



Inspecting policing
in the public interest

National Overview

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Version: [Draft \(0.15\)](#) Status: [Checked in and viewable by authorized users.](#) Publication Start Date: [Immediately](#)

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Police Performance in England and Wales

National Overview by Denis O'Connor HMCIC

Policing force is one of the most challenging public services to deliver.

Policing operates locally, and co-operates nationally. Police officers work in high profile on the streets, and in the most covert of circumstances. They must protect and guide citizens in every circumstance from catastrophe to crowd control. They have to work within one of the most complex and most dynamic social, legal, and technological environments ever seen.

The public expect a lot from their police. They rely in huge part on the skills, sensitivities, and initiative of individual officers, armed with little more than the authority of their office and the trust of the public.

Leading and managing a police force is not simple. No two forces face the same problems, geography or demography. But they must all account for what they do, and how well they are doing it. That is the basis for the British model of policing by consent.

For these reasons, giving the public a measure of how well a force is performing should not be over-simplified. But it is possible to make it more accessible and it is important to do so in order to inform public consent.

MyPolice.org.uk is an independent, ground-breaking website that will answer the questions you – the public – want to ask about your police. How safe am I? What is my risk of being a crime victim? How well are police performing? Are they likely to improve and am I getting value for money?

It is a one-stop-shop that will provide a wealth of facts, figures, grades and assessments of the 43 police forces in England and Wales. You can see how many officers your force puts on community duties, where its money is spent and whether anti-social behaviour is dealt with effectively.

British forces are perhaps the most closely scrutinised in the world. The British 'model' – based on approachability, impartiality, accountability and consent – is widely emulated. My Police will make a significant contribution to improvement.

How safe is my area?

MyPolice.org.uk provides an independent, professional assessment of the risks from crime and anti-social behaviour in every area across England and Wales. It shows how risks vary, for example:

1. Shootings, stabbings and sexual offences are rare compared to other crimes, with less than one victim per 1,000 population.
2. Violent assault, domestic burglary and vehicle crime are more common with, on average, between 5 and 10 victims per 1,000 population. But the rates vary significantly, depending on where you live. Violent assault is highest in Nottinghamshire.
3. The police recorded 3.6 million calls from the public about antisocial behaviour last year (compared with 4.6 million calls about crime). The number of calls per 1,000 population vary locally but this may reflect variations in public confidence in the police rather than risk. HMIC will be undertaking further work in this area.

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We have made a rounded assessment of each force because doing some tasks well and

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under-performing on others may not represent a good deal.

HMIC looked at dozens of aspects, from 'visible' work, such as neighbourhood policing and action against anti-social behaviour, to the 'invisible' – the often-secret work against terrorists and drug barons.

There is justifiable concern about demands for more performance data from forces regardless of the burden. We have collected existing facts and figures. For example, we have used 19 of the Home Office's 36 Analysis of Policing and Community Safety (APACS) indicators. We have put the information in one place to answer the questions the public ask. It is the public interest that counts.

In addition, we have added value to those facts and figures by using our experience and professional judgement to assess how well forces perform.

Policing is a complex business, covering many areas of work. The best forces reach very high standards in some areas; and generally they do well in a large majority of policing tasks:

Therefore assessing policing in your area does not mean looking for a single 'league table' position. Here are some examples of how to do it.

1. MyPolice.org.uk tells you why HMIC thinks Hertfordshire Constabulary, Northumbria Police, Surrey Police and Cleveland Police currently perform well across the board although their costs vary. You can compare your own force to them.
2. The Metropolitan Police Service, Merseyside Police and West Midlands Police achieved an excellent assessment for 'Protection from Serious Harm' – policing against the 'big threats' such as murder and organised crime. Lancashire achieved an excellent assessment for 'Local Crime and Policing'.
3. The forces that have improved on the most fronts over the last year are South Yorkshire Police, South Wales Police, West Midlands Police and Kent Police. South Yorkshire Police show the greatest prospect for improvement.
4. In this era of tightened budgets, value for money is essential. MyPolice.org.uk gives the clearest assessment yet of value for money in policing and it will provide greater detail in the near future. MyPolice highlights that Norfolk Constabulary generally performs well at a relatively low cost.
5. Nottinghamshire Police and Greater Manchester Police (GMP) are currently causing concern. GMP struggles in some key areas, but has a plan and clear commitment to improve. The performance of Nottinghamshire Police is below average in far too many aspects – it is struggling in all key areas.

MyPolice.org.uk

For some people, MyPolice.org.uk will be an uncomfortable read. But there is much to celebrate, and HMIC acknowledges the hard work of many forces. For example, homicide is at a 10 year low.

We aim to be fair in our assessments. When we compare forces it is against a set of 'peers' taking into account budgets, crime profiles, populations and challenges. Our grades are based on comparing like with like.

We cannot prevent the public comparing a big city force with a traditionally much lower-crime, county constabulary. They are entitled to do so because they may be considering moving their family.

But we can point out, in plain terms, that the fairer comparison is between peer or similar forces. We list each force's peers and describe the characteristics of a force's area and the context in which they operate.

We have done our best to strip out the jargon and to reflect questions the *public*, not police chiefs, tell us they want answered. You can compare forces for the first time in areas such as:

1. How many officers are on visible duties – catching criminals and keeping people safe.
2. How well forces identify and protect those people, often distressed and vulnerable, who suffer most from crime and anti-social behaviour.
3. How much you pay in Council Tax for your force.
4. Whether your force responds to the needs of people in its neighbourhoods – for example, responding to calls and neighbourhood concerns.

MyPolice will spotlight the high performers as a beacon for others to follow and tell the public in the under-achieving forces whether they can expect improvement. This is vital, as all forces can get better.

Areas for further development

We have based our assessments of police forces on data that is currently available. We

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recognise this data is not perfect and HMIC will play a leading role in improving the way performance information about forces is captured and analysed. We will do this in a way that will not place an unacceptable administrative burden on them.

There are testing times ahead, with difficult decisions about where police can best use their finite resources. The better the quality of information about performance, the more likely that sound judgements can be made in the future.

That said, the current data is clear enough for us to indicate areas where there is room for improvement.

1. The quality of crime data

Our experience is that the more serious the crime, the more rigorously police forces scrutinise it. Consequently, data on serious issues is stronger than on those offences regarded by the law as 'less serious'. However, the lives of many members of the public in parts of England and Wales are affected by these 'less serious' offences and it is vital that police have a clear picture so they can respond to public concerns. We will continue to sample and analyse crime data during the coming year.

2. Anti-social behaviour (ASB)

Police forces tend to view ASB as different to 'crime.' Members of the public on the receiving end of ASB find it hard to distinguish it from crime. While forces have been improving in their treatment of ASB, there is still a way to go. For instance, while we have surveys telling us what people think about it, we do not have up-to-date, credible data on victims, particularly repeat victims. To begin to address this, we have checked police systems and victims' experiences and a [separate note is available on the issue.](#)

3. Solving crime

We have used this title in My Police because we have found that the public do not understand the term used by police professionals - 'sanction detections'. There is a debate about what should count as 'detected' or 'solved'.

Some forces, for example undertake community resolutions for problems which do not count at present as a solved crime because they do not enter the criminal justice system even when the problem has been 'solved' to the victim's satisfaction. Nor are the experiences of victims reflected in the way we record crimes, never more so than in serious sexual offences where information is almost entirely directed at criminal justice outcomes – something we understand that Baroness Stern will highlight in her report, and which we support. We believe that these matters must be addressed so that the public has a clear understanding about what is being achieved and why.

4. Risk and harm

When we are judging performance in the round, it is important to ensure that serious criminality gets serious treatment.

We have made a start on this with the 'protection from serious harm' domain. It generally deals with the 'big' threats and risk: such as murder; drug trafficking; and being prepared for those 'critical crimes', such as child abductions, which can damage public confidence if not handled effectively. But it does not deal with all risks.

There is only a limited set of data but we have supplemented it with our knowledge of the work which police undertake that is largely unseen – for example, on tackling serious and organised crime. This approach has some limitations and we would like to give a better view on the risks to the public in future.

We will be working hard with professionals and others in the serious crime sector to improve our understanding of this policing dimension.

5. Value for money (VfM)

To date, there has not been a comprehensive benchmarking data set to enable police authorities and forces to consider comparative costs and resources used across England and Wales.

We have taken some data already supplied by police forces and converted it into value for money profiles. These show variations in a range of areas; raising valid and reasonable questions that police authorities and the public ask. We first made this available to forces and authorities in October 2009.

The profiles are not perfect but provide a good starting point for forces to compare themselves and to answer the key question the public put to us – where are the police?

The first set of value for money profiles will be released on 18th March 2010 on this website.



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	Local Crime and Policing	Protection from Serious Harm	Confidence and Satisfaction
A-C			
Avon and Somerset	FAIR	FAIR	FAIR
Bedfordshire	FAIR	FAIR	FAIR
Cambridgeshire	FAIR	FAIR	FAIR
Cheshire	FAIR	FAIR	FAIR
City of London	FAIR	FAIR	FAIR
Cleveland	GOOD	GOOD	GOOD
Cumbria	GOOD	FAIR	GOOD
D-G			
Derbyshire	FAIR	FAIR	FAIR
Devon and Cornwall	GOOD	GOOD	FAIR
Dorset	FAIR	FAIR	FAIR
Durham	FAIR	GOOD	GOOD
Dyfed-Powys	GOOD	FAIR	FAIR
Essex	GOOD	FAIR	GOOD
Gloucestershire	FAIR	FAIR	FAIR
Greater Manchester	POOR	GOOD	POOR
Gwent	FAIR	GOOD	FAIR
H-L			
Hampshire	FAIR	GOOD	FAIR
Hertfordshire	GOOD	GOOD	GOOD
Humberside	FAIR	FAIR	FAIR
Kent	GOOD	GOOD	FAIR
Lancashire	EXCELLENT	FAIR	GOOD
Leicestershire	FAIR	FAIR	FAIR
Lincolnshire	POOR	FAIR	FAIR
M-S			
Merseyside	GOOD	EXCELLENT	FAIR
Metropolitan	FAIR	EXCELLENT	FAIR
Norfolk	GOOD	GOOD	FAIR
North Wales	FAIR	FAIR	FAIR
North Yorkshire	FAIR	FAIR	FAIR



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Northamptonshire	FAIR	FAIR	FAIR
Northumbria	GOOD	GOOD	GOOD
Nottinghamshire	POOR	POOR	POOR
South Wales	FAIR	GOOD	FAIR
South Yorkshire	FAIR	FAIR	FAIR
Staffordshire	FAIR	GOOD	FAIR
Suffolk	FAIR	FAIR	FAIR
Surrey	GOOD	GOOD	GOOD
Sussex	FAIR	FAIR	FAIR
T-W			
Thames Valley	FAIR	FAIR	FAIR
Warwickshire	FAIR	FAIR	FAIR
West Mercia	GOOD	FAIR	GOOD
West Midlands	FAIR	EXCELLENT	FAIR
West Yorkshire	FAIR	FAIR	FAIR
Wiltshire	GOOD	FAIR	FAIR