

## **An inspection of how effective police forces are in the deployment of firearms (July 2023)**

### **Response from: Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner, Hampshire and Isle of Wight**

Use of force in policing comes in varying degrees, with deployment of firearms being the highest threat and risk to life. I am pleased to note HMICFRS that police forces in England and Wales are deemed as effective in deploying firearms. Ensuring quality policing with the right decision making processes in place is a priority for both my chief constable and I. Whilst I commend the many good areas of practices outlined in this thematic inspection report, I recognise the key role I play as Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) to ensure I review every recommendation where my chief constable has a role to deliver.

HMICFRS found officers intentionally discharged weapons at only 0.02% of armed operations in 2021-22. Sound professional judgement and effective governance structures allowed such operational discharge to be kept to a minimum, and only used where absolutely necessary. These are factors I will urge my chief constable to continue to uphold throughout his operational oversight of the force. I take pride in knowing officers involved in armed policing are dedicated, professional and focused on keeping the public safe, utilising their rigorous training for such a challenging role.

Of the 12 recommendations made by HMICFRS, 7 are directed towards chief constables, further highlighting the areas of improvement required in such a demanding area of policing. Locally, I hope to see the ongoing improvements provide our communities the reassurance of trust and confidence in the armed policing response to incidents of the highest risk.

Donna Jones  
Police and Crime Commissioner

### **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.

#### **OPCC response:**

I will seek assurance from my chief constable that there are adequate resources and a deliverable/workable rota in place to ensure there is always access to both strategic and tactical firearms commanders for the HIOWC area.

### **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.

#### **OPCC response:**

I will review the availability of vehicle asset tracking equipment and its use with the chief constable and ensure suitable staff training is in place for this where needed.

#### 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.

#### OPCC response:

As part of my oversight and scrutiny role as PCC, I will ask my chief constable, to ensure all strategic and tactical firearms commanders in HIOWC have sufficient training and observation of the firearms tactics, and use of specialist munitions they can authorise, before being operationally deployed.

#### 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.

#### OPCC response:

Keeping up to date with new weapons systems, tactics and specialist munitions is essential for officers working in such a high risk area of policing. I will follow up with my chief constable to seek assurances that the annual accreditation process for strategic and tactical firearms commanders includes familiarisation with these areas to help keep officers and the public safe for our officers in such roles.

#### 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.

#### OPCC response:

In my regular meetings with the chief constable I will ascertain that he is ensuring the assistant chief constable regional firearms lead, or an appropriate nominated colleague to provide consistency, is attending all National Armed Policing Portfolio meetings.

#### Recommendation 10

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

**OPCC response:**

As PCC, it is my role to provide oversight and scrutiny of the force. As part of this, I will ensure my chief constable has improved senior officer oversight of their armouries, the processes in place to meet this oversight and that an independent annual audit is carried out across the relevant force sites.

**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.

**OPCC response:**

In HIOWC's most recent PEEL assessment, the force were praised for good recording of data about crime. However, this report noted there were data quality issues in the police's use of specialist munitions information provided by HIOWC. I will review the governance structure of recording and storing armed deployment records with my chief constable and encourage him to put in place the necessary measures to ensure we do not fall below what is expected.