

***'AN INSPECTION OF HOW EFFECTIVE POLICE FORCES ARE IN THE DEPLOYMENT OF  
FIREARMS'***

**PUBLISHED BY HMICFRS ON 11TH JULY 2023  
AVON & SOMERSET PCC RESPONSE DATED 5TH SEPTEMBER 2023**

In my Police and Crime Plan I talk about the importance of the Peelian principles and the concept of policing by consent. One of these principles states that: *"police use physical force to the extent necessary to secure observance of the law or to restore order only when the exercise of persuasion, advice and warning is found to be insufficient"*.

Physical force, or threats thereof, are a last resort for British policing and this is one of the reasons that British police officers do not routinely carry guns (unlike in most other countries). However, it is critical that the police maintain an effective firearms capability to be able to respond to the most serious of threats and to prevent harm to the public or officers themselves.

This report contains eight recommendations for Chief Constables. These are set out below with the initial response to these after each of them.

It should be noted that I have a legal duty to respond to inspection reports within eight weeks of their publication. However, you will see the Constabulary have many more months to fully complete these recommendations: that's why a number of the responses are still a work in progress. With the support of my office, I oversee recommendations from the inspectorate on a continual basis to help ensure they are completed and will see the results of the audits mentioned.

### Recommendation 2

By 31 July 2024, chief constables should make sure there is access to both specialist strategic firearms commanders and specialist tactical firearms commanders, through a 24-hour rota covering their region.

### Response

The Constabulary are currently in discussions with the national Counter Terrorism Policing armed team and regional strategic operations leads as to how this can be implemented. Options are being explored for a Southwest and Wales regional on call arrangement being led by Devon and Cornwall.

### Recommendation 3

By 31 October 2023, all chief constables should make sure the armed response vehicle asset tracking equipment, as provided by Counter Terrorism Policing, is available and used in their forces. They should train relevant staff in its use.

### Response

The Constabulary already have a process which fulfils this function. They are part of a regional solution which allows commanders to track armed response vehicles. The Constabulary are reviewing their training to ensure that all new Force Incident Managers and Force Duty Officers are properly trained in the use of this system.

### Recommendation 5

By 31 December 2023, all chief constables should make sure that all strategic and tactical firearms commanders have observed the firearms tactics and the use of specialist munitions they can authorise, before being operationally deployed

### Response

The Constabulary are confident that most firearms commanders have observed the use of specialist munitions however there may be gaps among recently qualified commanders. The Constabulary will review the process which enables this to happen and ensure there are consistent records to show if and when this has taken place.

### Recommendation 6

By 31 December 2023, chief constables should make sure that the annual accreditation process for strategic and tactical firearms commanders includes familiarisation with any new weapons systems and observation of any new tactics or specialist munitions the force has introduced or is planning to introduce.

### Response

As above the Constabulary will review the process and review whether any new weapons systems, tactics or specialist munitions have been introduced.

### Recommendation 7

By 31 October 2023, the regional armed policing lead should share armed policing exercises with the National Armed Policing Portfolio. This would allow opportunities for learning to be identified and shared.

### Response

Armed policing exercises are undertaken periodically and are reported back through the regional armed policing meeting, to the strategic regional operational lead and to the National Armed Policing Portfolio. The Constabulary complete this through a formal debrief exercise to capture learning and any best practice identified.

### Recommendation 8

With immediate effect, each assistant chief constable regional firearms lead should attend all National Armed Policing Portfolio meetings. If they are unable to attend, they should make sure another assistant chief constable armed policing lead from a force in their region attends on their behalf.

### Response

The regional Operations lead, Assistant Chief Constable (ACC) James Pearce, and the Avon and Somerset firearms lead ACC Joanne Hall will attend these meetings moving forward.

### Recommendation 10

With immediate effect, chief constables should improve senior officer oversight of their armouries, including an independent annual audit.

### Response

The Constabulary already have stringent armoury processes in place. The National Police Chiefs' Council have been tasked to provide guidance for forces which will be implemented when it is received. The Constabulary's armourer will work with senior officers to ensure oversight of the armoury processes continues to be fit for purpose.

### Recommendation 12

With immediate effect, chief constables, through their armed policing governance structure, should make sure that all armed deployment records are stored and auditable.

### Response

The Constabulary already store all their firearms deployment records on an internal system which is auditable; this is in addition to the deployment record created on the call recording system.

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