

Concerns Airwave could fail during Olympics

The Federation is raising concerns that the Airwave communication system may not be able to cope during the 2012 Olympics because of the vast amount of officers using the service.

The issue was highlighted to the Home Affairs Select Committee who produced the report, *Policing in the 21st Century* recently.

The submission from the Federation said with the Olympics only four years away 'serious consideration' needs to be given to the system when 'problems that already exist' are likely to be exacerbated by the event.

Met officers experienced issues with the Airwave network during last year's Notting Hill Carnival because of the high numbers using the system in one place. While the system can also now be used on some of the Underground network, the roll-out is still piece meal and the Federation called for a push to get the system up and running well before the Olympics.

Vernon Coaker, police minister, told *Police* magazine: "As far as I know Airwave has been fantastically successful. I know looking forward there is the concern in 2012 there will be so many [officers using the system] and that is a concern I have heard expressed, but I have heard and seen nothing from anybody that's come to me saying this will be an issue. "All of the issues around security and protection around the Olympics will continue to be discussed and debated."

He added: "Let's be frank about these things, as with anything as we run up to the 2012 Olympics no doubt we will get different reports about things and we will look at them. People need to let us know if they are concerned."

Police targets branded 'absurd'

Arrest targets are 'absurd' and are removing an officer's discretion and damaging their relationship with the public, according to Essex Police Federation.

Tony Rayner, chairman of the local federation, told chief officers that arrest targets are an absurd measure of police performance which led to officers arresting the public over minor issues.

He cited incidents where children had been arrested at 4am for a playground scuffle the day before and another where children were arrested for 'pulling pigtailed'.

However, Andy Bliss, deputy chief constable of Essex Police, defended the policy, saying: "We do feel that parts of the service have almost lost focus of what differentiates us from the rest of the public. We do think, on occasions, the power of arrest is under-used."

He said that the force strongly supports discretion but that 'there was plenty of crime going on' without resorting to simply boosting crime figures by arresting people for minor offences.

But Mr Rayner said: "If you set a stupid target, you will get a stupid result. If you put young officers under intolerable pressure. If you bully them to achieve arbitrary arrest targets, you will get stupid arrests."

Airwave: will lines of communication be broken?



Targets: numbers do not add up

