

The work of the National Audit Office in the police and fire sectors

Briefing pack

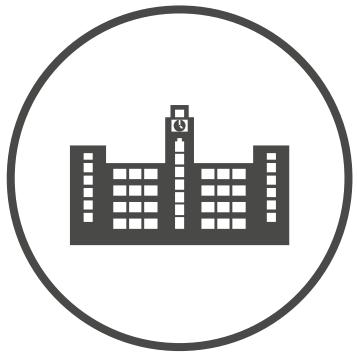


National Audit Office

July 2016



About this guide



This briefing summarises the National Audit Office's work in the police and fire sectors since 2012. It highlights the key messages coming from a selection of our recent reports and should be of interest to Police and Crime Commissioners and their officers and senior police and fire officials.



The National Audit Office scrutinises public spending for Parliament and is independent of government. The Comptroller and Auditor General (C&AG), Sir Amyas Morse KCB, is an officer of the House of Commons and leads the NAO, which employs some 785 people. The C&AG certifies the accounts of all government departments and many other public sector bodies. He has statutory authority to examine and report to Parliament on whether departments and the bodies they fund have used their resources efficiently, effectively and with economy. Our studies evaluate the value for money of public spending, nationally and locally. Our recommendations and reports on good practice help government improve public services, and our work led to audited savings of £1.21 billion in 2015.

If you would like to know more about the National Audit Office's work on police and fire, please contact:

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The NAO's role in local audit

The National Audit Office releases 60 value-for-money reports a year that examine how central government departments spend funds allocated to them. Our focus on central government departments has meant our studies on emergency services have focused on how central government agencies manage and support them (this briefing contains examples of our recent work).

The Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 gives the NAO two new responsibilities:

- preparing and maintaining the Code of Audit Practice, and supporting guidance, for the auditors of local bodies; and
- evaluating the achievement of value for money locally. This means our value-for-money studies can now consider local performance to give a full end-to-end view. It also means we can carry out studies focused solely on the local sector, such as thematic or sector-wide reviews. It does not however extend to the completion of studies looking at single local bodies, which remain the territory of the local auditor.

Supported by additional funds voted by Parliament, we now produce six additional value-for-money studies a year that have a local focus. Like all of our value-for-money reports, the Committee of Public Accounts can choose to hold a hearing on them, where it can question relevant witnesses and issue its own report and recommendations. The government is required to respond to the Committee's recommendations, setting out in Treasury Minutes the actions they have or plan to take. We carry out ongoing monitoring of our own and Committee of Public Accounts' recommendations.

Key facts

Police

41



Police and Crime Commissioners



43

territorial police forces
in England and Wales



£12.6 billion

expenditure
in 2015-16



124,066

police officers and **92,851** support
staff as at 31 March 2016



6.3 million

incidents in 2015-16,
a **6%** decrease compared
with the previous year



3.9 million

total offences
in 2015-16



18

police forces whose effectiveness
was rated as 'requiring improvement'
in 2015 PEEL assessments

Key facts

Fire



45

fire and rescue services
in England



£2 billion

expenditure
in 2015-16



35,958

full-time or retained
firefighters in England at the
end of March 2015, and
8,042 control room
and support staff



496,014

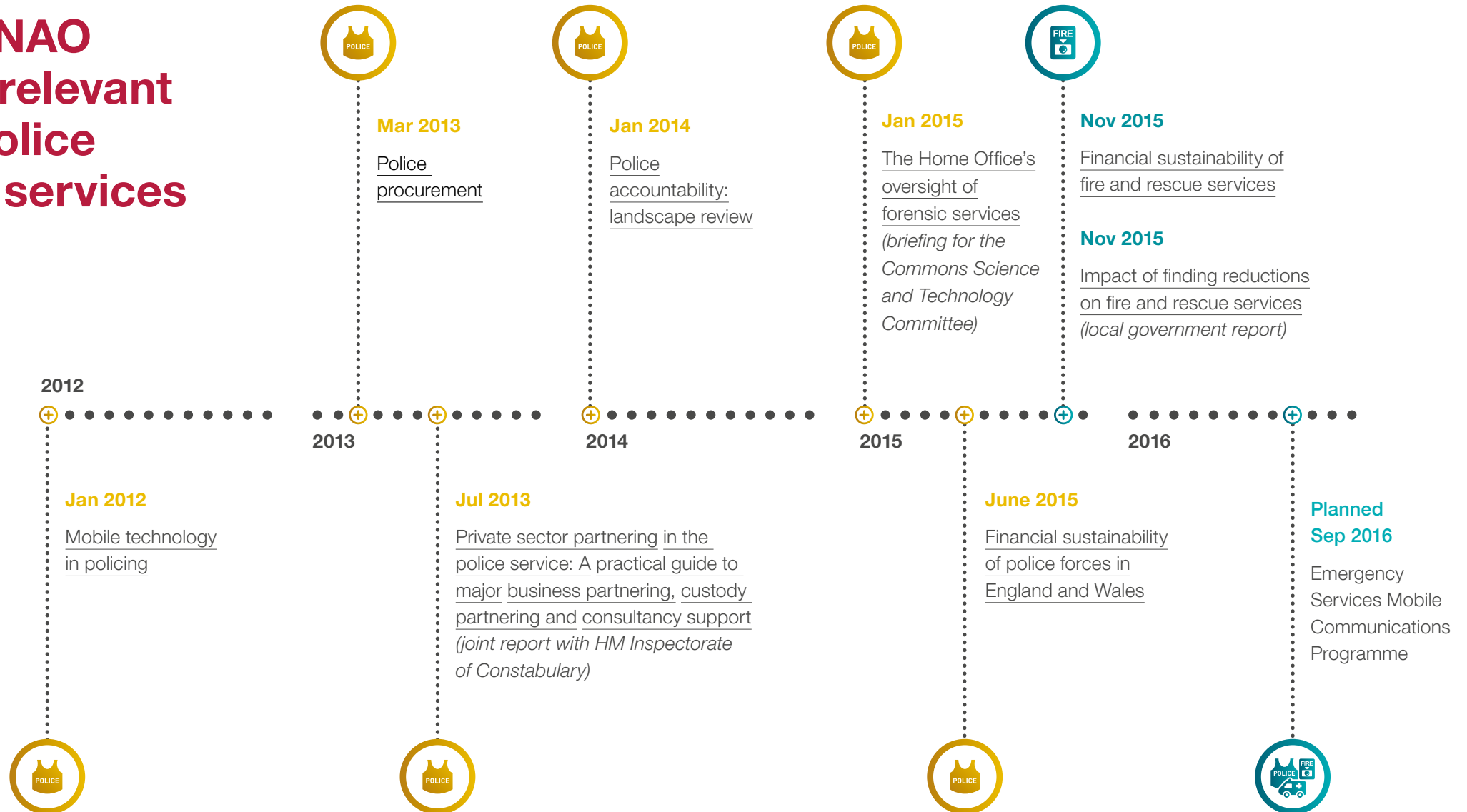
incidents attended
in England at the end of
March 2015, including
71,091 primary fires



58,827

fire safety audits and
inspections in England at the
end of March 2015, **67.4%**
of which were satisfactory

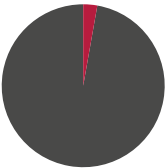
Recent NAO reports relevant to the police and fire services





£71 million

Home Office funding to police forces between **2008-09 and 2009-10** for the Mobile Information Programme.



3%

average proportion spent on business change of the 23 forces surveyed.



Mobile Technology in Policing

January 2012

This report looked at Home Office initiatives to invest in handheld mobile devices for police officers. We found that the Mobile Information Programme had enabled the roll-out of 41,000 devices to police officers, allowing them to spend a greater percentage of their working time out of police stations. However, we found only a minority of forces had used mobile technology to improve their business and operational processes, and only minimal cash savings had been realised.

Data was accurate at the time of the report's publication



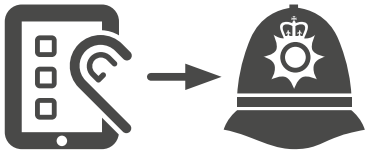
£1.5 billion

estimates, at the time of this report publication, on the total annual spending on police ICT per year.



£61 million

the total spending on procuring and using mobile devices from **2004-05 to 2011-12**, for the 23 forces we surveyed.



1% : 151%

the range in the number of devices relative to the number of officers in the forces we surveyed.



18 mins (± 11)

the average increase in time spent out of the station per officer per shift by using mobile technology.



Around

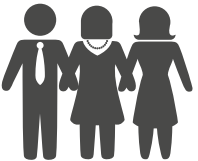
5,000

ICT staff in police forces.



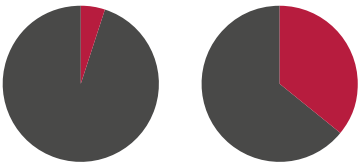
25

number of forces with joint procurement functions working across nine separate force collaborations.



280

full-time equivalent procurement staff in the 42 police forces that gave us comparable data, at January 2013.



Between

5% and 33%

price variation of identical specifications (compared to the lowest price) for five equipment types.



Police Procurement

March 2013

This report examined how police forces were procuring goods and services and the Home Office’s initiatives to encourage and support collaborative procurement. We found wide variation across police forces in how they managed their procurements, skills of procurement staff and the appetite for collaboration with other services. Consequently we found police forces paid widely different prices for standard items like handcuffs. A lack of comparable procurement information made it difficult to identify possible savings and determine best practice.

Data was accurate at the time of the report’s publication



£1.7 billion

spent by all police forces in England and Wales on non-ICT goods and services, 2010-11.



£474 million

savings that were planned by forces from better procurement of all goods and services by 2014-15.



68%

proportion of procurement staff in police forces that have professional procurement qualifications, at January 2013.



41
police and crime commissioners elected in November 2012 (England and Wales).



36
pieces of data that the Home Office has said that commissioners must publish for public scrutiny.



75%
highest compliance observed of data sets that are easily accessible on commissioners' websites against data publishing requirements, from a sample of 15 local police force areas.



Police accountability: landscape review

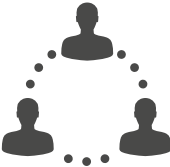
January 2014

This report examined the replacement of police authorities with elected police and crime commissioners, in particular how the Home Office balanced local autonomy against its requirement to assure Parliament that funds it allocates to police forces are spent with regard to value for money. We found that police and crime commissioners had more powers and flexibility to drive local efficiency and engage with the public. But data being published to help the public hold them to account was not complete or easily usable by the public. We also found gaps in oversight arrangements, for example where the Inspectorate did not have statutory authority to inspect commissioners or their offices.

Data was accurate at the time of the report's publication



42%
increase in public awareness of commissioners (April to June 2012 against the same period in 2013) according to the British Crime Survey.¹



6
commissioners who share a chief financial officer with their police force, raising a potential conflict of interest where chief financial officers cannot give unfettered advice to either party.

Note
1 Now called the Crime Survey for England and Wales.

Click for key messages from selected reports

Mobile technology in policing



Police procurement



Police accountability: landscape review



Financial sustainability of police forces in England and Wales



Financial sustainability of fire and rescue services



£12.8 billion

total amount spent in 2014-15 by all 43 police forces in England and Wales.



79%

of police spending is on workforce costs (2014-15 estimates).



3

forces rated by HMIC, who independently inspect police forces, as 'requires improvement' in their response to the spending review.



Police forces planned to make savings of

£2.5 billion

between 2011-12 and 2014-15.



Financial sustainability of police forces in England and Wales

June 2015

We looked at how the Home Office was managing and supporting police forces as they were asked to improve services while absorbing 25% real-terms budget cuts. We found forces had scope to make savings through better understanding the demands they face and the fact many incidents they responded to were not crime-related. But the Home Office did not have good information on how much funding reductions forces could cope with before services would start to degrade, or when it may need to intervene and support a force. We also found that central agencies could do more to support police forces to meet these challenges.

Data was accurate at the time of the report's publication



68%

funding comes from central government (2015-16)

32%

local taxation

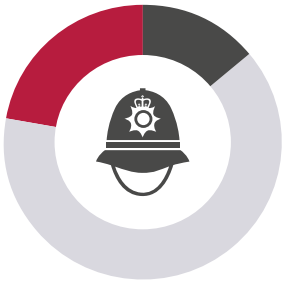
But these proportions vary between police forces.

22%

Crime

14%

Antisocial behaviour



64%

Other incidents

Only an estimated 22% of incidents that police responded to in 2013-14 were crime-related. This reflects the number of incidents rather than the workload they generate.



2%

reduction in number of fire stations between 2010-11 and 2014-15.



23%

fall in number of primary fires in England from 2010-11 to 2014-15.



22%

reduction in fatal casualties at fires from 2010-11 to 2014-15.



0

'section 114' reports issued during the 2010 spending review period by local authority chief finance officers because of unbalanced budgets.



Financial Sustainability of fire and rescue services

November 2015

This report examined how fire and rescue services had coped with reductions in funding and staffing between 2010 and 2016. With the number of incidents continuing its downward trend, we found that services had to date coped well with reduced funding. Services had changed how they respond to incidents and the amount of preventive work carried out. Some fire authorities indicated that their capacity to respond to major incidents might be compromised by further funding reductions. Meanwhile, a lack of comparable information across services made it harder to identify potential savings.

Data was accurate at the time of the report's publication



14%

reduction in whole-time firefighters between 2010-11 and 2014-15.



12%

real-terms reduction in spending on fire and rescue services from 2010-11 to 2014-15.



17%

estimated average real-terms reduction in spending power of stand-alone fire authorities from 2010-11 to 2015-16.



36

authorities that received funding in 2015-16 under the Fire Transformation Fund.