check that officers were compliant with policy and legislation. However, this was not common practice in some forces, and neither were reviews timely. Guidance given to supervisors was also limited.

Forces must make sure that supervision is purposeful and that where issues are found, they lead to improved training and, where needed, direct feedback to officers.

Preventing and deterring crime

Preventing crime before it occurs means less harm to communities and reduces demand on forces. A successful police force recognises this and invests in it.

Forces must commit to crime prevention activity

The basis of crime prevention work is the neighbourhood policing team. We found many forces understood the importance of preventative neighbourhood policing and invested in it. Their neighbourhood work is benchmarked against the College of Policing guidelines, and specific neighbourhood training is offered to professionalise the role.

Our inspections found some forces made good use of technology to understand neighbourhood demand, prioritise their work and see the effect they are having on crime and antisocial behaviour rates in their community. For example, South Yorkshire Police has introduced a technology-led performance framework for neighbourhood teams.

In some forces there are policies that make clear when it is appropriate for neighbourhood personnel to be moved to manage demand in other policing areas. Those policies are monitored.

However, most forces have reported real challenges in having enough people to respond to expected demand. This has meant a tendency in many for neighbourhood officers to be removed from their usual duties to deal with emergency response incidents. This is often ad hoc and leaves police community support officers (PCSOs) as the main neighbourhood resource. The *State of Policing 2022* report also highlighted the reduction in PCSO numbers in many forces. Taking neighbourhood officers away from their role routinely can make it difficult for neighbourhood teams to work effectively with support services in the community to prevent crime and harm.

Promising practice: Minimising abstraction from neighbourhood policing

Humberside Police has a clear process to manage and measure time spent by neighbourhood officers doing non-neighbourhood work, which is known as abstraction.

The force target is for neighbourhood officers to be on 'their area' 90 percent of the time and for police community support officers, that target is 95 percent. A neighbourhood co-ordinator (usually an inspector or sergeant) acts as a single point of contact for any unplanned staff movement. The use of this role not only supports management of competing workloads but sends a clear message about the value of neighbourhood teams.

Police personnel we spoke to told us that they believed this approach removed the assumption that neighbourhood officers would fill gaps. They also described "adult conversations" taking place before any decisions to move officers away from neighbourhood work.

Since the process was introduced, time spent away from neighbourhood duties has been minimal.

Forces need to embed a force-wide high-quality problem-solving mindset

Problem-solving is a way to tackle crime and disorder at the source. Using the [SARA](#) (scanning, analysis, response, assessment) model, a specific problem is identified, and data analysis is used to better understand it. This helps to develop targeted activity, often with partner agencies, to address antisocial behaviour or prevent crime. The activity is then assessed to see how successful it was. This helps the force develop the wisdom to tackle other similar issues, or to learn from things that haven't worked. To effectively reduce crime, forces need to train all staff and officers on the use of problem-solving and make sure it is woven into all policing activity.

We found that, although crime prevention was a priority in most forces, problem-solving was still largely viewed as a neighbourhood policing activity. Some officers were unsure about the need for it and how to develop problem-solving plans. And we found examples of poor problem-solving plans, which were reviewed infrequently. Too often the evaluation of problem-solving approaches, and how learning is shared between teams, was inconsistent or missing entirely.

Forces that performed well had local problem-solving plans in place that were regularly reviewed by supervisors. Plans were recorded on the force system and co-ordinated centrally to support the sharing of promising practice and assess success. The plans had good involvement of partner agencies, either in actions they were responsible for or in the review of the plans for outcomes.

Promising practice: Collaboration with partners on problem-solving

Cumbria Police, in collaboration with partners including housing, fire and rescue, councils and charities such as Safer Cumbria and MIND, has created six local focus hubs.

At some hubs, these partners are co-located, whereas at others, partners use Microsoft Teams. Any agency can make a referral to a hub, where partners share information and develop a problem-solving plan. The agency that makes the referral is responsible for the co-ordination of the plan, and each plan is discussed monthly.

Forces are increasingly using diversion schemes to reduce further offending

The aim of diversion schemes is to examine the causes of an individual's offending and to either put support in place to address it or help change behaviour. Schemes like this are often referred to as 'reachable/teachable moments'. This term recognises that there can be key opportunities, such as serious injury or police contact, that may help to change someone's behaviour if support is on offer.

During our inspections we were pleased to find that forces used a range of diversionary approaches that focus on <u>vulnerable</u> people. These included young people (recognising that offending may be because of exploitation), female offenders and those with mental health issues. These are high-value schemes that can prevent individuals committing crime through early intervention and reduce the impact of crime on communities.

However, while use of such schemes is increasing, it isn't widespread and forces need to improve the evaluation of their use, which is often lacking.

Innovative practice: Referring violent offenders to 'navigators'

When people attend Accident and Emergency with a violence-related injury and are arrested for a violent crime, South Yorkshire's violence reduction unit refers them to 'navigators'. The approach is based on the idea that when someone is in crisis, they may consider a different path and accept support. Navigators, who are employed by the hospital trust, engage victims and offenders with a network of organisations that can support them with housing, employment, substance misuse and more. A similar approach is taken in custody.

Innovative practice: Referring drug users to intervention schemes

Norfolk Constabulary has been trialling a Home Office-funded pilot programme called Project ADDER (addiction, diversion, disruption, enforcement and recovery). The project employs dedicated youth workers in custody suites to identify and refer drug users to intervention schemes. The programme aims to break the cycle of addiction, which can often lead to offending. To date, 90 percent of child detainees have met with ADDER youth workers.

Promising practice: Crime prevention education for children and older people

South Yorkshire Police has a Joint Community Safety Department with the local fire and rescue service. Part of the collaboration is the Lifewise Centre, which is a building set up as a mock-up town centre, designed by a local theatre to give an immersive community safety experience.

Community safety staff, police community support officers, volunteers, and partners such as the local bus company and retired magistrates run events focused on working with children before they go to secondary school. The topics covered by the programme have been designed in response to local problems and national trends. The scenarios used by the centre include mock courts, child sexual exploitation in a bedroom and knife crime.

The centre also hosts Live-Life-Wise for older people. This programme covers the different crimes that affect older people, such as fraud and online crime. The centre works with Age UK to teach older people about these crimes and how to prevent themselves becoming victims.
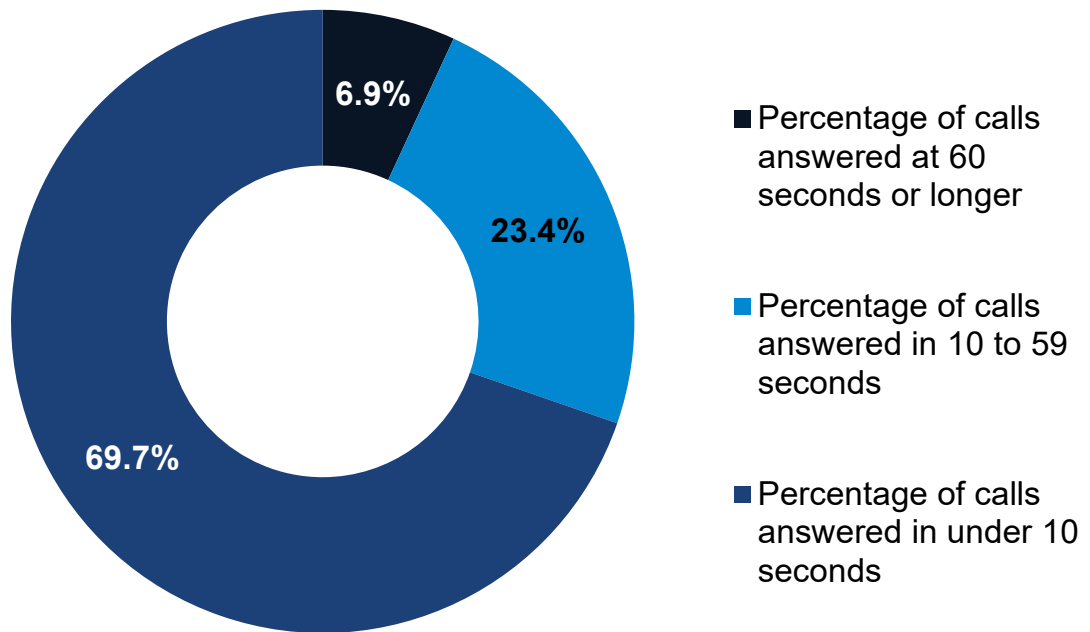
Responding to the public

Responding to the public was the poorest-performing area in our PEEL 2021/22 inspection programme, with no forces assessed as outstanding. In this area of policing, we awarded 17 of 43 forces 'requires improvement' grades and the highest number (8) of 'inadequate' grades for any area. This is extremely troubling. The public have a valid expectation that when they call the emergency services, their calls will be answered in a reasonable time and dealt with appropriately. Our inspections show that many forces face real challenges in this area and most forces need to improve.

Forces need to answer calls quickly and, where they don't, understand why

Members of the public can contact the police in a range of ways. But in most cases contact is still through phone calls. Irrespective of the way contact is made, the response the public receives needs to be timely and professional, with the most appropriate response then provided.

The National Contact Management Strategy expects 999 calls to be answered in less than 10 seconds, due to their critical nature.

Figure 2: 999 call answer times by forces in England and Wales (excluding the City of London Police) between 1 November 2021 and 31 October 2022

6.9%

23.4%

69.7%

- Percentage of calls answered at 60 seconds or longer
- Percentage of calls answered in 10 to 59 seconds
- Percentage of calls answered in under 10 seconds

For data source, see Annex A.

Figure 2 shows that between 1 November 2021 and 31 October 2022, 69.7 percent of 999 calls made in England and Wales were answered in under 10 seconds. However, a total of 30.3 percent of 999 calls were answered outside expected timescales with 6.9 percent of these taking longer than a minute to answer.

The average answer time between 1 November 2021 and 31 October 2022 varied by force and month. The shortest average was 4.4 seconds in one force in February 2022, and the longest average was 44.7 seconds in another force in October 2022. There are many reasons why these variances might exist, including time lags between the call being initially answered by BT and then passed to the relevant emergency service. However, our inspections showed a lack of detailed understanding by forces of their own performance, and a lack of robust governance to mitigate or improve variances and reasons for them. Without this knowledge, improvements to timeliness of call answering can't happen.

Forces need to improve their understanding of abandoned 101 calls

Our inspections found that abandoned non-emergency 101 calls – when members of the public hang up before their call is answered – often exceeded standards set in the National Contact Management Strategy. This may also increase demand on 999 calls, which people try as an alternative.

Many forces don't understand how many calls for service are abandoned and why. Some forces think that some abandoned calls are due to callers being diverted to other contact methods, such as Single Online Home, or because they heard about support information while waiting for their call to be answered. However, no force was

able to provide evidence for this assumption. This means they can't assure themselves that opportunities to report crime and prevent harm haven't been missed.

Promising practice: Use of telephone callbacks to improve response to 101 callers

Some forces have introduced a new system in control rooms called Q-Buster. This allows the caller to request a callback in periods of high demand rather than waiting in a queue.

Some forces are still evaluating the impact of this system, but in Humberside Police this has reduced the numbers of abandoned calls over a 12-month period. The force told us that during this period, 12.5 percent of non-emergency 101 callers requested a callback, with 96.5 percent of those callbacks being successful.

The police don't always collect or publish information on attendance times

Timely attendance at calls for service is essential to safeguarding victims and securing evidence for investigations. Our inspections found wide-ranging issues with the recording of data on attendance times at incidents. Some forces didn't have published attendance targets at all, and there were discrepancies between forces on when the time for attendance is measured from. For example, some measure the attendance time from when the call is received from a member of the public; others measure it from when the response is allocated for further action.

The effect of poor and varied data is the national inability to compare attendance times for the purposes of improving them. At a local level, the lack of detail on the difference in attendance times between rural and urban areas can mean forces can't understand the effect of police building closures. Forces that use data well can make informed decisions when considering moving officers from city centre locations to more rural locations with poor transport links to improve attendance times.

Recommendation 1a

By January 2024, the National Police Chiefs' Council should:

- agree a standard approach to how attendance times are measured in all forces; and
- set a national standard for attendance times.

The National Police Chiefs' Council should make sure they consult with the Home Office to allow the timely collection of data once the standards are introduced.

Recommendation 1b

By January 2024, to allow an understanding of whether forces are meeting the national standard, the Home Office, in discussion with the National Police Chiefs' Council, should develop a set of principles for the collection and analysis of force data.

Recommendation 1c

By July 2024, the Home Office, in collaboration with the National Police Chiefs' Council, should pilot the collection and analysis of attendance time data.

Recommendation 1d

By January 2025, the Home Office should roll out the process for the collection, analysis and publication of attendance time data for all forces.

Forces need to provide a consistent victim service across all contact channels

Many forces try to reduce demand on the 101 number by diverting victims to other options where appropriate. For example, there is an increased use of online crime reporting. This can reduce demand on call centres.

But forces must make sure that the level of response to online reports is no less than it would have been had the victim called. Our inspections found that many forces had no way of assessing and monitoring the performance of response to online crime reporting. This must improve.

Our inspections also identified that some forces gave members of the public the direct phone numbers of officers and staff – for example, in one force's harm reduction hub. This reduces the need for victims to contact 101 for updates on a case or to give the police further information. However, there are risks with this approach. Our inspections highlighted cases where members of the public contacted local beat officers directly with issues, which weren't always logged on to force IT systems. This can lead to an inappropriate police response and affect the intelligence the force has on local issues and crime.

Many forces can't manage call demand because they don't understand it

Our inspections found differences in how forces manage and understand their demand from 101 and 999 calls. This leads to differences in how they respond to increases in this demand and differences in the level of service the public receives.

Too many forces weren't managing their call demand on an almost daily basis. Some of these forces had plans in place to address the problem, but not all did. Other forces could manage their demand some of the time but were struggling at periods of high demand.

Better-performing forces used data, information and knowledge to guide their planning and staffing decisions, such as shift patterns for call handlers. They had enhanced supervision and leadership roles in control rooms and used technology to assist with non-emergency enquiries.

We found some forces had made good use of external support to review processes in control rooms. One example is Cumbria Police, which worked with an external consultancy company to map frequent, high-impact and preventable demand. By reducing preventable demand, forces can free up time to focus on meeting actual demand quickly. This is particularly important for 999 calls from vulnerable victims where an urgent response is critical.

Innovative practice: Using technology to understand demand in the control room

Humberside Police's control room helps it to understand its current demand, as well as forecast future demand and the staffing the force needs to meet it.

The force reviews historical data in 15-minute periods, running this each week to understand and predict demand and times of calls. The platform also gives staff flexibility in their start and finish times but still work within regulations. Staff can give their preferences in advance, which allows management to match those preferences to predicted periods of higher demand. Using the platform, management understands in detail exactly how long each task takes, including answering calls and taking breaks.

The identification of risk and vulnerability must improve

Risk and vulnerability aren't always immediately obvious. A seemingly low-level call about antisocial behaviour may mask the fact the caller is a repeat victim or there is an ongoing and increasing pattern of risk.

Too often, we found repeat or vulnerable victims were not identified. We were concerned to find that across England and Wales, in 32 percent (821) of the 2,540 cases we reviewed, checks to see if the caller was a repeat victim had not been completed. In 23 percent (590) of the 2,523 cases we reviewed, checks to see if the caller was a vulnerable victim hadn't been completed. In 24 percent (625) of the 2,622 cases we reviewed, an initial risk and needs assessment of the caller hadn't been completed.

A lack of understanding of risk and vulnerability affects the timeliness of the response the caller receives and the support they are offered. This can be detrimental to the quality of future investigations, the safety of the public, and trust and confidence in policing. We make a recommendation linked to this issue in our report on *The police response to burglary, robbery and other acquisitive crime*.

We found examples where incidents reported to police that had been assessed as low risk were taking up to nine days for a response, and there was a lack of evidence to suggest that the risk had been reassessed during this time. Forces should re-assess the risks where calls are still awaiting allocation, assure themselves that risk hasn't increased and consider alternative ways to manage the incident or escalate attendance.

Promising practice: Categorising 101 calls for service to assess priority

Suffolk Constabulary's 101 system allows the staff who receive the initial call from the member of the public to assess the call and place it into 1 of 14 'pots'. Pots cover things such as crime, antisocial behaviour, road traffic, and advice and guidance.

Our inspections found that staff were very skilled at using them. This means that 101 calls can be listed in priority order.

Call handlers need to be equipped to think beyond the obvious to identify hidden harm

In too many forces, our inspections found there was a need to improve the training of call handlers in identifying risk and vulnerability, and recording it.

Most forces use call scripts to support call handlers in getting the right information to understand what response is needed. However, call handlers also need to use their professional judgment to ask for additional details where there are indications of harm that aren't specifically being reported. Without this, opportunities to safeguard callers and other vulnerable members of a household, such as children, may be missed. This is an issue we found during our crime file review audits.

Forces that performed well in this area provided training and guidance to all control room and frontline officers and staff, which covered how to safeguard vulnerable members of the public and repeat victims. The forces regularly performed audits to check risk was being identified and addressed, and learned from the cases they reviewed. Officers and staff recorded the details of vulnerabilities on appropriate IT systems, which those attending incidents could easily access.

Promising practice: Vulnerability and active listening training for call handlers

Personnel working in the force control room at Cheshire Constabulary receive vulnerability training as part of their six-week induction course. In addition to this, they complete an active listening module based on police negotiator training. The aim of the training is to improve call handlers' awareness of vulnerability indicators, in particular hidden harm.

Following rollout of this training, dip sampling of calls showed improvements in the identification of vulnerability.

Promising practice: Joined-up training and guidance for call handlers in identifying and assessing vulnerability

Northumbria Police has trained all call handlers in threat risk and harm, with experts available on each shift to provide advice. This training is part of the protected learning built into shift patterns. The force has also widely distributed guidance in the force control room on identifying vulnerability.

The force carries out dip sampling, and reviews and acts on feedback from this. Assessments of risk are reviewed and updated where necessary. Flags to highlight vulnerability are updated on IT systems, which help to prioritise vulnerability incidents.

As a result of the guidance, personnel understand national definitions of vulnerability well.

Police must work with partners to make sure a response is given by the right service

Our inspections found that too often police were responding to incidents better dealt with by another organisation. While some forces are working with partners such as mental health services to try to address this issue, progress is not widespread. This is due to competing demands on those partners and a lack of structured strategic consideration between senior leads. This means that much of this demand remains with the police. This is diverting police time away from responding to crime.

Innovative practice: 'Right Care, Right Person' approach to incident response

Humberside Police has adopted the 'Right Care, Right Person' approach to respond to incidents. This has been developed in consultation with partners such as the NHS and the ambulance service.

The agreed process allows callers to be signposted to the most appropriate service when the issues they raise don't meet the threshold for police intervention. The approach makes sure that the right organisation is performing the right activity and helps partner organisations hold each other to account.

An example is reports of missing persons. The force has introduced a requirement for care homes and foster carers to complete a form for children who regularly go missing. This outlines some of the questions that would normally be asked when taking a missing persons call – for example, places the child normally goes and people they associate with. The information is kept on the Humberside Police system so it can be reviewed if the police receive a call. There is also an agreed expectation around the steps the carer or care home will take to find a child before contacting the police.

This process makes sure that people best placed to complete certain activities do complete them, and that important information is to hand to speed up the response provided.

The approach is also used for mental health demand. According to the force, this has resulted in a reduction in demand on the police from 80 percent to 29 percent for mental health-related incidents.

A similar approach is used in Lancashire Police with calls where there is a concern for safety and mental health. This helps ensure demand that could be better dealt with by another organisation is being directed to that organisation and away from the police.

For further information on this approach, see the College of Policing's practice bank.

Failure to give early crime scene preservation advice can undermine effective investigations

When the public report a crime, call handlers should make sure that they are safe and can remain safe, and that evidence is preserved.

Our inspections found inconsistencies in the quality and presence of safety and crime prevention advice given. Similar inconsistencies were found in supervisory reviews of calls to make sure crime prevention advice is given and is of good quality.

In 34 percent of the 1,037 case files we reviewed across 43 forces, callers weren't given appropriate advice on preservation of evidence. We set a national recommendation for forces on this issue in our report *The police response to burglary, robbery and other acquisitive crime*.

Some forces have taken the decision not to provide advice to callers, and many forces provide links to detailed online advice rather than give the advice direct to the caller. While forces may choose to do this in different ways, there is a lack of understanding of the effect of their chosen approach on the quality of investigation that follows.

Promising practice: Training call handlers on giving advice on crime prevention and evidence preservation

North Wales Police dip samples three calls for each call handler each month. Supervisors check that the call handler has given crime prevention and scene preservation advice to the caller. Call handlers receive training from crime scene investigators on evidence preservation. They also have access to action plans and guides for different incident types that help to make sure all the correct actions are taken.

Investigating crime

Investigating crime was the second poorest-performing area in our PEEL 2021/22 inspection programme. We assessed no force as outstanding, and we awarded the highest number of 'requires improvement' grades. Of the 558 areas for improvement we identified across our 43 inspections, 101 were linked to investigating crime.

We remain very concerned about the unacceptably low number of crimes that are solved following investigations. There needs to be a concerted effort across all forces to understand the issue and work to achieve better outcomes for victims. If all forces don't quickly get a grip on this issue, the public's confidence in policing will be further eroded. We intend to carry out a thematic inspection of police investigations in 2023–24.

Forces are closing investigations where there are still lines of enquiry

An outcome describes the way in which an investigation has been concluded – for example, a charge, caution or community resolution. An outcome also exists to describe when an investigation can no longer continue – for example, where there is a lack of evidence. Table 1 shows the crime outcomes that were assigned for all offences recorded in the year ending 31 March 2022, grouped by outcome.

Table 1: Grouped crime outcomes assigned for all offences recorded by forces in England and Wales in the year ending 31 March 2022

Outcome group	Proportion of outcomes assigned
Offences brought to justice	11.3
Prosecution or further action prevented or not in the public interest	2.8
Evidential difficulties: suspect identified; victim supports action	14.5
Evidential difficulties: victim does not support action	28.8
Responsibility for further action transferred to another body	1.5
Investigation complete – no suspect identified	38.2
Not yet assigned an outcome	2.9
Total	**100.0**

For data source and notes, see [Annex A](#).

Between the years ending 31 March 2015 and 31 March 2022, the offences brought to justice rate for victim-based crime and all crime declined; the rate for victim-based crime decreased from 22.7 percent to 8.3 percent (14.4 percentage points), and the rate for all crime decreased from 27.8 percent to around 11 percent (approximately 16.8 percentage points). These reductions reflect a decline in performance across forces in England and Wales regarding investigating crime.

We were disappointed that we continued to find many examples of the wrong outcome being used. For example, cases were finalised as 'Investigation complete – no suspect identified' where there were still lines of enquiry. In some cases, we saw no evidence that the victim had been informed of the outcome. This can have real implications for victims' trust and confidence in policing and their willingness to report future offences. It can lead to missed opportunities to bring offenders to justice, which can put the public at risk. And it can lead to missed opportunities to consider other sanctions when a court outcome isn't feasible, for example, [Stalking Protection Orders](#) or [sexual harm prevention orders](#).

Forces must get better at reviewing their use of outcomes to assure themselves that they are being applied correctly and if not, work out why and put plans in place to address it. We recognise that a criminal justice outcome isn't always the reason for a victim to call for help, but in many cases it is. The lack of understanding in forces of why cases are failing or whether the correct outcome is being applied is concerning. It makes it difficult to understand what improvements are needed to make sure victims aren't being prevented from accessing justice.

Forces don't allocate investigations to the most appropriate personnel

Investigations aren't always being led by people with the right skills.

A range of personnel carry out crime investigations, including police constables, detectives, specialist teams for serious crimes and sexual offences, and police staff investigators for crimes such as fraud and other financial crimes. The management and supervision of these personnel is critical. It helps make sure investigations are thorough and have the best chance of securing justice for victims. Equally it helps to identify training needs of investigators.

Our inspections found that many forces made poor decisions on which staff to allocate investigations to. For example, we found reports of rape being allocated to untrained and inexperienced investigators, and domestic abuse investigations being allocated to response officers whose main responsibility is to attend calls for service. This is in part due to the ongoing gaps in detective numbers.

Positively, we found that some forces had good systems in place to audit and dip sample investigations. This helps to make sure that not only the right people are investigating the right crime and that investigations are of a good quality, but also, if investigations are poor, it helps identify training needs. This is an important approach to making best use of the resource available when gaps in staffing exist.

All forces need to make sure investigations are allocated to the most appropriate people and that they understand training needs and are working to address them.

Promising practice: Auditing investigations to improve allocation of the right investigators and identify training needs

South Yorkshire Police has a structured approach to auditing investigative work, which scores investigations against four measures: victims, suspects, quality and supervision. This helps to identify whether the right people are investigating the right crime and to identify any training needs.

Where issues or opportunities for improvement in quality are noted, a dedicated investigation improvement unit (IIU) works to support improvements through a message of quality being more important than quantity.

The IIU supports the understanding of the developmental needs of the workforce and works to drive improvements in the capability of staff. This is achieved through masterclasses on good practice and the use of investigative powers. It provides updates to training materials and shares learning from audits of simple and more urgent issues.

The IIU has driven changes in policy, such as the frequency of supervisory reviews and policy related to investigation plans.

Poor understanding of demand can lead to a 'sticking plaster' approach to resourcing

In 2016, we identified a shortage of qualified investigators and made several recommendations. This led to the development of the Investigator Resilience Action Plan in May 2018, which was updated in January 2023. The plan highlights the barriers to recruitment and retention of investigators. While we recognise an influx of inexperienced officers (because of the Police Uplift Programme) further affects this issue, we remain disappointed and concerned by forces' grip of this ongoing problem.

Our inspections found a lack of understanding in forces of their investigative demand, which is leading to short-term 'sticking plaster' vacancy management and reliance on overtime. By 'understanding of demand', we mean the changing nature and complexity of it, increases in demand (both short and long-term), and levels of demand exceeding available resources.

Changes in investigative processes weren't assessed for their effect on demand. For example, changes to the rules on when evidence is disclosed to the defence and the increase in time it now takes for officers to prepare case files have an effect on demand.

Better-performing forces used a long-term planning approach to address the lack of investigative capability, including establishing clear entry routes into investigation roles. They made best use of the personnel they had and focused efforts on creating an environment people want to work in.

Innovative practice: Use of volunteers to support missing persons investigations

Devon and Cornwall Police makes use of volunteers for long-term missing persons investigations.

A pilot, established in 2020 with the UK-registered charity Locate International, provides tactical advice and guidance to the force on active and inactive missing persons cases and analyses trends and behaviours. The force has dedicated detective chief inspectors who oversee the pilot and allocate tasks in order to support investigations.

Volunteers conduct internet searches to develop a profile of a missing person. This includes data such as photographs, geolocation data, gaming activity, associates, linked addresses, social media activity and family history data. The profile is used to identify potential lines of enquiry. Volunteers don't have investigatory powers and don't investigate crimes or consider cases involving criminal networks.

The force told us that between 1 December 2020 and 30 November 2021, the volunteers committed more than 336 hours and reviewed more than 26 cases.

The importance of good-quality supervisory oversight isn't being recognised

Supervisors have a critical role in reviewing investigations to make sure they are high quality, proportionate and consider all appropriate lines of enquiry so there is the best chance of securing justice for victims.

Our inspections found that in approximately 22 percent (675) of 3,030 cases audited, supervision of investigations was ineffective. This was due to either the poor quality of the supervision or the complete lack of it. We have also reported on this problem before, most recently in our report *The police response to burglary, robbery and other acquisitive crime*.

Case file audits completed as part of our victim service assessment found policies relating to the review of investigations weren't always being followed. This resulted in:

- investigations not carried out in accordance with investigation plans;
- investigations that took too long;
- investigations allocated to untrained or inexperienced investigators;
- investigations not carried out in accordance with national guidance; and
- personnel in investigative roles not fully accredited to the required national standard.

We found many forces lacked training for supervisors, particularly those new to investigative roles. Workloads in specialist investigation teams were often high, which also made good supervision more difficult. Many supervisors told us they didn't have time to properly supervise investigations, due to the competing demands of their role.

The importance of supervision goes beyond investigation quality; it should also consider the workloads and working hours of investigators. In many forces, workloads are not manageable. Failure to recognise this and act on it risks investigations failing, as well as risking workforce well-being. Forces that performed well struck a good balance between investigation quality and personnel well-being. However, the importance of well-being was often not apparent in our inspections.

All forces should make sure they equip supervisors with appropriate training and guidance, and make sure they have sufficient capacity to provide good-quality oversight of investigations to achieve the best outcomes for victims.

Innovative practice: Domestic abuse handbook offers guidance to supervisors on conducting a good investigation

South Yorkshire Police has developed a domestic abuse handbook for supervisors, in conjunction with domestic abuse services. This force-wide guide offers practical guidance and helps supervisors understand what a good investigation looks like. It supports investigators in understanding how to properly investigate, and why it is important, rather than just focusing on what to do.

The handbook covers what officers should consider when deciding if an investigation is appropriate for evidence-led prosecution (this is where the victim may not support the police investigation because of fear, injury or being a hostile witness).

The force has also delivered supervisor masterclasses with a specific focus on how to improve investigative outcomes.

Protecting vulnerable people

The protection of vulnerable people is a core aim for, and outcome of, policing. Forces must work to both prevent harm and respond to it when it occurs. This is important not only to keep the public safe, but also to reduce demand. It is essential that forces also work with a range of partners, such as health and social care services and the voluntary sector, to identify vulnerable people and locations, and to develop approaches to reducing future harm and vulnerability.

Effective governance and use of data can help protect vulnerable people

We found that forces that manage vulnerability well had clear, structured and effective governance structures. They analysed their own data and partner data to understand what they need to improve and why, how that improvement will happen and what their measures of success will be. This allows policies and action plans to be created that result in meaningful and tangible positive outcomes.

However, this wasn't widespread. Our inspections showed many forces had vulnerability strategies that lacked an evidence base. Their action plans failed to identify how success would be measured. In some cases, strategies lacked substance and focused on pockets of innovation, rather than tackling long-standing issues.

We have noted an increasing adoption of the National Vulnerability Action Plan. This can support forces in working smartly to address common issues seen across multiple areas of policing, such as domestic abuse, mental ill health and hate crime. It avoids duplication of effort and allows improvements to be wider reaching.

Promising practice: Developing a vulnerability action plan

Humberside Police's vulnerability board oversees all elements of vulnerability in one governance structure. Its vulnerability action plan reflects all National Police Chiefs' Council national plans and is reviewed at the end of each year. A progress report against objectives is created, as well as a new plan for the next year.

The approach includes a review of national data and changes to legislation, which helps in planning future resource needs more effectively. Alongside this, and to make sure it can maintain things like high standards of investigation, it monitors the skills, abilities, workload and training of its staff.

The force's comprehensive understanding of vulnerability demand stems from the use of a vulnerability tracker, which considers volume, complexity and trends. For example, where domestic abuse is concerned it considers:

- domestic abuse that occurs inside or outside the home;
- the level of risk assigned to each incident;
- the type of domestic abuse;
- whether it is a repeat victim or a repeat offender; and
- gender, ethnicity and any children that are involved.

Live data is available through a data analytics system, which allows the force to map domestic abuse from ward to local authority area, and at a force level. Analysis of themes supports multi-agency problem-solving approaches.

We were encouraged to see a growing number of forces identifying how technology might help in identifying vulnerability trends and hidden harm. For example, Merseyside Police uses artificial intelligence to identify vulnerable people linked to county lines activity.

Many forces fail to consider victim feedback in service improvement

Recording the voice of the victim is essential to improving services to the public. But we found little evidence of victim feedback of any kind directly influencing strategic planning and operational policy. Most forces need to improve in this area.

Our inspections found that many forces failed to consider the wealth of feedback they already have – for example, Victims' Right to Review requests, complaints, and feedback provided by partner services. Most forces considered only survey responses, but their use was varied. Others surveyed only domestic abuse victims. While domestic abuse-related crimes are approximately 17 percent of total offences recorded by the police across England and Wales, this approach fails to consider the victim's voice in the widest sense.

Forces that did well in this area triangulated their own data – for example, response times – with the data from surveys of victims of crime. By asking victims about their experience, including on attendance, supervisors can both assess the performance of their personnel and consider opportunities to improve their processes.

Promising practice: Victim feedback is used to update training and improve services

Essex Police collects a range of victim feedback on a regular basis and uses it to improve services, both at an organisational and individual level.

The force's victim feedback panel, supported by partners from victim support services, and which has received a National Policing Vulnerability Knowledge and Practice Programme award, focuses on themes including sexual violence and domestic abuse, and victims from minority communities.

The process uses case studies to provide bespoke feedback to frontline teams and identify recurring themes that help the force to learn and shape future services. An in-depth Q&A session gives attendees the opportunity to share ideas for improvement and learn from colleagues with more experience, alongside those who have been recognised for the compassion and support shown to others.

The feedback provided is then used to update training sessions for officers and staff.

Forces often don't measure the benefits of multi-agency working to crime or harm reduction

Protecting vulnerable people from crime and reducing vulnerability and harm cannot be achieved by the police alone. It often requires a multi-agency approach.

Positively, we found all forces engaged in a range of multi-agency working practices, both at a strategic and an operational level. But the value of that involvement in reducing repeat victimisation or harm was often unclear. Most forces lacked purposeful strategic oversight of multi-agency work or evaluation of what works well and the benefit to the public.

Promising practice: Early intervention problem-solving approach for young people

The Harbour Project is a long-term early intervention problem-solving approach to helping young people aged 12 to 18 in care or on the cusp of care in Dorset. The project has a team of workers across police, health, housing and education, sharing data and knowledge. They work with a group of 50 children throughout their time of need, be it to prevent a young person needing to enter care, while they are in care, or once out of the care system.

The impact of the project is tracked through a dashboard. This includes matching outcomes for each child to the original aims of the support they were offered. It also provides evidence of the financial benefit of working in this way – for example, the cost associated with those young people going to prison, being involved in probation and the need for additional health and social care services.

An initial evaluation of the approach has estimated a forecasted financial saving of around £1.8m across the agencies involved since the approach began. Between April 2021 and August 2021, the force has suggested that the project saw a decrease in the number of young people using substances such as cannabis and alcohol. There have also been fewer instances of self-harm, criminal interventions, school exclusions and children going missing.

Data shows that children who are already in full-time education at the time they are referred to the Harbour remain in full-time education. Four out of five of the children who weren't in education, employment or training and were receiving support from the project had a confirmed education placement for September 2021.

The use of multi-agency risk assessment conferences and assessments of risk are inconsistent

The [multi-agency risk assessment conference (MARAC)](#) process was designed to safeguard the most high-risk domestic abuse victims. It relies on a range of services sharing information and developing action plans to reduce risk and keep victims safe.

Many forces had dedicated MARAC personnel who receive training for the role, but this wasn't the case in all forces. In forces without training, or dedicated personnel, MARAC meetings lacked purpose, and opportunities for police powers, both protective and enforced, weren't adequately considered. In some cases, our inspectors had to intervene to highlight unrecognised risk.

Risk assessments (which prompt the need for a referral to a MARAC) were appropriate in most cases but not always. We also found examples of decisions to downgrade high-risk cases being taken solely by the police. Worryingly, decisions were sometimes based on a lack of resources rather than the risk of harm to the victim. In one force we found only half of high-risk cases were referred to a MARAC, and no clear policy to evidence how these decisions were made.

Our inspections found that the structure and frequency of MARACs alongside the assessment of risk could vary across a force where there was more than one local authority. This could lead to a difference in the support victims receive depending on where they live. While MARAC is a multi-agency approach, the involvement of senior police leaders with multi-agency partners such as probation, domestic abuse and health services, to develop a consistent approach and evaluate success, needs to improve.

Positive partnership working can address shared problems and reduce harm

Many forces worked well with other local agencies to improve their response to the public. Forces that excelled in this area had regular meetings with partners, shared datasets, developed joint information and had joint objectives.

An increasing number of forces had funding agreements with other local services to deliver initiatives together that keep people safe and prevent further offending through perpetrator and suspect intervention.

Promising practice: Tri-service officers help to reduce demand

There are several tri-service officers in Cornwall funded jointly through police forces, fire and rescue services and ambulance services. They carry out a hybrid role, which has a range of responsibilities. For example, police community support officers who are also paramedics, and fire and rescue staff who are special constables.

The hybrid nature of the posts means that often a single visit by a single officer can address the needs of an individual – for example, helping to prevent people becoming involved in, or victims of, antisocial behaviour through early intervention. Shared information also improves both the safeguarding of vulnerable people and the wider community, and it can help reduce demand to all emergency services.

The approach helps to deliver a local service in rural areas where there is insufficient demand to fund a full-time post.

Other areas such as North Yorkshire, Lincolnshire and Essex have similar approaches.

Our inspections found many examples of promising and innovative practice in forces to address specific issues of vulnerability. However, examples tended to be specific to individual forces or areas within a force. Funding and limited numbers of staff affected the ability for innovation to be rolled out more widely. Additionally, a lack of proper evaluation and sharing of practice, both within a force and nationally, was hindering system-wide improvement.

The full benefits of protective powers aren't always realised

Domestic Violence Protection Notices (DVPNs) and Domestic Violence Protection Orders (DVPOs) are civil measures designed to protect victims from further harm. They provide breathing space for victims to consider their options and receive support.

In general, our inspections found that workforce knowledge of the value and use of these tools was good in many forces. However, in some their use was infrequent, and we found cases where a DVPN or DVPO was appropriate but there was no evidence of it having been considered. Overall, in some forces there has been a gradual decline in the use of DVPNs and DVPOs.

In some forces, IT system limitations or lack of processes meant there was a risk that breaches of orders might go missed or unrecorded. The full benefit of a DVPN or DVPO, or any other order such as a sexual harm prevention order, relies on breaches being identified and acted on.

> **Promising practice: Working with partners to reduce reoffending of high-harm individuals**
>
> Hampshire and Isle of Wight Constabulary has created a High Harm team that works with offenders who are themselves vulnerable to criminality owing to their age or lifestyle. The High Harm team consists of a sergeant, seven constables and a police community support officer.
>
> The team targets perpetrators of domestic abuse and works with partners to identify ways to reduce reoffending. This covers issues such as alcohol or drug addiction. The team uses disruption tactics where victims aren't willing to participate. These include Domestic Violence Protection Orders and setting bail conditions.
>
> The team also targets offenders linked to the most serious violence, especially gang activity. It works with partners to divert younger children who are linked to gangs and who are at risk of abuse and violence.

Managing offenders and suspects

For the protection of the public, forces need to be effective at arresting and managing suspects and offenders. It is important at the initial response, throughout investigations and, for more dangerous offenders, after their sentence. To do this well, forces must have clear processes that personnel understand and follow. They must also have good-quality and meaningful data that supports them to understand both volume and risk.

Poor use of data undermines the safe management of sexual and violent offenders

All forces have dedicated teams (often called management of sexual offenders and violent offenders (MOSOVO)) responsible for supervising registered sex offenders. Offender managers, usually working with other criminal justice agencies, develop risk management plans (RMPs) to reduce the likelihood of further offending. RMPs are completed after an active risk management system assessment is made. This assessment helps identify risks and protective factors that indicate how likely the offender is to commit further crime. The offender manager then decides what action is needed to reduce risk, and how frequently an offender should be visited.

Our inspections found a worrying lack of recorded data and information analysis to inform this high-risk area of policing. Of the data that was collected, often only the quantitative data was looked at. For example, forces focused solely on the volume of outstanding visits or the number of registered sex offenders in the community. Some forces had additional data on the number of outstanding RMPs or active risk management system assessments. However, in far too many forces, supervisors were

unable to identify how out of date visits or assessments were, or the level of risk associated with them. This means supervisors can't safely prioritise the work of their teams, and senior leaders can't make informed decisions about the management of risk to the public.

Concerningly, in several forces some supervisors didn't know how to obtain data from systems such as the Violent and Sex Offender Register (ViSOR) to support them to manage workload and risk. In addition, some forces have developed their own performance-recording processes, often using Microsoft Excel, having recognised that ViSOR isn't a performance management tool and its ability to provide all the data needed to manage demand is limited. However, too often the information held wasn't sufficiently detailed or updated regularly.

Our case file audits of ViSOR found RMPs overdue by up to 18 months and visits to high-risk offenders not completed due to team-member shortages. The oldest high-risk visit we saw was two years overdue. This lack of understanding of the risk within backlogs potentially puts the public at risk. Home visits are an important part of the supervision of offenders. They provide an opportunity to understand any changes to dynamic risk factors, such as relationship breakdowns or loss of employment, that may increase the risk of reoffending.

In forces where quality data was lacking, we found the workloads for offender managers were too high to safely manage risk and there was high use of overtime. This often results in higher sickness levels and issues recruiting new personnel into these dedicated teams.

Forces that managed registered sex offenders well had good-quality performance data and information. This helps supervisors and senior leaders understand the complexities of risk and demand in this area of policing. It means they can make sure they have the right number of personnel in MOSOVO teams or make the best use of available personnel to manage offenders to keep the public safe.

Some forces step outside national guidance without fully considering the risk to the public or their workforce

The College of Policing's authorised professional practice (APP) provides guidance on how registered sex offender management should be conducted. While many forces work to these guidelines, we saw increasing numbers adopting local policy to manage demand, which doesn't follow APP. We recognise that in some forces the demand for managing high-risk registered sex offenders has more than tripled since April 2019, and that it is a chief constable's decision whether to follow APP or not. But our inspections showed that operating practice set out in local policy often failed to consider, or properly mitigate against, potential increases in risk to the public or police personnel.

For example, completing unannounced visits to offenders reduces the likelihood of them being able to hide or delete evidence of offending. In some forces pre-arranged visits were used to clear backlogs, but they failed to consider the false environment this creates. This may lead to an inaccurate assessment of the risk.

Similarly, we found many forces where a single officer completed registered sex offender home visits due to insufficient personnel and vehicles (termed 'single-crewing'). This included cases of police staff offender managers who had no powers of arrest, and no personal safety equipment or training. We have also seen cases where the offender's RMP clearly stated that double-crewed visits were needed to manage risk, but single-crewed visits continued to occur. Working in this way can compromise the quality of the visit and the risk assessment. It also increases the opportunity for offender managers to be groomed. Forces need to make sure that any deviation from APP fully considers, mitigates and monitors the risk to the public. Chief constables should document their decision to step away from national guidance in local policy.

Investment in technology is meaningless without trained personnel to use it

Investment in technology can reduce the need for police to seize devices such as laptops and phones – for example, during an investigation into online child sexual abuse or during a visit to a registered sex offender. This reduces demand on police digital investigation teams and helps detect further offending. It also helps to quickly establish key lines of investigation.

Our inspections found a mixed picture regarding access to technology and training for personnel on its use. Many forces had increased their investment in technology but had failed to consider the ability or capacity of their workforce to use it. Personnel in MOSOVO teams and paedophile online investigation teams also reported feeling unequipped to keep up with the changes in methods of offending and the technology offenders are using.

More offenders are using digital cloud storage to save images of online child sexual abuse. Forces that concentrate solely on reviewing hardware such as laptops and phones potentially miss a wealth of evidence. Our inspections highlighted that many forces had limited ability or no ability to access, examine and preserve data stored in the cloud. A lack of national guidance was often cited as a reason for not obtaining evidence stored in the cloud. However, if evidence isn't secured prior to a suspect being released from police custody, it can be immediately deleted by them. This potentially leads to investigations failing due to a lack of evidence.

Promising practice: Triage of electronic devices at the scene of suspected online child abuse

Several forces are using 'cyber vans' at scenes when carrying out warrants at the address of people suspected of online child abuse. These vehicles have forensic examination tools and specialist digital media investigators who can quickly check many electronic devices such as phones and laptops.

If there is any risk of deletion or amendments to data on the cloud, they will capture the data before the suspect is released from custody.

This approach reduces the number of devices that require complex, expensive and time-consuming forensic examination, which supports quicker investigations, reduces the impact of unnecessary device removal from suspects' families and an increased ability to protect people who may be the victims of crime.

Intelligence isn't being used to prioritise action in online child abuse

The increasing volume of referrals of online child sexual abuse into paedophile online investigation teams by the National Crime Agency has caused backlogs in many forces of cases waiting for action (arrest or warrants). While intelligence checks are initially completed to support a risk assessment to determine the speed at which a case should be dealt with, it is essential that intelligence is reviewed periodically until an arrest is made or a warrant is issued.

We were concerned to find in our inspections that many forces weren't routinely refreshing their intelligence on online child sexual abuse suspects. In one force, we found worrying examples of cases taking months to be actioned that were initially assessed as low risk. When these were eventually allocated to an officer to investigate, a review of intelligence highlighted that one suspect had since become a teacher, and another had had a child. If a regular intelligence refresh process had been in place, this increased risk would have been identified and acted on sooner. However, we have been pleased to see evidence of forces quickly introducing changes to their intelligence review policy following our inspections to improve the safety of the public.

Building, supporting and protecting the workforce

A police force's workforce is its biggest asset. A healthy and well-supported workforce is likely to be more productive and provide a better service to the public.

In July 2019, the Government announced plans to recruit an additional 20,000 police officers in England and Wales by the end of March 2023. The Police Uplift Programme is now complete. In our *State of Policing 2022* report we highlighted some of the benefits the programme has brought. However, we also highlighted some of the issues created by the number of officers who are young-in-service and

lack experience. This creates challenges for forces in managing the level and quality of service they provide to the public. To combat this, forces need to have the right infrastructure to develop and support this inexperienced workforce. We also found examples of forces making short-term savings through 'reverse civilianisation', where police officers are performing roles normally undertaken by police staff.

Officer numbers are increasing but a lack of experience creates problems

While the increase in officers through the Police Uplift Programme is needed, the speed of recruitment is leading to an inexperienced workforce, as indicated by Figure 3. According to a press release from the National Audit Office, by 2023/24, 38 percent of all police officers will have fewer than 5 years' service. One force reported that 48 percent of its response officers were student officers.

Figure 3: Proportion of police officers in England and Wales by length of service, as of 31 March 2017 and 31 March 2022
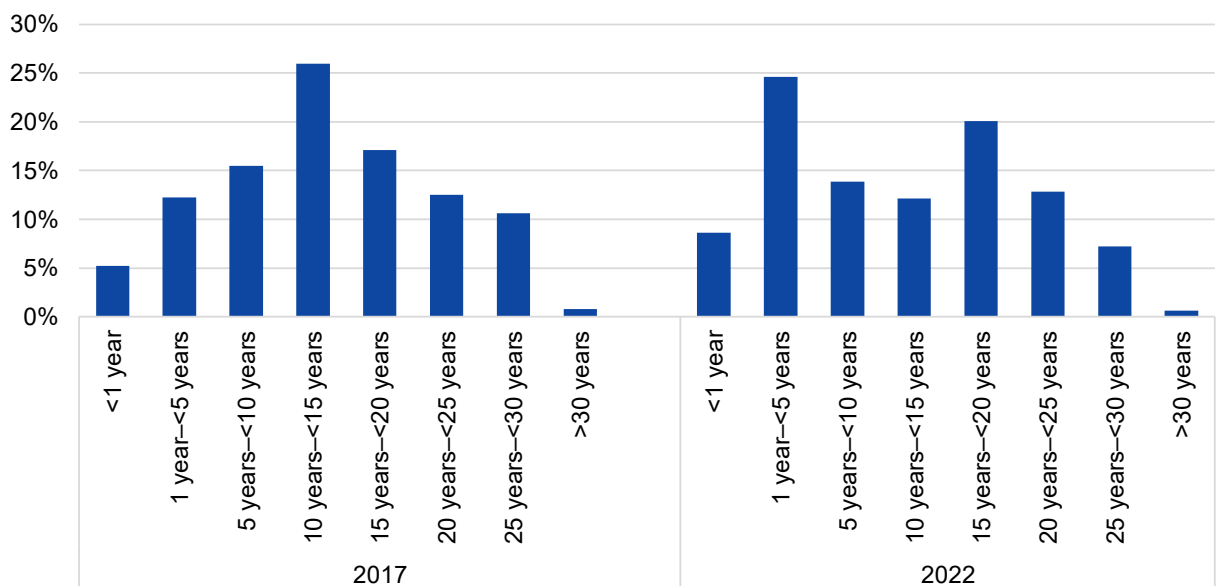
For data source and notes, see Annex A.

We found some forces were using student officers in roles unsuitable for inexperienced and untrained students. This affects not only the service the force provides to victims and the public, but also the safety and well-being of those officers.

As well as lacking experience, young-in-service officers were often unable to drive certain vehicles as they weren't trained or authorised to do so. A reduction in the availability of driver training courses and lack of trainers was contributing to this. This means increased demand is falling on more experienced officers, which in turn can negatively affect their well-being. The impact of this is being seen particularly in response teams and roles requiring advanced driver qualifications.

Some forces were also finding it increasingly difficult to recruit. We heard concerns about the quality of applicants, and the rate at which new officers were leaving. In-role training is key to the development and retention of staff, but this requires forces to have experienced tutors. Regrettably, our inspections showed that some tutor constables were stepping away from this important role as they felt they didn't have sufficient time to give proper support. While some forces were investing in greater numbers of tutor constables to improve tutor to student ratios and therefore capacity, or paying incentives, others had no plans to address the issue.

Too many officers and staff are resigning in the first five years of service

In the year ending 31 March 2022, 8,117 officers left policing in England and Wales. Most (55 percent) took normal or medical retirement. However, 42 percent resigned voluntarily. Additionally, data from the Police Uplift Programme National Leavers Framework highlighted that 71 percent of all voluntary resignations were of officers with less than 5 years' service.

A high turnover of officers and staff affects the delivery of service to the public. But there is also a significant financial impact at a time when the budget is already often stretched. Recruiting and training new officers and staff costs money. The financial loss of early police officer leavers highlighted by the Police Uplift Programme is estimated to be £83,000 per officer in the first year of service and £138,000 over the first two years.

Our inspections showed that too many forces failed to maximise the use of exit interviews (conducted with officers and police staff leaving an organisation). This information is important in understanding the current high attrition rates generally, alongside specific issues faced by different groups.

We found forces that used this approach effectively could better understand any challenges affecting particular groups that might lead to them leaving. Such challenges might be shown by a difference between the number of resignations of employees from ethnic minority backgrounds and those of White employees, or between the number of men resigning and the number of women resigning at the three-year point. Without a strategic focus on attrition rates, forces can't hope to put proactive plans in place to address them. Ultimately, this affects the ability of the force to provide a good-quality service to the public due to insufficient resources and wasted investment.

Promising practice: Using feedback from leavers to retain control room personnel

Dorset Police has worked to develop a good understanding of what influences staff to stay in post and has worked hard to increase workforce numbers. It has a clear strategy to understand why people leave, and exit interviews are regularly completed with findings fed back to senior leaders. Its strategy also focuses on what encourages people to stay, including offering flexible working, career breaks, mentoring and secondments where possible.

Staff report that they would encourage others to join and describe their role as fulfilling, and the force as a good place to work.

We encourage all forces to make better use of information from exit interviews, particularly considering the increase in early leavers. Furthermore, we encourage them to review the good practice examples and resources in the National Police Chiefs' Council's retention toolkit.

Recommendation 2

By January 2024, forces should review whether they have effective processes in place to reduce the risk of skilled personnel leaving the organisation. These should include:

- how they conduct exit interviews and use this information to identify patterns and trends in why people leave; and

- how they identify people who are thinking of leaving and the action they take, where appropriate, to encourage them to stay.

Processes should cover police officers, police staff, special constables and volunteers.

Some forces lack sufficient understanding of the well-being of their workforce

We were pleased to find well-being support for the workforce had improved in most forces. This included:

- better use of data to understand well-being issues;

- equipping the workforce to help them to maintain their own well-being; and

- improving working environments and conditions.

However, while our inspections found that, overall, forces were more focused on the well-being of their workforce, there is more to do. Poor well-being and insufficient support, particularly for those in high-risk roles, can be linked to high attrition rates.

Regrettably, some individuals we spoke to in high-risk roles felt unable to be honest about their well-being. They felt the process for assessing if they needed help (completing a survey) was impersonal and a tick-box exercise. They reported that they or colleagues often 'cheated' the system by responding positively to the survey when they were, in fact, struggling. This was due to them worrying that they themselves would be seen as the issue and moved away from their role, rather than supervisors looking to solve the underlying issues (resources and workloads).

Better-performing forces didn't just make improvements to well-being; they also had a detailed understanding of the main drivers of stress within their organisations. Their workforce felt well-supported and able to be open about its well-being needs. Well-being data was used effectively to understand the needs of different groups, locations and roles within the force, and how issues might vary by time of day or by week, or seasonally. This creates a dual benefit: less stressed and well-supported personnel who can provide a better service to the public.

We encourage forces to make sure easy-to-use dashboards are available to all levels of manager. This will help them to see patterns and monitor the progress of initiatives they have put in place to improve workforce well-being.

Promising practice: Assessing force well-being using dashboards

South Yorkshire Police has a good understanding of well-being across the force – the areas that are 'running hot', where greater well-being focus is required, and which areas are improving.

A range of data including sickness levels, referrals to occupational health, workloads, and results from staff surveys is analysed. Each district and department has a well-being dashboard, and these are combined into a force-wide well-being matrix. This allows the force to understand the 'temperature' in different areas of the force, and act where needed.

By using data from exit interviews, staff appraisal and return to work interviews, they can also monitor improvements from actions they have taken.

Each area of the force also has its own well-being lead and well-being champions, who can do more targeted activity where required.

More needs to be done to support personnel in high-risk roles or exposed to trauma

Enhanced support to officers and staff in high-stress roles or those experiencing trauma was increasing but was inconsistent. While many forces had an internal policy that highlighted the need for regular formal psychological checks, often it wasn't followed. In one case we found officers in high-stress roles who had not had welfare meetings for four years. Experienced investigators told us they felt exhausted. They often felt responsible for their own well-being, with limited force support.

The College of Policing, through the National Police Wellbeing Service (Oscar Kilo), has developed the Wellbeing of Investigators toolkit. This resource identifies those working in high-risk roles alongside contributing factors to poor well-being. We encourage forces to review this toolkit.

Promising practice: Promoting well-being in high-stress roles

Police officers are exposed to many traumatic events throughout their career, and these can lead to ill health and create issues such as burnout and depression. Some forces are using a range of approaches to help manage stress in high-stress roles.

Research such as Understanding Moral Injury can support with identifying positive coping strategies for staff working in online child sexual abuse roles where they are expected to review indecent images of children.

For online child sexual abuse roles, some forces are looking at ways to automate the process of grading and reviewing indecent images. This can remove the need for human viewing of much stressful material, and the associated trauma.

Other research has shown that playing simple repetitive computer games such as Tetris can reduce the formation of traumatic memories. Some forces provided access to a dedicated welfare space for staff where this sort of activity can be done.

Promising practice: Supporting personnel in high-impact roles by using 'pause points'

Cambridgeshire Constabulary supports staff in high-impact roles by using a 'pause point' policy to prevent burnout and support career progression. This is a welfare provision for staff in high-impact roles such as child abuse investigation or paedophile online teams.

The pause point process gives staff members and supervisors the opportunity to determine if a break from the role would be beneficial, and it helps identify opportunities to do this. It is mandated for all staff, partly to make sure that those who may need to take a break or consider other career paths don't feel they are being singled out.

We spoke to staff in high-impact roles. They were aware of the process and saw it as supportive. We were told about specific examples of it being used successfully to manage a supportive move for staff.

Recommendation 3

By January 2024, forces should review their proactive well-being support for officers and staff in high-stress roles and situations. They should make sure it includes targeted support that goes beyond mandatory annual psychological screening.

The use of overtime to meet predictable demand has become commonplace

Overtime is expected in a 24-hour service where emergencies occur. But too often it has become the default approach to managing demand. Forces should limit its use to only when necessary and focus on planning long-term sustainable solutions.

As well as overtime, coming in to work several hours early, working from home after work and giving up rest days were common in some teams. Worryingly, we found some core elements of policing, such as the operation of custody suites, were routinely reliant on overtime in many forces.

Most forces have systems to monitor overtime and identify the highest earners. While the process is positive, it focuses on the wrong thing – it should consider what the volume of overtime says about workforce well-being. Without a full picture of the actual time staff spend on work outside contracted hours, forces can't manage the well-being effects of this, or effectively plan to meet demand.

Forces can work to improve public confidence through better external scrutiny

Recent reports of the criminal and unethical behaviour of some police officers, and concerns about police culture, have received widespread media attention. Our report *An inspection into vetting, misconduct, and misogyny in the police service* concluded that it is too easy for the wrong people both to join and to stay in the police. We also found that far too many women had, at some stage in their career, experienced unwanted sexual behaviour towards them.

If public confidence in policing is to be improved, forces need to understand and challenge any potential complacency on these issues. One way that this can be addressed is through more robust external scrutiny.

> **Promising practice: Independent scrutiny and advisory group aims to challenge racism and social bias**
>
> West Yorkshire Police independent scrutiny and advisory group has ambitious aims to improve its understanding of how historical injustices have affected and continue to affect communities and individuals. The approach aims to help to challenge racism and social bias in the police and bring about positive social change.
>
> The group seeks to drive change in policing outcomes for people from ethnic minority backgrounds and improve their socio-economic status.
>
> The group has several workstreams, including stop and search, use of force, understanding community tensions, fair policing and procedural justice, and how justice is perceived when police make mistakes.

Ethics committees are a useful way for the police to get feedback on ethical issues. The College of Policing's organisational model to promote ethical behaviour includes reference to ethics committees. We saw good use of these groups in some forces, although there were inconsistencies in how they were used and in their membership. Effective committees are independent of policing, publish findings from their work and look for opportunities to learn and improve rather than blame. Findings are shared, even when – or especially when – they are critical of a force.

We encourage all forces to make greater use of independent external scrutiny, publicise its value, promote its use and truly learn from its findings.

> **Promising practice: Ethics panel's consideration of off-duty responses leads to further monitoring of personnel well-being**
>
> Hertfordshire Constabulary has an ethics panel that considers a range of ethical issues. One that we were made aware of in our inspection work was about a mobile phone app that alerts people nearby of someone in cardiac arrest, allowing them to offer help. The ethics panel received a question around officers and staff using the app and responding when off duty.
>
> The panel considered what the expectations were of the police and if they were different to those of the wider public. As a result of the panel's consideration, the force now records when officers and staff attend such incidents, including when off duty. Managers are then made aware so that they can monitor well-being and recognise where officers and staff have gone above and beyond what is expected of them.

Organisational efficiency

By investing in efficient planning and management, forces can make the best use of their funding to improve service to the public, whether that be responding in a timely way to emergencies or having neighbourhood teams to focus on crime prevention.

Financial planning in some forces is optimistic and unrealistic

We found good examples of forces that have balanced their budgets well. Other forces have identified the savings needed and, importantly, how they will achieve them in a sustainable way that limits the effect on service to the public.

Unfortunately, other forces were more short-term in their planning approach. For example, they were over-reliant on an increase in the council tax precept, or the use of overtime to manage demand.

In some forces, financial planning was based on optimistic and unrealistic figures, meaning that the force plans were likely to fail. We saw plans that lacked clear detail of how required savings would be achieved, particularly when considering predicted demand. Other forces had identified the amount of savings required and had delivery plans, but the plans didn't consider how they may affect the service to the public.

Promising practice: Matching changes in demand to changes in financial resources

Norfolk Constabulary has a good understanding of its financial position and a clear and long-established process to match changes in demand to changes in financial resources.

The force considers proposals for both growth and savings against their impact on the priorities of the force and the police and crime commissioner. It works jointly with neighbouring forces and robustly scrutinises proposed investments, to make sure they match strategic priorities. The force can also evidence the rationale for non-collaboration where an opportunity might exist.

It has a clear medium-term financial plan, which is 'stress tested' under a range of scenarios, such as planned savings not materialising, or less favourable decisions on issues such as central government grant and pensions.

Too many forces lack a systematic and rigorous approach to planning

Planning is important in making the best use of the money and resources available to meet demand. Training new police officers takes several years. Savings options such as disposing of buildings or reducing the size of vehicle fleets also take time to complete, so it is critical that forces look far enough ahead when making plans. Disappointingly, our inspections showed that too often strategic plans were short sighted, unsustainable and didn't consider a wide range of issues.

Force plans need to consider changes to demand and the force's ability to meet it. This ability can be influenced by things such as population, technology, the demand for and funding of partner organisations, and recruitment and retention issues. Seasonal and known one-off demand should be fully planned for. However, our inspections have shown some forces failed to do this. For example, despite some forces being located in tourist hotspots, they didn't plan effectively for predictable peaks in demand.

As part of our inspections, we require forces to send us their force management statement (FMS). These statements cover all areas of policing. FMSs are essential documents that provide a framework for police forces to effectively plan, prioritise and assess their resource requirements and align them with their organisational objectives. These statements cover all areas of policing.

Better-performing forces used the FMS process to assess the effectiveness of the force's strategic planning across the organisation, examine performance against their policing priorities and inform decisions about the allocation of resources. FMSs are crucial for police forces as they ensure financial accountability and operational effectiveness.

We encourage all forces to use the FMS process to assure themselves they are making effective and efficient use of their resources.

Understanding of demand is improving but still isn't good enough

Without good-quality data about demand, forces are unable to plan the resources they need to deliver services to the public and keep them safe. During our inspections we found that the analysis of demand in some forces was limited. Others lacked a systematic and rigorous approach to forecasting and modelling what they need to do to manage demand. Forces were also not always taking sufficient account of public expectations when estimating future demand.

However, many forces were actively seeking to improve the data they have on current and anticipated demand. This includes access to demand data held by partners, such as the local authority, and the impact of preventative work.

Innovative practice: Academic research to understand demand using analysis tools

Durham Constabulary has a comprehensive picture of crime demand and is working with the University of Leeds to develop experimental analytical tools. These tools intend to better understand the complexity of different types of investigation and the range of non-investigative activity the force completes. This helps the force to better understand the demand its teams are managing. Other analytical tools are being developed to give the force a better understanding of repeat victimisation, near repeats, resource allocation and crime prevention.

Some leaders lack the skills to carry out their role well

To ensure the effective and efficient running of a multi-million-pound organisation, forces need to employ strategic leaders with the right skills and abilities. This includes leaders that have experience of IT, HR and finance. A range of both police and non-police expertise is essential.

However, our inspections found that some strategic leaders were unfamiliar with the areas of work under their management, and important specialisms such as finance were under-resourced and lacked leaders with the right skills. The resulting inability of senior operational leaders to understand and provide support and challenge to their area of policing is a concern.

Conclusion to part 1

Our PEEL 2021/22 inspection programme shows improvements are needed across all core areas of policing. We are pleased that the College of Policing has recently developed an evidence-based performance improvement programme to support forces. We encourage them to access this new capability.

Our inspections also identified a problem across multiple areas of policing relating to how forces manage their performance. We use the term 'performance management' to cover all aspects of how the police collect, analyse and use data to understand and improve their performance.

The second part of the report explores this problem in more detail.

Part 2 – Strategic performance management

Introduction

The link between strong strategic performance management and effective operational delivery is often unrecognised by policing. Our police effectiveness, efficiency and legitimacy (PEEL) 2021/22 inspection findings have shown that there is a need for forces to consider their approach to managing performance across all areas of policing. As one member of police staff told us: "The police are very good at mopping the floor but are failing to turn the tap off."

While the National Police Chiefs' Council Performance Co-ordination Committee produced a Performance Management Framework Guidance document in 2019, our inspection findings suggest it hasn't translated into effective performance management in many forces.

Forces are often data rich but lack insight to generate wisdom. We have seen too many examples of well-intended but blind decision-making, and forces taking a crisis management approach to planning and demand management. Forces will be better able to resolve the areas for improvement we have identified through a stronger strategic grip of performance management.

In many forces the police national decision model is widely used and understood. When you consider what is needed for good strategic performance management, the national decision model could provide a blueprint for it.

Figure 4: National decision model

The circles arranged around a central circle read:
- Gather information and intelligence
- Assess threat and risk and develop a working strategy
- Consider powers and policy
- Identify options and contingencies
- Take action and review what happened

Central circle: Code of Ethics values and professional standards

Source: National decision model from the College of Policing

While they may not do this consciously, high-performing forces work in this way. They have robust senior leadership oversight under a clear governance structure with a continual 'sense check' process, not only of the effectiveness of their approach, but also of whether the approach is ethical – the right thing to do.

Summary of key issues

We found three key issues that affect performance management in policing:

- Police forces don't always collect the right data.
- Where they collect data, they are often poor at analysing it and turning it into useful information that they can act on.
- The police are poor at evaluating what works, and why it works.

These issues cause three impacts:

- Without performance information that meets their needs, police forces can't plan well.
- If police forces can't explain their performance, especially in contentious areas of policing, this threatens the legitimacy that British policing is based on.
- When police forces don't fully understand their performance, their service to the public isn't as good as it should be.

A core factor of concern that cuts across all these issues and impacts is the lack of support forces provide to first-line supervisors, to help them perform their role effectively and manage the performance of their team. This support includes short and long-term plans for better training, resourcing and technology, and a more reflective approach to improvement.

Issue: Forces aren't always collecting the right data to understand and improve performance

Our inspections showed that the police were consistently not collecting the data they need, in a way that allows them to take decisions, assess performance and understand the outcomes of their activities.

Performance management is everyone's business

An effective performance management culture must start at the top and be woven throughout the force. All personnel need to understand why data is important and how to develop it into useful information that supports their everyday decision-making.

Our inspections found that some forces had no clear understanding of the role of performance, or how it can improve policing. For example, in one force we found the following issues:

- Supervisors believed there was no process to hold officers and staff to account for their poor performance.
- Strategic leaders didn't know how performance information or priorities were fed back to the front line.
- One policing department wanted to end performance meetings entirely without explanation.
- Managers said that performance was improving but were unable to quantify this in any meaningful way.

There appears to be a lack of value placed on good-quality data. Poor recording of data and information means that forces can miss intelligence on criminal and antisocial behaviour, which hinders performance. If a force isn't recording data consistently, comparisons between different geographic areas or communities, or comparisons over time will all be flawed. This limits the effectiveness of decision-making.

While performance measures often exist for operational teams, they can be hard to understand. Users often reported that there were too many measures, which was confusing.

Innovative practice: Training in data analytics for all personnel

Essex Police has a programme to develop officers and staff to have the skills they need for the digital age. The force has software that can interpret data to look at trends and present this data clearly, creatively and in a way that is easy to understand for every user.

Known as Analytics for Everyone, the aim is to embed a data-driven culture across the force and create a more personalised user experience that provides the information that people need to perform their roles well. Decisions on what the system produces are agreed by a tactical board made up of officers and staff from across different ranks and grades. External consultants then develop the software in partnership with the users.

It is important that available and limited resources are used to address the correct issues and highest risks. Without good-quality data, the ability for strategic leaders to plan is severely restricted and often concentrated on the short term.

At a national level, the lack of good-quality data that allows comparisons between forces means that opportunities to learn from what works elsewhere are limited.

Recommendation 4a

By January 2024, the National Police Chiefs' Council should identify all performance frameworks in place at a national level with a view to creating a single performance framework covering core aspects of police performance.

Recommendation 4b

By July 2024, the National Police Chiefs' Council should develop a plan to implement a national performance framework, with a timescale for implementation.

Forces too often have knee-jerk reactions to long-term problems

Too often, forces use assumptions to plan staffing needs, rather than looking at all the data and information they need to make evidence-based decisions. For example, they assume a percentage increase in crime will require a similar increase in the size of their team. They fail to consider the complexity of demand, the risk held within it and smarter ways of working, including the use of technology that might help to manage demand.

This leads to some forces being unable to match their resources – officers, staff and equipment – to their demand. An example of this effect on the service to the public can be seen in delays in answering calls for service and responding appropriately at busy times.

It is inevitable that there will be periods of exceptional demand on policing, because of a major incident or event, or a murder investigation. However, we found that many forces were continually in a state of crisis, moving scarce resources from one area to another, and in the process failing to prevent or respond to incidents or investigate crime properly. We saw too many cases of forces having knee-jerk reactions to problems.

This crisis mode also means that in many forces, the systems available to manage the performance of the force have been neglected and are outdated. This leaves strategic leaders unable to understand the scale of the issue, or what effect the force is having on public confidence or crime rates, or its ability to recruit and retain new officers and staff.

The police don't always have the right data to accurately assess risk

Some forces don't hold sufficient data to understand the level of risk that they are managing.

Without the right data, and the means to turn this into information and knowledge, data can't inform operational and strategic decisions. This means forces can't properly understand how to prioritise their activity.

We found risks associated with a range of policing functions, including being able to respond to the public effectively, investigating crime and prioritising cases where backlogs develop. For example, some forces didn't always use all available information to manage the overall risk posed by suspects and offenders to the public, focusing instead on the reactive management of demand. Other forces didn't have a standardised approach to measuring risk. We have seen how this can lead to differences in the percentage of domestic abuse incidents graded as high risk between different parts of a force, or differences in how standard-risk incidents are dealt with.

Our inspections found that there was often poor training for staff on what constitutes antisocial behaviour and, when it is identified, what risks there may be to victims. This is leading to poor data on antisocial behaviour incidents in many forces, which means they can't assess risk and provide an appropriate response.

Forces also didn't fully understand the risks they have concerning the well-being of their personnel. These include how well-being affects retention and the ability of personnel to carry out their roles effectively.

> **Promising practice: Understanding demand and risk using data analysis and strong governance**
>
> Humberside Police has a good understanding of its demand and effectively manages the risk posed to the public by the most dangerous offenders. This understanding is built on good data analysis and strong governance.
>
> The force produces management reports with data on demand, outstanding suspects, examination times for computers and phones, the use of police tactics, and quality of files. The online investigation team also has near-live access to this data, which is used to review the team performance.
>
> Every month there is a team meeting with senior managers to review performance. This meeting not only looks at the numbers, but explicitly looks to understand what lies behind those numbers. The force understands that this level of analysis requires support and has agreed a dedicated researcher to support the team as well as an uplift in officers.

There are significant gaps in police-recorded equality data

Our inspections found significant problems with the availability and quality of data relating to protected characteristics. Forces had gaps in their crime-recording data on disability, gender identification and sexual orientation, or were gathering this data only for more serious crimes.

Table 2 shows the proportion of victim-based crime records reported to the Home Office by forces, in the year ending 31 March 2022, that contained demographic information. While it is mandatory for forces to provide the Home Office with victim information regarding age and sex, they provide ethnicity data voluntarily. It is notable that the proportion of records containing ethnicity data is much lower than the proportion containing data on age or sex.

Table 2: Proportion of victim-based crime records reported to the Home Office containing demographic information across forces in England and Wales, in the year ending 31 March 2022

Demographic information	Proportion
Age	73
Sex	74
Self-classified ethnicity	31
Police-defined ethnicity	27
Ethnicity (self-classified or police-defined, but unspecified)	39

For data source and notes, see Annex A.

There were also issues with data not being recorded on stop and search and use-of-force incident records, for example, data on ethnicity and other protected characteristics, such as disabilities, as well as important information on mental health.

Without data on protected characteristics, it is impossible for forces to accurately assess if they are using their powers disproportionately, or whether there are differences in the level of service that people from different demographic groups receive when they are victims of crime.

Disappointingly, the quality of equality data for the police workforce was also poor. This means forces are unable to fully understand any difference in experience where recruitment, well-being and retention are concerned. As such, they can't develop adequate plans to address any issues there may be.

Issue: Too many forces are poor at analysing data to create useful information to manage performance

Insufficient analysis of data creates a poor understanding of issues such as demand. Although forces are more focused on understanding their demand, this understanding is often at a superficial level. Good-quality performance data is important, but our inspections found it often lacked sufficient context, which led to firefighting and 'sticking plaster' decision-making.

A poor understanding of data leaves the police less able to:

- explain their activities to the public – for example, where there are concerns over disproportionate use of police powers;

- prevent crime and problem-solve;

- answer and attend calls for service or investigate crime;

- understand the capacity, capabilities, diversity and well-being needs of their workforce; and

- undertake long-term planning and make strong cases for increased funding. This could be when seeking increases in central government funding, or when asking the public to support increases in the council tax precept for policing activities.

Put simply, we found a lack of insight at all levels of policing, which is having a noticeable effect on police personnel and the public.

The crisis mode that many forces operate in can limit their ability to use the data they have to propose longer-term, sustainable solutions to problems. These problems can be internal, such as funding and resource gaps, or external, such as spikes in crime. This issue is made worse by shortages of expert staff in areas such as finance and analysis.

A culture that moves away from approaches to analysis of data and auditing based on gut feeling and box ticking to one of real desire for continuous improvement is needed in many forces. The best-performing forces actively manage their data, creating opportunities to improve the information and knowledge they have, which can drive change and better outcomes.

Investment in analytical capability is needed as a national priority

Our inspections found there was often limited investment in IT systems and analysts. This negatively affects the ability to interrogate data and present information in an easy-to-understand format.

We found many forces needed to invest in both the number and the skills of their data analysts. The _State of Policing 2022_ report highlighted the issue of police pay in recruiting and retaining officers, and we recognise the effect of the pay gap between the public and the private sector for analysts. However, without investment in analytical capability, forces can't make best use of the data they have to improve operational activity. They can't manage their resources effectively or improve the service they provide to the public. At a basic level, forces cannot understand what they need to improve on, why and whether their plans to address issues will work.

Policing must improve its ability to strategically map investment priorities at a local and national level. Without this investment in key technologies and personnel, performance will continue to be affected.

> **Promising practice: A comprehensive approach to performance management using a fully automated system**
>
> Humberside Police has improved understanding of its performance by moving from use of spreadsheets to capture data to a fully automated system. This approach allows the force to analyse its performance and see where improvements can be made.
>
> The force understands both the 'pipeline' of applicants to join the force, and the anticipated retirements and leavers. This information is available at individual unit level, which allows the force to plan for projected shortages in key roles and teams. Requests from managers for more resources can be prioritised against force needs, and current and projected demand. This has helped the force reduce overtime costs, and exceed its targets for savings and recruitment of new police officers.
>
> The force has also used external experts – for example, commissioning a University of Hull review of its approach to domestic abuse. This helped identify themes and ways to improve the tracking and management of offenders, which led to changes in training offered to staff.

Innovative practice: Operation Soteria – improving the investigation and prosecution of rape

The need for better strategic analysis, improved analytical capability and monitoring of performance was also found by the research in relation to Operation Soteria. Operation Soteria is a unique police and Crown Prosecution Service programme in England and Wales. It is funded by the Home Office and involves five pilot forces and academics from many universities and research centres. It aims to develop a new operating model for the investigation and prosecution of rape offences through the evaluation of existing system-wide processes. The results from the first year of research has been published by the Home Office.

The interim report said a better strategic analysis was needed of recorded rape offences. It also said that improved analytical capability was required to make sure that the context of the offences was reflected in investigations and in performance monitoring approaches.

The report noted that in the four forces examined in the year one work programme, around a third of recorded rapes, and a tenth of other recorded sexual offences were marked by the police as linked to domestic abuse. In many forces the links between domestic abuse and sexual offence teams is poor. This impacts the needs of different types of victims and different types of offending being reflected in investigation plans and victim support processes.

Recommendation 5a

By January 2024, the National Police Chiefs' Council should map all analytical capacity and capability across police forces in England and Wales, with a view to establishing where gaps exist.

Recommendation 5b

By July 2024, the National Police Chiefs' Council should develop a plan to address the gaps identified, with a timescale for implementation.

Forces need careful investment in IT to turn data into useful information

Forces are increasingly aware of the potential for new technologies, such as artificial intelligence and machine learning, to improve how they analyse data quickly and accurately. Technology can reduce mundane, repetitive tasks, releasing people to do work only a human can do. It can also support personnel well-being. For example, it can reduce the amount of human time spent viewing and assessing images of child abuse, while still correctly identifying known images and suspected new ones.

However, innovative technology can involve significant financial cost and create skills shortages for specialist IT functions in its implementation. National programmes and working with specialist IT organisations has the potential to make technology more affordable and attainable for forces.

Our inspections have shown greater collaboration with universities to develop new technology and new approaches. This includes a focus on ensuring there are governance processes in place to make sure use of technology is ethical. We were pleased to find partnerships between police forces and academic institutions were being used to research issues of importance to both the police and the public. Many forces have an approach to evidence-based policing that has the potential for real change.

Innovative practice: Essex Centre for Data Analytics uses analysis, data science and artificial intelligence

Essex Police is part of Essex Centre for Data Analytics (ECDA). This is a joint venture between the force, Essex County Council, and the University of Essex, intended to use the power of analysis, data science and artificial intelligence to tackle key public policy and social challenges. ECDA focuses on four areas:

- county lines and gangs;
- protecting young people;
- population and demographic demand; and
- using data to meet future challenges.

The partnership has developed a risk model for knife crime that identifies individuals who show high-risk factors directly associated with carrying and use of knives. ECDA is now working with partners across Essex to prevent and stop knife crime using this knowledge.

Forces must improve their understanding of demand, including through use of IT

To have sufficient officers and staff to attend incidents, forces need to forecast demand for their services.

Forces told us that they were regularly at minimum staffing levels. This means, for example, that the highest-priority calls usually get answered promptly, but lower-priority calls can remain awaiting attendance for several hours. The lowest-priority calls can sometimes wait days. Some forces also reported that a lack of vehicles or suitably qualified drivers could affect attendance at incidents, especially in rural areas.

Forces that performed well in responding to calls had a better understanding of their current and forecast demand, alongside the availability of resources. They considered not only when staff and officers might be required in the immediate, short and medium term, but also their mix of skills, the ways they could respond and their locations. This helped these forces to have sufficient officers and staff to respond to calls for service and to adjust resource models to cover anticipated as well as unanticipated demand.

All too often during our inspections, we saw the consequences of forces not assessing demand and resourcing appropriately. These included poor service to victims of crime, risk to the public of further crimes, and stress and fatigue for police officers and staff (for example, where overtime was continually used to manage demand).

Some forces use IT systems to assist with predicting demand and matching resources, but this isn't widespread. There is often too much reliance on spreadsheets that are often outdated and can't provide real-time information.

Promising practice: Using simulations to plan demand response

South Yorkshire Police uses simulation technology developed by the NHS to proactively assist with planning how to respond to different demand scenarios, and then assess the force's response.

The force's demand management strategy outlines four key elements of consideration:

- Demand analysis – maintaining a comprehensive understanding of demand to enable the force to plan to meet it.

- Capacity management – analysing how resources can be better used to match demand. This considers shift patterns, failure demand and organisation processes.

- Prediction – using statistical data, analysis and forecasted trends from a range of sources including the Office for National Statistics to assess the impact on strategic financial and workforce planning.

- Partnerships – including academic research, sharing data between partner organisations, joint analysis projects and approaches to problem-solving.

The force is now looking to use advanced digital analytics to its systems to allow analysts to do even more complex forecasting.

Promising practice: Workforce optimisation software to help meet demand

Humberside Police has sophisticated workforce optimisation software that can assess the suitability of a proposed shift pattern or flexible working application in its control rooms to meet demand and providing public service.

This software is also used to produce operational workforce schedules for control room staff in 15-minute intervals and produce highly detailed work schedules, showing all activities on a daily, weekly, monthly and annual basis.

Such information allows the force to be very flexible in meeting anticipated demand from calls to both 101 and 999.

Promising practice: Using technology to understand demand

Humberside Police uses technology in its control room to help understand demand on a daily and even hourly basis and then match the resources to the demand. This is overseen through daily 'pacesetter' meetings.

The force is constantly adapting the Power BI dashboards it uses. These give officers and staff access to up-to-date information on the performance of their team and staffing levels. Power BI is refreshed every two hours, seven days a week. The data available also considers local authority and NHS information, which creates a richer picture of incidents, crime and demand.

Better knowledge can help forces to reduce 'failure demand' and repeat callers

By analysing and understanding data on calls received from the public, forces can identify and, with partners such as mental health services, help the small number of people who are responsible for large numbers of calls. For example, people who go missing regularly can be the cause of a large part of 999 and 101 demand.

Forces should use their data to understand the level of 'failure demand' in the control room and take action to reduce it. One force identified 21 percent of all calls to 101 in a one-week period as 'failure demand'. This refers to the situation where a member of the public calls many times, because their issue wasn't resolved at the first contact, or they weren't given information, such as crime numbers, when they called.

Promising practice: Specialist advice in control rooms and use of partnership vulnerability hubs

To address non-emergency issues at the point of first contact, several forces have access to specialist advice in control rooms and use partnership vulnerability hubs to develop action plans that address the root cause of vulnerability.

Humberside Police uses staff from mental health charity Mind, who are present in the force control room on evening shifts seven days a week. Wiltshire Police has six mental health practitioners who provide advice and guidance 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

As well as providing advice on the best way to respond to calls, specialists are often involved in delivering training to all control room staff.

Promising practice: Safeguarding vulnerable repeat callers

Kent Police has developed an approach that helps safeguard vulnerable repeat callers, by making sure they access support from the most appropriate service. The approach is focused on callers experiencing mental health issues and who may pose a risk to themselves or others.

A central co-ordinator monitors repeat caller activity, and highlights individuals to leads within each police district. Those leads work with partner services through a vulnerability panel that are multi-agency and include services like housing, drug and alcohol treatment and the local authority.

The services compare high-demand callers and produce joint solutions to safeguard and reduce demand. Over 150 individuals have been supported in this way. The force estimates £97,000 in savings from reduced calls to and attendance by police.

Better knowledge can improve crime prevention

Several forces were trying to improve information on the performance of neighbourhood policing and crime prevention work. The National Police Chiefs' Council is currently consulting with forces to develop a national performance approach in this area. We think this will be helpful. Forces that performed well in crime prevention collected a range of data, including data from partners, such as local authority community safety partnerships, health services and education, to help evaluate the outcomes of the work of neighbourhood policing teams.

Promising practice: Technology-led evaluation of neighbourhood policing

South Yorkshire Police has introduced a new technology-led performance framework for all neighbourhood teams. The tool allows supervisors to measure the effectiveness of neighbourhood teams, through measurements such as crime and antisocial behaviour rates, frequency of incidents and local satisfaction survey results.

This supports supervisors to understand not only the demand faced by neighbourhood teams but also the impact of their problem-solving activities. The data can be broken down at force, district, neighbourhood and ward level. The tool can also be used to oversee the amount of time neighbourhood officers undertake non-neighbourhood police work. This helps the force understand how well its abstraction policy is working.

Forces need to analyse the positive and negative impact of their investment in technology

Most forces have invested heavily in a range of technologies. What is lacking is an analysis and evaluation of their impact on performance and, most importantly, outcomes for the public, such as improved safety and crime reduction.

Technology is often implemented in isolation, making it harder for personnel to access all the information they need in one place. In many areas of policing, IT systems are still under-connected. This requires data to be re-entered into each separate system, or a review of multiple systems to extract complete information (for example, to fully identify vulnerabilities). Even where this isn't the case, many systems are unintuitive. We found some officers and staff didn't understand how to use them effectively – for example, how to use flags and reminders.

Most forces lacked knowledge of how well (and even if) their investment in technology was delivering the outcomes they anticipated. In one force there had been a major investment in technology to monitor breaches of sexual harm prevention orders. However, the force hadn't considered what level of use (frequency) they would expect from personnel, or what would indicate that the investment was beneficial.

We heard from forces about the benefits of technology, especially in areas such as tackling online offending, including indecent images of children. However, in several forces this technology was not used to its full extent. This was because either limited numbers of the team had received training on it or the workloads of the people who had been trained were so high, they had no opportunity to put their skills into practice. Equally, investment lacked consideration of the knock-on impact to other departments: more use of technological tools results in an increase in offences identified that need to be investigated elsewhere in the force.

Investing in technology to keep the public safe is the right thing to do. But without planning the management of the demand it generates, and without robust governance, unintended consequences could result. Such consequences include lengthier investigations, poorer victim service and additional pressure on already overstretched personnel.

Forces should work with partners on using data more effectively to problem-solve

Collaboration can be helpful in tackling shared issues. By sharing data and analytical capacity and capability with relevant partners, both forces and partners can get more benefit from scarce resources.

We saw good examples of forces that used partner data to understand the prevalence of issues, such as female genital mutilation, suicide risks and mental health issues, in order to establish new ways of working. Similar approaches for crime prevention were also common, such as partnership working and data sharing with drug treatment, housing and education providers. However, these approaches aren't widespread.

Many forces recognise there is more to do concerning sharing of information. There are concerns from the police that certain partners are less willing to share data, and concerns from partners that the police aren't always good at explaining their need for requested data or sharing the results of their analysis with partners.

Promising practice: Shared data helping to manage demand

Devon and Cornwall Police has introduced several roles with partner organisations to manage demand. Two roles have been created within the fire and rescue service in community safeguarding hubs. The people in these posts look at available data to identify risks – for example, by picking out keywords such as 'hoarder' or 'fire setting'. These people are then referred into fire safety, or for a police intervention.

Promising practice: Accessing health data to reduce police attendance at mental health calls

In Avon and Somerset, the Emergency Mental Health Despatch Pathway has been introduced. A police control room staff member works within the ambulance control room to get access to health data when required and to overcome previous issues of data-handling compliance for NHS data.

One of the principles is that, as far as possible, health matters are not attended to by police. This approach has reduced police attendance at mental health-related calls by 30 percent. For every £1 spent on this initiative, £3 is saved on police time.

Promising practice: Sharing performance information with local authorities

West Mercia Police provides a range of data to its local councils. This includes information on crime types, risks, repeat missing children, number of repeat child suspects and victims, and information on vulnerable adults.

There are also 'deep-dive' reports on subject areas relevant to each authority, on serious and organised crime in the community, and on areas of concern such as knife crime and violence against women and girls. These reports use police and local council data, as well as publicly available statistics.

This information allows the force and local authorities to better understand the risk faced by their communities and helps planning for joint working to address these risks.

Promising practice: Police and partner data hub to predict demand and plan response

West Midlands Police and local partners share data through a data hub. The Data Analytics Lab performs forward-facing analysis to help predict future demand. The analytical capacity in the Data Analytics Lab allows a detailed understanding of crime types and police and partner resources available to tackle these.

It helps to predict areas where violence is most likely to happen, and the force and partner organisations can use this information to plan activity to address it.

Examples include identifying the estates where violent crime offenders or victims live, and opportunities to change behaviours in those areas. This might include police or partners going into schools or identifying relatives of people who have been imprisoned to develop a supportive environment for ex-prisoners. Working with the health service, the force helps doctors recognise the signs of domestic abuse and know what to do.

Performance management and planning are fragmented and often don't take a whole system approach

We found there was often a lack of analysis of how demand or performance in one area affects others. This can lead to either planned improvements negatively affecting another department or information that would be useful in planning decisions or performance management not being considered.

In most forces we found that performance of control rooms wasn't viewed alongside performance information from investigation teams and those working with the most vulnerable victims. This is despite the fact that initial call handling is critical in identifying vulnerability at the earliest possible stage of an investigation and in advising callers on securing evidence.

We also saw a lack of wider strategic planning to manage increases in demand where there was a predictable future impact on another department. For example, the increasing number of National Crime Agency referrals into paedophile online investigation teams for online child sex abuse will create demand for digital forensics departments and, following sentencing, for teams that manage registered sex offenders. The links between these teams should be better mapped out, to allow for personnel to be trained and recruited, and resources made available as the demand filters from one team to another.

The force management statement requires chief officers to consider how demand in one area of policing affects demand elsewhere across the force. Chief officers should use the findings from the force management statement to better manage expected increases in demand.

Issue: Forces are poor at evaluating outcomes to identify what works and why

The importance of evaluating performance should start at the top and be woven throughout the force. Our inspections found that in many forces the evaluation of decisions at both strategic and operational levels was poor. It often focused on individual projects, or in some cases was missing entirely. Poorer-performing forces lacked information and systems to help them to assess whether their activities were effective or not. This makes it hard to understand whether claimed improvements are real. It also misses opportunities to make successful activities even better, to expand on good practice and to learn from failure.

As one officer told us, they are using some problem-solving approaches not because of evaluation that shows it worked, but because it had been done before and they hoped the outcome would change.

To be successful in evaluating outcomes, forces must understand what the activity they are undertaking aims to achieve. Without this there is no basis for measuring success or failure. Tools such as the College of Policing's practical evaluation tools for crime reduction are useful for forces to do this work.

Promising practice: Embedding evaluation into force strategies

Avon and Somerset Police's engagement strategy sets out how it will engage with and gain the co-operation of communities. It considers the use of a range of approaches including volunteering, community watch schemes, developing a youth independent advisory group, targeted engagement with rural communities and older people.

The strategy sets out a delivery plan for each strand of activity. This covers the resources required, the intended activity and what it is expected to achieve. Importantly, it includes how success or learning will be evaluated.

This approach makes sure that all engagement approaches have a clear purpose with an embedded evaluation process.

Some forces make policy decisions without understanding or monitoring the consequences

We found examples where forces have chosen to move away from national guidance, such as the College of Policing's authorised professional practice. There may be a valid reason for a force to do this, but these decisions need to be evidence-based and monitored. This is to assure chief officers that any resulting negative effect is identified and managed. And this is particularly important when decisions might alter risk to the public or the quality of service they receive.

One example is forces adopting alternative ways for the public (and partners such as health and social care services, etc) to contact them, such as Single Online Home. Without collecting and analysing data to fully understand the consequences to public service, senior leaders can't assure themselves that the service being provided is as good as it would be if the contact were via a call.

Evaluation of partnership working is lacking in most forces

It is important that forces can evidence the benefit of their investment in all areas of policing, including multi-agency working. This supports them in understanding how to develop successful models or knowing when to stop doing things that aren't working. Reduction in crime or reduction in harm are important indicators to consider, alongside things such as the cost to society of offending.

Promising practice: Investment in a harm reduction unit achieves cost saving

Cheshire Constabulary has a harm reduction unit managed by a detective sergeant, and it includes victims' advocates, a consultant forensic psychologist, forensic practitioner and an occupational therapist.

The unit provides a joint approach to reducing the risk of harm, with an emphasis on supporting victims of stalking and harassment. The unit also works with offenders involved in stalking and harassment, as well as some serial domestic abuse perpetrators.

The model of the unit is a blend of psychological, social and legal. The unit manages risks, provides practical advice on stalking and harassment cases, provides therapeutic and bespoke interventions for offenders, and manages the offenders themselves. Referrals to the team are made by police officers and partners, and the team also scans force systems for incidents that may be suitable for the team to work with.

The unit has been independently evaluated by the Jill Dando Institute and shown to add value – for every £1 of time spent, there is a saving to the state of £82.

Integrated offender management (IOM) schemes introduced in 2009 enable a multi-agency approach to identifying and jointly managing the most prolific and problematic offenders. Our *Joint thematic inspection of integrated offender management*, published in 2020, found the scheme had lost its way. In the same year, the Ministry of Justice and the Home Office published a new IOM strategy. This includes an evaluation toolkit to assess the effect it has on reducing crime and improving outcomes for offenders.

In most of the forces we inspected, there was a lack of any process to understand what benefit their investment in offender managers is having.

Forces that performed well in this area could show tangible benefits to society from their investment. Some forces hold annual reviews with local universities of their process to manage offenders. This helps them to check it achieves the expected outcomes and to understand ways to improve. Most forces recognise that measuring reoffending rates of those they managed through IOM is critical to understanding the strengths and weaknesses of their approach. However, some forces are still seeking funding for analysts to support this work.

Promising practice: Reducing the cost of harm using integrated offender management

Several forces use the national IDIOM system to estimate the cost of crime. This system can be used to track the benefit to society from integrated offender management (IOM) – for example, by identifying the reduction in average offending cost per offender once they have been accepted on to the scheme.

Hampshire and Isle of Wight Constabulary has used this system to show reductions in reoffending of around 90 percent after IOM.

Bedfordshire Police has developed a cost-of-harm model based on IOM data that identified a reduction in the cost of harm from just 43 offenders of £1m in 2019–20.

We encourage all forces to explore how approaches other forces have successfully taken might be able to be used in their own force.

Evaluation means more than whether activity leads to cost savings

While cost savings are important, they shouldn't be the main motivation for change. Reductions in demand, an increase in public safety, better workforce well-being and a more manageable workload for officers and staff are equally important.

Changes to public confidence and trust in policing are also important to evaluate, particularly at a time when trust in policing is at an all-time low. Involving the public in evaluation is a good way to understand how policing is perceived. However, our inspections found that this approach isn't widely adopted.

Promising practice: Understanding and working with communities to drive change

Leicestershire Police has a comprehensive approach to understanding and engaging with its communities. This helps the force to prioritise the activities it does to address need and vulnerability.

For example, it trialled the use of Instagram to reach younger people in the community. To evaluate the success of this approach, it monitored both the reduction in antisocial behaviour in the areas targeted and the data in relation to hit rates and demographics. The approach was successful, and this tactic has subsequently been used for other events such as Halloween.

Impact: Poor performance management means forces can't plan well

Without robust strategic performance management that feeds into operational delivery and planning, forces can't:

* carry out evidence-based policing;

* identify innovative and effective ways to answer calls for service from the public or improve performance;

* develop sustainable plans to manage peaks in demand or long-term demand increase (resulting in routine use of overtime);

* fully assess how requests for growth and opportunities for savings will meet future needs;

* provide evidence-based reasons for any changes to policy, funding or resource models;

* effectively bid for increased funding from central government or increases to council tax precept due to a lack of evidence of need; or

* evaluate the success of strategic and operational activity in order to apply learning to new issues or different areas of policing.

Impact: Poor performance management may threaten the legitimacy of policing

Effective performance management, underpinned by quality performance data, is an important part of reassuring the public that the police are addressing crime and antisocial behaviour in their communities. It also helps to demonstrate that intrusive tactics, such as stop and search, are being used appropriately. If forces don't improve this, they will be unable to:

* properly explain their actions to the public;

* use external challenge, such as independent advisory groups, effectively and meaningfully, rather than as a tick-box exercise'; or

* improve public trust and confidence.

Impact: Poor performance management results in the needs of the public not being met

A consistent theme throughout this report has been the continual movement of resources to try to keep up with demand. The need to respond to emergencies will always require decisions on prioritising some issues over others, and short-term movement of resources. However, while the effect of reduced funding plays a part in this issue, our inspections found that some forces were better able to plan and use the resources they have than others.

If forces continue to move scarce resources around, they may:

- be unable to meet the needs of the public;
- meet immediate demand but devalue or fail to provide longer-term crime-reduction activity;
- increase risk to the public;
- lack the right resources to investigate crime (meaning they don't achieve the best outcomes for victims, and criminals escape justice);
- undermine understanding of, and involvement with, their communities (which affects their ability to know what is important to them); or
- leave personnel feeling undervalued and overworked.

Perhaps the most concerning result of poor performance management on service provision is how few crimes are solved, and how few victims of crime get the justice they deserve. This is particularly worrying in relation to crimes that cause harm or strike at the heart of how safe people feel in their own communities.

Figure 5: Offences brought to justice rate by offence type, for crimes in England and Wales recorded between the years ending 31 March 2015 and 31 March 2022
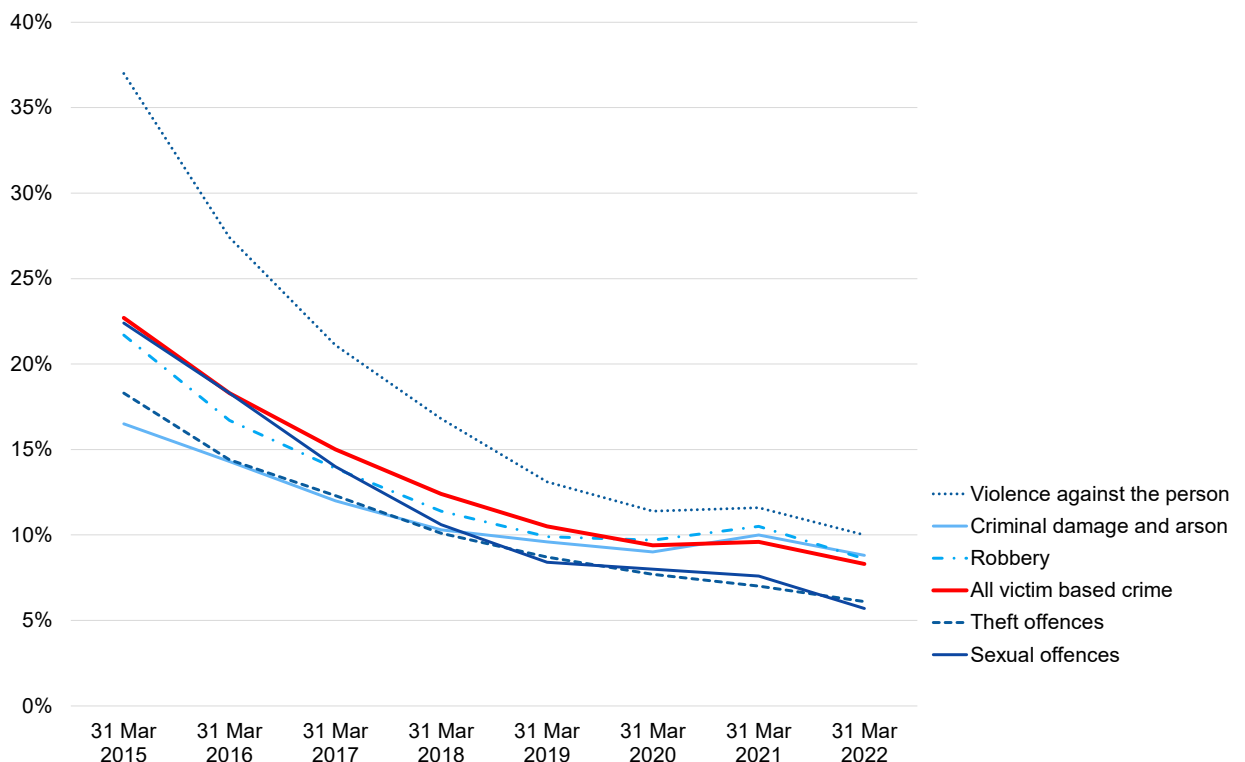
For data source and notes, see Annex A.

As shown in Figure 5, between the years ending 31 March 2015 and 31 March 2022, offences brought to justice rates for all victim-based crime types declined. Violence against the person offences showed the largest decrease (27 percentage points over an 8-year period).

This simply isn't good enough; the public expect and deserve better.

Recommendation 6

By January 2024, chief constables should review their force's performance frameworks and governance processes to reassure themselves that the force is:

- collecting and analysing the right data to help it to understand and improve its performance; and

- integrating a culture of evaluation into performance and improvement activity at all levels.

Core concern: Forces aren't doing enough to help first-line supervisors to oversee performance more effectively

At the core of the issues described in this report, we found problems with ineffective supervision. First-line supervisors are critical to the service the public receives and to managing the performance and well-being of their teams.

Supervisors are busy and frequently have high workloads, particularly in specialist teams. And they are often inexperienced (and managing inexperienced teams). They often lack sufficient training, don't always have access to the right technology and can be unaware of the importance of collecting data and using information to help manage workloads and performance.

To be clear, this isn't about individual supervisors, who are often working above and beyond what is expected of them. They are being let down by the system around them.

Forces are failing to address the worrying skills gaps of their first-line supervisors

We recognise that the upskilling of new entrants to policing and new first-line supervisors isn't something that can happen overnight. However, we saw that many forces weren't as aware of this issue as they should be, and often had no plans to support their inexperienced officers. Frontline staff, officers and first-line supervisors saw themselves as being abandoned to cope with rising workloads. They weren't aware of any longer-term plans or immediate actions that were likely to improve their ability to do their job well.

First-line supervisor reviews are too often poor or missing entirely

Poor supervisory oversight can have a direct impact on the service the public receives, the safety of the public and the well-being of personnel. We saw issues of poor or missing first-line supervision across all aspects of policing.

Supervisory oversight is key to making sure that the use of intrusive tactics, such as stop and search and use of force, is appropriate. If not appropriate, oversight is key to ensuring that the learning is taken on at an individual, team and force level.

For neighbourhood policing and problem-solving, we saw a lack of supervisory oversight of problem-solving plans. This affects a force's understanding of what works well, and how to use success for future improvement. We also saw a lack of supervisor influence on the direction of their neighbourhood personnel.

For investigations in which supervisory reviews are rushed, incomplete or not done at all, the impact can be seen on the quality of the investigation. Investigation plans are not produced, actions that drive the investigation are not set and cases are closed where there are still open lines of enquiry.

For the management of registered sex offenders, our case file audits of the [Violent and Sex Offender Register](#) too often highlighted a lack of review of the appropriateness of actions set by offender managers. Supervisors failed to pick up on missing or incomplete actions. Reviews were reactive and failed in many forces to influence the prioritisation of work where caseloads were high.

Policing is a challenging profession. With the increase in new recruits and a high rate of leavers, supervision is more important than ever.

The value of first-line supervisor audits and debriefs isn't recognised in strategic planning

Our inspections found that audits undertaken at an operational level weren't being seen as opportunities to learn and improve.

They can often miss key stages of an incident. For example, in most forces the audit of incidents doesn't include listening to the original call to 999 or 101. Without the initial context and full details of what was reported to the police, the opportunity to identify improvements will be limited.

Forces too often used debriefs only when things went wrong, rather than when things went well. Information gathered from debriefs and audits was often not considered at a strategic level and didn't feed into planning decisions. This means that force priorities may not reflect the actual needs of frontline staff and first-line supervisors.

First-line supervisors often lack access to performance management systems and knowledge

For first-line supervisors to effectively manage the performance and well-being of their teams, they need access to performance management information. This should be presented clearly and help both them and their personnel understand how their performance is being measured and why.

We did find good examples of supervisors accessing simple and focused performance information. However, we found it often included too many measures, which created confusion for personnel on how they were being assessed. Awareness of the importance of the measures is also key. If personnel and supervisors can't see the relevance of a target – for example, the effect that the target has on the public – it could lead to undesirable behaviours that hit the target but miss the point.

Conclusion to part 2

The police need to break the cycle of poor data, poor analysis and poor planning. This leads them to only *reacting* to resource shortages or things that go wrong, instead of working more proactively to prevent problems arising in the first place. They must learn from those forces that are planning effectively and providing a good – and in some cases outstanding – service.

In short, police forces need to:

- get better at collecting the right data, and making sure it is accurate and of high quality;

- improve how they analyse that data and turn it into useful information and knowledge; and

- apply that information and knowledge to other areas of policing.

Internally, they must:

- help supervisors to manage performance at all levels, with the right training and tools to do so;

- consider how IT systems affect the ability of forces to manage their performance, and invest in solutions that make managing performance, risk and threats more straightforward, rather than investing in isolated solutions for one area of policing;

- become better at evaluating the outcomes from police activity, seeking external challenge that supports them in learning and sharing that learning more widely; and

- develop robust data governance policies and processes to protect the integrity of the data collected. This will reassure both the public and relevant partners that any data is being protected and used appropriately.

Without understanding their demand, the police can't plan to meet it effectively. Without collecting the right data, or understanding the data they have collected, police forces are unable to learn from both mistakes and good practice, and be transparent with the public over contentious issues.

Since 2018, we have required police forces to send us their force management statement (FMS). The FMS as a tool supports good strategic planning. Chief officers should make sure they retain oversight of the FMS process as part of their strategic planning process.

At the root of the poor performance culture lies a lack of investment in supervisors. It will take time to address this, but forces must invest in these key roles. Force plans need to reflect the requirements of supervisors and propose immediate and longer-term solutions to the issues preventing them from performing their roles effectively.

Externally, forces need to work more effectively with all partners to use their knowledge to improve the communities they serve and understand how they can measure outcomes from partnership work.

List of recommendations

Part 1

Recommendation 1a

By January 2024, the National Police Chiefs' Council should:

- agree a standard approach to how attendance times are measured in all forces; and

- set a national standard for attendance times.

The National Police Chiefs' Council should make sure they consult with the Home Office to allow the timely collection of data once the standards are introduced.

Recommendation 1b

By January 2024, to allow an understanding of whether forces are meeting the national standard, the Home Office, in discussion with the National Police Chiefs' Council, should develop a set of principles for the collection and analysis of force data.

Recommendation 1c

By July 2024, the Home Office, in collaboration with the National Police Chiefs' Council, should pilot the collection and analysis of attendance time data.

Recommendation 1d

By January 2025, the Home Office should roll out the process for the collection, analysis and publication of attendance time data for all forces.

Recommendation 2

By January 2024, forces should review whether they have effective processes in place to reduce the risk of skilled personnel leaving the organisation. These should include:

- how they conduct exit interviews and use this information to identify patterns and trends in why people leave; and

- how they identify people who are thinking of leaving and the action they take, where appropriate, to encourage them to stay.

Processes should cover police officers, police staff, special constables and volunteers.

Recommendation 3

By January 2024, forces should review their proactive well-being support for officers and staff in high-stress roles and situations. They should make sure it includes targeted support that goes beyond mandatory annual psychological screening.

Part 2

Recommendation 4a

By January 2024, the National Police Chiefs' Council should identify all performance frameworks in place at a national level with a view to creating a single performance framework covering core aspects of police performance.

Recommendation 4b

By July 2024, the National Police Chiefs' Council should develop a plan to implement a national performance framework, with a timescale for implementation.

Recommendation 5a

By January 2024, the National Police Chiefs' Council should map all analytical capacity and capability across police forces in England and Wales, with a view to establishing where gaps exist.

Recommendation 5b

By July 2024, the National Police Chiefs' Council should develop a plan to address the gaps identified, with a timescale for implementation.

Recommendation 6

By January 2024, chief constables should review their force's performance frameworks and governance processes to reassure themselves that the force is:

- collecting and analysing the right data to help it to understand and improve its performance; and

- integrating a culture of evaluation into performance and improvement activity at all levels.

Annex A – About the data

Data in this report is from a range of sources, including:

- the Home Office;

- the Office for National Statistics;

- our police effectiveness, efficiency and legitimacy (PEEL) programme, which assesses the performance of police forces in England and Wales (comprising all 2021/22 PEEL inspections); and

- our victim service assessment audits.

Victim service assessment

Our victim service assessments track a victim's journey from reporting a crime to the police, through to the outcome stage. We subject all forces to a victim service assessment in our PEEL inspection programme. Additionally, we assess every force on its crime recording practices at least every three years.

For details of how we undertake the victim service assessment, see our victim service assessment – technical methodology.

Excluded data

British Transport Police was outside the scope of inspection. Any aggregated totals for England and Wales exclude British Transport Police data, so will differ from those published by the Home Office.

When other forces were unable to supply data, we mention this in the relevant subsections below.

Specific data sources

For each of the groups of data that we refer to in the report, we set out the specific sources below.

Arrest and use-of-force incidents

We took data on arrests from the Home Office publication *Police powers and procedures: Stop and search and arrests, year ending 31 March 2022*. We took data on use-of-force incidents from the Home Office publication *Police use of force statistics, England and Wales: April 2021 to March 2022*. The Home Office may have updated this data since we obtained it.

999 calls

BT provided data on 999 call answer times.

Data on 999 call answer times excludes data for the City of London Police. This force does not answer 999 calls. All 999 calls for London are handled by the Metropolitan Police Service.

Crime outcomes

We took data on crime outcomes from the Home Office releases of Police recorded crime and outcomes open data tables for the years ending 31 March 2015 to 31 March 2022. The Home Office may have updated this data since we obtained it.

Total police-recorded crime includes all crime (except fraud) recorded by all forces in England and Wales, except British Transport Police. Home Office publications on the overall volumes and rates of recorded crime and outcomes include British Transport Police, which was outside the scope of inspection. Therefore, England and Wales rates in this report will differ from those published by the Home Office.

Police-recorded crime data should be treated with care. Recent increases may be due to forces' renewed focus on accurate crime recording since our 2014 national crime data inspection.

For a full commentary and explanation of crime and outcome types, see the Police recorded crime and outcomes open data tables from the Home Office.

Source for the data in Table 1: Crime Outcomes in England and Wales Open Data, Year Ending March 2022 from the Home Office.

Notes for the data in Table 1:

- Data is for the 43 forces in England and Wales. It excludes British Transport Police.

- Proportions show the percentage of the total number of outcomes assigned to offences recorded in the year ending 31 March 2022 (5,282,066).

- Offences brought to justice comprise the following crime outcomes: charged/summonsed; caution (youths and adults); taken into consideration; offender died; penalty notice for disorder; cannabis/khat warning; community

resolutions; not in public interest (Crown Prosecution Service (CPS)); diversionary, educational or intervention activity.

- Prosecution or further action prevented or not in the public interest comprises the following crime outcomes: not in public interest (CPS); not in public interest (police); prosecution prevented: suspect under age; prosecution prevented: suspect too ill; prosecution prevented: victim/key witness dead/too ill; prosecution time limit expired; further investigation to support formal action not in the public interest (police decision).

- Derbyshire Constabulary: There is an undercount of approximately 100 (8U) control and coercive behaviour offences during April–September 2021.

- Leicestershire Police: The force is experiencing IT difficulties and outcome 22 is not showing for crimes finalised under outcome 22.

Source for the data in Figure 5: Police recorded crime and outcomes open data tables from the Home Office.

Note for the data in Figure 5: Offences brought to justice comprises the following crime outcomes: charged/summonsed; caution (youths and adults); taken into consideration; offender died; penalty notices for disorder; cannabis/khat warning; community resolutions; not in public interest (CPS); and diversionary, educational or intervention activity.

Workforce

We took data on police officer leavers, by leaver type, from the Home Office's Police Workforce, England and Wales statistics publication for the year ending 31 March 2022.

We took data on police officers in England and Wales, by length of service, from the Home Office's Police Workforce, England and Wales statistics publications for the years ending 31 March 2022 and 31 March 2017.

The Home Office may have updated this data since we obtained it.

Notes for the data in Figure 3:

- Excludes British Transport Police.

- Length of service is based on the date on which the officer joined the police service, not the date on which the officer joined his/her current force.

- Several forces are unable to provide accurate length of service data for all officers. This is due to certain systems being unable to extract the date on which an individual joined the police service. In some cases, forces record these officers against the date on which they joined that force.

- Although time spent on career breaks and other long-term absence shouldn't be included in the length of service, there may be some cases where these are included.

Victim-based crime records containing demographic information

The Home Office provided us with data on the proportion of victim-based crime records reported to it by forces, in the year ending 31 March 2022, which contained age, sex and ethnicity information. The Home Office collates these statistics as part of its police recorded crime data.

Notes for the data in Table 2:

- Data is for all forces in England and Wales except those that don't submit data through the Home Office data hub (six forces).
- Data includes British Transport Police.
- Unspecified ethnicity refers to the proportion of records that contain ethnicity information but don't specify whether this was self-classified or police-defined.

Domestic abuse-related crime

We took data on the proportion of all police-recorded crimes that were domestic abuse-related from the Office for National Statistics release of Domestic abuse prevalence and victim characteristics for the year ending March 2022.