FORCE MANAGEMENT STATEMENTS

As part of the Committee of Public Accounts report, Financial Sustainability of Police Forces in England and Wales, published on 07 November 2018, you asked HMICFRS to write to the Committee, "...setting out insights of the demands on police services drawn from the first set of force management statements". This was included within the wider recommendation (point 2, page 5 of the report) that: "The Department [Home Office] should develop better measurements of both crime and non-crime demand for police services and use these to inform their bid for funding in the next Spending Review."

Force management statements: an overview

2. We have received FMSs from 45 forces (43 Home Office, British Transport Police and Jersey).

3. Force management statements (FMSs) are self-assessments that chief constables (and London equivalents) prepare and submit to HMICFRS each year. Each is the chief constable’s statement and explanation of:

(a) the demand the force expects to face in the next four years;

(b) how the force will change and improve its workforce and other assets to cope with that demand;

(c) how the force will improve its efficiency to make sure the gap between future demand and future capability is as small as it can reasonably be made to be; and

(d) the money the force expects to have to do all this.

4. Before we introduced FMSs, police forces did not have a consistent way to describe the full range of demands they face. One of the principal aims of FMSs is for forces to gain a better and more complete understanding of their demand, both current and future, by adopting a common and comprehensive classification of their workload.
5. The launch of FMSs was part of a three-year plan. FMSs were introduced in late 2017 and we received the first tranche of completed FMSs (FMS 1) on 31 May 2018. FMS 1 gave forces four steps to consider when analysing the demand they face. However, there was relative freedom for forces to describe demand in the way they felt most appropriate. In 2018-19, the second year of FMSs (FMS 2), forces will provide information in a more structured way. Future FMSs will be more prescriptive, enabling far easier data analysis and comparison by forces, the Home Office and other interested organisations, and the establishment of good practice by the police service across England & Wales.

6. Introducing the process for the first time in all forces was always going to be difficult. The initial template we proposed was prescriptive but, after consultation with forces, we amended it to include only the demand sections (see paragraph 8 below), and the four steps (see paragraph 9 below). This was necessary to make sure forces could:

(a) understand the process; and

(b) develop their own methods to address their demand requirements without being confined to a presumed approach.

7. Because forces were completing the FMS for the first time, we expected the individual returns to reflect varying levels of maturity in both establishing and interpreting the demand picture. We also anticipated that returns would likely differ in style and content.

8. Despite the variance in returns, the FMS guidance is robust. FMSs are structured using seven demand categories: prevention and deterrence; responding to the public; investigations; the protection of vulnerable people; managing dangerous offenders; dealing with serious and organised crime; and preparing for major events. These categories are comprehensive and largely distinct. Many forces have now included this structure as part of their systems for planning and performance review.

9. We asked forces to assess each demand category by following a simple four-step approach, the application of which provided further insights:

(a) to establish the gap between current demand and the demand the force expects in the next four years;

(b) to establish the state of the workforce and other assets, in meeting current demand;

(c) to explain what the force will do to ensure that the workforce and other assets can meet the anticipated demand; and

(d) to state what types and how much of future demand the force expects not to be able to meet.

Insights from the first set of FMSs

10. The overall insight of the demands placed on police drawn from the first set of FMSs is that most forces should manage demand more effectively. The process of producing their first FMSs has made most forces more aware than they would have been of their strengths and weaknesses
in managing current and future demand, which is an essential first step in making the necessary changes.

11. For many forces, FMSs exposed important gaps in their knowledge about the overall demand profile. Forces provided considerable amounts of data about demand in relation to their responses to the public, such as: numbers of 999 calls, 101 calls, their priority and incident type – anti-social behaviour, investigations – crimes and their outcomes and registered sex offenders (RSOs). Knowledge about demand in other areas was more patchy but, in general, demand was better presented in FMSs where the forces were required to provide information to other government departments in a specified standard form.

12. Many forces reported increases in 999 calls. In nearly all cases, there was an acknowledgment that there was not a corresponding increase in the crimes or incidents recorded as a result of them. Only a few forces reported an increase in calls to the 101 police non-emergency number, with around a third reporting a reduction. In almost all cases, the fall in the number of 101 calls was greater than the corresponding increase in 999 calls.

13. Improved analytical capabilities would help forces undertake more in-depth assessments of areas of high demand (or high costs). Conducting analysis relative to other similar forces and making better use of existing comparative information would improve a force’s understanding. Continuing the example at paragraph 12, while some forces took increases in 999 calls as evidence of increasing calls for service from the public and whilst they may have been right about this, it would have been more persuasive if they had also measured and made comparisons with reductions in 101 calls. Forces that did analyse the 101 calls further discovered a large percentage of these calls were because of aborted 101 calls, and/or unsatisfactory feedback to victims of crime, resulting in victims calling 999 to get an update on progress.

14. Several forces described significant reductions in the large volume of anti-social behaviour (ASB) incidents over the last three years (which, given the overall volume of ASB, is a potentially significant reduction in demand). The reduction was generally only mentioned briefly, but the commentary did not describe how the resources that had been meeting the ASB demand were now being used to offset increases in demand in other areas.

15. To improve the wellbeing of officers and staff, many forces are working hard to identify mental ill health at the earliest opportunity and/or provide the necessary resources for treatment and support. Although there was no evidence to indicate a national trend of increasing absence amongst officers and staff, in nearly all forces, absence or referrals for support relating to psychological conditions (which include mental ill health) had risen to represent around 30-40% of absences or referrals over the reporting period. Many forces described how they were either providing or seeking to provide additional resources to their staff wellbeing function. Throughout the country, significant investment has been made in training staff, raising awareness and breaking down the stigma of mental ill health within the workplace. Often, this has been done together with Mind, the mental health charity, and this should be regarded as a positive step.

16. Forces need to improve their analytical capabilities to produce meaningful forecasts. Many forces relied on general assessments of future demand which were primarily based on professional judgments or the interpretation of raw data. Others were limited to either basic trend analysis or straight-line extrapolation. Based on the FMSs, the increased demand that forces expected is from: online offences, including anti-social behaviour (ASB) and fraud; modern day slavery and human trafficking; organised crime groups (OCGs); county lines offences; terrorism
and associated tensions; an increase in registered sex offenders; vulnerability, including mental ill health; and offences against the ageing population. Larger forces also mentioned the long-term problems of homelessness, begging and rough sleeping. Plausible reasons for most of these prognoses, while they may exist in a force, were often not documented in FMSs.

17. **Despite the variability in provision and analysis of the data by forces, the FMS submissions indicate that the workforce in policing is under strain.** This indicates that workloads have increased. Workload may have increased due to higher demand, raised expectations of the public, more effort being needed to complete work and a reduction in workforce availability (for example, officers redeployed to areas outside their main responsibilities, or unfilled vacancies). It is likely that all these factors are present, and, in fact, all are mentioned in FMS submissions. However, the relevance and presence of these factors tend to be lost, with the emphasis being placed on increasing demand.

18. While all forces could do better, the quality of some FMSs stood out from the rest. We think that three factors distinguished these returns:

(a) the production of the FMS as part of the force’s decision-making processes; this requires the commitment of the chief constable and his or her senior team;

(b) a force culture that values candour about its problems: for instance, the recognition by one force that poor investigation outcomes caused significant extra 999 demand from victims; by contrast, some FMSs gave the impression that demand was the source of most, if not all, problems and that little could be done about it, now or in the future; and

(c) the appointment of lead staff to manage the process on behalf of the chief constable’s team, with the experience and analytical skills to make sure the FMS addressed critical difficulties and gave a balanced and reliable view of the current and future demand position.

**Next steps**

19. We are continuing to work with forces to improve the quality and insight in FMSs. This will be of benefit to us, the service and the public.

20. To improve the consistency and comparability of FMSs, while allowing forces to use what they have learned from FMS 1, we have introduced small but significant changes in the FMS 2 guidance. These include:

(a) the requirement to follow the section headings and the four-step approach;

(b) the requirement to limit returns to no more than 170 pages, and not including unnecessary contextual information;

(c) an increased requirement for forces to provide case studies to highlight aspects of demand and initiatives they have taken;

(d) the requirement to present data consistently by applying common data standards; and

(e) the introduction of a risk assessment for forces to gauge their ability to deal with their anticipated demand and workload using a RAG (red, amber and green) rating.
21. So that FMSs continue to develop collaboratively between HMICFRS and forces, we have established a steering group which comprises representatives from the:

(a) National Police Chiefs Council;

(b) Association of Police and Crime Commissioners;

(c) College of Policing;

(d) Home Office; and

(e) staff associations (including, the Police Federation of England and Wales, and the Police Superintendents’ Association of England and Wales).

If you need any more information, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sir Thomas Winsor
Her Majesty’s Chief Inspector of Constabulary