

‘What do we want from the next Prime Minister?’

Policy Exchange 

A series of policy proposals for new leadership:

Crime & Policing - A force fit for the future

David Spencer



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About the Author

David Spencer joined [Policy Exchange](#) as the Head of Crime & Justice in April 2022.

David was previously a police officer with the [Metropolitan Police Service](#), joining in 2003. After serving in uniformed and detective roles he was posted to Waltham Forest, East London in 2010 as the Detective Inspector responsible for combatting robbery and burglary. After many years of increasing robbery and burglary rates Waltham Forest was, under David's leadership, the only London borough to deliver three consecutive years of reductions in both crime types. During this time, he also led the local investigative response to the aftermath of the 2011 riots.

Appointed to a Detective Chief Inspector role in 2013 David took responsibility for tackling gang crime, drug supply and violent street crime. As an experienced detective, he regularly led the immediate response to the most serious offences and critical incidents. This included being the senior detective on-call for North London leading the initial investigative response to murders, kidnaps, high-risk missing persons, arsons, armed robberies and active threats to life.

After first proposing the idea for [Police Now](#) in 2013 while still undertaking his operational role, David was the driving force for the creation of this multi-award-winning national organisation. In 2016 he led the spin-out of Police Now from the Metropolitan Police Service to become an independent social enterprise. During his tenure Police Now established itself as one of the UK's Top 30 graduate recruiters and consistently delivered the most diverse cohort of officers joining the police service. Under his leadership Police Now's two leadership programmes brought nearly 2,500 highly qualified graduates into policing over half of whom would not otherwise have applied for a policing career.

David's formal qualifications include an under-graduate business degree, a master's degree in US politics, and a research master's degree in British politics. He has also undertaken executive education programmes at London Business School and the University of Oxford Business School.

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The 'Peelian' Principles of Policing¹

1. To prevent crime and disorder, as an alternative to their repression by military force and severity of legal punishment.
2. To recognise always that the power of the police to fulfil their functions and duties is dependent on public approval of their existence, actions and behaviour, and on their ability to secure and maintain public respect.
3. To recognise always that to secure and maintain the respect and approval of the public means also the securing of the willing co-operation of the public in the task of securing observance of laws.
4. To recognise always that the extent to which the co-operation of the public can be secured diminishes proportionately the necessity of the use of physical force and compulsion for achieving police objectives.
5. To seek and preserve public favour, not by pandering to public opinion, but by constantly demonstrating absolutely impartial service to law, in complete independence of policy, and without regard to the justice or injustice of the substance of individual laws, by ready offering of individual service and friendship to all members of the public without regard to their wealth or social standing, by ready exercise of courtesy and friendly good humour, and by ready offering of individual sacrifice in protecting and preserving life.
6. To use physical force only when the exercise of persuasion, advice and warning is found to be insufficient to obtain public co-operation to an extent necessary to secure observance of law or to restore order, and to use only the minimum degree of physical force which is necessary on any particular occasion for achieving a police objective.
7. To maintain at all times a relationship with the public that gives reality to the historic tradition that the police are the public and that the public are the police, the police being only members of the public who are paid to give full-time attention to duties which are incumbent on every citizen in the interests of community welfare and existence.
8. To recognise always the need for strict adherence to police-executive functions, and to refrain from even seeming to usurp the powers of the judiciary of avenging individuals or the State, and of authoritatively judging guilt and punishing the guilty.
9. To recognise always that the test of police efficiency is the absence of crime and disorder, and not the visible evidence of police action in dealing with them.

1. The 'Peelian' Principles of Policing are often considered the fundamentals on which British policing is based. They first appeared as an appendix to *A New Study of Police History* by Charles Reith (1956). For more on their creation see S. Lentz & R. Chaires (2007), The invention of Peel's principles: A study of policing 'textbook' history, *Journal of Criminal Justice*, Vol. 35 (1), pp. 69-79, [link](#)

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Executive Summary

British policing has lost its way. If the next government is to have any right to a claim to be the 'party of law and order' by the next general election, the next Prime Minister and Home Secretary must make a series of significant interventions.

This paper proposes a policy programme for turning round British policing, making our communities safer and preparing to tackle the crime threats of the future. This includes a programme of both reform and investment. Both are necessary if policing is to effectively serve the public in the short and longer term.

1. Ensure that policing gets the basics right and focuses on fighting crime.

- i. Use the Home Secretary's powers in legislation to give directions to those police forces failing to effectively serve the public.
- ii. Eliminate unnecessary complexity and regulation which impedes effective and efficient policing, with an initial focus on:
 - police misconduct regulations,
 - the legislation, case law and guidance surrounding policing of public events and protest, and
 - the Home Office Counting Rules for recording crime.
- iii. Review the amount of time not related to crime and disorder that police officers are dealing with people with mental illnesses.

2. Establish a cadre of leaders who are fit to lead the police forces of the future.

- i. Commission a rapid independent review of initial police officer training.
- ii. End the police promotions 'closed shop'.
- iii. Replace the College of Policing with a national police Leadership Academy.

3. Tackle the increased threats from technology and use technology to enable policing to tackle the threats of the future.

- i. Use technology to focus policing on what matters to local people and enable communities to contribute to decisions on police tactics.
- ii. Make tackling online fraud a priority for law enforcement and government.
- iii. Recruit a corps of data scientists, hackers and programmers into policing.

Summary of Recommendations

- The Home Secretary should use their powers in legislation to provide direction to police and crime commissioners in those forces that have been placed into ‘special measures’. Where appropriate this may include the replacement of the chief constable and other senior officers.
- Police regulations should urgently be amended so that the decision to dismiss officers found guilty of criminality or serious misconduct lies with police chiefs. It is critically important if police chiefs are to be able to drive the cultural change necessary in policing.
- The Home Office, working with the National Police Chiefs Council and the College of Policing, should undertake a thorough review of the existing legislation, case law and guidance (including police tactics, technology and equipment) to provide officers with the tools necessary to effectively police protests and other public events.
- The Home Office should simplify the Home Office Counting Rules to reduce the administrative burden they currently place on police forces and to provide a more realistic picture of crime to the public.
- The Home Office should review the amount of police officer time spent dealing with persons with mental illness which does not relate to preventing, responding to, or investigating crime and disorder; and consider potential solutions which would enable officers to get this balance right.
- A rapid independently chaired review of initial police training in England and Wales to report within 3 months should be commissioned. Given the role of the College of Policing in the development and implementation of the PEQF, they should not be involved in delivering the independent review.
- Police Regulations should be amended to mandate the end of the ‘closed shop’ of police promotions. All appointments to chief police officer, superintendent and inspector ranks should be open to external and re-joiner applicants. At least a quarter of all appointments to these ranks should be made to external or re-joiner applicants.
- The College of Policing should be replaced. Its role in setting standards should be transferred to Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services. A national police Leadership Academy should be established with responsibility to

develop and drive a singular doctrine of leadership into policing. The police Leadership Academy should be responsible, with forces, for the effective training and development of policing leaders across the country.

- The roll-out of app-based technology should be piloted across the country to enable greater involvement for local residents in policing tactics and decision-making. Forces should be held to account by publishing the data showing whether they are focusing on the issues that most concern local people.
- The Home Office should reorganise the response to the fraud epidemic. This must include fraud being represented in the Strategic Policing Requirement. Responsibility for investigating fraud should be transferred to appropriately resourced Regional Organised Crime Units under the leadership and governance of the National Crime Agency.
- The Home Office should establish the scale of a new corps of data scientists, programmers and hackers to be recruited into policing to tackle the threat from online crime. This recruitment programme should be commenced at the earliest opportunity, in addition to the uniformed officers currently being recruited under the Government's existing Police Uplift Programme.

Introduction

Between 2010 and 2019, the government attempted reform of policing without investment; between 2019 and 2022 the government’s Police Uplift Programme provided investment without reform. The impact of this disconnected approach over the last twelve years has led to policing in England and Wales being insufficiently prepared to tackle the crime and disorder threats that Britain faces in the 21st century.

This paper proposes both targeted investment in policing alongside reform and modernisation. While recognising that the current economic climate and cost of living crisis makes substantial investment in public services challenging, this is however the only way the government will be able to fulfil one of its fundamental duties – the safety of its citizens from those who would commit crime and disorder.

Police Workforce & Funding

There are fewer police officers in England and Wales now than there were 12 years ago. This is despite the nearly three years of intense recruitment of police officers through the government’s Police Uplift Programme. The latest data released by the Home Office shows there were 142,759² police officers in England and Wales in June 2022 compared to 143,734³ in March 2011. During this period, the population in England and Wales increased by 3.5 million people⁴. There are now 235 police officers per 100,000 people compared to 264 in 2011 – a real terms reduction in the number of police officers over the decade of 11%.

Over the same period the total policing workforce has fallen significantly, having reduced from 244,497 to 225,229⁵. It is erroneous to characterise all members of this wider policing workforce, who are not themselves police officers, as being purely back-office or administrative staff. They include police community support officers patrolling local communities; crime scene investigators gathering forensic evidence used in the prosecution of those alleged to have committed serious crimes; and intelligence analysts tracking the patterns of repeat offenders to stop them committing more crime.

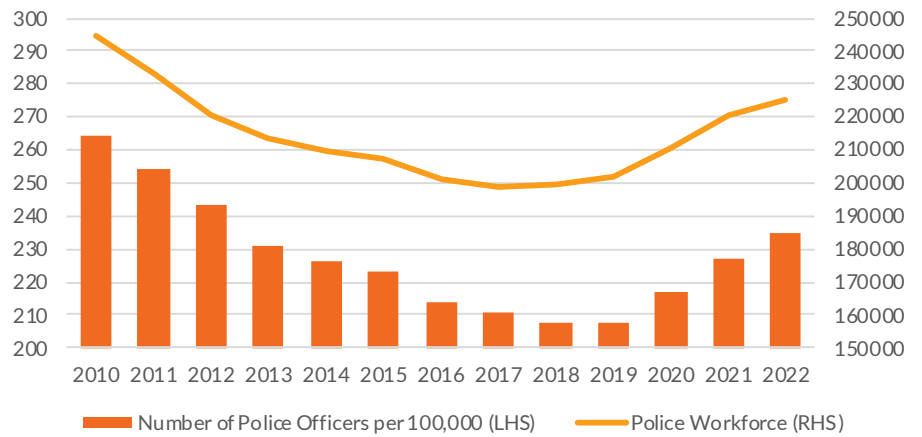
2. Home Office, Police officer uplift, quarterly update to June 2022, [link](#)

3. Home Office, Police workforce, England and Wales, 31 March 2022, [link](#)

4. Office for National Statistics, Population estimates, [link](#)

5. Home Office, Police workforce, England and Wales, 31 March 2022, [link](#)

Number of police officers (per 100,000 population) & size of policing workforce (England & Wales: 2010 - 2022)



Source: Home Office⁶

Total police funding in England and Wales for 2021/22 (£15.88 billion) is almost identical in real terms to police funding in 2010/11 (£15.86 billion)⁷. However, given the increase in population over that time per capita spending on policing has reduced from £282 in 2010/11 to £265 in 2021/22, having reached a per capita nadir of £233 in 2017/18. Treating 2010/11 as the baseline, over the subsequent eleven financial years there was a reduction in police spending of £15.6 billion in real terms⁸. Were police spending to be brought genuinely in line with 2010/11 levels, a further increase of just under £1 billion per annum would be required.

Financial Year	Police Funding (nominal) (£bn)	Police Funding (real terms) (£bn)	Per capita (£)
2010/11	12.89	15.86	282
2011/12	12.59	15.26	270
2012/13	12.21	14.49	254
2013/14	12.12	14.14	246
2014/15	11.94	13.73	237
2015/16	12.06	13.76	236
2016/17	12.35	13.75	234
2017/18	12.61	13.80	233
2018/19	13.07	13.98	235
2019/20	14.18	14.83	248
2020/21	15.44	15.19	255
2021/22	15.88	15.88	266

Source: Home Office⁹

6. Home Office, Police workforce, England and Wales, 31 March 2022, [link](#)

7. Home Office, Police funding for England and Wales 2015 to 2022, [link](#)

8. Ibid

9. Ibid

Police Performance

Over the last five years the proportion of those who state the police are doing a good job has reduced. The most recently published Crime Survey of England and Wales data on public confidence in the police reports that the proportion of people thinking that the police are doing a ‘good or excellent job in my local area’ reduced from 62% in 2018 to 55% in 2020¹⁰. More recent polling suggests that this decline has continued, with YouGov data showing that the number of people who think that the police are generally doing a good job has fallen from 70% in July 2019 to 52% in July 2022¹¹.

The decline in public confidence in London has been even more precipitous. During the three years between March 2015 and March 2018, the proportion of residents who answered ‘yes’ when asked if the police were doing a good job in their local area was relatively stable at around 68%¹². By March 2022, less than half of Londoners believed so¹³.

The public’s confidence in whether the police are doing a good job is more than just a glorified customer satisfaction rate. It is central to whether the police can be effective at fighting crime and keeping the public safe. There is a large body of evidence which demonstrates that people who have higher trust and confidence in the police, are more likely to come forward with information or intelligence, more likely to obey the law and more likely to defer to police authority¹⁴.

Whilst most police officers serve with integrity and act consistently in line with the standards expected of them by the public, this is not universally the case. The impact of a series of high-profile cases on the public’s trust and confidence in British policing has been significant. No case stands out more than the abhorrent crimes committed by the serving Metropolitan Police officer who murdered Sarah Everard in March 2021. His actions were a betrayal of everything the public expect of those in policing and everything those who serve honourably in policing stand for.

The ability of policing to prevent, reduce and solve crime over the past five years has been mixed. According to the Crime Survey of England and Wales the rates of crime have been heavily affected by the Covid-19 pandemic and government restrictions over the last two years¹⁵. Although many crime types saw significant reductions, instances of fraud and computer misuse offences have significantly increased with almost one in nine adults in England and Wales now becoming victims of these offences in the year to March 2022¹⁶.

Police recorded data shows levels of violent crime have increased compared with pre-pandemic levels. The instances of violence increased by 18% in the year to March 2022 compared to March 2020 with a 5% increase in violence with injury¹⁷. In the year to March 2022 there were 710 homicides, a similar number to the year March 2020¹⁸.

10. Office for National Statistics, Crime Survey of England and Wales (2020), [link](#)

11. YouGov, ‘Are the police doing a good job?’ (July 2019 - July 2022), [link](#)

12. Mayor’s Office for Policing and Crime, Public Voice Dashboard, [link](#)

13. Ibid

14. E. Stanko & B. Bradford (2009), Beyond Measuring ‘How Good a Job’ Police are Doing: The MPS Model of Confidence in Policing, Policing, Vol. 3 (4), pp. 322–330, [link](#)

15. Office for National Statistics, Crime Survey of England and Wales (2021), [link](#)

16. Ibid

17. Ibid

18. Ibid

"There are more than 100 young men being killed every year in this city. Many, many, many more being maimed in unpleasant and vicious ways. We do not hear a single word about it, actually. The police think about it, a bit. But in a sense, they think it's, they appear to think it's not really their problem. It's happening somewhere else. Why is this an issue? Well, of course, because all these people are black. Literally, almost all of them are black. And of course, let's not beat the beat about the bush here, the perpetrators are also black."¹⁹

Sir Trevor Philips OBE

Former Chair, London Assembly

Former Chair, Equality and Human Rights Commission

There have been significant increases in the reporting of sexual offences, albeit no significant change in the Crime Survey of England and Wales estimates of actual offences²⁰. This suggests that victims of these offences are increasingly likely to report these types of offences to the police – a positive step forward.

The proportion of police-recorded crimes which resulted in a suspect being charged or summonsed has followed a downward trend in recent years, from 15.6% in the year to March 2015 to 7.3% in the year to March 2021²¹. Similarly, out-of-court disposals (such as 'police cautions' and 'cannabis warnings') have fallen over the same period from 9.1% to 4.4%²². Policing's ability to solve more common crime types is woefully low with only 3.5% of reported residential burglaries, 6.3% of reported robberies and 4.1% of reported thefts solved during the financial year 2021/22²³. There may be a host of reasons for these trends, including victims being less likely to be willing to support pursuing a prosecution or increasingly stringent crime recording standards. However, there appears to be no doubt that the ability of the police to solve crime once it has happened has reduced significantly over the last decade.

Criminal Justice Performance

Policing, as part of the wider criminal justice system, does not exist in a vacuum. The efficiency and effectiveness of the wider criminal justice system, although beyond the scope of this paper's primary concern of policing, has a significant impact on policing's ability to keep the public safe. This is especially relevant given the current parlous condition of the wider criminal justice system. Of particular concern is the length of time from offences being reported to the police to then being concluded at court.

In most cases in England and Wales the police are responsible for conducting criminal investigations and the Crown Prosecution Service is responsible for their prosecution. Decisions about whether to prosecute suspects generally reside with the Crown Prosecution Service. It is now taking much longer to reach the decision to charge or summons a suspect than it was previously. The median number of days has increased

19. T. Philips at 'What do we want from the next Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police' event at Policy Exchange, 30th June 2022, [link](#)

20. Office for National Statistics, Crime Survey of England and Wales (2021), [link](#)

21. Home Office, Crime outcomes in England and Wales 2020 to 2021, [link](#)

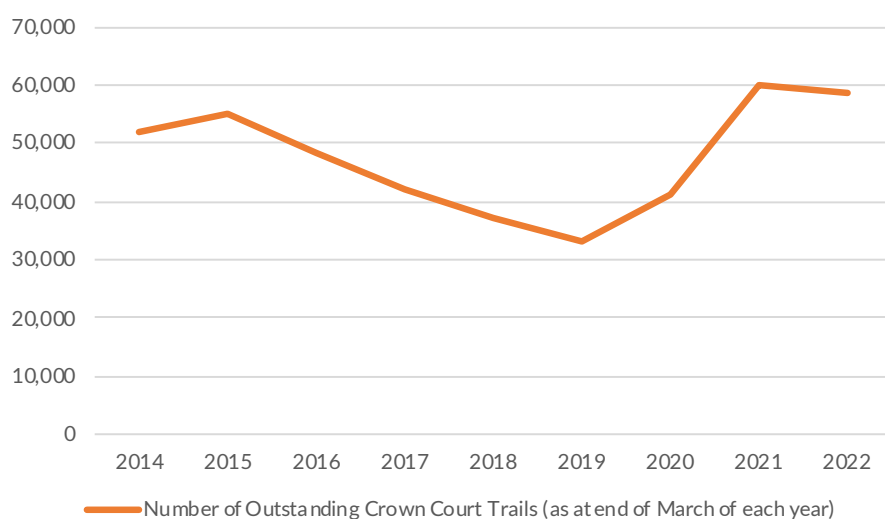
22. Ibid

23. Home Office, Police recorded crime and outcomes in England and Wales 2021 to 2022, [link](#)

from 14 days in the year to March 2016 to 44 days in the year to March 2022²⁴. This may have several causes, including the increasing complexity of investigations, but it cannot solely be accounted for by the Covid-19 pandemic given the median number of days to charge suspects had already reached 33 days by March 2020²⁵.

Once the decision has been taken to charge or summons a suspect all cases start in the Magistrates Court. Less serious criminal cases remain for trial in the Magistrates Court while the most serious cases move to be tried in the Crown Court. In the year leading up to the Covid-19 pandemic, the number of outstanding cases in the Crown Court increased by 23%, from an all-time low of 33,359 in March 2019 to 41,112 in March 2020²⁶. Since the pandemic the number of outstanding cases reached 59,917 in March 2021, reducing slightly to 58,653 by March 2022²⁷.

Outstanding Crown Court Trials (2014 - 2022)



Source: Ministry of Justice²⁸

As the backlog has increased, so has the length of time that defendants, witnesses and victims have waited for their case to be completed. Between March 2019 and March 2022, the number of cases waiting longer than a year to conclude had increased nearly six-fold, from an all-time low of 2,639 cases to 15,580²⁹.

The current plan by the Ministry of Justice is to reduce the backlog of outstanding cases to 53,000 by March 2025, a reduction of less than 8,000 cases³⁰. Given the impact on victims, witnesses and defendants, this is inadequate. The government must take urgent steps to resolve what is now clearly a crisis in the criminal courts system. At a minimum, this must include an increase in the number sitting days in the Crown Courts, increases in the number of judges able to hear cases, efforts to increase the number of solicitors firms working on criminal legal aid cases and the resolution of the current dispute with the Criminal Bar Association.

24. Home Office, Crime outcomes in England and Wales 2021 to 2022, [link](#)

25. Ibid

26. Ministry of Justice, Criminal court statistics quarterly, January to March 2022, [link](#)

27. Ibid

28. Ibid

29. Ministry of Justice, Criminal court statistics quarterly, January to March 2022, [link](#)

30. House of Commons Committee of Public Accounts, Reducing the backlog in the criminal courts (2022), [link](#)

About the Report

This report is part of a series of Policy Exchange publications proposing policy ideas for the new Prime Minister. In addition, this report is part of Policy Exchange's Crime & Justice series, 'Policing Can Win'. The central argument of this series is that policing can win on behalf of the public over those who would commit crime and disorder in our communities.

The last decade provides limited evidence that the existing governance structures enable policing in England and Wales to be an effective 'self-reforming' sector, fit to take on the challenges of the 21st century. The modernisation of policing must be led by central government, police and crime commissioners and the police service acting in a unified way. Policing and the Home Office must be more effective at demonstrating value, and particularly return on investment. The current Police Uplift Programme continues to fail to clearly demonstrate what crime and disorder outcomes can be achieved with the significant investment of more police officers.

Despite its failings, British policing remains a standard bearer of excellence around the world. One reason for this is the men and women who make up British policing. They regularly demonstrate conspicuous bravery and commitment. Where others sit on the side-lines these men and women face the most extraordinary challenges and, at times, mortal danger. It is incumbent on those who have the honour of holding leadership positions, whether political or in policing, that they take the steps necessary to better enable policing to serve the public effectively.

This report seeks to give the next Prime Minister a head start.

The Policy Proposals

1.1 Use the Home Secretary's powers in legislation to give directions to those police forces that are failing to serve the public effectively.

Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) routinely monitor and assess the performance of police forces. The PEEL framework used by HMICFRS considers performance relating to forces' efficiency, effectiveness and legitimacy. Police forces are placed into the 'Engage' mechanism, often referred to as 'special measures', when HMICFRS's assessment and monitoring identifies systemic or management failings which forces have failed to resolve³¹.

Six of the forty-three police forces in England and Wales are currently within the HMICFRS 'Engage' process³². In such cases the police force is expected to provide an improvement plan to HMICFRS. With two of the biggest police forces in England and Wales (London's Metropolitan Police Service and Greater Manchester Police) amongst their number, a third of police officers in England and Wales now work for forces in 'special measures'. This is an unprecedented indictment of British policing.

Elected for terms of four years, police and crime commissioners (PCCs) are accountable to the public for the performance of police forces. Where forces are found to be failing so egregiously as to be placed into 'special measures' it is not reasonable for the public to tolerate up to four years of a failing police force until the next round of PCC elections.

The Police Act 1996 provides the Home Secretary with the powers to direct PCCs to take the specific measures necessary to remedy failures by police forces³³. PCCs are required to comply with the directions given. The Home Secretary should utilise these powers to ensure that PCCs, and therefore chief constables, are taking the steps necessary to correct the issues which have been identified.

The Home Secretary should be willing to provide PCCs and chief constables with clear priorities which they would then be required to follow. The Home Secretary should have the courage to set out explicitly how these forces should balance their priorities relating to crime matters and those matters which are clearly not crime related. In cases where chief constables and their senior team have led the organisation into special measures, it may be appropriate for the Home Secretary to give a direction to the PCC to remove the chief constable.

31. Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services, Our approach to monitoring forces, [link](#)

32. Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services, Police forces in Engage, [link](#)

33. Section 40 Police Act 1996, [link](#)

The Home Secretary should use their powers in legislation to provide direction to police and crime commissioners in those forces that have been placed into 'special measures'. Where appropriate this may include the replacement of the chief constable and other senior officers.

1.2 Eliminate unnecessary complexity and regulation which impedes effective and efficient policing.

There are countless examples of policing being hampered by unnecessarily complex regulations, procedures and legislation. While policing should be constrained to ensure ethical practice, there are currently too many areas where this is overly burdensome without leading to better outcomes for victims or the public. Steps must be taken to eliminate those situations where unnecessary complexity and regulation impedes the ability of police forces to fight crime and effectively serve the public.

Three areas which the new Prime Minister and Home Secretary should resolve as a matter of urgency are:

1. The requirement for legally qualified chairs in police misconduct hearings.
2. The complexity of legislation, case law and guidance concerning the policing of public events and protest.
3. The over-regulation of crime recording through the Home Office Counting Rules.

Police Misconduct Regulations: Policing must take an unequivocal stance in relation to misconduct by police officers with nothing short of a zero-tolerance approach to criminality and unlawful discrimination. The police service must commit to rooting out, by all means necessary, those officers and staff who are likely to damage the public's confidence in policing by acting in a manner which does not meet the standards expected of those in policing.

Police regulations are the series of statutory instruments which govern all aspects of the terms and conditions of police officers' employment³⁴. This includes the processes governing police officer misconduct³⁵. Given significant public concern regarding the conduct of police officers, police regulations must be fit for purpose. They are not.

Whilst a more detailed review of police regulations may be required in due course, the government must make one immediate change. If police chiefs are rightly to be held accountable for ensuring high standards and an intolerance for serious misconduct and criminality within the police forces they lead, they must also have the power to dismiss officers who do not meet the standards they set.

In most misconduct hearings which might lead to the dismissal of a police officer, it is a legal requirement that the panel is led by a legally qualified chair. Appointed by police and crime commissioners, legally qualified chairs must be eligible under the conditions for judicial

34. Police Regulations 2003, [link](#)

35. Police (Conduct) Regulations 2020, [link](#)

appointments³⁶. Early research into the decisions of legally qualified chairs found they were less likely to result in the dismissal of an officer found guilty of gross misconduct than the decisions of assistant chief constables under the previous regime³⁷.

Having been introduced with the aim of increasing the public's confidence in the police misconduct process, the experiment is having the opposite effect. Additionally, their removal would save both time and money from a process in which there is considerable public interest.

Police regulations should urgently be amended so that the decision to dismiss officers found guilty of criminality or serious misconduct lies with police chiefs. It is critically important if police chiefs are to be able to drive the cultural change necessary in policing.

Legislation, case law and guidance surrounding the policing of public events and protests: The range and number of public events which police forces attend to ensure the safety of the public cannot be underestimated. The policing of the Notting Hill Carnival requires the deployment of 12,000 police officers to a small part of west London every August bank holiday weekend³⁸. Meanwhile, across the country, police officers attend countless local fetes which require, at most, the attendance of one or two local neighbourhood officers for only a short period. The nature of events also encompasses huge range. From the largely good-natured (albeit with the ever-present risk of terrorism) such as the recent celebrations for Her Majesty The Queen's Platinum Jubilee, through to highly confrontational protests which pose a considerable risk of crime and disorder. Occurring in full view of the press, social media and the public, policing cannot afford to get these events wrong. Yet the current combination of legislation, case law and formal guidance prevents policing from being as effective as it might be in successfully navigating these highly challenging events.

The number of protests in the UK, particularly those using confrontational tactics, has increased substantially over the last decade³⁹. Confrontational tactics include activities such as 'locking on' (where protestors attach themselves to buildings, the transport network and other structures with glue, chains or D-locks), mass obstruction of the highway, and occupations by highly motivated protestors. They present particularly significant challenges for policing.

While the right to protest remains vital in any modern democracy, this must be balanced with the right of the public to go about their daily activities without intimidation or harassment. The need for balance is recognised by articles 10 and 11 of the European Convention on Human Rights which provide for the right to freedom of expression and freedom of assembly, subject to laws "which are necessary in a democratic society in the interests of ... public safety, for the prevention of disorder or crime"⁴⁰. In practice, however, this often means the balance is struck, not by parliament in setting the law, but by the courts in the course of litigation. This litigation can put the police in a very challenging position, with the potential to frustrate effective policing.

The Supreme Court case of *DPP v Ziegler* [2021] UKSC 23 in effect

36. Section 50 Tribunals, Courts and Enforcement Act 2007, [link](#)

37. Review of legally qualified chairs and misconduct hearings, Association of Police and Crime Commissioners, [link](#)

38. Mayor of London, Questions to the Mayor, 12th September 2019, [link](#)

39. D. Bailey, Decade of dissent: how protest is shaking the UK and why it's likely to continue (January 2020), The Conversation, [link](#)

40. Articles 10 (2) & 11 (2) Human Rights Act 1998, [link](#)

requires the police to conduct a very detailed proportionality assessment before deciding whether a protest can lawfully go ahead. This was again emphasised in *Leigh v the Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police* [2022] EWHC 527 (Admin). As part of the proportionality assessment, police are, amongst other issues, required to consider whether the views giving rise to the protest relate to 'very important issues' and whether they are 'views which many would see as being of considerable breadth, depth and relevance'. Many would consider that the police, supposedly politically neutral, are expected to make such a judgement about the righteousness or otherwise of a particular protest is extraordinary.

The *Ziegler* case also makes it difficult for police to know whether it is lawful to arrest protestors, in that case for obstructing the highway. In other cases, such as the Colston statue trial in Bristol⁴¹, protestors have relied on *Ziegler* to defend themselves against charges of criminal damage. This again puts the police in a difficult position when determining whether lawful protest has spilled over into a breach of the criminal law. After *Ziegler*, and unless and until the case is reversed by the Supreme Court or overturned by parliament, police officers must navigate an increasingly uncertain legal framework, making it more difficult for officers to balance the rights of protestors and the wider public and thereby deal effectively with protests when they occur.

The policing of public events beyond traditional protests also presents policing with significant challenges. Navigating the demands of keeping people safe, engaging with the public at events, achieving the necessary standard of impartiality and maintaining wider public confidence is a fine balance. Whilst it is essential that police officers and leaders retain the discretion to make the wide range of operational decisions that may be necessary at such events, they must also be supported by national and local guidance which provides them with the best chance of achieving the right balance.

The perception of impartiality is critical to maintaining the public's confidence that policing is fair. No one should expect those in policing to be silent about settled ethical questions, it being incumbent on everyone in public life to challenge unlawful discrimination where it arises. However, where there are unresolved partisan political questions, whether divided along party political lines or not, far greater care is required. Even the perception that an officer's decision making, such as whether to arrest someone, might be influenced by a partisan political view has the potential to be hugely damaging to public confidence. Acts that may be intended by as a show of solidarity against discrimination, such as 'taking the knee' or an officer wearing a badge on their uniform⁴², can easily be interpreted by others as an expression of a partisan political view. To maintain the public's confidence that police officers are acting with impartiality, such acts must always be avoided by police officers and their leaders. This should be made clear in both national and local guidance.

When deployed at public events it is essential that officers consider the balance between engaging with those at the event and the potential

41. *R v Graham & Ors* [2022] Bristol Crown Court (unreported)

42. Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services, *Getting the balance right? An inspection of how effectively the police deal with protests* (March 2021), [link](#)

impact of their activities on the wider public's confidence in policing. This is an issue which has recently grown in prominence given that officers' actions can be broadcast widely through social media. Recent polling has found that, "the public were almost twice as likely to agree than disagree with the statement that 'the police are more interested in being woke than solving crimes'"⁴³. While this may be a grossly unfair distortion of what police officers engaging with the public are attempting to achieve at the policing of public events, the potential prominence of this perception is reflective of the scale of the challenge for modern policing.

The Home Office, working with the National Police Chiefs Council and the College of Policing, should undertake a thorough review of the existing legislation, case law and guidance (including police tactics, technology and equipment) to provide officers with the tools necessary to effectively police protests and other public events.

Home Office Counting Rules: The Home Office Counting Rules (HOCR) are updated annually by the Home Office and set out how police forces must record crime⁴⁴. The HOCR were introduced in response to concerns that police forces were failing to accurately record crime to the detriment of victims and communities. The HOCR is designed to ensure that there is consistency of crime reporting across police forces, that victims of crime receive a proper service from the police, and to inform the public of the level of crime in their local communities⁴⁵.

The threshold for recording crimes is set with an intentionally low bar, with the HOCR requiring that incidents are recorded as a crime if the victim's report amounts to a crime and there is no evidence to the contrary⁴⁶. It is sufficient for the victim to merely believe that a crime has occurred for a crime to be recorded. However, for that recorded crime to be cancelled or 'no-crimed', it would require 'additional verifiable information' which definitively demonstrates that a crime did not occur⁴⁷. This imbalance provides a structural incentive towards incidents being recorded as a crime, rather than providing an incentive for crime recording to be objectively accurate.

Furthermore, the rules do not in many cases conform to the reality of crime and policing. For example, where a drunken fight occurs which may not have a distinct victim or suspect, there is the risk that the police may be required to record several crimes when the public might reasonably view it as only a single incident.

While the objectives of the HOCR may be laudable, the rules as set out in the 367-page guidance document impose a significant bureaucratic burden on police forces and officers⁴⁸. They also fail to provide an accurate picture of crime to the public, particularly given that for most offense types there are other more accurate sources, such as the Crime Survey of England and Wales.

A less burdensome system should be developed which provides sufficient assurance to victims of crime and a more realistic picture of crime to communities. By simplifying the HOCR considerably, efficiencies within

43. L. Tryl, 'The police must show they care more about tackling crime than being woke, CapX' (23rd August 2022), [link](#)

44. Home Office, Home Office Counting Rules (2022/23), [link](#)

45. Ibid

46. Ibid

47. Ibid

48. Ibid

policing could be created by reducing or eliminating the considerable bureaucratic industry which now exists in recording, enforcing and auditing what is an unnecessarily complex process.

The Home Office should simplify the Home Office Counting Rules to reduce the administrative burden they currently place on police forces and to provide a more realistic picture of crime to the public.

1.3 Reduce the excess time due to inefficiencies that police officers spend dealing with people with mental illness to free up officers to focus on fighting crime and disorder.

As the emergency service of first resort, the police are frequently called upon to respond to situations involving people with mental illness. A study with Greater Manchester Police estimated that ~10% of calls to the police concerned people with mental illnesses, while ~20% of frontline police time was spent resolving incidents involving people with mental illnesses⁴⁹. London's Metropolitan Police Service estimates that, between 2018 and 2020 alone, calls relating to mental health crises increased by 40%⁵⁰.

The 2018 inspection into police and mental health by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) found of those calls to the police which were flagged as having a mental health component: 66% related to a 'concern for safety'; 17% related to a 'suspicious incident', crime or anti-social behaviour; 5% related to a missing person; and 12% related to 'other' factors⁵¹.

That a suspect suffers from a mental illness must not preclude police from attending incidents or individuals being arrested and prosecuted where there is sufficient evidence to do so⁵². This includes instances where less serious crime, anti-social behaviour or disorderly conduct occurs - it is essential that in such circumstances victims and members of the public are not left feeling that such situations are beyond justice and resolution. The police must undertake as rigorous an approach to protecting the public, pursuing an investigation, and working with the Crown Prosecution Service to enable a prosecution to ensue in these instances as they would in any other case.

It is similarly vital that where individuals with a mental illness are victims of crime that the police conduct a thorough investigation with prosecutions ensuing where appropriate.

The legislation most used by frontline police officers when dealing with people with mental illness is section 136 of the Mental Health Act 1983⁵³. This legislation permits a police officer to take a person who they believe is suffering from a mental disorder and is not in a private dwelling, to a place of safety. The number of occasions that individuals were detained in England and Wales by the police using section 136 of the Mental Health Act 1983 increased by 28% in the five years from 2015/16 to 2020/21;

49. S. Langton, J. Bannister, M. Ellison, M. Salman Haleem, K. Krzemieniewska-Nandwani (2021), Policing and Mental ill-health: Using Big Data to Assess the Scale and Severity of, and the Frontline Resources Committed to, mental ill-health-related calls-for-service, *Policing: A Journal of Policy and Practice*, Vol 15 (3), [link](#)

50. Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime London, Policing and Crime: An evidence base for London, November 2021, [link](#)

51. Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services, Policing and Mental Health: Picking Up the Pieces, [link](#)

52. Crown Prosecution Service, Mental Health: Suspects and Defendants with Mental Health Conditions or Disorders (14 October 2019), [link](#)

53. Section 136 Mental Health Act 1983, [link](#)

from 26,328 occasions to 33,652 occasions⁵⁴.

Typically, once a person detained under section 136 of the Mental Health Act 1983, the police will take them to hospital to be assessed by a mental health professional. In most cases, individuals can be held by police for a period of up to 24 hours, often in Accident & Emergency waiting rooms, awaiting that assessment. Police are required to wait until that assessment takes place until they can return to other duties. Officers regularly report that they spend significant amounts of time doing so⁵⁵. There are even reports of officers spending multiple shifts waiting for an assessment to be made and in some cases the 24-hour time limit expiring before the awaited assessment has taken place⁵⁶.

It is inevitable that police officers will always be required to deal with incidents that involve people with mental illnesses. However, given the apparently vast amount of police time which is committed to situations where there has been no crime or disorder committed, it is necessary to identify how the right balance can be struck in order that police time can be used most efficiently.

The Home Office should review the amount of police officer time spent dealing with persons with mental illness which does not relate to preventing, responding to, or investigating crime and disorder; and consider potential solutions which would enable officers to get this balance right.

2.1 Commission a rapid independent review of initial police training.

Unlike many professions, the most difficult and important decisions in policing are often made by the most junior people. Like the US Marine Corp ‘Strategic Corporal’⁵⁷, the modern police officer must be the ‘Strategic Constable’⁵⁸. Police constables often operate in the middle of night, alone or with just one colleague to consult. In potentially violent or highly emotive situations, constables are expected, sometimes with only a few months operational experience, to use their discretion and make decisions that might have a lifelong impact on those they are dealing with.

The nature of the role of police constables requires their recruitment and training must be exceptional, with the highest standards achieved throughout. The initial training of police officers has been the subject of significant change over recent years. The principal changes are a result of the introduction of the Policing Education Qualifications Framework (PEQF) - a new training framework and curriculum introduced by the College of Policing⁵⁹. Through one of a number of different routes, new police officers are now required to develop operational policing skills at the same time as they obtain an academic policing qualification with a university.

New officers have been joining the police service under the PEQF since September 2018. Throughout its development and since its implementation, the PEQF has been dogged by controversy. Due to its

54. Home Office, Police powers and procedures: Other PACE powers, England and Wales, [link](#)

55. Mental Health Cop, ‘When does 136 end?’ (1st Feb 2022), [link](#)

56. Meetings with police chief officers, inspectors, sergeants & constables, July & August 2022

57. C. Krulak (1999), The Strategic Corporal: Leadership in the Three Block War, Marines Magazine, [link](#)

58. M. Wood, The Strategic Constable, Blue Line (27th January 2021), [link](#)

59. College of Policing, Policing education qualifications framework, [link](#)

potential impact on frontline policing, in an unprecedented step, the Chief Constable of Lincolnshire Police sought judicial review of the PEQF to delay the framework's implementation⁶⁰. Although ultimately unsuccessful, it is remarkable that a chief constable even attempted to take such action against the College of Policing.

As the number of officers joining the police service through the PEQF has increased, concerns over the framework have also increased. It is now a view held by many within policing that the implementation of the PEQF is having a potentially negative impact on forces' ability to serve the public. Discussions with leaders at various levels across policing identify concerns which include:

- **Officers being unable to meet the necessary standard required to serve the public effectively**, due to the inadequate quality of operational training, (particularly where forces have outsourced significant elements of initial recruit training).
- **Fewer officers being on duty to serve the public**, due to the amount of time officers are removed from their frontline policing duties to undertake academic study.
- **An increase in the number of officers resigning from the police**, due to the impact on officers' welfare having to undertake academic assignments during their days off from work.
- **Increasing costs to the public**, due to the partnership arrangements with universities who award the degree level qualification element of the training programme. Whether these considerable costs are genuinely adding value to British policing is in doubt. At a time of strained public finances, this alone may be reason to discontinue the university element of the training programmes.

A rapid independently chaired review of initial police training in England and Wales, to report within 3 months, should be commissioned. Given the role of the College of Policing in the development and implementation of the PEQF, they should not be involved in delivering the independent review.

2.2 End the police promotion 'closed shop'

There have been a series of efforts over the last decade to modernise the police service's approach to the recruitment, training and development of its workforce. There has been a particular focus on ending the 'closed shop' of promotions and expanding the pool of talent from which to select the most senior leaders in policing. This has included recruiting external entrants at superintendent and inspector ranks, allowing officers to re-join the police service at a higher rank if they have gained experience elsewhere, and allowing entrants from similar organisations (such as the UK Border Force) to become police chiefs.

60. Judicial review of PEQF dismissed as 'far too late', Police Professional (6th December 2019), [link](#)

“In that the selection of [police chiefs, they have] be an optimist. You have to be a leader, with a vision, with the capability to collaborate, with the ability to basically bring people to common ground, not just the public, not just the politicians, but as importantly, the men and women of the department who he is going to have to lead. And so going forward, the issue for that person is they’re going to have to be an extraordinary communicator, that they’re going to have to be able to deal with the media, deal with the public, deal with the labyrinth of political issues they have to deal with.”⁶¹

William J. Bratton CBE

Former Commissioner, New York Police Department
Former Chief of Police, Los Angeles Police Department

The efforts to bring talented individuals with leadership experience gained outside policing into the senior ranks of policing have almost entirely failed to have any impact on the pool of chief officers available to lead police forces. There remains a very small pool of potential candidates for most chief officer posts⁶². A significant number of chief officer vacancies continue to be predicted with forces increasingly unlikely to find sufficient substantively qualified chief officers to fill them⁶³. Despite this, a number of those who do successfully graduate from the College of Policing’s Strategic Command Course, the gateway course to chief officer posts in policing, fail to secure chief officer roles⁶⁴.

The shambolic implementation of the Direct Entry programmes by the College of Policing and police forces is a case study in organisational and sector-wide failure. Less than 5% of those appointed as superintendents in England and Wales between 2014 and 2018 were external appointments through the Direct Entry programme⁶⁵. Only 13 of the 43 police forces in England and Wales made external appointments at superintendent rank⁶⁶. Of the 33 officers recruited between 2014 and 2018 as a Direct Entry superintendent, only one has been appointed as a chief police officer. The College of Policing has now suspended the Direct Entry programmes to ‘consult with the police service’ on their future.

Having failed to successfully introduce what are, in reality, relatively minor changes to police leadership and workforce development, the College of Policing, and the police service more widely, has demonstrated that it is unable or unwilling to be a ‘self-reforming sector’ in terms of its own workforce. Rather than giving policing the option to modernise its approach to senior promotions, as has been the case over the last decade, government must now impose the changes that are necessary.

Police Regulations should be amended to mandate the end of the ‘closed shop’ of police promotions. All appointments to chief police officer, superintendent and inspector ranks should be open to external and re-joiner applicants. At least a quarter of all appointments to these ranks should be made to external or re-joiner applicants.

61. W.J Bratton at ‘What do we want from the next Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police’ event at Policy Exchange, 30th June 2022, [link](#)

62. Chief constable preparation, selection, tenure, retirement in the ‘New Landscape of Policing’, National Police Chiefs Council (June 2018), [link](#)

63. Ibid

64. Meetings with police chief officers, May 2022

65. College of Policing, Direct Entry Superintendent programme, Five year evaluation report 2014 – 2019, [link](#)

66. Ibid

2.3 Replace the College of Policing with a national police Leadership Academy.

The College of Policing was established in December 2012 as the professional body for policing in England and Wales⁶⁷. Its purpose is to develop the research and knowledge base of best practice in policing, to set standards across the police service (primarily through the development of Authorised Professional Practice) and to support the professional development of those in policing⁶⁸. The College of Policing is an operationally independent arms-length body of the Home Office.

With an annual budget of £71 million (2020/21), the College of Policing has, since its inception, received well over half a billion pounds of public funds to deliver its purpose⁶⁹. It is apparent from its own 'Fundamental Review', however, that the College of Policing has become synonymous to many within policing with a reduction in standards alongside a perceived lack of real-world relevance to the prevention of crime and disorder⁷⁰.

There is also a lack of synergy between the standards set by the College of Policing, mainly through its Authorised Professional Practice, and the inspection regime delivered by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS). The College of Policing's recent Fundamental Review stated that, "HMICFRS must be clearer that the College sets standards against which it inspects, rather than seeking to develop standards through inspection, or to undermine the standards that have been set"⁷¹. The HMICFRS meanwhile, referring to section 54 of the Police Act 1996, takes the view that it is a "matter for the judgment of the inspectors of constabulary what constitutes police efficiency and effectiveness"⁷². Having two separate organisations setting and inspecting against potentially different standards is wholly unsustainable and risks causing considerable inefficiencies within policing and confusion for both the public and police officers themselves. This must be resolved.

Given its catastrophic reputation within policing, its failure over the last decade to deliver workforce reform that has been both substantive and effective, and the desire to simplify and make more efficient the setting and inspection of standards the College of Policing should be replaced. The functions of the College of Policing concerning the setting of standards against which police forces should be inspected should be transferred to Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services. This will enable the setting and inspection of standards of professional practice, effectiveness and efficiency across policing to be undertaken by the same organisation.

The College of Policing's responsibility for developing leaders within the police service should be transferred to a new national police Leadership Academy. The challenges of 21st century policing are exceptional. Crime and disorder now take place across public, private and online realms – often interacting across two or more simultaneously. As the complexity of policing increases, the experience of the policing workforce has decreased,

67. College of Policing Limited, Annual Report and Accounts for the year ended 31 March 2021, [link](#)

68. College of Policing, About us, [link](#)

69. Companies House, Annual Accounts for the College of Policing (2013 – 2021), [link](#)

70. College of Policing (2020), Fundamental review of the College of Policing: Boosting professionalism, improving leadership and driving consistency, [link](#)

71. Ibid

72. Letter to the College of Policing from Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (10th February 2022), [link](#)

with a third of police officers now having less than three years operational experience. In providing a 24/7 service to the public, the police service operates at an exceptionally high 'operational tempo', making the dedication of time for officers to undertake development activities highly challenging.

Whilst the bravery and commitment of police officers is a cornerstone of British policing, it is impossible to escape the too regular reports of criminality and misconduct within the police service. All too often, the common thread in both misconduct cases and other failings within policing more broadly are failures of leadership. To meet effectively the challenges of modern policing, a new generation of exceptional police leaders is required at every level.

Policing is fundamentally an operational rather than purely intellectual discipline. Protecting the public from crime and disorder will always ultimately require men and women who are willing to do what most cannot or will not do - to run towards danger, to physically restrain the violent, in the rarest of cases to use lethal force to protect the public. In policing, as in other operational environments, leadership and operational command ability are synonymous. It is not possible to learn to be a credible leader in the classroom without also having operational leadership credibility.

Given the fragmented 43-force structure across England and Wales, it is unsurprising that there is an inconsistent approach to the development of leaders across the police service. A singular doctrine of police leadership is required to provide the police service with a common philosophy, language and clarity of purpose. Leaders at all levels of the police service should be trained and developed based upon this singular doctrine. Leadership development in policing cannot merely be the preserve of senior officers.

To this end, the next Prime Minister and their Home Secretary should establish a national police Leadership Academy with responsibility for the development of a singular police leadership doctrine. The police Leadership Academy should take responsibility, with forces, for the training and development of leadership skills across the police service of England and Wales. The police Leadership Academy should be established as a modern facility which over time develops a reputation on a par with the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst, the Defence Academy of the United Kingdom at Shrivenham or the Federal Bureau of Investigation Academy at Quantico, Virginia.

The College of Policing should be replaced. Its role in setting standards should be transferred to Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services. A national police Leadership Academy should be established with responsibility to develop and drive a singular doctrine of leadership into policing. The police Leadership Academy should be responsible, with forces, for the effective training and development of policing leaders across the country.

3.1 Use technology to focus policing on what matters to local people and integrate communities into choices over police tactics.

It is central to increasing the public's confidence in policing that police forces focus on resolving the crime and disorder that most concerns local people⁷³. Yet too often policing understands the concerns of the elites that often make up Independent Advisory Groups, Safer Neighbourhood Boards, or Ward Panels as being wholly representative of the views of an entire community. The tools now exist to better understand the concerns of a far greater proportion of local residents than might historically have been possible.

Local residents should be able to report crime and disorder issues to police in real-time using app-based technology. The issues might range from anti-social behaviour, such as aggressive begging and street drinking, through to more serious offences. This real time information would enable policing to better understand the crime and disorder problems occurring in local communities.

Using this type of technology, police forces could provide residents with information on crime and disorder trends at a hyper-local level directly to their mobile devices. Given a sense of community ownership is critical to the success of local policing, residents could then respond by prioritising which problems they would wish local officers to focus on⁷⁴.

Once the crime and disorder issues that most concern local people are identified, policing teams could also use app-based platforms to demonstrate how they are focusing on resolving those issues. Officers could, for example, provide regular updates on what activities they are undertaking and how much time they are dedicating to tackling the problems prioritised by the public. This feedback loop is essential in retaining and enhancing public confidence in and support for police action to combat crime and disorder. Members of the public could provide further feedback to articulate whether they believe the problems identified are being resolved.

Forces could also provide information on the range of tactical options available to deal with crime and disorder problems in order that local residents could articulate their support or otherwise for those tactics. Policing rightly operates more intensively in communities where there is more crime. However, in doing so it is essential that the public's support for the tactics used by officers is retained. By enabling the public to be better informed about local crime and disorder alongside the potential responses to it, technology could advance public support for policing tactics. This could be particularly useful for controversial policing tactics such as stop and search, the routine deployment of armed officers in communities, and the use of facial recognition technology in public places.

73. Gill et al (2014), Community-oriented policing to reduce crime, disorder and fear and increase satisfaction and legitimacy among citizens: a systematic review, *Journal of Experimental Criminology*, Vol 10, [link](#)

74. A. Myhill (2012), Community engagement in policing: Lessons from the literature, National Policing Improvement Agency, [link](#)

“A young black man growing up in London is 9 times more likely to be murdered than his white peers; taking the UK as a whole, the risk of a young black man being unlawfully killed is 24-fold that of his white contemporary. Pause and reflect on why we don’t hear that number frequently in debate on policing yet reports on the ‘disproportionality of stop and search’ seem to be released weekly. Why are we more concerned with criticising police operations than with understanding the reason for the tragic concentration of crime in a few communities? It is frankly immoral that we are obsessed with stop and search rather than concentrating on the true injustice faced by young black men.”⁷⁵

Sir Mark Rowley QPM

The next Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police Service

The wealth of data available from this sort of technology would also enable forces to deploy resources and tactics in a way which enabled the more effective targeting of crime and disorder problems. A number of forces already have established units (such as the Metropolitan Police’s Strategic Insights Unit and West Midlands Police’s Data Analytics Lab) which are capable of the type of sophisticated analysis which could put big data such as that created by these types of platforms to good effect. Every force should have access to such capabilities.

The funding for the roll out of this technology should be prioritised from within the existing Home Office £607 million dedicated to Police Technology Programmes⁷⁶.

The roll-out of app-based technology should be piloted across the country to enable greater involvement by local residents in policing tactics and decision-making. Forces should be held to account by publishing the data showing whether they are focusing on the issues that most concern local people.

3.2 Tackling online fraud should become a priority for law enforcement and government.

With an estimated 4.5 million offences in the year to March 2022, up 25% on the year to March 2020, nearly one in ten adults in England and Wales are believed to have been a victim of fraud last year⁷⁷. The vast majority of these offences are committed online. The agony of having your life savings taken by an online criminal gang can be as catastrophic as any other crime and the financial benefits accruing to organised crime groups from fraud are significant. Despite this, fraud continues to be treated as a low priority compared to other crimes with only 0.7 per cent of the policing workforce operating out of specialist fraud teams⁷⁸.

Without concerted effort by policymakers and law enforcement, the increasing proliferation of fraud will continue unabated. The first step should be for the Home Secretary to include fraud as a national threat as part of the Strategic Policing Requirement. Police forces and police and

75. M. Rowley, Foreword in S. Falkner (2021), Knife Crime in the Capital, Policy Exchange (p. 5), [link](#)

76. Home Office, Provisional Police Grant Report England & Wales 2022/23, [link](#)

77. Office for National Statistics, Crime in England and Wales: year ending March 2022, [link](#)

78. Police Foundation, Strategic Review of Policing (2022), [link](#)

crime commissioners would then be required to put in place plans at a force level and nationally to combat fraud.

Given the cross-border and organised nature of fraud offending, the response should be led primarily through the existing Regional Organised Crime Units staffed by specialist fraud investigators. To provide effective leadership to the threats from both fraud and wider serious and organised crime, the governance and leadership of Regional Organised Crime Units should sit with the National Crime Agency.

To stem the tide of offending and to ensure that increasing numbers of offenders are to be brought to justice, it is essential that these units are appropriately staffed with specialist investigators. This will require these units to be staffed well beyond the existing resourcing arrangements.

The Home Office should reorganise the response to the fraud epidemic. This must include fraud being represented in the Strategic Policing Requirement. Responsibility for investigating fraud should be transferred to appropriately resourced Regional Organised Crime Units under the leadership and governance of the National Crime Agency.

3.3 Recruit a corps of data scientists, hackers and programmers into policing.

In March 2022, in a frightening statement Sir Tom Winsor, the outgoing Chief Inspector of Constabulary said that, “online offenders can very easily reach distant and vulnerable victims. Most children are now more at risk in their own bedrooms than they are on the streets”⁷⁹. Last year, the Internet Watch Foundation investigated 361,000 reports of images of online child sex abuse - an increase of 21% on the year before⁸⁰. The National Crime Agency estimates that some 550,000 to 850,000 individuals in the UK pose ‘varying degrees of sexual risk to children’⁸¹.

The opportunities for the prevention and detection of crime provided by future advances in technology are likely to be significant. As connectivity, processing power and data volumes grow so will the potentially transformative effect of artificial intelligence, biotechnology and quantum computing on society and policing. Yet modern-day policing is neither geared to take advantage of future opportunities from technology nor to keep the public safe from current modern-day threats.

Less than 2% of all police officers in the UK are dedicated to the investigation of fraud or the sexual abuse of children online. The government’s recruitment of 20,000 more police officers through the Police Uplift Programme will fail to make any real contribution to tackling the online threat. Most of these 20,000 officers are uniformed police officers deployed to do traditional policing. British policing simply does not have the capability or the capacity to tackle online-based criminality. As a result, these offences are in essence almost entirely decriminalised.

Just as the detective branch was created 150 years ago to investigate more serious crimes, so a new breed of police specialist is required to tackle the threats we face online. Given the 6.3 million offences of

79. Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services, State of Policing - The Annual Assessment of Policing in England and Wales 2021, [link](#)

80. Internet Watch Foundation, Annual Report 2021, [link](#)

81. National Crime Agency, National Strategic Assessment of Serious and Organised Crime 2021, [link](#)

computer misuse and fraud that were committed last year alone, it will be necessary for an entire corps of officers to patrol our online world to track down the gangs and predators who lurk there.

This new breed will not come from the traditional recruiting grounds or have the usual backgrounds. They will need the technical skills and aptitude to tackle the predators that prowl our online lives. They will be coders, programmers and hackers. A detailed analysis will be required to establish the scale of resource required to effectively tackle the level of threat which modern Britain faces from online crime. The level of investment required and potential benefits which can be accrued from such programmes can be indicated through the government's existing Police Uplift Programme to recruit an additional 20,000 police officers. The Police Uplift Programme estimates that the economic benefits from the programme are £23.2 billion over 10 years with costs of £18.5 billion over the same period⁸². Over the next decade, if the threat from online crime is to be stemmed, a similar level of investment will be required.

Whilst traditional crime and disorder threats remain, the online world is a new dimension to our lives. The threats to individuals, the public and wider society from online child abusers, computer hackers and online fraudsters are huge and growing. Tackling these threats will require considerable financial investment if the government is to keep the public safe from these new and growing threats.

The Home Office should establish the scale of a new corps of data scientists, programmers and hackers to be recruited into policing to tackle the threat from online crime. This recruitment programme should be commenced at the earliest opportunity, in addition to the uniformed officers currently being recruited under the Government's existing Police Uplift Programme.

82. National Audit Office, Police Uplift Programme: Report by the Comptroller and Auditor General, [link](#)



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