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in the public interest

# Strategic Policing Requirement

Northumbria Police

October 2014

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## Introduction

The *Strategic Policing Requirement* (SPR) was issued in July 2012.<sup>1</sup> 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*

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

*connectivity forms the basis for interoperability between police forces and with other partners.”*

We report the findings from this inspection of Northumbria 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 [www.hmic.gov.uk](http://www.hmic.gov.uk):

- 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 Northumbria Police has 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 her 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.

Threats and risks from international terrorism and domestic extremism are considered in the force's strategic assessment which was provided to HMIC, dated 2012. Special branch staff have completed local counter-terrorism profiles for six geographic areas within the force. These documents provide assessments of a number of factors that could affect the vulnerability of people to be radicalised for violent extremism.

Northumbria Police has effective links with the North East Counter-Terrorism Unit, which is located within the West Yorkshire Police area. The unit is part of the national counter-terrorism 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. It provides most of Northumbria Police's specialist counter-terrorism capacity.

The force's senior leaders contribute to the co-ordination of counter-terrorism capacity and capability by the seven forces in the North East Police regions<sup>2</sup> through quarterly regional CONTEST<sup>3</sup> meetings.

## Civil emergencies

The force, together with the Northumbria Local Resilience Forum have the capacity to respond to civil emergencies locally and to contribute to national emergencies.

As part of the force's strategic assessment process, the force reviewed the Northumbria Local Resilience Forum community risk register and considered the threats that it may face from civil emergencies. The community risk register included within the local resilience forum website had been most recently updated in February 2014.

The deputy chief constable had recently taken over as chair for the executive group of the local resilience forum that co-ordinates strategic level partnership working when we visited Northumbria Police. The group is supported by a

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<sup>2</sup> The North East police region consists of Northumbria Police, Cleveland Police, Durham Constabulary, North Yorkshire Police, South Yorkshire Police, West Yorkshire Police and Humberside Police.

<sup>3</sup> CONTEST is the government's counter-terrorism strategy, which includes four strands; pursue, prevent, protect and prepare.

business management group, which co-ordinates the activities of a number of working groups called 'theme groups'. Theme groups take planning and preparedness activity under a number of headings for example: communications, testing and exercising, capacities, communities, environment, and health and social care. Senior police officers represent the force on the business management group and the theme groups.

Northumbria Police has sufficient staff trained to command police responses to civil emergencies and co-ordinate multi-agency arrangements; provide specialist capabilities including the management of scenes and identification of victims; and operate in areas contaminated by chemical, biological, radioactive and nuclear material.

The force's resource unit manages information about staff skills and other force resources. The unit plan and organise the provision of staff and equipment needed to respond to planned and spontaneous events like civil emergencies.

## **Serious organised crime**

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

Threats posed by organised crime groups are considered in the force's strategic assessment.

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

The North East Police region has two regional organised crime units. One covers the police forces in Yorkshire and the Humber areas and the second covers Northumbria Police, Cleveland Police and Durham Constabulary. Northumbria provides 57 percent of the funding for this unit. Senior leaders in the force are agreeing plans for the regional organised crime unit in accordance with nationally issued guidance on regional organised crime unit development. The force has a way of allocating resources to investigate, disrupt and prosecute organised crime groups.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> 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 her role to provide police support units<sup>5</sup> to deal with public order incidents across force boundaries and to make a contribution to the national requirement.

Northumbria Police has completed a public order and public safety strategic threat and risk assessment, dated March 2013. Public order threats are also considered within the force's overall strategic assessment.

Senior leaders have used the public order and public safety strategic threat and risk assessments to make sure that they have sufficient appropriately trained resources to respond to public order threats. Staff within the force resource unit monitor numbers of specialist public order staff<sup>6</sup> and senior officers who have been trained to command police responses to major events and public disorder, to ensure that there are sufficient numbers.

The force is represented at regional and national meetings that co-ordinate public order policing capabilities. Public order threats are discussed and agreement reached at regional task-allocation meetings that are chaired by the deputy chief constable of Northumbria Police.

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 47 police support units to respond to local threats and could provide that number. Senior leaders recognise that, taking account of the size of the workforce and threats identified within the strategic assessment, this is a large number. They consider that this number of police support units is necessary due to geographic factors including the size of the force area and limitations in neighbouring forces' capabilities to provide timely assistance. The force can provide the ten police support units that it has assessed it requires to contribute towards national mobilisation.

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

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<sup>5</sup> Police Support Units are the basic formation 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.

<sup>6</sup> 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.

provision and receipt of mutual aid for 2011/12 and 2012/13<sup>7</sup> show that Northumbria Police was one of 31 forces that were net providers for public order policing mutual aid.

## **Large-scale cyber incident**

Northumbria Police's plans to respond to the threat of a large-scale cyber incident are still under development.

The force has appointed a senior leader to co-ordinate and develop its capability to respond to cybercrime, which is included in the force's strategic assessment. That section of the document records the force's assessment of threats posed by criminal use of technology.

The whole police service is working to understand better the extent of crime committed using computers. Northumbria Police has introduced a system that requires staff who are recording crimes to highlight those involving the use of computers or the internet, so that accurate information can be collected about the extent of cybercrime.

The force has a limited capability to investigate cybercrime that includes staff trained to forensically examine computers and recover evidence, conduct financial investigations, investigate fraud offences and forensically examine computer networks. The regional organised crime unit did not have the capacity or capabilities to investigate cybercrime. In the event of the force being required to respond to a large-scale cyber incident, the force would take the first steps to secure evidence and seek the assistance of national agencies.

Staff contribute to and receive information from the government and other police sources about trends in information security. There is an information assurance working group, chaired by a senior leader, and attended by representatives from departments within the force.

Northumbria Police had recently assessed its information security procedures against government IT security standards. Results from this assessment identified that, in some areas, the force should improve its capability to monitor protection measures for its information and technology systems. A programme of work is already underway to deliver monitoring processes to further enhance the security of force systems. The force regularly considers its ability to minimise the impact of a denial of service attack<sup>8</sup> both in terms of the technology and services available to it and the business continuity plans to

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<sup>7</sup> 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.

<sup>8</sup> A denial of service attack is an attempt to make a computer or network of computers unavailable to its users.



accommodate this loss of service. Technical solutions commensurate with the agreed level of risk from the senior information risk officer, have been implemented, however these will be further enhanced in the coming months.

The force had prepared business continuity plans<sup>9</sup> to enable it to continue functioning in the event of disruptions to services, including its IT systems. These plans were focused on the force's ability to continue functioning and not the cause of any disruption.

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<sup>9</sup> 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.

## Terrorism

Northumbria Police 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 make sure 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 using command and control) and provide specialist equipment and training to national standards.

A senior leader in the force is responsible for its capability to tackle crime, including counter-terrorism, the allocation of tasks and the coordination of the force's response to threats from terrorism. The counter-terrorism unit organises fortnightly regional counter-terrorism task-allocation meetings. Representatives from all seven forces in the North East Police region either attend or participate through video conferencing. Regional counter-terrorism staff review current intelligence and the allocation of resources in daily telephone conference meetings. There are also meetings for forces' heads of special branches every six weeks to co-ordinate long-term counter-terrorism activity for the region.

The human resources department maintains records of staff skills. The force's special branch also maintains copies of staff skills related to counter-terrorism. Special branch managers use these records to plan for when staff leave.

The force has sufficient trained local staff to support all four strands of the counter-terrorism CONTEST<sup>10</sup> strategy.

## Civil emergencies

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

Events that could threaten human welfare are recorded in the local resilience forum community risk register.

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<sup>10</sup> CONTEST – the government's counter-terrorism strategy. The four strands are: pursue, prevent, protect and prepare.

The force has a planning and co-ordination unit that includes a contingency section. Contingency section staff have prepared a plan which provides information and guidance about how the force will respond to a range of major incidents. Threats and risks recorded in the national security plan are considered by force staff who maintain plans to respond to these. These plans are accessible to staff on the force's intranet.

At the time of inspection a revised exercising and testing regime was being developed, that was linked to the community risk register, to test arrangements in the plan. The contingency section also makes sure that the force's contingency plans and business continuity plans are maintained, reviewed and updated.

Local resilience forum arrangements proved effective when the region suffered flooding that led to losses of IT capabilities and the closure of main roads. Senior leaders make sure that the force has access to sufficient skills to deal with civil emergencies by reviewing force resource unit and human resources records, using the information to plan for when staff leave their current roles.

The force undertakes regular tests of its capability to respond to chemical, biological, radioactive and nuclear threats. The testing and exercising theme group plans regular joint exercises for local resilience forum member organisations.

## **Serious organised crime**

Northumbria Police has the capabilities required, either internally or through officers provided by the regional organised crime unit, to meet threats from serious organised crime.

The force's strategic threat and risk assessment is prepared by a team of police officers and other staff who collect and analyse information about a range of threats including those linked to serious organised crime.

An assistant chief constable chairs monthly force task-allocation meetings where decisions are reached about the allocation of resources against organised crime groups posing the greatest levels of threat. Daily management meetings review ongoing information about local threats and decisions about the force's responses to serious organised crime threats. The regional organised crime unit co-ordinates bi-monthly meetings where the unit's resources are allocated to respond to serious threats across the three force areas.

Training requirements are reviewed through the force resource unit and there is a way to make sure that Northumbria Police can maintain its capability to tackle serious organised crime as staff move on.

## Public order

Northumbria Police has the capabilities required to respond to public order threats.

The force has completed a self-assessment of its public order capability using the College of Policing's capability framework, which was used to inform the Public Order Strategic Threat and Risk Assessment.

Northumbria Police trains its staff in accordance with national standards, including the use of tactics to end incidents of disorder before they become worse. The force has provided more training for its police support unit officers. Trainers have developed more realistic training scenarios to provide practical testing of police support unit skills. The force is developing plans to train with the other emergency services so that they can operate alongside the police in areas where disorder is taking place.

Staff within the force resource unit review officers' records and skills on the unit's IT system to make sure that Northumbria Police has sufficient senior police officers trained to lead responses to public order events. The force trains its own staff in police support unit tactics. For some specialist public order skills or command training, staff attend training with other forces that are accredited to provide it.

Regular testing of public order mobilisation takes place, this has demonstrated that the force is able to respond to local, regional and national requirements within timescales provided within mobilisation plans. The force's public order staff participate regularly in exercises with other North East region police forces where they operate together resolving realistic test scenarios.

The force has developed a way to gather and record information about the policing of public order events which is analysed and effective practices and opportunities for improvement are identified. This organisational learning is also used for training and planning operations.

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 Northumbria demonstrated effective ways of responding to the scenario given in the test.

We found that there were plans to establish command, control and communications support to respond to incidents. Control room staff had access to information about available resources and their public order skills. The force had a mobilisation plan that required three police support units to be available within an hour. Staff were aware of the obligations placed upon each policing area to provide resources and how these police support units would be assembled at a rendezvous point for deployment. The mobilisation plan provided for a further three police support units to be available within four hours and control room staff were aware of arrangements to activate the plan through

the force resource unit. The force command and control system contained information about the availability of trained senior police officers who would co-ordinate longer-term responses. Decisions about requesting assistance from other police forces would be taken by the senior officer responsible for commanding the overall police response. Control room staff were aware of arrangements to obtain this assistance by contacting Humberside Police, which is the force that co-ordinates public order mobilisation for the North East region. Contingency plans are available to control room staff on the force's command and control system.

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**

Northumbria 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.

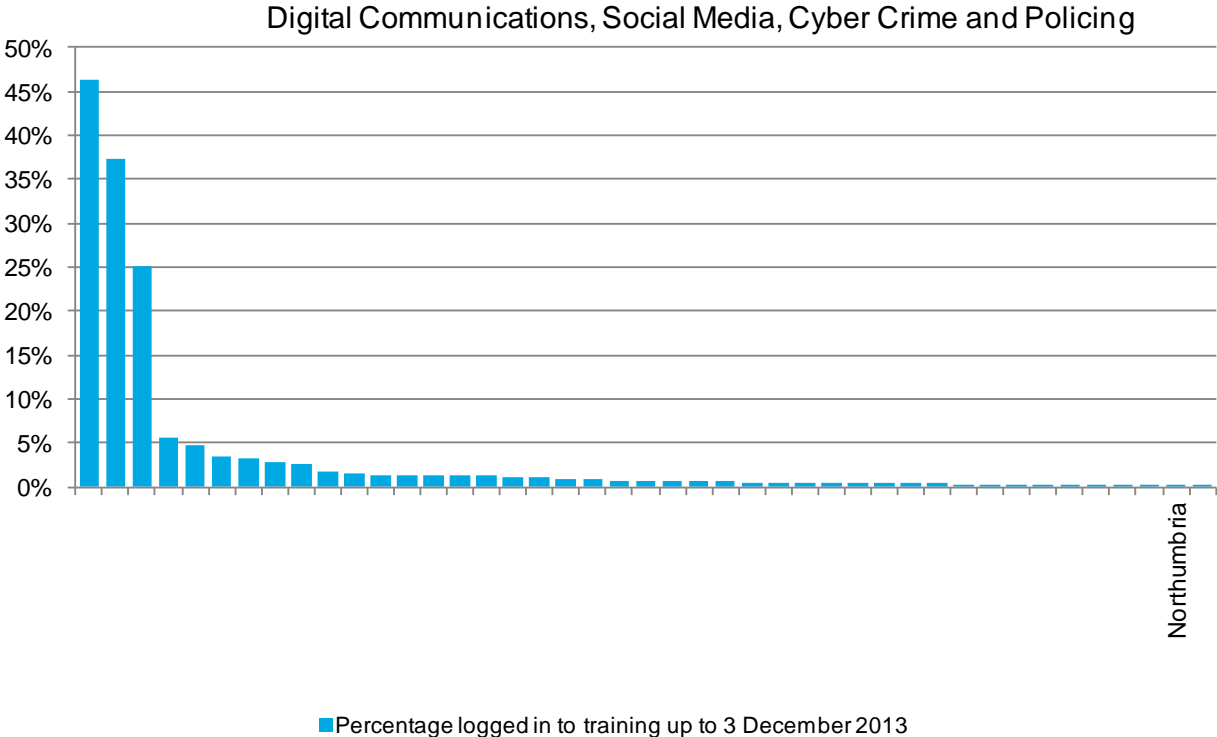
At the time of the inspection visit, the force was working to improve its understanding of issues linked to cyberspace and its response to a cyber attack. The force's strategic assessment document includes an acknowledgement that there are significant intelligence gaps that make it difficult to understand the nature and extent of threats linked to cybercrime.

Northumbria Police high-tech crime investigators – staff who investigate cybercrime – have been trained to nationally agreed standards. Staff expressed concerns about the absence of guidance from national police leadership concerning the capabilities that forces should establish or training that should be provided to high-tech crime staff. Northumbria Police staff identified and received specific training to conduct examinations of defined systems. The force has purchased advanced equipment for use in computer examinations. Collaborative partnerships have been developed with local universities to develop relevant courses linked to information and technology, and to enable students to work with the force. Students working with the force can widen their experience and the scheme provides additional skilled assistance in the high-tech crime unit. Force staff have also worked with local authorities and the National Health Service facilities to raise awareness and prevent cybercrime.

The College of Policing has developed eight computer-based training courses to improve the police service's knowledge and skills to deal with cybercrime. Senior leaders within Northumbria Police were assessing the relevance of the training to the workforce performing different roles. Data has been provided and analysed to understand the proportion of the workforce who have sought the

training up to the beginning of December 2013.<sup>11</sup> 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 Northumbria’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, Cyber Crime and Policing introduced in April 2013 and Cyber Crime and Digital Policing – Introduction, introduced in August 2013) and for investigators (Introduction to Communications data and Cybercrime introduced in July 2011).

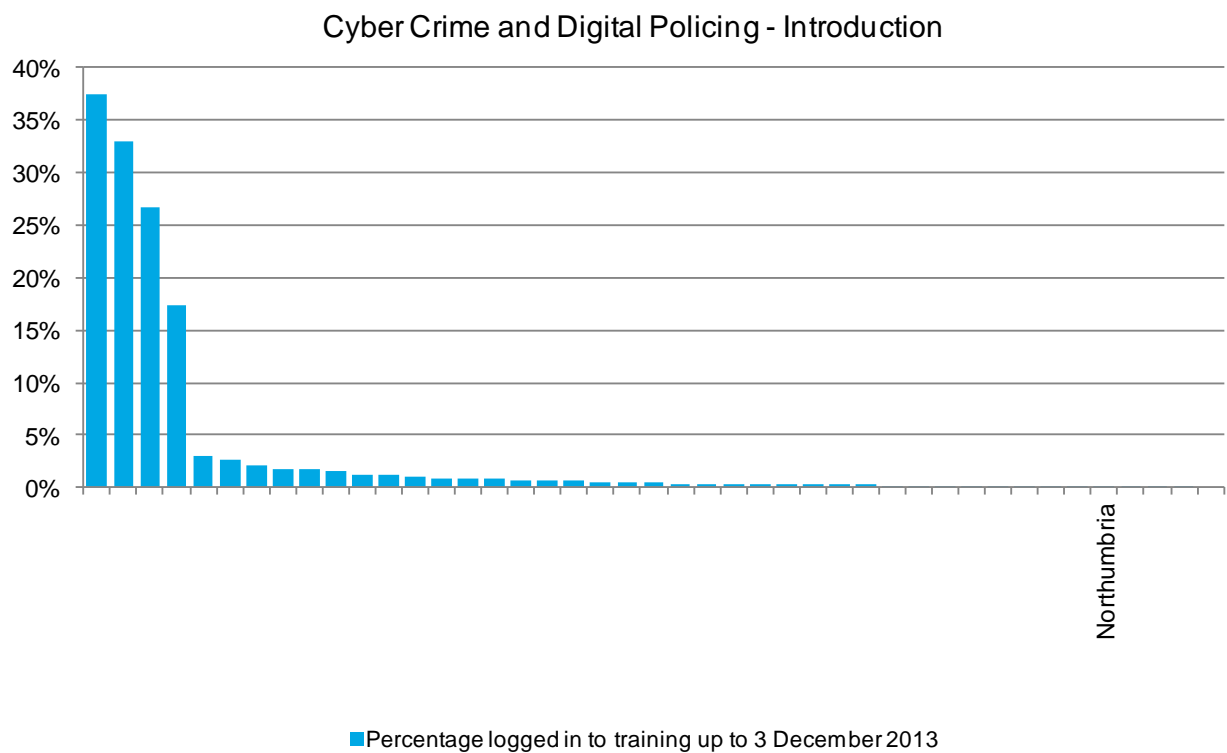
**Figure 1: Digital Communications, Social Media, Cyber Crime and Policing<sup>12</sup>**



<sup>11</sup> Information provided by the College of Policing dated 10 February 2014 – completion figures for communication data and cybercrime modules (period ending 31 January 2014).

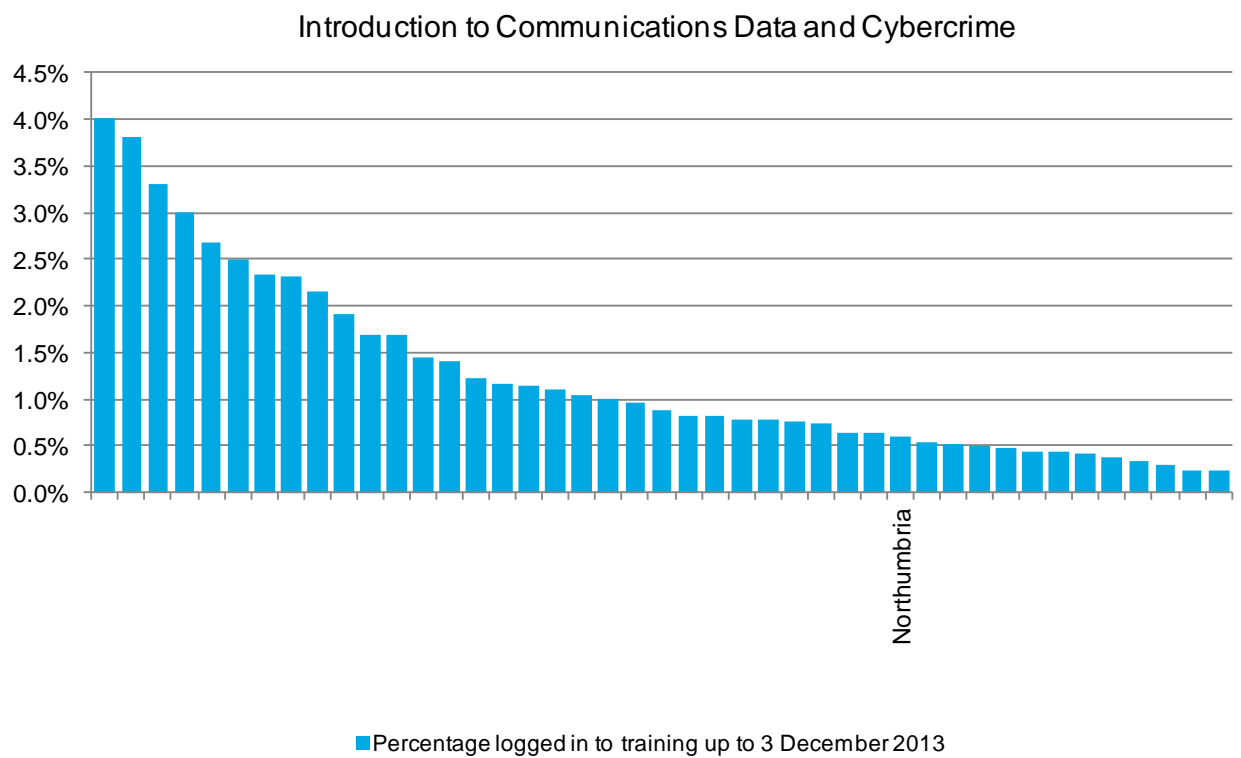
<sup>12</sup> This course, designed for all staff, aims to develop awareness of digital communications technology and its impact on different areas of cybercrime, social media, law enforcement and policing.

Figure 2: Cyber Crime and Digital Policing – Introduction<sup>13</sup>



<sup>13</sup> 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 Cybercrime<sup>14</sup>**



<sup>14</sup> 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 North East region.

Force representatives contribute to regional and national discussions and agreements about the standardisation and procurement of equipment. Northumbria Police, Cleveland Police and Durham Constabulary are procuring equipment together and the forces are increasing collaborative purchasing arrangements with each other and with the other four forces within the North East region. 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 operate effectively with other forces' public order staff.

All forces within the North East region use the same tactics. The seven North East region police forces' police support units regularly perform test exercises together. Senior leaders told HMIC about police operations when they had commanded police support units comprising of police officers from different forces without experiencing any difficulties in interoperability. Effective joint working by Northumbria police support units with other forces has also been demonstrated in a number of deployments for major policing operations.

### Responding to chemical, biological, radioactive and nuclear incidents

Northumbria Police is able to operate effectively together with other emergency services to respond to chemical, biological, radioactive and nuclear incidents.

Northumbria Police conducts regular, formal chemical, biological, radioactive and nuclear training exercises with other forces in the region and with other emergency services. Tactics and equipment used by Northumbria Police staff to deal with chemical, biological, radioactive and nuclear incidents are compatible with those used by other forces. Equipment used by the force for dealing with chemical, biological, radioactive and nuclear incidents will need replacing in 2014 and the force is discussing economically effective arrangements with other forces and national organisations to replace the equipment.

### Terrorism

The force and its neighbouring forces in the North East 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.

Northumbria Police participates in regional daily meetings, organised by the counter-terrorism unit, where representatives from the seven forces in the North East Police 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 is engaged in national discussions and the formulation of plans to introduce an IT system that will improve the secure sharing of counter-terrorism and extremism intelligence between police forces and with the government and security and intelligence agencies.

The force uses the Airwave radio system to communicate effectively with other police forces in the North East region.

### Civil emergencies

Northumbria Police is able to communicate with other local resilience forum members in the planning of their response to civil emergencies.

Police and other emergency services within the North East region develop strategic arrangements for training, testing and improving interoperability on a regional committee called the regional interoperability board.

Northumbria Police takes part in regular exercises with other forces to test their responses to civil emergencies. Local resilience forum exercises are also organised to ensure that the police can work effectively with other emergency services and local resilience forum members. An Olympic Games venue was located within the force area. The event at this venue provided an opportunity for local resilience forum members to work together in planning and providing a response. Emergency services' joint responses to a multiple shooting incident were tested by an exercise led by the police and conducted in preparation for the Olympic Games. Organisers assessed that interoperability between the emergency services was effective. The force is improving the way that joint exercises are debriefed and how that information is used for the purpose of learning and development.

Standard operating procedures have been established for the use of the Airwave radio system to communicate between police forces and with other emergency services. These procedures provide guidance about how staff can

use the system to communicate during incidents involving the criminal use of firearms and other critical events.

Emergency services in the Northumbria area communicate with the national joint emergency services interoperability programme, but were still developing plans to implement the programme's recommendations. Northumbria Police participated in a national multi-agency exercise led by the fire and rescue service, which was a part of the joint emergency services interoperability programme.

## **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 other partners. It is participating 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.

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

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

## **Public order**

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

Humberside Police had recently assumed responsibility for the mobilisation of public order resources for the North East region. West Yorkshire Police previously fulfilled this responsibility for the region and had developed a document which provided details of arrangements for mobilisation of resources within the region.

Annual regional public order exercises are planned using information from previous incidents so that learning and development is shared between the seven police forces in the North East Police region. There are also regular exercises to test arrangements to mobilise police support units from across the Northumbria Police area. Learning and development from the mobilisation exercises is also used to inform planning.

In terms of mutual aid, during the previous two years, the force has not required assistance from other forces but had provided one police support unit to assist others.<sup>15</sup>

## **Cyber connectivity**

Northumbria 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 ask for the national expertise of the National Cyber Crime Unit of the National Crime Agency. The force uses working practices and equipment that with available national guidelines and staff believe that they would be able to work with people from national units if it were necessary.

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<sup>15</sup> 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.