



Inspecting policing
in the public interest

Strategic Policing Requirement

Avon and Somerset

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Introduction

The *Strategic Policing Requirement* (SPR) was issued in July 2012.¹ This document sets out the Home Secretary's view of the national threats that the police must prepare for and the appropriate national policing capabilities that are required to counter those threats. The SPR respects the operational independence of the police service, advising what, in strategic terms, it needs to achieve, but not how it should achieve it.

The particular threats specified in Part A of the SPR, and referred to as the national threats in this report, are:

- terrorism;
- civil emergencies;
- organised crime;
- public order threats; and
- large-scale cyber incidents.

Part B specifies the policing response that is required nationally, in conjunction with other national agencies, to counter these threats. This policing response is described in the SPR as follows:

*“the combined national **capacity** of all police forces to respond to these threats, expressed in terms of the outcomes sought – these are drawn, wherever possible, from publicly available national government strategies. Police and crime commissioners and chief constables must have regard to this aggregate capacity when considering the respective **contributions** they will make to it;*

*the **capabilities** that police forces, often working collaboratively, need to maintain in order to achieve these outcomes; the requirement for **consistency** among forces for certain key specialist capabilities where the resources from more than one police force need to be integrated with, or work effectively alongside, each other. In some instances this requirement for consistency may need to involve other key emergency services and agencies; and*

*the **connectivity** arrangements by which resources from several police forces may effectively be co-ordinated or mobilised, together and with those of other agencies – such as the Security Service and, from 2013, the National Crime Agency. The combination of consistency and connectivity forms the basis for interoperability between police forces and with other partners.”*

¹ In accordance with section 37A Police Act 1996. Available from www.gov.uk/government/publications/strategic-policing-requirement

We report the findings from this inspection of Avon and Somerset Constabulary which took place during September 2013 against each of these requirements.

The breadth of requirements that are set out in the strategic policing requirement are outside the scope of a single inspection. Therefore, it has been necessary to plan a series of inspections over three years so that the police response to all the national threats can be examined individually and in-depth over that period.

This year, HMIC has examined how well police forces have established arrangements to respond to strategic policing requirement threats and has conducted in-depth examinations of the police response to two of the national threats: the threat to public order; and the threat of a large-scale cyber incident.

We have produced the following three national reports, available at <http://www.justiceinspectors.gov.uk/hmic>:

- The Strategic Policing Requirement: An inspection of the arrangements that police forces have in place to meet the requirement;
- The Strategic Policing Requirement: An inspection of how police forces in England and Wales deal with threats to public order; and
- The Strategic Policing Requirement: An inspection of how police forces in England and Wales deal with threats of a large-scale cyber incident (including criminal attack).

This report sets out what we found when we examined the arrangements that Avon and Somerset Constabulary had in place to meet the strategic policing requirement and follows the format of the first of the national reports listed above.

Capacity and contribution

Terrorism

The chief constable understands his role in tackling the threat of terrorism. The constabulary, together with the counter-terrorism network has the capacity it needs to contribute to the national counter-terrorism effort.

The constabulary considers threats and risks from international terrorism and domestic extremism in its strategic threat and risk assessment.

Avon and Somerset Constabulary is the lead constabulary on counter-terrorism for the South West region and hosts the regional counter-terrorism intelligence unit. The South West counter-terrorism intelligence unit is part of the national network of dedicated counter-terrorism policing units providing functions such as the gathering of intelligence and evidence to help prevent, disrupt and prosecute terrorist activities. An example of how the counter-terrorism network has assisted in the provision of local counter-terrorism capacity was an investigation into a suspicious fire within the Avon and Somerset force area. This was believed to have been linked to domestic extremism, and the investigation was undertaken by the South East counter-terrorism unit led by Thames Valley Police.

Avon and Somerset Constabulary collaborates with the other forces in the South West region providing a regional special branch operation, Brunel, where counter-terrorism intelligence is managed more efficiently and effectively than would be the case if each force were doing it separately.

Civil emergencies

The constabulary, together with the Avon and Somerset local resilience forum, has the capacity to respond to local civil emergencies and to contribute to national emergencies.

An assistant chief constable chairs the Avon and Somerset local resilience forum. The constabulary has considered likely threats that it may face from civil emergencies, but has not produced a strategic threat and risk assessment. Instead, the Avon and Somerset local resilience forum community risk register, which is published on the local resilience forum's website, describes risks that the partnership may have to deal with. At the time of our inspection it had not been updated since 2011.

The constabulary has arrangements to request mutual aid – the provision of resources from other police forces – and any specialist skills required for dealing with civil emergencies. For the five police forces in the South West region, mobilisation of specialist resources is co-ordinated by the South West regional information and coordination centre, which is hosted by Devon and Cornwall Police. The centre also supports the national police coordination centre, which mobilises resources across the country.

An operational team has been established to support the Avon and Somerset local resilience forum and has been used to deal with a number of incidents which require a response from the police and other organisations, such as a flooding incident that occurred during our inspection visit.

All of the forces in the region have sufficient numbers of trained staff to deliver basic chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear capabilities. However, for functions like decontamination and detection, each force trains some of its staff to provide one of these specialist capabilities for all of the forces in the region.

Serious organised crime

The force has appropriate capacity to meet threats from serious organised crime, either with its own trained staff, or through its regional organised crime unit, known as Zephyr.

An assistant chief constable provides clear leadership of the constabulary's response to serious organised crime. She is also responsible for leading the regional organised crime unit, in which the constabulary works with others in the region to tackle serious organised crime. Serious organised crime is considered in the constabulary's strategic threat and risk assessment.

The constabulary applies nationally approved methods to disrupt organised crime groups. There is a clear way to make sure that appropriate measures are taken against organised crime groups in accordance with the constabulary's assessment of the potential threat, risk, harm and demand that these organised crime groups pose. The constabulary can respond to these threats using its own resources, or it can request assistance from the South West region or other forces across the country.

The constabulary is developing the regional organised crime unit in accordance with nationally issued guidance on regional organised crime unit development. There is a structure to decide upon the allocation of resources to investigate, disrupt and prosecute organised crime groups.² Organised crime groups that have been identified are discussed at local, fortnightly task-allocation meetings and actions from these meetings are then allocated across the constabulary. Staff from other law enforcement agencies, including: the National Crime Agency; Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs; United Kingdom Border Agency; United Kingdom Border Force; Trading Standards and a specialist Crown Prosecution Service lawyer, also work within regional organised crime unit.

² The United Kingdom law enforcement approach to tackling serious organised crime is based upon the identification of organised crime groups, assessment of the harm posed by them and their management by disruption, investigation and prosecution.

Public order

The chief constable understands his role to provide police support units³ to deal with public order incidents across force boundaries and to make a contribution to the national requirement.

Avon and Somerset Constabulary had completed a public order strategic threat and risk assessment, dated July 2013. In addition, a strategic threat and risk assessment had been completed for the South West region, dated March 2013, both of which HMIC considered current for this inspection.

For each force, HMIC compared the number of police support units they declared they had, with the number of police support units that they told us they needed to respond to local outbreaks of disorder. The force assessed that it needed 25 police support units to respond to local threats but has 22 and therefore had three fewer than it assessed that it needed at the time of our inspection. The constabulary can provide the nine police support units that it has assessed it requires to contribute towards national mobilisation.

The constabulary has sufficient specialist public order staff⁴ and senior officers to command responses to major events and public disorder.

The use of mutual aid – the provision of support between police forces – is another indicator of the extent to which police forces either have or do not have sufficient trained public order resources. Data provided by forces on their provision and receipt of mutual aid for 2011/12 and 2012/13⁵ show that Avon and Somerset was one of 12 forces that were net recipients for public order policing mutual aid.

³ Police support units are the basic formations used by the police service for the policing of major events. The composition of a police support unit is standardised across all of the 43 police forces in England and Wales and consists of one inspector, three sergeants and 18 police constables, plus three drivers trained and equipped to carry out public order tactics to national standards, with three suitably equipped personnel carriers. Formations of a sergeant and six constables are referred to as serials.

⁴ In addition to public order trained police officers, forces have specialists who are trained in a number of capabilities. These include liaison with protestors to facilitate peaceful protest and the removal of uncooperative protestors causing obstructions.

⁵ This analysis excluded three major policing operations – the 2011 widespread disorder experienced in England in August 2011, the London Olympics 2012 and the removal of the residents at Dale Farm, Essex in 2012 (Operation Cabinet) – as they were exceptional incidents that skewed the results.

Large-scale cyber incident

Avon and Somerset Constabulary did not yet have the capacity to respond to the threat of a large-scale cyber incident; this was still under development at the time of our inspection.

An assistant chief constable has been nominated as the constabulary's lead for its capability to respond to cybercrime. At the time of our visit to Avon and Somerset Constabulary, a document had been prepared to define the force's response to cyber threats. HMIC was told that this included an action plan detailing the changes that are required in the constabulary and, as the lead for the regional organised crime unit, across the region.

Cybercrime was highlighted in the constabulary's strategic threat and risk assessment and a document identifying the issues the constabulary faces had been completed. This document provides details of the constabulary's understanding of the extent of the threat posed by cybercrime. Nationally, the police service is working to understand better the extent of crime committed using computers. Avon and Somerset Constabulary is one of two forces that were, at the time of our inspection, working with the Home Office to pilot the tagging of cybercrime reports to identify them from other crime reports, so that accurate information can be collected about the extent of cybercrime.

Avon and Somerset Constabulary has considered the threat of a denial of service attack⁶ on its own systems. There is an effective regime – penetration testing – which is conducted by external contractors, for testing whether the force's systems can be compromised. The most recent test took place within the two months before our inspection visit. Staff demonstrated an understanding of the implications of a cyber attack. The constabulary had prepared business continuity plans⁷ to enable the force to continue functioning in the event of disruptions to services, including its information and technology systems. These include a plan illustrating what should be done in the event of a cyber attack.

⁶ A denial of service attack is an attempt to make a computer or network of computers unavailable to its users.

⁷ Business continuity plans set out how the constabulary will operate following an incident and how it expects to return to normal business in the quickest possible time afterwards.

Capability

Terrorism

Avon and Somerset Constabulary has, or has access to, the necessary capability to conduct complex investigations into terrorism. It has the systems in place to manage the training of special branch officers to maintain the necessary skills to provide specific counter-terrorism capability.

Constabulary staff and the counter-terrorism intelligence unit work together to ensure that all available information is gathered and analysed. This provides intelligence that informs regional and national understanding of terrorist and domestic extremism threats.

The counter-terrorism intelligence unit provides most of the capability needed to undertake complex investigations, respond to critical incidents (including using command and control) and provide specialist equipment and training to national standards. The counter-terrorism intelligence unit and the constabulary have also developed strong links with the South East counter-terrorism unit, which provides specialist investigative resources.

Avon and Somerset Constabulary uses a secure video-conferencing system to facilitate daily management meetings with the other forces in the South West region. Details about terrorism intelligence and the forces' responses are discussed and shared securely.

The constabulary has sufficient trained staff locally to support all four strands of the counter-terrorism CONTEST⁸ strategy.

Civil emergencies

The constabulary is meeting the strategic policing requirement to provide capability to meet civil emergencies which span the borders between Avon and Somerset and surrounding forces.

Events that could threaten human welfare are recorded in the Avon and Somerset local resilience forum community risk register. Currently, an Avon and Somerset local resilience forum risk sub-group is considering what capabilities the constabulary has and whether they are sufficient to respond to the risks the group has identified. This work is designed to identify where the constabulary does not have sufficient capability and allow for the planning of responses or agreement on how risks of civil emergencies can be managed.

⁸ CONTEST – the government's counter-terrorism strategy. The four strands are: pursue, prevent, protect and prepare.

The head of emergency planning has prepared resilience plans for the Avon and Somerset local resilience forum and the constabulary assesses its capacity and capability against the roles identified within these plans. The Avon and Somerset local resilience forum conducts a training and exercise programme that regularly validates the constabulary's capability to co-ordinate responses, with partner agencies, to events threatening human welfare (such as nuclear incidents or industrial accidents). Avon and Somerset Constabulary maintains records of training provided to staff.

The constabulary has been involved in a number of joint exercises with neighbouring forces and live events, the most recent being the Somerset Level flooding in January 2014.

Serious organised crime

Avon and Somerset Constabulary has the capabilities required, either internally or through officers provided by the regional organised crime unit, to meet threats from serious organised crime.

HMIC found that, in the South West region, chief constables have agreed their detailed plans for the further development of the regional organised crime unit. The constabulary holds task-allocation meetings every two weeks to agree what is dealt with by the different levels of response (local, regional or national). Matters that require immediate attention are dealt with in similar, daily meetings.

Avon and Somerset Constabulary, other forces and 25 different law enforcement, local authority and other regulatory organisations agree how they work together to disrupt the most serious organised crime groups. This is managed by a detective chief inspector from the regional organised crime unit. This also identifies opportunities for multi-agency working.

The constabulary has recently reviewed its capability to deal with serious organised crime. Staff are trained to national standards and have appropriate equipment to fulfil their roles. Training requirements are reviewed annually. Records of staff skills are kept and there is a process to ensure that it can maintain its capability as staff move on.

Public order

Avon and Somerset Constabulary has the capabilities required to respond to public order threats.

The constabulary has completed a self-assessment of its public order capability using the College of Policing's capability framework. This involves assessing how the constabulary meets ten capabilities that are sub-divided into 32 definitions. The constabulary reported that they fully complied with 31 of the 32 definitions.

Avon and Somerset Constabulary trains its staff in accordance with national standards, including the use of tactics to end incidents of disorder before they become worse. The constabulary is nationally accredited to train senior officers who have been selected to lead police responses to public disorder and major events, and has established a system for their continued development.

The constabulary has reviewed the number of officers with skills that it needs to perform specific roles and assessed that there are no gaps. While information provided by the constabulary included an assessment that it was only able to provide 22 police support units, it has 32 trained police support unit commanders, 97 trained sergeants and 619 trained constables. With the requisite equipment, this would be sufficient to provide 32 police support units.

The constabulary has identified that there were opportunities to improve the way it analyses intelligence linked to public order and has created a public order intelligence training course.

Avon and Somerset Constabulary has established procedures, to use during planned operations, to understand how those involved in disorder are using social media. This means that the use of it (such as that which occurred during the 2011 disorders to communicate where disorder was taking place) can be monitored. It can also use its constant intelligence management capability to perform this role in the event of spontaneous outbreaks of disorder. This contributes to national intelligence gathering and enables incident commanders to deploy their resources using the best available information.

Training staff attend other forces' training events to share good practice. To ensure that the constabulary is using the most effective tactics and equipment, staff who have been deployed for public order events are debriefed. Officers are confident that their views are considered in developing the constabulary's public order capability. The learning from debriefing and visits to other forces informs the constabulary's training and planning for events.

HMIC tested, without notice, the force's capability to mobilise and conduct mutual support across boundaries to outbreaks of public disorder. Control room staff in Avon and Somerset demonstrated fully effective processes to respond to the scenario given in the test.

We found that there were plans to establish command, control and communications support to respond to incidents. An inspector trained in commanding police responses to public order incidents was available immediately. A senior officer was also available who would co-ordinate longer-term responses. One fully equipped serial would be available within 15–20 minutes and there were plans to secure further serials from elsewhere in the constabulary area within 30 minutes. Control room staff were aware of the standard operating procedures and the regional

memorandum of understanding⁹ for cross-border mobilisation which set out how a force should obtain assistance from other forces in the region. The staff on duty did not access the contingency plans using the constabulary's command and control systems, but instead they referred to the hard copy plans available from the control room. The constabulary conducts mobilisation exercises to test its ability to deploy trained resources to resolve incidents. There is early planning for another such exercise in 2014.

We inspected one of the constabulary's police support unit carriers and found it to be fully functioning and equipped to national standards.

Large-scale cyber incident

Avon and Somerset Constabulary, like most forces, is not yet able to identify or understand fully the threats, risks and harm posed by cybercrime. The constabulary is not yet taking full advantage of opportunities being made available to train its staff to deal with cybercrime.

At the time of the inspection visit, the constabulary was working to improve its understanding of cyber issues and its response to a cyber attack.

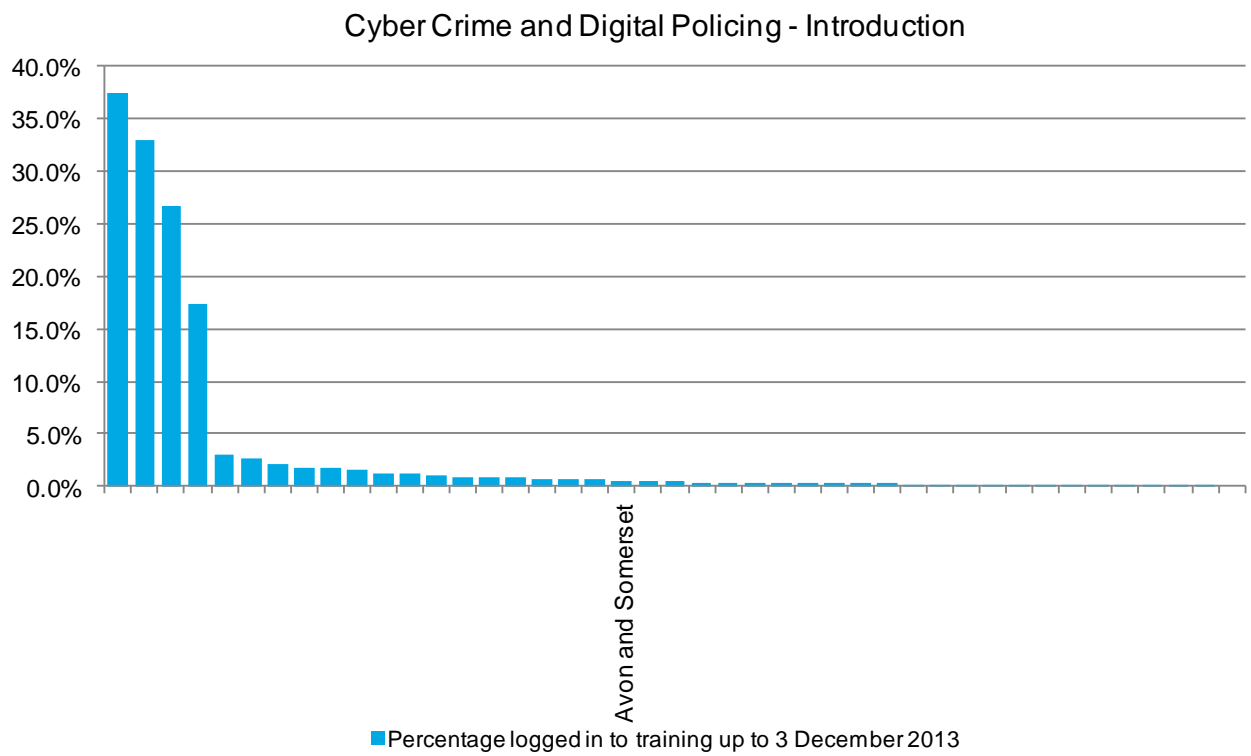
Avon and Somerset Constabulary's hi-tech crime investigators – staff who investigate cybercrime – have been trained to nationally agreed standards. The constabulary has not developed direct partnerships with academic institutions and private industry that focus on the recruitment of people with information, communication and technology skills or asking for assistance from volunteer information, communication and technology professionals. The force is linked to a regional initiative with Bournemouth University which improves the capability of the region as a whole rather than Avon and Somerset Constabulary individually.

The College of Policing has developed eight computer-based training courses to improve the police service's knowledge and skills to deal with cybercrime. Data have been provided and analysed to understand the proportion of workforce who have sought the training up to the beginning of December 2013.¹⁰ Tables that show the proportion of staff, for each force, who have signed in for the training are included in our national report on the police service's response to cyber threats. The following charts demonstrate how many of Avon and Somerset's workforce enrolled for three of the eight e-learning courses designed to improve awareness. The courses were selected to be representative of the constabulary's commitment to this aim for both general front-line policing (Digital Communications, Social Media, Cybercrime and Policing introduced in April 2013 and Cybercrime and Digital Policing – Introduction,

⁹ South West Regional Information and Co-ordination Centre regional mobilisation protocol.

¹⁰ Information provided by the College of Policing dated 10 February 2014 – completion figures for communication data and cybercrime modules (period ending 31 January 2014).

Figure 2: Cybercrime and Digital Policing – Introduction¹²



¹² This course is designed for all police officers, special constables and other individuals in a law enforcement community. It is aimed at helping them develop a general awareness of the types of emerging threats and risks from criminals exploiting technology. The training is linked to relevant legislation and also covers cybercrime prevention.

Consistency

Public order

Arrangements to train public order officers and procure public order equipment are consistent across all forces in the South West region.

Public order equipment is purchased through regional procurement arrangements and can be shared with the other forces in the South West region. The constabulary uses nationally agreed procurement standards for its public order protective shields and its procurement staff take part in national discussions about standards of public order equipment. Staff trained in public order expressed confidence that their equipment was up to date and compatible with that used by other forces. They are able to effectively operate with other forces' public order staff.

All public order training for forces in the region is organised by Devon and Cornwall Police, and forces within the region train together. Exercises in which all regional forces practice their public order tactics together are conducted every two years. Together, the five forces in the South West region fund an inspector who oversees their public order training. This makes sure that the tactics taught are consistent and that the forces can work together effectively.

Responding to chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear incidents

Avon and Somerset Constabulary is able to operate effectively together with other emergency services to respond to chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear incidents.

Avon and Somerset Constabulary conducts regular, formal chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear training exercises. These are delivered by a full-time chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear trainer. Officers from the five forces in the South West region meet quarterly to share information about resources, skill levels and training plans. The constabulary also works with the fire and ambulance services locally and staff are trained to use equipment for chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear incidents. The constabulary's staff train with the Avon Fire and Rescue Service and the Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Service. The most recent exercise took place in November 2013. Chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear equipment complies with national specifications.

Connectivity

Terrorism

Avon and Somerset Constabulary and its neighbouring forces in the South West region have effective ways to co-ordinate and mobilise resources to deal with incidents of terrorism. These are supported by secure IT and radio communications.

The constabulary participates in daily national counter-terrorism network meetings at which threats are discussed and the police service's response is determined. The counter-terrorism intelligence unit also co-ordinates regional daily meetings where representatives from forces in the region discuss threats that are developing and agree actions to respond to them. The constabulary has clear arrangements to ask for assistance from the counter-terrorism network.

The constabulary has a fully equipped operations centre from which it is able to co-ordinate covert activity to support operations linked to counter-terrorism and serious organised crime.

The constabulary uses the Airwave radio system to communicate effectively with other police forces in the South West region and with the regional organised crime unit.

Civil emergencies

Avon and Somerset Constabulary is able to communicate with other Avon and Somerset local resilience forum members in the planning of responding to civil emergencies.

Responsibility for co-ordinating the mobilisation of different specialist personnel required to respond to civil emergencies is divided between forces. For example, Wiltshire Police leads on the provision of specialists to identify casualties at civil emergencies, and Dorset Police leads on responses to chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear incidents. It is anticipated that Avon and Somerset Constabulary will take lead responsibility in the region for chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear incidents later in 2014.

Emergency services in the Avon and Somerset area work with the national joint emergency services interoperability programme. The constabulary works well with the other emergency services, and, on an almost daily basis, its contingency planning manager speaks to his counterparts in these other services.

The constabulary makes use of a secure website, the national resilience extranet, which enables those responding to incidents to have access to important information that assists multi-agency working and communication. The constabulary uses

information about the way it deploys its personnel to real incidents and to exercises for the purpose of learning and development. The force has established a telephone conference protocol with other emergency services to help decision-makers to plan appropriate responses to incidents as they develop.

Serious and organised crime

The constabulary communicates effectively with other forces in the region and with the regional organised crime unit about the mobilisation of resources, sharing of equipment and tactics, and communication with other partners. Also, it participates actively, through the regional organised crime unit, in the national tasking arrangements.

The region has an effective way to prioritise organised crime issues that require operational activity, allocate tasks to officers at either a force or regional level, and co-ordinate activity across the region. There was evidence that resources are prioritised to deal with the most serious organised crime groups.

Equipment used in operations to tackle organised crime groups is purchased by the constabulary's procurement unit. This unit collaborates with the other forces in the South West region to ensure these forces can share equipment.

Through its reviews of the operations it carries out with other forces, the constabulary was able to demonstrate good levels of interoperability.

The constabulary is able to share intelligence securely with the regional organised crime unit.

Public order

We found that the chief constable of Avon and Somerset Constabulary is co-operating with the arrangements for cross-boundary mobilisation of officers to deal with public order incidents.

The South West Regional Information and Co-ordination Centre co-ordinates regional mobilisation of public order resources. Forces have agreed a regional mobilisation protocol which has been effective in a number of instances including the recent support the force provided to the Police Service of Northern Ireland; Glastonbury Festival; the policing of a demonstration against the construction of a nuclear power station; professional football matches; and demonstrations against a proposed cull of badgers.

In the past two years, the force has received assistance from other forces in the form of 52¹⁴ police support units and has in turn, provided two police support units to others.

Cyber connectivity

Avon and Somerset Constabulary has not been faced with a large-scale cyber incident that would require a joint response. Staff in the constabulary were aware, however, of where they could get help if it was needed.

The constabulary has not had to investigate or deal with the consequences of a serious cyber attack. Senior management in the constabulary recognise that, if they were faced with such a challenge, they would seek access to national expertise through the National Cyber Crime Unit of the National Crime Agency. At the time of our inspection the constabulary was planning to test its response to a major cyber attack in May 2014. It plans to share lessons learned from this exercise with partner agencies and businesses.

¹⁴ This analysis excluded three major policing operations – the 2011 widespread disorder experienced in England in August 2011, the London Olympics 2012 and the removal of the residents at Dale Farm, Essex in 2012 (Operation Cabinet) – as they were exceptional incidents that skewed the results.