

Emergency Services News Briefing

August 2023



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In this edition of our news briefing, we draw attention to some of the key developments and publications in the sector, with particular focus on police performance and effectiveness as well as the National Fire Chiefs Council's new Culture Action Plan.

Police

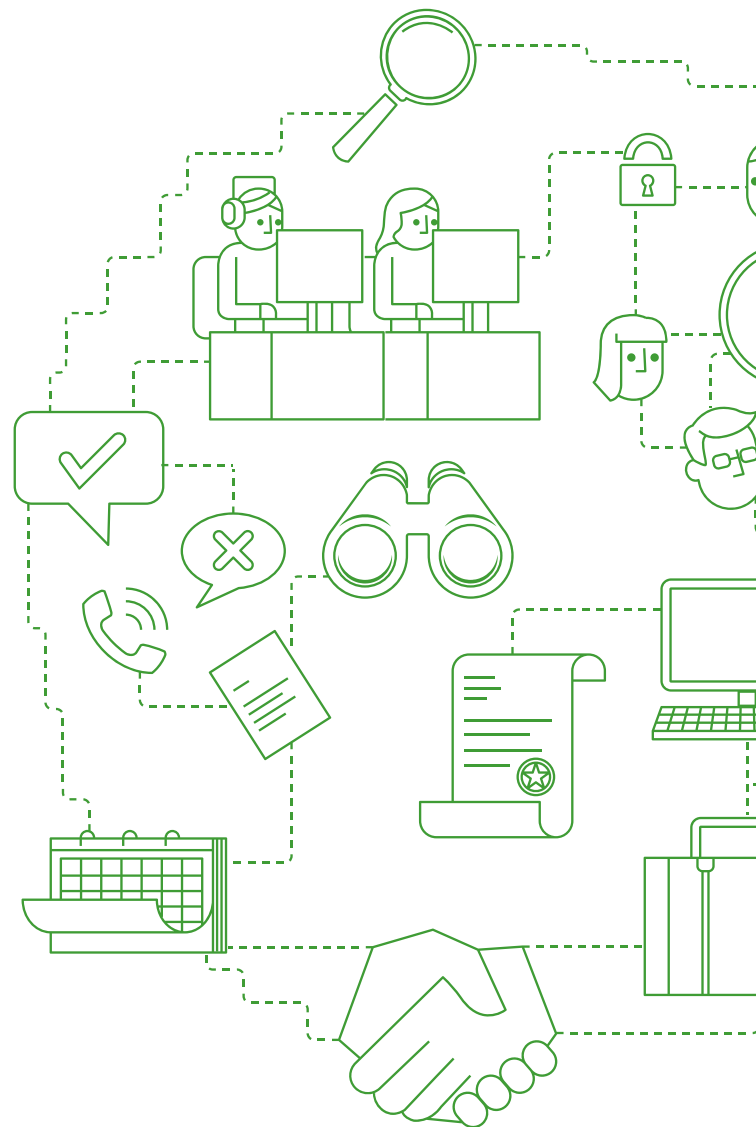
An inspection of how effective police forces are in the deployment of firearms

His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) has published a report following its inspection on how effective police forces are in the deployment of firearms. The inspection investigated:

- how well policies and processes comply with applicable legislation and guidance;
- the operational effectiveness of forces collaborating across boundaries; and
- how effective forces are in selection, training, and deployment of firearms advisors.

HMICFRS visited nine police forces across England and Wales between November 2022 and January 2023. Overall the inspectorate found that there is a good selection process, with well trained and well-equipped officers. However, the inspection found improvements were needed in the training of high risk strategic and tactical firearms commanders and HMICFRS made 12 recommendations to help policing improve, including :

- all chief constables to make sure armed responses 'vehicle asset tracking equipment, as provided by Counter Terrorism Policing, is available and used in their forces';
- introducing new entry criteria for strategic and tactical firearms commanders, similar to the process used to select public order commanders; and
- improving record keeping in relation to armed operations and introducing regular auditing of these records.



Questions for committee's consideration

- Are the Audit Committee sighted on the progress being made by the Force to implement these recommendations?



Police performance: Getting a grip

HMICFRS has published a report on police forces' progress in recording crime. The report explores performance across the 43 forces in England and Wales and brings together the findings from HMICFRS' police effectiveness, efficiency and legitimacy (PEEL) 2021/22 inspection programme. The report highlights an increase from 'an estimated 80.5 per cent of all crime being recorded (excluding fraud) in 2014, to 92.4 per cent at the end of 2021/2022 inspections.' Other key findings include:

- many forces were failing to properly understand and manage their own performance;
- many forces don't understand what issues are most important to tackle, how their performance can be measured, how they should change and what works in tackling issues;
- too many forces make decisions based on poor data or insufficient analysis of data;
- the workforce is increasingly under-resourced and under-skilled, with forces not doing enough to understand why such a large proportion of its workforce are leaving and having any plans in place to tackle it; and
- some strategic leaders were unfamiliar with the areas of work under their management. Due to insufficient operational knowledge, they were less able to properly lead, support, develop and challenge their specialist teams. This further reduces forces' ability to work effectively in high-risk areas of policing.



Questions for committee's consideration

- Is the Force Senior Management Team and Audit Committee fully sighted on the findings and progress being made to implement the key findings?
- Are Strategic Leaders in your Force fully familiar with the areas of work under their management?

Crime and Policing Minister opens new research facility

The Crime and Policing Minister, Chris Philp, has opened a new facility at the Defence Science and Technology Laboratory (Dstl). This facility, funded by the Home Office, integrates the former Home Office Centre for Applied Science and Technology (CAST) staff and capabilities, offering bespoke trials, storage, laboratory, and research office space. The facility allows for the exchange of ideas and application of funded innovations across multiple problems within law enforcement, policing, counter-terrorism and military research. The main capabilities of this facility include ground and water-based search support, audio and video surveillance, contraband and threat-detection systems including x-ray and CT scanning, and innovation spaces to address future science and technology challenges for law enforcement and front line services. This integration aims to be efficient and cost-effective.


UK Police Data Breach

Four police forces have admitted breaching the data that led to the names and roles of thousands of serving officers being published on a public website. The breach occurred following the accidental release of data within a spreadsheet following a Freedom of Information (Fol) request.

The data impacted was information held on a specific police system and related to crime reports. The data also included personal identifiable information on victims, witnesses, and suspects, as well as descriptions of offences.

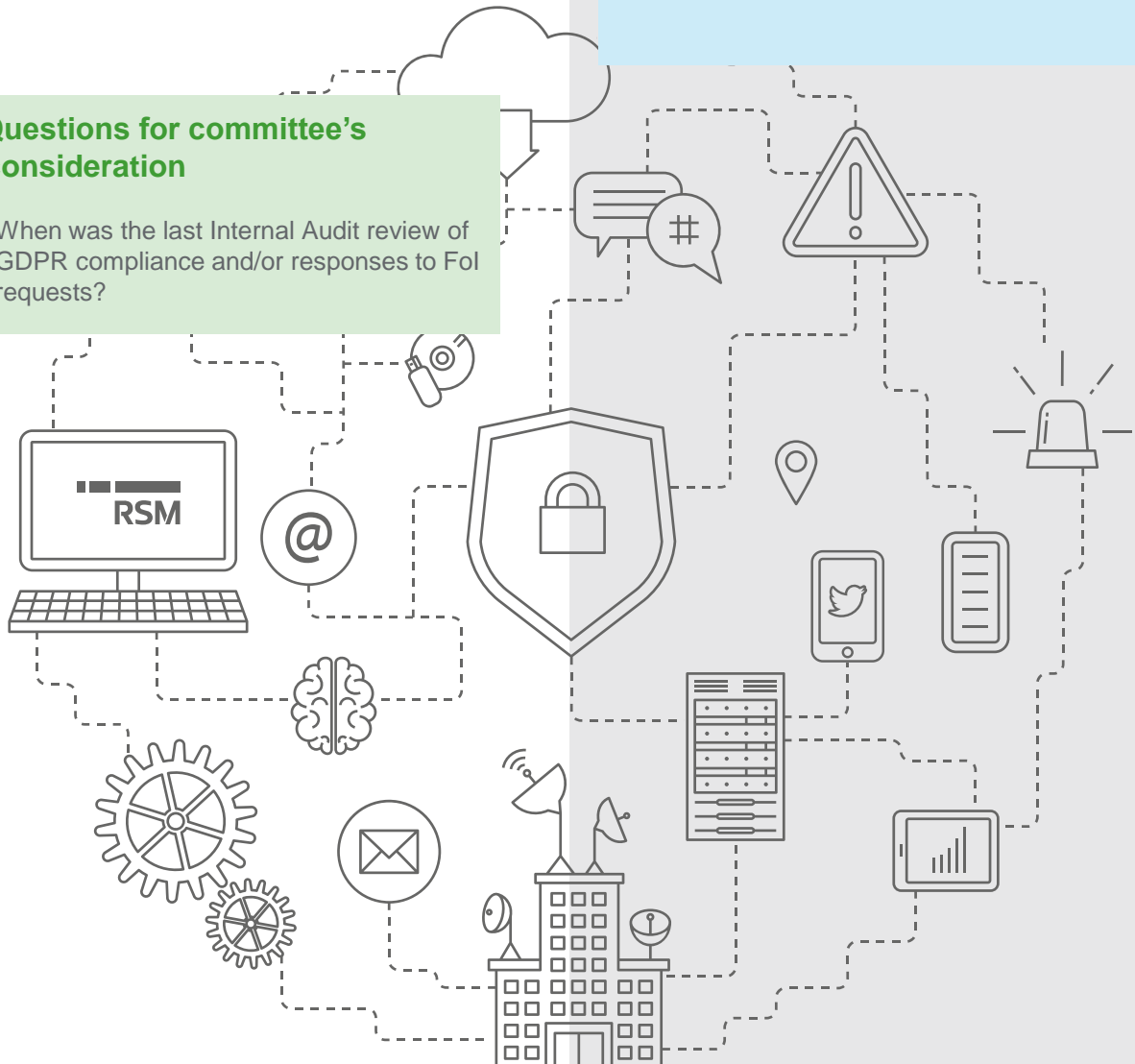
RSM insight

This incident highlights the importance of robust data governance controls and staff awareness. A common cause of data loss is through human error and lack of understanding of internal procedures. Therefore, the need for regular staff awareness training is vital to underpin a robust data governance framework and reduce the risk of data breaches occurring. In addition, it is important to ensure that associated incident management procedures are both well designed and regular tested to ensure that the actions from any future data beach are effective to help minimise any corresponding loss.



Questions for committee's consideration

- When was the last Internal Audit review of GDPR compliance and/or responses to Fol requests?





State of Policing

HMICFRS has published its annual assessment of policing in England and Wales 2022. The annual assessment provides an overview of the findings of inspections, which were carried out between 1 December 2021 and 31 March 2023, including a summary of police effectiveness and efficiency of police forces. Key findings include:

- police are not focusing on issues that matter most to the public and with forces unable to keep up with rising demand, public satisfaction with the police is reducing, and 'people can be left at risk';
- many victims are not satisfied that the police have taken their reports seriously or that enough action is being taken;
- the police role should be clearly defined, while changes in recent years have meant the police have taken on extra tasks which could be undertaken by other services;
- police need to balance their priorities and whilst there are 'tools to assist with prioritisation this is a balancing act that requires careful judgement'; and
- better efficiency is needed as HMICFRS is continually seeing inefficiencies stemming from the police's reliance on outdated IT.

The report includes three key recommendations for the government and chief constables, notably :

- review legislation to clarify HMICFRS's inspection remit and its power to inspect policing functions delivered by police and crime commissioners;
- re-establish the role of the inspectors of constabulary in selecting and appointing police chief officers; and
- initiate new research into the deterrent value of stop and search and the reasons for its disproportionate use.



Questions for committee's consideration

- What are the force doing to implement the recommendations from the report?

Non-crime hate incidents: code of practice

The Home Office has published a code to assist police officers and staff in making decisions about the recording of non-crime hate incidents (NCHI) and relevant personal data. The code outlines a balanced and practical approach to NCHI recording. It includes the following key points :

- 'guidance relating to whether and how the personal data of an individual who is the subject of an NCHI report should be processed as part of an NCHI record';
- provides comprehensive information on the right to freedom of expression, accompanied by case studies illustrating 'how this right should be taken into account in the context of NCHI recording';
- 'clarifies that debate, humour, satire and personally-held views which are lawfully expressed are not, by themselves, grounds for the recording of an NCHI'; and
- specifies that an NCHI should not be documented if the report is deemed by the police to be 'trivial, irrational, malicious, or if there is no basis to conclude that it was motivated by intentional hostility.'



Questions for committee's consideration

- Is there a good level of awareness of the Non-Crime hate incidents code of progress and are Senior Leaders sighted on implementation progress?



New police performance data

For the first time, consolidated police performance data has been made available to the public. This initiative is a collaboration between HMICFRS, the National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC), the Association of Police and Crime Commissioners (APCC), the College of Policing, the NCA, and the Home Office. The newly launched Digital Crime and Performance Pack includes performance data of all 43 police forces in England and Wales against the measures in the government's beating crime plan, including homicide and burglary rates. While this data was previously published by the Office for National Statistics (ONS), its existing format was challenging to interpret and compare police forces' performance. The aggregated data should make it easier for the police and crime commissioners to demonstrate to the public how their respective forces are performing, thereby enhancing their accountability.



Questions for committee's consideration

- Has your Force reviewed its data and compared and contrasted with top performers?
- Does the Force / Commissioner regularly report performance to the public?

Agreement to support mental health care and free up police time

The NHS, police and government have reached a new agreement whereby patients who are in need of mental health support will be treated by the most appropriate agency. This aims to ease the pressure on the police, enabling more time for officers to attend to crimes whilst also making sure that people are getting the right level of mental health support that they need from trained specialist with the most relevant skills and experience. Policing Minister, Chris Philp, stated that 'we have listened to the concerns raised by police leaders about the pressures that mental health issues are placing on policing which takes officers' time away from preventing and investigating crime.'

Police workforce statistics

The Home Office has published data on the police workforce as at 31 March 2023. There were 147,430 full-time equivalent (FTE) officers. 'This was an increase of 5.1% on March 2022 (up 7,201 FTEs from 140,228 officers), reflecting the police officer uplift recruitment campaign to recruit an additional 20,000 police officers by March 2023.'

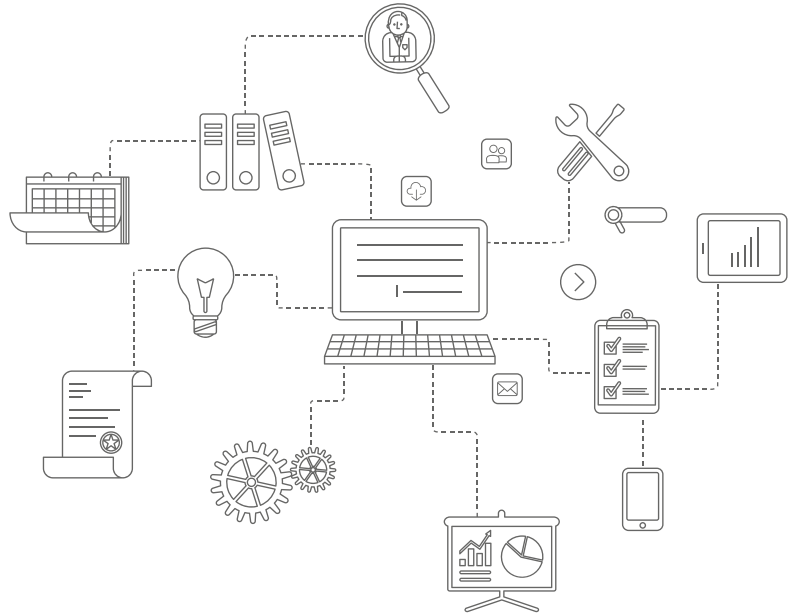
In the year ending March 2023, 16,328 FTE police officers joined the 43 police forces (excluding transfers) in England and Wales, an increase of 3,359 FTE (or 27.7%) on the previous year. This is the highest number of police officer joiners in a financial year since records began. However, the statistics also show that 9,192 (FTE) police officers left the police force; the highest number of leavers in a financial year since comparable records began.

Fire

NFCC publishes the Culture Action Plan

The National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) has developed a Culture Action Plan to address culture and inclusion within the fire and rescue sector. This follows an earlier conference in March and HMICFRS' report on ['values and culture in fire and rescue services.'](#) After negative national reports and people sharing their actual experiences of the fire service not following the code of ethics, the plan aims to deliver improvements and a safe inclusive culture.

The NFCC confirms that 'the plan will do this by continuing to support services in developing effective leadership and behaviours, embedding equality, diversity and inclusion, finding and nurturing diverse talent, and supporting the health and wellbeing of people in fire and rescue services.'



Terms of reference: Home Secretary's commission for a thematic inspection of the handling of misconduct

HMICFRS has published the terms of reference for a thematic inspection of the handling of misconduct in fire and rescue services in England. Services will be inspected in relation to:

- 'the extent to which services are identifying and investigating misconduct';
- 'the effectiveness of misconduct processes and how consistently they are applied';
- 'how confident fire and rescue service staff are in raising concerns and in misconduct processes'; and
- 'the role of fire and rescue authorities and other organisations in handling misconduct.'

Questions for committee's consideration

- Has your Fire Service put in place actions to address culture and inclusion within the service and is this subject to regular review and reporting?



References



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How effective is the National Crime Agency at dealing with corruption?



State of Policing



New police performance data



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