



Inspecting policing
in the public interest

**Policing in austerity:
One year on**

**Cheshire Constabulary
July 2012**

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About this review

In October 2010, the Government announced that the central funding provided to the police service would reduce by 20% in the four years between March 2011 and March 2015.

Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC) carried out an inspection of all 43 police forces in England and Wales in Spring 2011, to see how they were planning to meet this financial challenge. When the results were published in July 2011 (search for 'Valuing the Police' on www.hmic.gov.uk), we committed to returning one year later to report on progress, and to assess whether there had been any impact on the service provided to the public.

A thematic report, *Policing in Austerity: One year on*, brings together the findings from all 43 forces and looks at the picture in England and Wales. We found that, across England and Wales:

1. Forces have risen to the financial challenge, balanced the books and largely maintained the service they provided to the public in year one;
2. Their plans show that over the whole spending review period (i.e. until March 2015), they are working to protect, although not preserve, frontline services;
3. As there are significant variations between force plans and performance, HMIC has some concerns about whether all forces can sustain this position;
4. Forces should ensure the changes they are making now transform efficiency and will provide a strong enough foundation to face future spending reviews.

This report summarises the findings for Cheshire Constabulary, and is based on data provided by the force in February 2012.¹

HMIC will continue to monitor the progress made by the force, and to publish the results on our website (www.hmic.gov.uk).

¹ Figures are rounded (financial figures to the nearest million and workforce figures to the nearest 10) and financial figures are in cash prices.

Summary

The challenge for police forces and police authorities isn't just to balance the books, but to transform the way they deliver policing and make it more efficient, so that the public can continue to receive improving services.

Cheshire Constabulary is a medium-sized constabulary, and has a medium budget compared to the rest of England and Wales. It has put in place a comprehensive change programme to manage the reductions in its budget, and is in the process of implementing this. The constabulary is in a good position to achieve its savings target by March 2015 and may even exceed it.

The constabulary has reviewed many of its key functions and departments, with the aim of becoming more efficient and effective and making better use of its staff without there being any noticeable difference to the service received by the people of Cheshire. It has created a single business service centre for the constabulary, to reduce duplication and waste in many of its support functions, such as finance and human resource management. In 2012 some of these services will be shared with Northamptonshire Police to make further savings. In addition, the constabulary has restructured its neighbourhood policing model to be more visible to its communities and changed the way it deals with calls from the public to try to deal with the root cause of the issues that matter most to people.

Cheshire Constabulary is a key member of the North West collaboration partnership. This comprises the five North West Region police forces and North Wales Police, and works to identify opportunities to provide policing more efficiently at a regional level. The partnership has plans in place which put them on track to deliver savings by 2015 by providing some services together. Examples of these areas of policing include motorway patrol, air support, policing public order events and providing forensic services. Other projects, such as one to reduce costs and duplication in relation to IT support, are also in progress with other forces.

Because of the changes it is making, Cheshire Constabulary will be able not only to balance the books but to increase the proportion of its workforce in frontline, crime-fighting roles. The constabulary can only plan until 2013 but at this point 68% of its workforce will be on the front line: however, this is lower than other forces over the same time. The proportion of police officers on the front line increases over the same period from 82% to 88%, which is a move in the right direction, although still lower than in England and Wales as a whole. The constabulary has committed to protecting frontline services.

The constabulary continues to drive down crime, and is doing so to a greater extent than other forces. 86% of victims were satisfied with the service they received from Cheshire Constabulary, which is higher than England and Wales as a whole.

The following sections of this report explore: money (how much Cheshire Constabulary needs to save and its progress in achieving this); people (its planned changes to the number and type of its workforce and the effect of this on the front line); and the impact on services to the public. We have looked at these areas because they are important in helping you to understand how your constabulary is making savings, and how it continues to improve the services you receive.

Money – meeting the savings

What is the financial challenge in Cheshire Constabulary?

£29 million – the amount Cheshire Constabulary will need to save between 2011 and 2015 (based on the constabulary's calculations). There are 28 forces in England and Wales with larger savings to make (as a proportion of their budget).

By Spring 2012, Cheshire had developed plans which outlined how it will achieve £29m (100%) of its savings requirement.



Cheshire Constabulary's four-year plan is based on the constabulary saving £12m by March 2012 (i.e. in the first year of the budget reductions). The constabulary reported that it had already saved £12m by December 2011.

As well as funding from the Government, forces also receive money from local council tax. The police authority has decided to increase by 3.94% the amount of money you pay for policing from your council tax in 2012/13. This is one of 22 forces in England and Wales where it will increase.

Within the constabulary's plans are a number of assumptions on future costs, including pay increases, rate of inflation and the level of funding it will receive from council tax. If these change this may impact on the amount of savings the constabulary has to find.

Forces will continue to develop the detail of their plans between now and 2015 and this may also affect the amount of savings required as they revise their assumptions, further develop the detail of their savings plans and update their financial plans as part of ongoing budget management.

People – reconfiguring the workforce

What is the impact on the workforce?

650 – the number of posts the force plans to cut by 2015. 240 of these will be police officer posts. This is an 11% reduction in police officer posts, compared with a 10% reduction across England and Wales, which is 89%.

Because 81% of police budgets (on average) is spent on staff costs, it is not surprising that forces across England and Wales are planning to achieve most of their savings by reducing the number of police officers, police community support officers (PCSOs) and police staff they employ.

According to data provided by the force in February 2012, Cheshire Constabulary is planning to make the following changes to its workforce between March 2010 and March 2015. By March 2012 the constabulary planned to have achieved 47% of the required reduction of its workforce. (We use March 2010 as our starting point here because many forces started to reduce their workforce in the year before the funding cut was implemented, anticipating that they would have to make savings later on).

	31 March 2010 (actual)	Planned Change 31 March 2010 – 31 March 2015	% change in Cheshire	% change across England and Wales
Officers	2,160	-240	-11%	-10%
PCSOs	240	-20	-6%	-10%
Police staff	1,550	-400	-26%	-19%

Notes:

2010 is a snapshot of the number of people in post, whereas the 2015 data is projected number of posts. All workforce figures are rounded to the nearest 10; columns may therefore not add up. In the workforce baseline data (March 2010), an 'Other' function is included within the non front line. This is made up of staff absent from duty due to maternity / paternity leave, career break, full time education or suspension, and those on long-term leave (sickness, compassionate, special and unpaid leave). In March 2010 the 'Other' function made up 1 percent of the total workforce across England and Wales. The projected data for March 2015 was provided by forces, and forces have budgeted for this in different ways. As a result there will be some variability when used for comparisons. Police staff actual figures for 2010 include Designated Officers. Designated Officers are not included in 2015 estimated figures.

What is the effect on the front line?

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

68% – the proportion of the total workforce (i.e. officers, PCSOs and staff) Cheshire Constabulary estimates will be working on the front line by 2013.

88% – the proportion of police officers specifically the force estimates will be working on the front line by 2013, up by six percentage points from 2010.

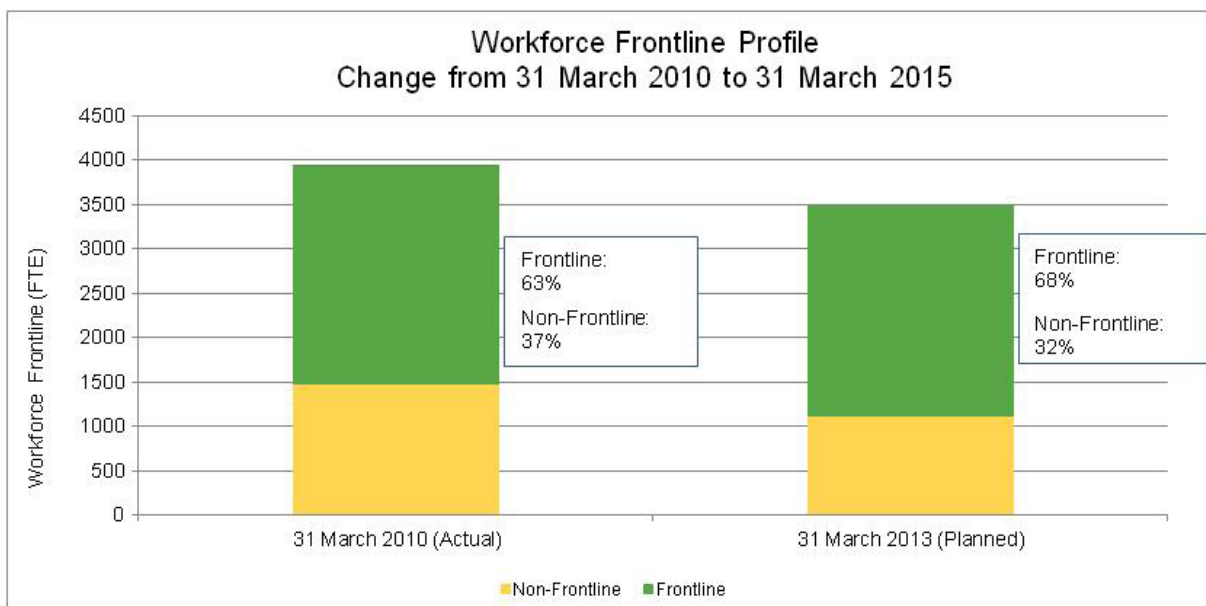
The constabulary was unable to provide figures to 2015.

Number and proportion of officers, PCSOs and staff in frontline roles

The **number** of officers, PCSOs and staff (i.e. the constabulary’s total workforce) working on the front line will drop from 2,480 in March 2010 to an estimated 2,370 by March 2013.

Based on these figures, the **proportion** of Cheshire Constabulary’s total workforce allocated to frontline roles will increase from 63% to 68% between March 2010 and March 2013. This compares with an overall increase across England and Wales from 68% to 72% over the same period.

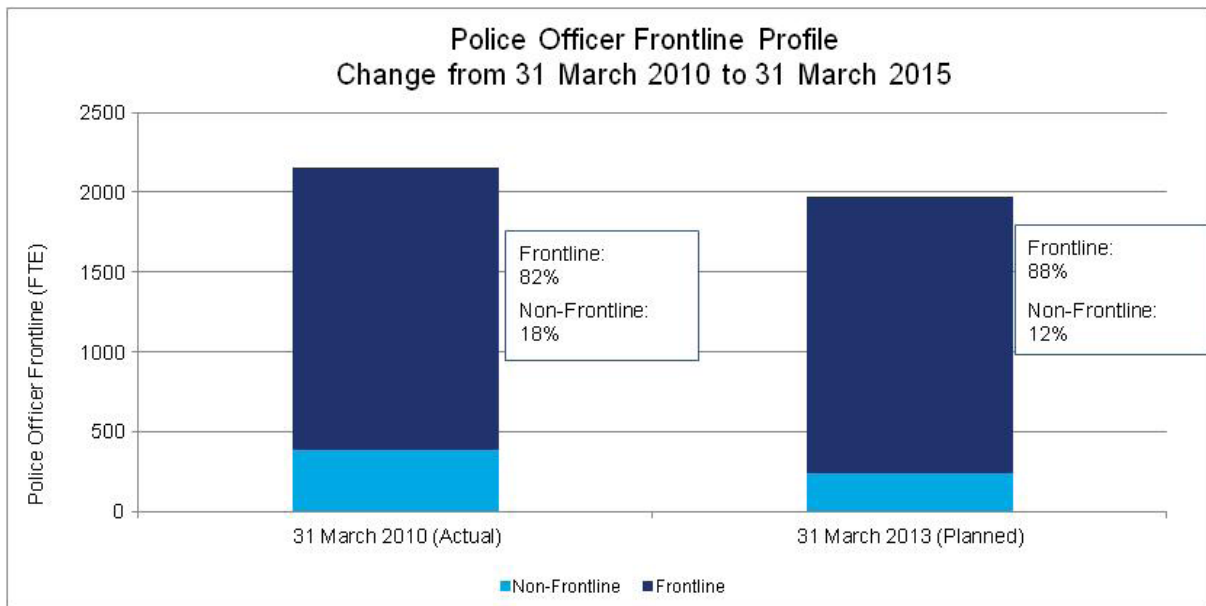
The following chart shows the change in the workforce frontline profile for Cheshire.



Number and proportion of police officers in frontline roles

Looking specifically at police officers: the **number** of officers working on the front line will drop from 1,770 in March 2010 to an estimated 1,730 by March 2013. The number working in non-frontline roles will also drop (from 390 to 240).

Based on these figures, the **proportion** of Cheshire police officers allocated to frontline roles will increase by six percentage points to 88%, as the following chart shows. This is lower than the figure for England and Wales, which is 89%.



Public – reviewing the services you receive

What proportion of police officers and police community support officers are visible and available to the public?

63% – the proportion of police officers and PCSOs which Cheshire allocates to visible roles (such as officers who respond to 999 calls, deal with serious road traffic accidents or patrol in neighbourhoods). This is greater than the England and Wales figure.

HMIC define ‘visible’ as police employees who wear uniform and mainly work in public and ‘available’ means police officers and PCSOs who are actually ready for duty (i.e. as opposed to being on a training course, attending court, off shift, on leave or sick, etc).

It is important to note that the work done by those in visible roles represents only a part of the policing picture. Chief constables need to allocate resources to many other functions in order to protect the public, such as counter terrorism, serious and organised crime and child protection (to name just three).

Research has shown that people who see the police at work in uniform at least once a week are more likely to have confidence in their local force (see our 2011 report *Demanding Times*, available from www.hmic.gov.uk).

HMIC recently looked at whether Cheshire Constabulary has police officers available when they are most likely to be needed, a repeat of a survey which we last carried out in 2010. This showed that there was a decrease in the proportion of police officers and PCSOs available in visible roles at key times.

How is the way you can access policing services changing?

Forces are exploring different ways in which the public can access policing services. They are making more use of the internet and social media to communicate with people and reviewing the number of face-to-face access points they need.

Cheshire does not plan to change the number of front counters and other locations (e.g. libraries or local authority buildings) where you will be able to physically access policing services between 2010 and 2013.

Has there been any change in crime levels over the last year?

6% - the reduction in recorded crime levels overall in Cheshire between years ending December 2010 and December 2011 (compared with a 3% fall across England and Wales).

The first job of the police is to reduce crime and keep the peace; and in 2010 the Home Secretary Theresa May stated that she expects forces and authorities to make financial cuts while still reducing crime, and without impacting on the front line.

Based on the number of crimes per 1,000 people recorded in the 12 months to December 2011, the force came 12th out of 42² forces (where first equals lowest crime rate).

The table below shows how rates of crime changed between years ending December 2010 and December 2011. (ASB is not included because data is not available for the same time period; however, HMIC has examined how this problem is tackled in Cheshire in a separate report, which is available on our website.)

Type of crime	Difference between years ending Dec 2010 and Dec 2011 in Cheshire	Difference between years ending Dec 2010 and Dec 2011 across England and Wales
All crime	-6%	-3%
Victim-based crime*	-5%	-2%
Robbery	-5%	3%
Burglary	-7%	-1%
Criminal damage & Arson	-6%	-9%

*This category includes all crime where there is a direct victim – either an individual, a group, or an organisation.

We have chosen these types of crime to give an indication of the nature of offending in Cheshire. For information on the frequency of other kinds of crimes in your area, go to www.hmic.gov.uk/crime-and-policing-comparator where you will find more detailed information. You will also find links to the force's own website, where it publishes the latest crime figures.

2 City of London is not included.

Does the force's own survey work show any change in public satisfaction with the service they provide?

As forces reconfigure their resources to meet the budget challenge it is important that they understand the impact on service delivery. One way of measuring whether this is changing is by tracking how satisfied the public are with the overall service they receive when they seek police assistance.

The overall victim satisfaction for Cheshire is 86%, which is greater than the rate for England and Wales as a whole.³

³ This is a statistically significant difference.