



Strategic Policing Requirement

West Midlands Police

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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*

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

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.”

We report the findings from this inspection of West Midlands Police 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.justiceinspectorates.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 West Midlands Police 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; and the force, together with the counter-terrorism network, has the capacity it needs to contribute to the national counter-terrorism effort.

West Midlands Police is the lead force on counter-terrorism for the West Midlands region and hosts the regional counter-terrorism unit. The West Midlands Counter-Terrorism 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. Counter-terrorism unit staff assess threats and risks from international terrorism and domestic extremism and produce strategic threat and risk assessment documents for the force that help senior leaders understand threats, risks and harms linked to these themes.

Activity to take forward all four strands of the government's counter-terrorism CONTEST strategy² is co-ordinated by the West Midlands Police CONTEST board which co-ordinates counter-terrorism activity in all four regional police forces³.

The West Midlands Counter-Terrorism Unit provides the force's counter-terrorism capacity and supports other forces in the region. This includes investigation, forensic management and high-tech examinations. When required, the counter-terrorism unit obtains further assistance from the wider counter-terrorism network. A business plan outlines the strategic priorities for the unit.

Civil emergencies

The force, together with the West Midlands Conurbation Local Resilience Forum, has the capacity to respond to civil emergencies locally and to contribute to national emergencies.

An assistant chief constable chairs the local resilience forum. The force has considered likely threats that it may face from civil emergencies in its strategic assessment. The local resilience forum records risks that it faces on the community risk register.

² CONTEST – the government's counter-terrorism strategy. The four strands are: pursue, prevent, protect and prepare.

³ The four police forces within the West Midlands region are West Midlands Police, West Mercia Police, Staffordshire Police and Warwickshire Police.

The force has a unit called the operations department, integrated emergency management team that plans and co-ordinates West Midlands Police's responses to civil emergencies. This unit's responsibilities include emergency planning and business continuity planning.⁴

The force has the capabilities that it needs to respond to civil emergencies as a category 1 responder.⁵ These include staff with specialist skills required to manage incidents involving large numbers of casualties and identify victims, and also police officers who can operate in areas where there may be chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear hazards.

A regional public order and public safety steering group reviews numbers of police officers that the four police forces have trained to operate in areas where there may be chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear hazards. This meeting is chaired by the West Midlands Police assistant chief constable, who leads the force's capability to deal with civil emergencies and public order.

Serious organised crime

The force has appropriate capacity to meet threats from serious organised crime.

An assistant chief constable provides clear leadership of the force's response to serious organised crime. She is also responsible for leading the regional organised crime unit. Serious organised crime is considered as a threat within the force's strategic threat and risk assessment.

The force applies nationally approved methods to disrupt organised crime groups and uses the same approach to deal with urban street gangs. There is a clear way to make sure that appropriate measures are taken against organised crime groups and urban street gangs in accordance with the force's assessment of the potential threats, risks, harm and demands that these groups pose. The force can respond to these threats using its own resources, or it can work with other forces in the region or request assistance from other forces across the country. There is a structure to decide the allocation of resources to investigate, disrupt and prosecute organised crime groups.⁶

⁴ Business continuity plans set out how the force will operate following an incident and how it expects to return to normal business in the quickest possible time afterwards.

⁵ Category 1 responders are described by the Cabinet Office as organisations at the core of the response to most emergencies (the emergency services, local authorities, National health Service) (as defined by the Civil Contingencies Act 2004) – www.gov.uk

⁶ The United Kingdom law enforcement approach to tackling serious organised crime is based on 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 units⁷ to deal with public order incidents across force boundaries and the force has the capacity to make a contribution to the national requirement.

West Midlands Police considers public order threats within its strategic assessment. The force co-ordinates public order capability for the four police forces in the West Midlands region and has completed a regional public order and public safety strategic threat and risk assessment in accordance with nationally issued guidance. The public order and public safety steering group reviews numbers of public order trained police officers that are required to meet mobilisation requirements within the region.

The force's central operations team (events and planning) reviews events within the West Midlands Police area that are notified to the police, or about which they have information from other sources. This unit assesses the resources which are needed to police events and how they will be co-ordinated and led.

For each force, HMIC compared the number of police support units it declared it had with the number of police support units that it told us it needed to respond to local outbreaks of disorder. The force assessed that it needed 75 police support units to respond to local threats and can deploy that number. There are sufficient public order trained police officers to provide the 21 police support units that it has assessed it requires to contribute towards national mobilisation. While the force has assessed that it needs 75 police support units, it has trained more staff than needed to provide this number. Senior leaders have developed a formula to assess the number of police officers that they need, allowing for absences through sickness, leave and other abstractions. The force also has sufficient specialist public order staff⁸ 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 2012/13 shows that West Midlands Police was one of 12 forces that were net recipients for public order policing mutual aid.

⁷ 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.

⁸ 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.

Large-scale cyber incident

The force's plans for how it will respond to the threat of a large-scale cyber incident were still under development at the time of our inspection.

An assistant chief constable has been nominated as the force's lead for its capability to respond to cybercrime. The force's strategic assessment includes a comprehensive summary of the threats and risks that the force should consider in deciding upon capabilities that it needs to have in place. Staff are working on further analysis so that the force will have a better understanding of the nature of cyber threats and risks.

Senior leaders in West Midlands Police recognise that the force needs to further develop its capacity to tackle threats posed by large-scale cyber incidents. The force's director of intelligence has prepared a control plan and tactical menu of options document that outlines a number of activities to deal with cyber threats. This document includes proposals for activity under the headings; prevention; information and intelligence; enforcement; and reassurance. There are plans for a cybercrime board, chaired by the director of intelligence, to co-ordinate activity outlined in the control plan and tactical menu of options.

The force's response to cyber incidents is provided by a small unit called the technical intelligence development unit. In the event of the force being faced with an incident that it could not deal with using its own resources, it would seek assistance from the National Cyber Crime Unit of the National Crime Agency. Force leaders are in the early stages of planning, with the other three forces, the development of a regional cybercrime unit.

The West Midlands Police strategic assessment includes considerations about the vulnerability of the force's systems to denial of service attacks.⁹ Using this information, managers recognised that they need to review the security of their systems and establish more robust protective measures. This work was ongoing at the time of our visit. The force had an information and technology recovery contingency plan, but staff recognised that this needed to be reviewed.

⁹ A denial of service attack is an attempt to make a computer or network of computers unavailable to its users.

Capability

Terrorism

West Midlands Police either 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.

The force and the counter-terrorism 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 unit provides most of the capability needed to undertake complex investigations, respond to critical incidents (including command and control) and provide specialist equipment and training to national standards. The counter-terrorism network also provides specialist counter-terrorism investigative resources.

Within the West Midlands region, the counter-terrorism unit works closely with local police staff to make sure that they have information that helps them understand threats from terrorism and violent extremism within their areas. Local policing and counter-terrorism staff work together, and with others, to engage with and reassure communities about terrorism and violent extremism.

The West Midlands counter-terrorism unit manages regional counter-terrorism and domestic extremism task-allocation meetings and contributes to daily and weekly national counter-terrorism network meetings. Participants in these meetings discuss information about terrorism intelligence and forces' responses.

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

Civil emergencies

The force is meeting the strategic policing requirement to provide capability to meet civil emergencies which span the borders between West Midlands and surrounding forces.

In addition to considering civil emergencies in the force's strategic assessment, events that could threaten human welfare are recorded in the local resilience forum community risk register. The force's integrated emergency management team have developed emergency plans, policies and guidance documents to respond to each of the threats identified in the community risk register. The assistant chief constable, through the local resilience forum, seeks assurance from other organisations that police plans are effective and compatible with those of other agencies.

West Midlands Police also hold the vice-chair of the local resilience forum general working group and chairs of the training and exercising task and finish group, and the risk assessment working group. Local resilience forum working groups also seek the assistance of the integrated emergency management team to carry out tasks to take forward their aims and objectives.

The local resilience forum has produced a document called ‘working together - a guide to multi-agency incident response’, which outlines how its partner agencies would provide co-ordinated responses to a range of incidents.

Training, availability and succession planning for staff with relevant skills are managed by the integrated emergency management team. The force has trained the numbers of police officers required for national mobilisation to deal with chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear incidents.

Serious organised crime

West Midlands Police has the capabilities required to meet threats from serious organised crime.

Chief constables in the region are formulating plans to develop the regional organised crime unit in accordance with nationally issued guidance on regional organised crime unit development. Staff have recognised that little information has been received from sources outside of the police service for use in assessing organised crime groups. Measures are being taken to increase the sources of information used to understand the extent of organised crime groups’ criminality and their capabilities.

West Midlands Police has sufficient trained staff to investigate serious organised crime and undertake proactive operations against organised crime groups. The force has established a gangs task force which works with local policing units, force departments and others to reduce risks arising from the activities of urban street gangs.

The force holds daily task-allocation meetings and has ways to refer threats to regional- and national-level task-allocation meetings to obtain the assistance of specialist resources that the force does not have. Regional task-allocation meetings are chaired by the West Midlands Police assistant chief constable, who manages the force’s capabilities to tackle serious organised crime.

Public order

West Midlands Police has the capabilities required to respond to public order threats.

The force did not provide HMIC with a completed self-assessment of its public order capability using the College of Policing's capability framework.

West Midlands Police trains its staff in accordance with national standards, including the use of tactics to end incidents of disorder before they become unmanageable.

The regional public order training centre is located within the West Midlands Police area and led by force staff. A force and regional training plan has been prepared that assists staff in scheduling the delivery of initial and refresher training for the four regional police forces. The force is accredited nationally 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 force has introduced a new information and technology system to record training and development that has been provided to staff. This system enables force leaders to understand how many officers are trained with public order skills and their availability.

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 West Midlands demonstrated fully effective ways of responding to the scenario given in the test.

We found that control room staff had information about the numbers of public order trained police officers who were on duty and contact details for five nominated inspectors, trained to lead police support units, who would be available immediately for deployment. There is also a way by which, at the beginning of each tour of duty, the force control room is notified of the location of five fully equipped personnel carriers that would be used to deploy trained staff to deal with incidents. In response to the HMIC test, three police support units would have been deployed immediately. The force could mobilise ten inspectors trained to lead police support units and more than 700 trained sergeants and constables who would be directed to attend a rendezvous point within one hour. Control room staff also had information about a nominated on-call senior police officer who would be called to lead the overall police response. There were plans for the establishment of a multi-agency control room within which the police could work with the other emergency services to co-ordinate their responses to incidents. Staff were aware of arrangements for seeking further assistance, and the force command and control system has the capability to generate automatic messages and reminders which assist in co-ordinating responses.

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

Large-scale cyber incident

West Midlands Police, like most forces, is not yet able to identify or understand fully the threats, risks and harm posed by cybercrime. The force 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 force was working to improve its understanding of cyber issues and its response to a cyber attack.

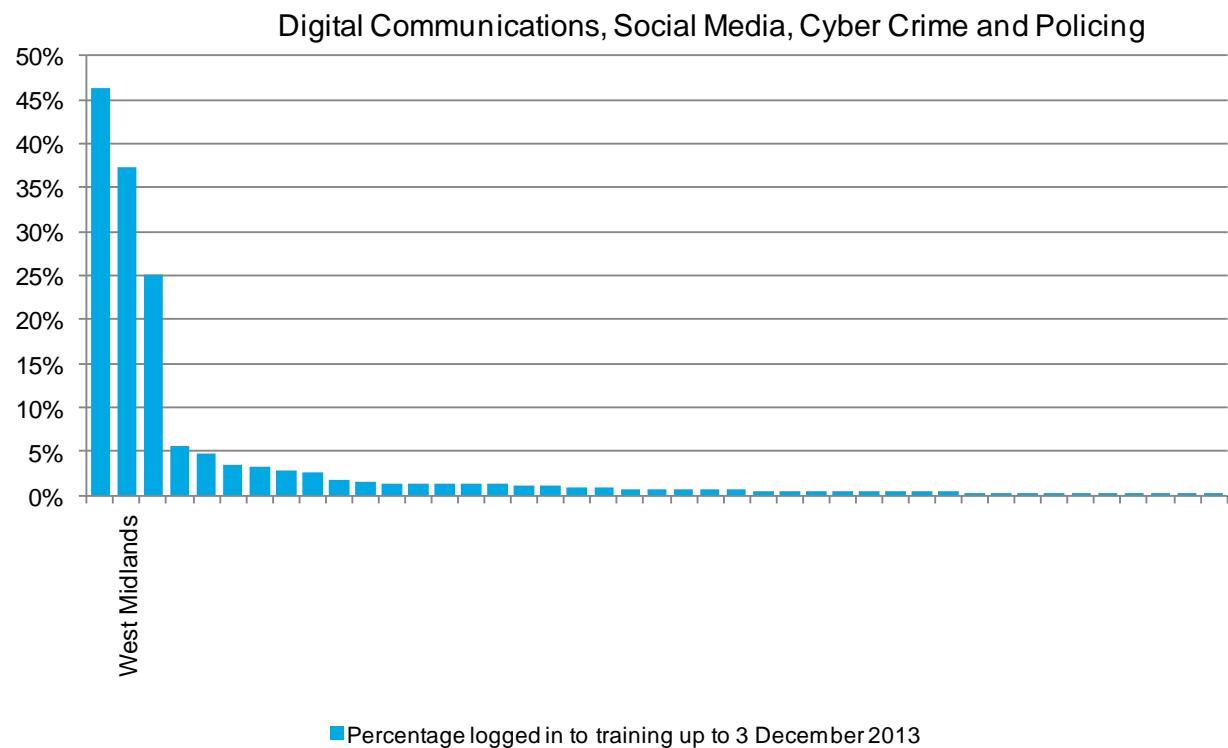
West Midlands Police high-tech crime investigators – staff who investigate cybercrime – have been trained to nationally agreed standards. The force has not developed arrangements with academic institutions and private industry that focus on the recruitment of people with information, communication and technology skills or asking for assistance from volunteer information, communication and technology professionals. This would improve the force's skills in this area.

Senior leaders understood how the force would respond to a serious cyber attack. A senior detective would be appointed to co-ordinate the police investigation and wider response. The force's technical intelligence development unit would deal with ongoing crimes, for example, hacking and distributed denial of service software and provide technical advice to the senior detective. These arrangements have been tested. Force leaders did not, however, clearly understand how the force's response would connect with recently formed regional cyber capabilities.

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 the 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 West Midlands Police's workforce enrolled for three of the eight e-learning courses designed to improve awareness. The courses were selected to be representative of the force'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, introduced in August 2013) and for investigators (Introduction to Communications Data and Cybercrime, introduced in July 2011).

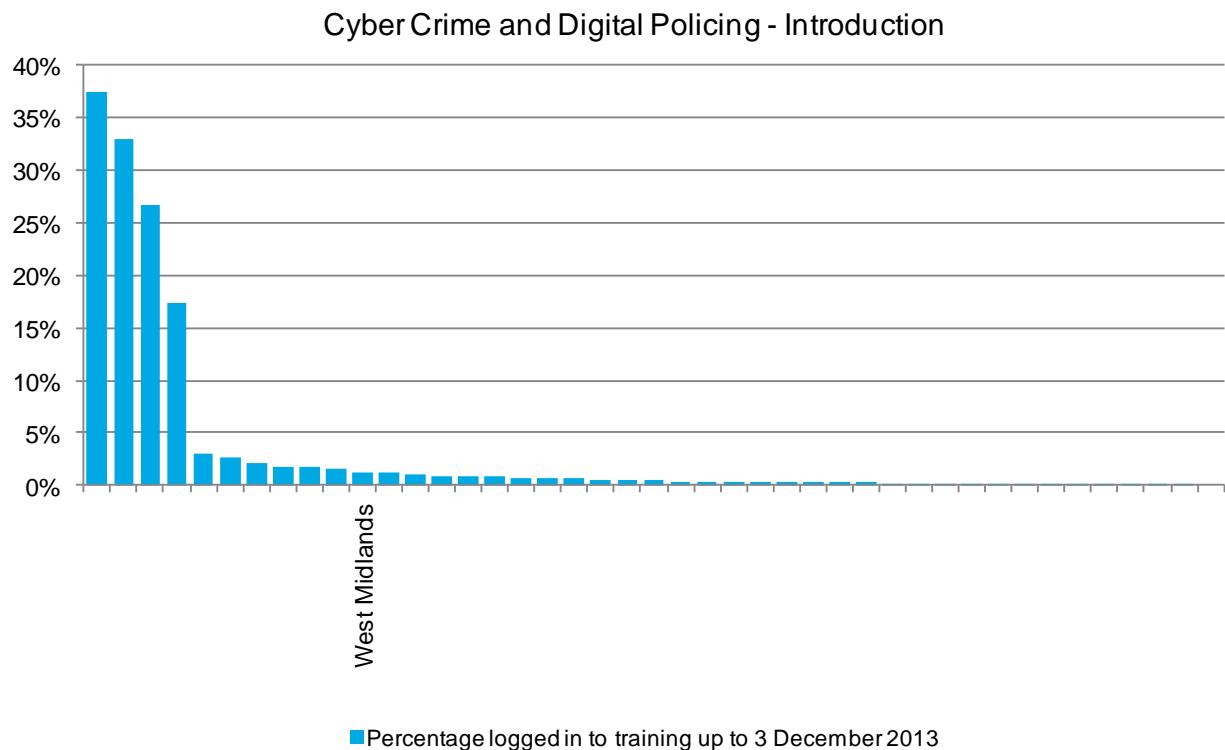
¹⁰ Information provided by the College of Policing dated 10 February 2014 - Completion figures for communication data and cybercrime modules (period ending 31 January 2014).

Figure 1: Digital Communications, Social Media, Cybercrime and Policing¹¹



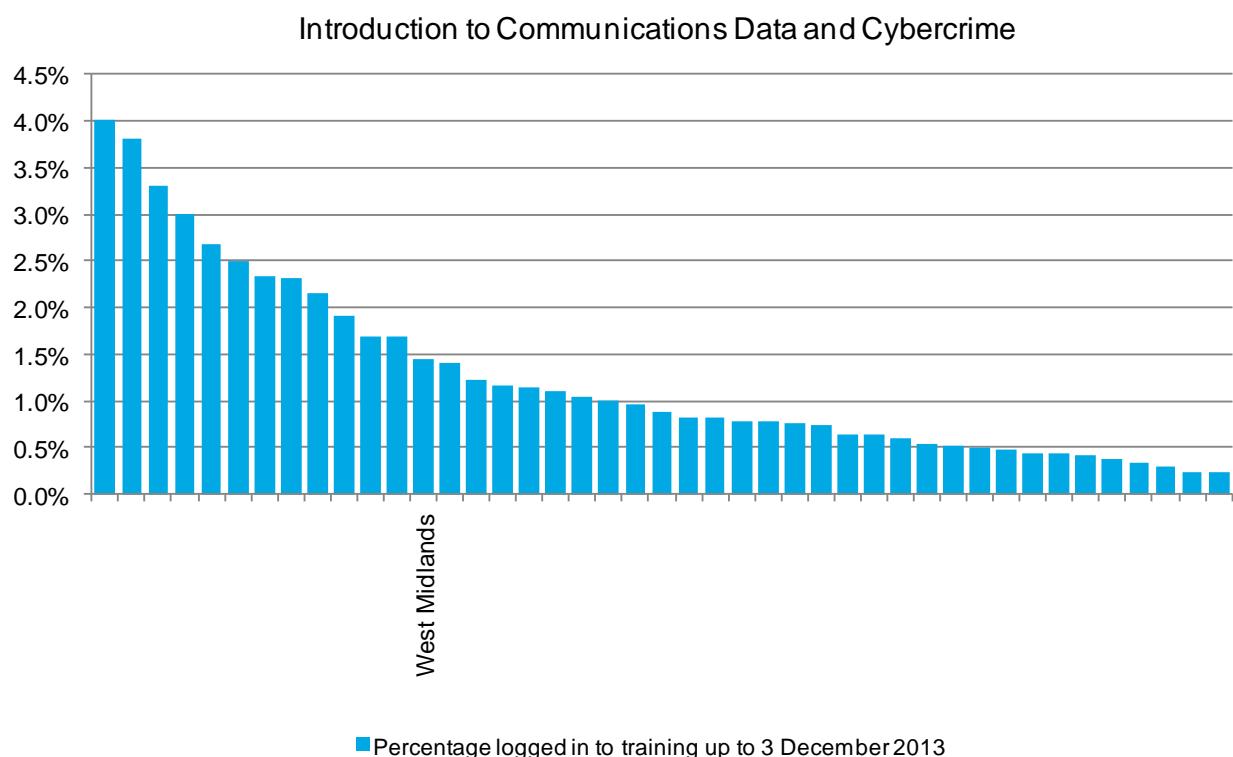
¹¹ This course, designed for all staff, aims to develop awareness of digital communications technology and how it affects different areas of cybercrime, social media, law enforcement and policing.

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.

Figure 3: Introduction to Communications Data and Cybercrime¹³



¹³ This course is aimed at investigators and demonstrates the skills needed for a basic level of understanding of the uses of communications data in law enforcement, including guidance on cybercrime prevention.

Consistency

Public order

Arrangements to train public order officers and procure public order equipment are consistent across all forces in the West Midlands region, but there are some small variations in the types of equipment used.

West Midlands Police leads an eleven police force regional consortium for procurement within the Midlands area of Great Britain. Force leaders meet with leaders in other forces to improve consistency in equipment. Within West Midlands Police, types and specifications of public order equipment procured are identified by the public order operational policing lead officer for the force. There is currently some variation in the public order equipment used by the four West Midlands region forces. These differences are recognised by senior public order leaders who do not believe that they affect the ability of the four forces to operate together effectively.

All public order training for forces in the region is organised by West Midlands Police and forces train together at the regional public order training centre. Inspectors train with police support units from other forces and serials have been mixed to include police officers from different forces within the region. These mixed serials have also been used to deal with public order events. This demonstrates that the forces' public order police officers can work together.

The region does not organise testing and exercising of its public order capabilities because senior leaders consider that arrangements are sufficiently tested during public order operations.

Responding to chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear incidents

West Midlands Police is able to operate effectively with other emergency services to respond to chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear incidents.

The regional public order and public safety steering group provides for the sharing of information and co-ordination of the four forces' capabilities to deal with chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear hazards. The force has taken part in a European Union funded multi-agency training event to improve the joint working of emergency services in areas where there may be chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear hazards. In the event of the force being faced with incidents requiring specialist capabilities that it does not have, it would seek assistance from other forces and agencies.

Connectivity

Terrorism

The force and its neighbouring forces in the West Midlands region have effective ways to co-ordinate and mobilise resources to deal with incidents of terrorism. These are supported by secure information and technology and radio communications.

West Midlands Police participates in daily national counter-terrorism network meetings at which threats are discussed and the police service's response is determined. The counter-terrorism 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 force has clear arrangements to ask for assistance from the counter-terrorism network.

The force has a fully equipped operations centre from which it is able to co-ordinate covert activity in support of operations linked to counter-terrorism anywhere in the United Kingdom. Equipment within the operations centre enables the force to track assets that have been deployed using global positioning technology and electronically transfer pictures and other images.

Counter-terrorism task-allocation and other meetings are facilitated by video conferencing technology. This system also enables the unit to communicate with local policing units within the West Midlands Police. There are also information and technology systems that enable the counter-terrorism unit to share information securely with other police forces, the counter-terrorism network and partner agencies. The force uses the Airwave radio system to communicate effectively with other police forces in the West Midlands region.

Civil emergencies

West Midlands Police is able to communicate with other local resilience forums in the planning of, and responding to, civil emergencies.

The local resilience forum does not have a structured programme for testing and exercising arrangements for responding to incidents. Organisations in the forum have recognised that this needs to be developed. Staff do undertake table-top exercises and review with other organisations how their plans would work together, but not as part of a wider plan.

Emergency services in the West Midlands Police area work with the national joint emergency services interoperability programme. The force has trained two members of staff who will provide training to support the programme's objectives to improve the way that the emergency services operate together.

Serious and organised crime

The force 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 others. Also, it is participating actively, through the regional organised crime unit, in the national tasking arrangements.

The region has an effective way of prioritising organised crime issues that require operational activity; allocating tasks to officers at either a force or regional level; and co-ordinating activity across the region. West Midlands Police takes part, through the regional organised crime unit, in the National Crime Agency organised daily management meeting process. There was evidence that resources are prioritised to deal with the most serious organised crime groups.

The force's procurement unit within the consortium arrangements purchases the equipment used in operations to tackle organised crime groups.

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

Public order

We found that the chief constable of West Midlands police is co-operating with the arrangements for cross-boundary mobilisation of officers to deal with public order incidents.

The West Midlands regional information and coordination centre co-ordinates regional mobilisation of public order resources and supports national arrangements through the National Police Coordination Centre. Regional mobilisation arrangements have proven effective on a number of occasions in response to public order events.

In the past two years, the force has received assistance from other forces in the form of 43 police support units¹⁴. The force, in turn, has provided 21 police support units to others.

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.

Cyber connectivity

West Midlands Police has not been faced with a large-scale cyber incident that would require a joint response. Staff in the force were aware, however, of where they could get help if it was needed.

The force has not had to investigate or deal with the consequences of a serious cyber attack. Senior management in the force 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.