Learning Lessons

An overview of the first ten joint inspections of police authorities by HMIC and the Audit Commission

March 2010

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Our work across local government, health, housing, community safety and fire and rescue services means that we have a unique perspective. We promote value for money for taxpayers, auditing the £200 billion spent by 11,000 local public bodies.

As a force for improvement, we work in partnership to assess local public services and make practical recommendations for promoting a better quality of life for local people.

Her Majesty's Inspectors of Constabulary are appointed by the Crown on the recommendation of the Home Secretary and report to Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Constabulary, who is the Home Secretary's principal professional policing adviser. Her Majesty's Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC) is charged with examining and improving the efficiency of the Police Service in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. HMIC is independent both of the Home Office and of the Police Service.

The primary functions of HMIC include:

- **The formal inspection and assessment of all forces in England, Wales and Northern Ireland (as well as a number of non Home Office funded police forces), HM Revenue and Customs, and the Serious Organised Crime Agency.**
- **Undertaking thematic inspections across forces, some in conjunction with other bodies, including the other Criminal Justice System Inspectorates.**
- **Undertaking a key advisory role within the tripartite system (Home Office, chief officer and police authority/Northern Ireland Policing Board), where its independence and professional expertise are recognised by all parties. HMIs also provide a crucial link between forces and the Home Office, and contribute to the process of appointments to the most senior ranks in the Police Service.**

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Executive summary

1 Police authorities play a vital role in the governance of policing in England and Wales, and oversaw spending of £13.7 billion in 2008/09. They are expected to ensure that forces deliver efficient and effective policing for the public. In doing so, police authorities need to take account of the recent focus on public confidence in policing and the role of the police in reducing risk, harm and threat against a background of increasingly pressured resources.

2 Since the 1996 Police Act, legislation has clarified the roles and responsibilities of police authorities. They act as one of the 'checks and balances' in a three part system of shared responsibilities comprising the Home Office, Chief Constables and individual police authorities. The role is increasingly wide ranging and police authorities now have more than 60 statutory duties and responsibilities. In the last year alone, over ten additional responsibilities have begun to impact the work of police authorities, ranging from duties to consider the views of communities across the full breadth of their work[i] to new responsibilities with regard to visiting counter-terrorism detainees in custody.[ii]

3 Hard choices have to be made between priorities and these decisions come with risks attached which touch people's lives very directly. The police service is required to maintain a testing and fine balance in addressing local, regional and national priorities whilst responding to increased financial pressure. The 2009 Policing White Paper[iii] set out efficiency savings to be delivered by the police service of £545 million by 2014, with at least £100 million of those savings in 2010/11. Our inspections of police authorities assess the capacity and capability of police authorities to ensure that forces improve their productivity and achieve workforce efficiencies.

4 Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC), the Audit Commission and the Wales Audit Office have jointly inspected ten of the 43 police authorities in England and Wales. Together, the ten police authorities inspected account for 44 per cent of total overall spending (£6 billion in 2008/09)[iv]. Inspection teams were made up of a mix of staff with experience of policing, governance and performance. They tested police authorities against four key issues: setting strategic direction and priorities; scrutinising performance outcomes; achieving results through community engagement and partnerships; and ensuring value for money and productivity.

[i] Policing and Crime Act 2009
[ii] Coroners and Justice Act 2009
[iii] The Policing White Paper: *Protecting the public: supporting the police to succeed,* published in December 2009 set out actions to increase the effectiveness of police authorities through improvements to their capacity and capability and through greater public engagement and involvement.
[iv] Source: CIPFA Police Actuals Statistics 2008/09. The Metropolitan Police Authority alone account for 26 per cent of overall spending, equating to £3.58 billion in 2008/09

5 Following these inspections our report provides an early view on the ability of police authorities to respond effectively to the demands being placed upon them. At this interim stage in the inspection programme we found a mixed picture of police authority effectiveness. We found that performance of most police authorities was 'adequate', meaning that they meet most minimum requirements of the role with some exceptions and areas of concern. Most performed best on scrutiny of everyday police performance. Overall we found examples of good progress on each of the assessment themes across all police authorities inspected, but only one was assessed as performing well across all four themes. Most police authorities perform their statutory responsibilities to some extent, often relying overly on the contribution of the chair and a few stalwart members. Police authorities could perform more effectively by focusing on setting clear strategic direction for policing which reflects the views of the public and securing the best possible value for money with whatever resources they have.

Key findings from the first ten inspections are as follows:

6 Most of the police authorities inspected are not taking a sufficiently strategic lead in deciding the longer term shape of policing for their area. Police authorities need a better understanding of the risks and threats to policing to make informed decisions about the long term direction of the force and priorities that reflect community concerns. This needs to be linked to a clear and sustained focus on value for money. We have found:

- Police authorities are mostly effective at setting clear standards and expectations of chief constables and senior officers in recruitment, performance reviews and annual policing priorities.
- Police authorities that are providing strong strategic leadership understand the risks and threats to policing and effectively challenge their forces whilst ensuring that the operational independence of the chief constable is maintained.
- Little or no assessment is made by police authorities of the delivery of efficiencies or workforce modernisation by forces.
- Risk management is not well developed within police authorities.

7 **Most of the police authorities inspected are effective in scrutinising everyday performance and holding their police forces to account in delivering policing priorities.** In many cases this relies upon the strength of character and personal determination of chairs and other committed members. This cannot be an enduring mechanism for securing effective governance. Police authorities need better information that is up to date so they can scrutinise performance more effectively, applying their judgement based on consideration of public sentiment and need. We have found:

- Highly committed and visible leadership by Chairs and other committed members, holding Chief Constables and forces to account.
- Ability to hold forces to account is limited by not always having clear enough information and data on how the force is performing
- Opportunities to share resource and support across authorities are not being maximised.
- Insufficient understanding and scrutiny of more complex areas of policing, such as tackling terrorism, serious crime and other major challenges to public safety (protective services).

8 **All of the police authorities inspected can do more to secure improved outcomes for the public through effective partnerships and community engagement.** Partnership working has significant potential to deliver improved outcomes for the public and better value for money. However, many police authorities are unable to demonstrate the benefit and impact of partnership working. Participation in partnership is a means to an end and authorities need to be clearer on objectives and business cases. When faced with tough choices and limited resources, authorities will need to increasingly demonstrate that activity in this area is an effective use of their time and prioritise their involvement accordingly. We have found:

- Some excellent examples of police authorities engaging well in their communities and acting on the priorities identified locally.
- Few police authorities are actively and routinely exploring opportunities to work with local strategic partnerships, business and voluntary organisations to drive efficient and effective policing and community safety outcomes in their area.
- Strategic approaches to community engagement are limited. Most authorities do not have a clear picture of the communities or vulnerable groups whose policing needs may not be adequately provided for.
- In most places, feedback from consultation and community engagement is not being used routinely to shape policing priorities.

9 Most of the police authorities inspected are not doing enough to ensure a clear and sustained focus on value for money and collaboration. With the tighter economic climate, police authorities need to ensure their forces deliver more for less as well as achieving ambitious targets on efficiency and productivity. We have found:

- Police authorities are effective in influencing annual budgets, funding and resource allocations and have a track record of effective annual financial planning, budget monitoring and asset management.
- Benchmarking is not routinely used by police authorities to understand the costs of policing; inform priorities and secure efficiencies. This is a key component of effective governance.
- Not enough is being done to set challenging and ambitious efficiency and productivity targets for police forces.
- Collaboration and partnership working are not promoted, or used effectively to deliver efficiencies. Police authorities lack a comprehensive understanding of the resources available in their area to deliver sustainable policing.

10 Police authorities are not yet demonstrating that they can respond effectively to the demands being placed on them. Police authorities need to improve their understanding of the risks and threats to policing and their scrutiny of value for money if they are to provide effective governance in the future.

11 Despite increasingly wide ranging responsibilities, authorities need to undertake their prime governance role more effectively. The best performers devote their time ruthlessly to key strategic priorities, to avoid being drawn in multiple directions. Police authorities will need to take hard decisions to prioritise activities better, to provide sound judgement and leadership that enables police forces to deliver substantial efficiencies whilst improving force performance.

12 In light of these findings and individual police authority inspection reports, Association of Police Authorities (APA) and other national partners will want to consider carefully the most appropriate model of training and development, to deliver genuine expert support in the priorities identified, targeted to the authorities in greatest need.

Introduction

13 In November 2008[v], the government confirmed its intention to proceed with police authority inspections in its response to the Policing Green Paper consultation. Police authorities have been jointly inspected across the full range of their activities by the Audit Commission, HMIC and the Wales Audit Office (WAO).

14 In July 2009, our Police Authority Inspection Framework[vi] set out how the Audit Commission, HMIC and the WAO would deliver inspections of police authorities. The framework was developed following four pilots and consultation with the Home Office, the National Policing Improvement Agency, the Association of Police Authorities and the Improvement and Development Agency. Police authorities were not required to undertake additional work in preparation for inspection itself. Our requests for information were restricted to those essential for effective assessment. These included the sharing of existing key documents, attendance and presentation at an inspection scene-setting meeting, interview with inspectors during the on-site week and review of the draft report.

15 On-site inspection activity began in September 2009. The first phase of ten inspections has now been completed, covering the Metropolitan Police Authority, Avon and Somerset, Hampshire, Wiltshire, Leicestershire, Northamptonshire, Cheshire, Greater Manchester, Lancashire and Gwent. Nine reports have been published on our websites and the Metropolitan Police Authority inspection report will be available by the end of March 2010.

16 Our inspections assess whether police authorities have the capacity and capability to carry out their core duties effectively. Since the 1996 Police Act, legislation has clarified the roles and responsibilities of police authorities. More recently, the 2009 Policing and Crime Act and 2009 Policing White Paper[vii] have increased the expectations of police authorities especially in relation to public confidence and understanding risk, harm and threat at all levels. The White Paper also set out efficiency savings to be delivered by the police service. These were set at £545 million by 2014, with at least £100 million of those savings in 2010/11.

[v] The Policing Green Paper: *From the Neighbourhood to the National: Policing our Communities Together,* published in July 2008, with the summary of consultation responses and next steps published in November 2008, Home Office

[vi] Police Authority Inspection: *Joint Audit Commission and Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary Police Authority Inspection Framework,* Audit Commission and HMIC, July 2009

[vii] The Policing White Paper: *Protecting the public: supporting the police to succeed,* published in December 2009 set out actions to increase the effectiveness of police authorities through improvements to their capacity and capability and through greater public engagement and involvement

17 Police authorities are inspected against four assessment themes and questions, shown in the table below.

Assessment theme	Assessment question
Setting strategic direction and priorities	How does the police authority ensure that both it and the force have the leadership, capacity and capability needed to deliver good quality service outcomes on behalf of the public?
Scrutinising performance outcomes	How effective is the police authority in scrutinising and ensuring that the force delivers the priority services that matter to local people?
Achieving results through community engagement and partnerships	How well does the police authority achieve results through community engagement and partnerships to deliver its ambitions and strategic priorities?
Ensuring value for money and productivity	How effective is the police authority in ensuring a clear and sustained focus on value for money to secure a good deal for the public?

18 Each assessment theme is scored separately on a scale of 1, performing poorly, to 4, performing excellently, and these are combined into an overall score. Appendix 1 sets out our assessment criteria and scoring descriptors.

19 From the ten inspections completed so far this report shows, across each of the four assessment themes, where police authorities are doing well and where improvement is needed. Appendix 2 sets out the scores from each of the published inspection reports.

20 During March 2010, examples of good practice, drawn from inspection, will be published on our websites. This set of good practice case studies will be updated after each phase of inspections.

Summary findings

21 Police authorities are not yet demonstrating that they can respond effectively to the many demands being placed on them. At this interim stage in the inspection programme we found a mixed picture of police authority effectiveness. We found that performance of most police authorities was 'adequate', meaning that they meet most minimum requirements of the role with some exceptions and areas of concern. Most performed best on scrutiny of everyday police performance. Overall we found examples of good progress on each of the assessment themes across all police authorities inspected, but only one was assessed as performing well across all four themes. Most police authorities perform their statutory responsibilities to some extent, often relying overly on the contribution of the chair and a few stalwart members. Police authorities could perform more effectively by focusing on setting clear strategic direction for policing which reflects the views of the public and securing the best possible value for money with whatever resources they have.

22 Our findings from the first ten inspections, against each of the four assessment themes, are shown below.

Setting strategic direction and priorities

23 Most of the police authorities inspected are not taking a sufficiently strategic lead in deciding the longer term shape of policing for their area. Police authorities need a better understanding of the risks and threats to policing to make informed decisions about the long term direction of the force and priorities that reflect community concerns. This needs to be linked to a clear and sustained focus on value for money.

24 Better performing police authorities have shaped and influenced annual policing priorities for their area, to ensure that they reflect what matters to local people. In these areas, a good balance is struck between the chief constable's operational independence and the scrutiny role of police authority members, particularly the Chair.

25 However, most police authorities are not actively involved in setting a clear long term vision and ambitious priorities for policing in their area. In general, members have an under-developed understanding of the risks and threats facing policing in their area, which makes it difficult for the police authority to shape longer term priorities, and influence the resources required. The Metropolitan police authority published MetForward in 2009, which is a strategic document that sets out the direction and priorities for policing in London in a format that is easily accessible to the public. MetForward contains eight work strands to develop and improve services, provide better value for money and fight crime to protect the public.

26 Many authorities need to understand better the risks and threats to policing and identify the information they need in order to make informed decisions about the long term direction of the force and policing priorities that reflect community concerns. We have found differing interpretations in different places of what the *operational independence* of the chief constable actually means. The best authorities can influence and challenge the force effectively about the delivery of operational outcomes by using their knowledge of local policing together with objective and timely information about the performance of the force. They do this in a way that does not question the operational independence of the chief constable but which is sufficiently challenging to hold the force to account. We would expect the APA to raise issues directly with the Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) where differing interpretations of operational independence translate into barriers to effective governance. To date, this has not happened. The inspectorates intend to review progress made by APA and ACPO in this area in our next thematic report.

27 Without a clear long-term vision and plan, police authorities cannot demonstrate that they and their forces have the leadership, capacity and capability needed to deliver good quality policing outcomes on behalf of the public. It also means that they lack clear benchmarks against which to judge progress and direct resources.

28 Senior appointments are one of the most important activities that police authorities undertake. Police authorities are mostly effective at setting clear standards and expectations of chief constables and senior officers in recruitment and performance reviews. Senior police officer appointments reflect the values and vision that the police authority has for policing in its area. For example, in response to the concerns of partners about continuity in key roles, the Metropolitan Police Authority is seeking to ensure that borough commanders remain in post for a minimum of three years. In Lancashire, the police authority has a clear picture of the type of officer that it wants to deliver its vision for local policing and has used this effectively in making senior officer appointments.

29 A key responsibility for police authorities is to ensure that members are properly equipped to be effective in their scrutiny role. This is generally done well. Police authorities have invested heavily in the recruitment, development, performance review and support provided to members; to ensure they have the right skills and are representative of the communities they serve. Most police authorities have clearly defined roles and responsibilities for members, supported by annual skills and training plans.

30 All police authorities promote high standards of governance and ethical behaviour for themselves and their forces. Police authorities have generally robust governance and committee structures, a sound approach to investigating complaints and appropriate policies to prevent and detect fraud and corruption.

31 There are examples of police authorities doing effective work to tackle inequality and improve outcomes for people in vulnerable circumstances. This is illustrated by the police authorities' influence in the treatment of people in custody through the independent custody visitor's scheme. Greater Manchester Police Authority uses its 'appropriate adults' scheme to ensure that vulnerable detainees receive the support they need and spend the minimum time necessary in custody. Police authorities have actively promoted diversity and equalities. Although the composition of both police authority and force staff is not yet fully representative of local communities, a lot of progress has been made.

Scrutinising performance outcomes

32 Most of the police authorities inspected are effective in scrutinising everyday police performance and holding their police forces to account in delivering policing priorities. In many cases this relies upon the strength of character and personal determination of chairs and other committed members. This cannot be an enduring mechanism for securing effective governance. Police authorities need better information that is up to date so they can scrutinise performance more effectively.

33 Police authorities rely heavily on analysis of performance data provided by the force. At times, information is presented to members in too much detail and complexity, which can be a barrier to effective scrutiny. Police authority chairs, chief executives and members need access to information and data analysis that provides an objective assessment of force performance. Many police authorities need to define more clearly the data they require from the force, and in what form, to inform their scrutiny function.

34 Police authorities have differing approaches to how they structure and operate their executive offices. Of the authorities we inspected, we saw a wide variation in the number of staff in executive offices and the functions they perform to support the police authority. Northamptonshire has six full-time executive officers whilst the Metropolitan Police Authority has over 100. All police authorities need to satisfy themselves that the functions and structures of their executive offices provide them with the appropriate support to deliver their governance roles effectively.

35 Opportunities are not exploited to share data analysis functions and resources across police authorities. Drawing on comparative benchmarking data and information from local public service partners, private and voluntary sectors will also strengthen members' effectiveness in their scrutiny role.

36 In a number of areas, police authorities are effectively challenging force performance on priority areas of concern to local people. Members of some authorities attend force performance review meetings and carry out visits to area commands and neighbourhood policing units, to ensure that they have a reliable picture of policing performance in their area. In Lancashire, the police authority used its annual scrutiny plan to determine the work programme of its committees and keep a comprehensive log of scrutiny issues to track force performance (**Case study 1**).This helped the Authority to understand and approve a reallocation of resources to manage a spate of gun crime in Preston. In Wiltshire, the police authority plays an active role in the local stop watch committee, and publishes stop and search performance reporting on a public website.

37 Police authorities demonstrate a good understanding of the Policing Pledge and single confidence target. Performance against the Pledge is monitored regularly and some police authorities have developed a policing pledge score card to assess and improve performance. Few police authorities follow up on this, through activities such as reality testing (mystery shopping), to monitor how decisions are translating into improved practice locally.

38 Police authority members have an insufficient understanding and scrutiny of more complex areas of policing, such as tackling terrorism, serious crime and other major challenges to public safety (protective services). Responsibilities for scrutinising protective services are not clear and a number of police authorities have recognised this as an area for improvement. Typically, police authorities have vetted a small number of their members to take the lead in this area. For example, members and officers from the Metropolitan Police Authority meet regularly with senior officers from the force to discuss joint operations, ensuring that any action taken is justified and that community impact has been assessed.

Case study 1 – Lancashire Police Authority

Overseeing performance data

Lancashire Police Authority uses its analysis and scrutiny of performance data constructively to challenge the Force. To achieve this, it ensures Members are fully equipped with the necessary skills and knowledge to enable them to interpret and examine performance data at all levels of the organisation. This rigorous approach ensures that performance is effectively scrutinised and any areas of under-performance are tackled. This rigour and scrutiny has contributed to the success of Lancashire Constabulary and helped to drive continuous improvement.

The Authority has developed an integrated planning and scrutiny process. The Planning Working Group is a joint Authority and Constabulary forum. It meets on a monthly basis to develop, amongst other things, the Local Policing Plan. An integral part of this work is the compilation of a mapping matrix which provides the main framework for performance assessment for the forthcoming year.

The Authority's Improvement and Scrutiny Group highlights the effectiveness of the Authority's performance scrutiny function. The composition of the Group (Committee Chairs, Chief Executive and Policy and Performance Officer) provides an opportunity for cross cutting consideration of performance issues in advance of the formal Committee cycle. It reviews, amongst other documents, the Quarterly Performance Bulletin received from the Constabulary, the Annual Scrutiny Plan (which is developed from the Local Policing Plan and covers promises made which are not already the subject of scrutiny via a formal mechanism), efficiency and productivity information, and Member reports following their attendance at the divisional quarterly performance review meetings.

Members actively engage with the Constabulary and this helps them to understand the work and difficulties faced by the Force. Members are linked to individual divisions, within both geographic and specialist areas, and they are invited to attend the divisional quarterly performance review meetings. They are required to produce quarterly reports giving an outline of:

- overall perception of divisional performance and the management team;
- particular strengths and examples of good practice; and
- any issues of concern and any other developing issues.

These reports are considered by the Improvement and Scrutiny Group who then, collectively, have an overview of all the divisional quarterly performance reviews including any areas of particular strength and good practice as well as issues of concern or areas for development. The Improvement and Scrutiny Group Members agree the areas they would like to formally raise through the Authority's Planning and Performance Review Committee.

The approach adopted by the Authority is that of a 'critical friend' and the Force is encouraging of the approach and support afforded which has resulted in better policing outcomes for the people of Lancashire whilst driving up efficiencies and value for money.

Achieving results through community engagement and partnerships

39 All of the police authorities inspected can do more to secure improved outcomes for the public through effective partnerships and community engagement. Partnership working has significant potential to deliver improved outcomes for the public and better value for money. However, many police authorities are unable to demonstrate the benefit and impact of partnership working. When faced with tough choices and limited resources, authorities will increasingly need to demonstrate that activity in this area is an effective use of their time and prioritise their involvement accordingly.

40 Police authorities use a variety of methods for consulting and engaging with the public, including surveys, newsletters, leaflets, focus groups, community meetings and events. As a result, police authorities generally have a good understanding of what matters to people locally. To differing extents, police authorities have used outcomes from community engagement to influence and shape policing priorities and targets. For example, in it's 2010/11 Annual Policing Plan, Cheshire Police Authority placed more importance on tackling anti-social behaviour as this was a priority identified by local people.

41 While there are some excellent examples of police authorities engaging well with their communities, the strategic approach to community engagement is limited. Most police authorities do not have a clear picture of the communities they should be targeting and why. Police authorities are not routinely working in partnership with local authorities and community organisations to identify outcomes from community engagement that takes place in each area. Police authorities need to develop a clear rationale with the force and local partners on how to co-ordinate and develop a comprehensive picture of public opinion. We have found that most police authorities cannot demonstrate that they fully understand their diverse communities and are connecting with hard-to-reach and vulnerable groups. In most cases, outcomes from community engagement are not routinely informing strategic, finance, service and workforce plans.

42 Few police authorities are actively exploring opportunities to work with local strategic partnerships (LSPs), crime and disorder reduction partnerships (CDRPs) and business and voluntary organisations to drive efficient and effective policing and community safety outcomes in their area. Police authorities do not have a clear approach to partnership working and are not systematically identifying which partnerships they should work with and what value they could add. Representation and influence of police authority members on LSPs and CDRPs is variable.

43 We found very few examples of how police authorities have influenced policing and community safety priorities at an LSP level (**Case study 2**). As a result, few police authorities can demonstrate that policing priorities inform local area agreement priorities, targets, funding and resources.

44 In some cases, police authorities are developing a good understanding of which partnerships exist, including respective roles and responsibilities. The Metropolitan Police Authority uses a partnership toolkit to enhance its governance over the 323 partnerships that the Metropolitan Police Service is involved in. Action plans are produced after partnership meetings and the Authority is identifying a database of good practice identified through these meetings.

Case study 2 – Avon and Somerset Police Authority

Working in partnership to improve public confidence

Avon and Somerset Police Authority has been active in influencing all five local area agreements (LAAs) across the constabulary area. The aim is to improve the work relating to the National Indicator 21 (NI 21), dealing with local concerns about anti-social behaviour and crime issues by the local council and police.

In April 2009, a single target for measuring confidence levels in local policing was introduced. The authority identified that policing measures alone would not deliver the target. It recognised that perception of crime and actual crime levels are both drivers of confidence. The authority worked to get all its LAA partners to adopt the confidence target (NI 21) in all its LAA agreements.

To achieve this, the police authority set out to influence the constabulary's thinking about the single confidence target. Initially, the constabulary and authority developed their ideas separately to explore the confidence target from their own perspectives. A workshop then brought these perspectives together and helped set the basis for a delivery plan.

The authority plays a full role in delivering the plan. Chief Officers inform the authority of progress at performance meetings and joint citizen focus boards. At these meetings, the authority examines trends and challenges the constabulary. The authority also studies performance and oversees risk management.

The authority understands the importance of working with its partners to achieve the confidence target. It has representatives on three Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs) and ensures rigorous monitoring of the target in the LSPs work. A dedicated partnership working group, chaired by a police authority member, is the contact point for other LSP members to oversee the constabulary's activity. The group's aim is to consider the views of its partners in the ways the authority conducts its business. The group also plays a role in improving data quality, examining performance and adding value to partnerships.

The authority has made good progress in delivering the single confidence target in policing. By aligning targets, it has also has created a more integrated approach for the police and its partners to deliver key priorities. The partners now have a real sense of improving public confidence as their involvement helps to achieve the confidence target.

Early signs show that the constabulary is on track to deliver the single confidence target and that the actions of the police authority are having an impact. The authority has also improved how it works with its partners.

Ensuring value for money and productivity

45 Most of the police authorities inspected are not doing enough to ensure a clear and sustained focus on value for money and collaboration. With the tighter economic climate, police authorities will need to ensure their forces deliver more for less as well as achieving ambitious targets on efficiency and productivity.

46 Police authorities have helped drive efficiencies in the last ten years to meet Government targets. They are effective in influencing annual budgets, funding and resource allocations, and have a track record of effective annual financial planning, budget monitoring and asset management. But this is not enough if police authorities are to respond effectively to the economic downturn and the challenges of managing in the tighter fiscal climate that they and their forces face. Police authorities are not taking a strategic lead to ensure that they and their forces are making the necessary hard choices on priorities, funding and resources to deliver improved value for money.

47 Police authorities lack a comprehensive understanding of the resources available to deliver sustainable policing and are not setting sufficiently challenging targets for improved efficiency and productivity to respond to the economic climate in front of us. Benchmarking of costs ought to be the order of the day. It is not. Little or no assessment is made of efficiencies that can be achieved from workforce deployment, redesigning business processes, streamlining support services, collaborative and partnership working.

48 Police authorities do not sufficiently understand their force costs, or their own. Available benchmarking data is not being routinely used to understand the costs of policing, inform priorities and secure efficiencies. The Metropolitan Police Authority has recently carried out a corporate benchmarking exercise and has plans in place to tackle high spending areas, including premises, supplies and services and ICT.

49 Few police authorities have driven improved efficiency from force collaborative working or shared services. Collaboration is not promoted or used effectively to deliver efficiencies, as police authorities do not have a clear understanding of the benefits that will result. In too many cases, collaboration is opportunistic and lacks a robust business case that identifies value for money and service outcomes.

50 We found very few examples of police authorities recognising and taking action to anticipate the coming tighter fiscal environment (**Case study 3**). Police authorities need to focus more clearly on prioritising those activities that will deliver the greatest improvements in service delivery and efficiency.

Case Study 3 – Gwent Police Authority

Staying Ahead review

Gwent Police Authority's Staying Ahead review is a wide-ranging and ambitious strategic review of policing in Gwent. It aims to deliver high-quality services to the public within the available resources.

The Staying Ahead review incorporates a new approach to policing in Gwent. It plans to provide efficiencies as well as delivering better customer service with a community based ethos. Its key priority is to enable the Force to meet the challenges of providing future services in line with national and local priorities.

The Authority's projections in 2007/08 showed a budget shortfall of £14 million by 2010/11, representing more than 12 per cent of the net revenue expenditure. Because of the shortfall it was clear the Authority and the Force had to carry out a major budget savings exercise. The Authority implemented the Staying Ahead review to help achieve this.

The Staying Ahead review involves all the Authority members in a change management programme affecting the Force. The aim is make greater efficiencies and improve service delivery to the public. The review also set out to reform the structure of the Force, including revised roles for officers and support staff.

So far the review has produced an increase in efficiency savings and the operational resources used. The savings achieved have enabled the Authority to reduce the Protective Services gap by £2 million without increasing resources. The Authority has reviewed and realigned its committee structures to ensure it has suitable arrangements in place to manage its new policing vision.

The Authority has systematic processes in place for assessing and measuring the benefits of the Staying Ahead review. There has been a 22 per cent increase in the resources deployed on neighbourhood policing and an increased allocation to roads policing.

The Authority expects efficiency savings of £14.4 million between 2009 and 2013, approximately £3.1 million above its efficiency and productivity target.

The Staying Ahead review has improved the matching of operational resources to demand. The Authority has worked hard to achieve efficiency savings whilst delivering a good police service with an improving customer focus. This has helped to increase the confidence levels in Gwent policing.

Interim conclusions

51 Police authorities have yet to demonstrate that they can respond effectively to the increasing demands being placed on them and need to prioritise their activities better if they are to deliver effective governance of policing. Our inspection findings so far confirm that the more successful police authorities rely largely upon the strength of character and visible leadership of their Chair, supported by highly committed members and officers. Individually they can and do make a visible difference. However, relying on heroic efforts by individuals cannot be an enduring mechanism for securing effective governance.

52 Police authorities perform well on some aspects of their responsibilities but, the challenge to perform consistently well across all aspects of their remit is considerable. Despite increasingly wide ranging responsibilities, authorities need to undertake their prime governance role more effectively. The best performers devote their time ruthlessly to key strategic priorities, to avoid being drawn in multiple directions. Police authorities will need to take hard decisions to prioritise activities better, to provide sound judgement and leadership that enables police forces to deliver substantial efficiencies whilst improving force performance.

53 Our inspection findings confirm that police authorities need to significantly improve their capacity and capability on strategic planning and value for money. This will need more focused and effective longer-term strategic planning, priorities, partnership working and targeted investment in the skills of police authority members and officers. Police authorities can do more to increase the effectiveness of their own executive office and better align resources to need. Our inspections have confirmed that chairs and chief executives recognise where police authorities need to improve and have the desire, leadership and commitment to tackle the challenges they face.

54 There is a range of improvement support being offered to police authorities by the APA, the National Policing and Improvement Agency (NPIA) and the Improvement and Development Agency (IDeA). In light of these findings, they will want to consider carefully the most appropriate model of training and development, to deliver genuine expert support in the priorities identified, targeted to the authorities in greatest need.

55 We will publish another thematic report by February 2011 when more inspections are complete. In the meantime, we will continue to publish individual inspection reports as they are completed and will update our websites with good practice case studies.

Recommendations

56 In light of these findings, the joint inspectorates make the following eight recommendations for police authorities, the APA and Home Office.

Police authorities should:	
R1	**Devote their time to key priorities of setting strategic direction and delivering value for money.** Some will need to extend their understanding of the risks and threats to policing in order to make informed decisions about the long term direction of the force. All police authorities should review the nature and effectiveness of the relationship with the force to ensure that they have sufficient visibility and understanding of operational outcomes, in a manner that enables them to discharge their governance responsibilities effectively, whilst respecting the operational independence of the chief constable. Police authorities should review their own executive office support to ensure limited resource is tightly aligned to their key priorities.
R2	**Define more clearly the data they require from the force, and in what form, to inform their scrutiny function.** Police authorities should ensure that they have access to objective analysis of force performance in priority areas, alongside comparative information detailing performance of others (most similar forces and national). Analytical support may come from the force or be provided directly to the authority. Police authorities should explore the best options to share resource and analytical support.
R3	**Improve their understanding of more complex areas of policing, such as tackling terrorism, serious crime and other major challenges to public safety (protective services).** Police authorities should review local arrangements to ensure that lead members with responsibility for protective services, vetted to the appropriate level, are sufficiently linked into force activity. Without the right level of knowledge and information the authority cannot sufficiently hold the force to account in this area.
R4	**Ensure the right level of engagement in local partnerships that best support the police authority's strategic objectives to deliver improved outcomes for the public and better value for money.** Police authorities should review the effectiveness of their relationship with local strategic partnerships, business and voluntary organisations and take necessary steps to improve involvement where needed and demonstrate the benefit and impact of partnership working.

Recommendations

Police authorities should:	
R5	**Extend the use of benchmarking to understand the costs of policing, inform priorities and secure efficiencies.** Police authorities need to use comparative benchmarking data to develop a thorough understanding of their force costs and their own. More assessment is needed of efficiencies that can be achieved from workforce deployment, redesigning business processes, collaborative and partnership working.
R6	**Act as leaders in collaboration to offset risks and costs for their communities.** Police authorities need to be clear on the benefits from collaboration, supported by robust business cases which identify value for money and service outcomes.
APA with the support of improvement partners should:	
R7	**Urgently review how best to support the development of skills in the priority areas identified above, to improve individual and organisational effectiveness in the delivery of value for money and the setting of strategic direction.**
Home Office should:	
R8	**Develop and oversee effective governance arrangements in the sector to ensure that the areas for improvement highlighted in this report area addressed successfully.**

Appendix 1 – Assessment Criteria and Scoring

Assessment theme	Key question and assessment criteria
1. Setting strategic direction and priorities	How does the police authority ensure that both it and the force have the leadership, capacity and capability needed to deliver good quality service outcomes on behalf of the public? The police authority demonstrates that it: • sets clear and ambitious priorities for policing in its area; • plans effectively for longer term strategic challenges at local, regional and national levels; • ensures the force is well led; • tackles inequality and improves outcomes for people in vulnerable circumstances; • directs resources and is properly skilled to discharge its governance responsibilities; and • ensures high professional and ethical standards are set for itself and the force.
2. Scrutinising performance outcomes	How effective is the police authority in scrutinising and ensuring that the force delivers the priority services that matter to local people? The police authority demonstrates that it: • has the capacity to make effective senior officer appointments and that it holds the chief constable to account for delivery of objectives, priorities and quality outcomes; • has a rigorous approach to performance scrutiny, analysing data to monitor performance and tackling under-performance; • sets challenging targets for performance and the Policing Pledge, fulfils its own role in delivering the single confidence target, and drives the progress of its force towards achieving this target; and • sets clear priorities and ensures the delivery of effective protective services.

Appendix 1 – Assessment Criteria and Scoring

Assessment theme	Key question and assessment criteria
3. Achieving results through community engagement and partnerships	How well does the police authority achieve results through community engagement and partnerships to deliver its ambitions and strategic priorities? The police authority demonstrates that it: • has secured and understood the views of local people about policing priorities in its area; • acts upon community concerns by setting priorities for policing that reflect local needs and will lead to improvements in public confidence; • provides feedback on how issues raised through consultation and community engagement have been considered; • ensures that local policing services are accessible to all communities, including hard to reach and vulnerable groups; • secures desired outcomes for local policing and community safety priorities through effective partnership; and • properly balances the focus on local issues and improvements in confidence with the wider needs of the public in policing regional and national concerns.
4. Ensuring value for money and productivity	How effective is the police authority in ensuring a clear and sustained focus on value for money to secure a good deal for the public? The police authority demonstrates that it: • has, with the force, made a comprehensive assessment of risk and threats, and ensures that resources are aligned to priorities, risk and threats; • directs effort away from non-priority areas; • ensures the force's use of resources reflect supply and demand profiles; • promotes and supports collaboration/joint working between forces and other local public service partners to improve efficiency, reduce costs, manage risk more effectively and deliver improvements in policing services nationally; • regularly reviews costs and overheads; and • sets ambitious local targets to deliver improved efficiency, effectiveness and productivity and challenges the force to achieve them.

Score	Descriptor of performance	Public reporting
1	Police authority does not meet minimum requirements for this theme	Performs poorly
2	Police authority meets most of the minimum requirements for this theme with some exceptions and areas of concern	Performs adequately
3	Police authority exceeds minimum requirements for this theme	Performs well
4	Police authority significantly exceeds minimum requirements for this theme	Performs excellently

Appendix 2 – Police authority inspection summary of scores

Police Authority	Assessment theme				Overall score
	1 Strategic direction	2 Performance scrutiny	3 Engaging Communities	4 Value for money	
Avon and Somerset	2	2	2	2	2
Cheshire	3	3	3	2	3
Gwent	3	3	3	3	3
Hampshire	2	3	2	2	2
Lancashire	3	3	4	2	3
Leicestershire	2	1	2	2	2
Greater Manchester	2	1	2	2	2
Metropolitan	Report due to be published on 25 March 2010				
Northamptonshire	2	2	2	2	2
Wiltshire	2	3	2	2	2

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