

Home Affairs Committee

Oral evidence: [Work of the Metropolitan Police Service](#), HC 1240

Wednesday 20 April 2022

Ordered by the House of Commons to be published on 20 April 2022.

[Watch the meeting](#)

Members present: Dame Diana Johnson (Chair); Ms Diane Abbott; Carolyn Harris; Tim Loughton; Gary Sambrook; Matt Vickers.

Questions 1 - 62

Witnesses

I: Sir Stephen House QPM, Acting Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service; and Louise Rolfe OBE, Assistant Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service.

Examination of witnesses

Witnesses: Sir Stephen House QPM and Louise Rolfe OBE.

Q1 Chair: Good morning, everybody. This is the Home Affairs Select Committee. We are very pleased to have the Metropolitan Police with us today. Would the witnesses like to introduce themselves?

Sir Stephen House: Good morning. I am the temporary Commissioner.

Louisa Rolfe: I am an Assistant Commissioner from the Metropolitan Police and also the national lead for domestic abuse, violence and public protection in policing.

Q2 Chair: You are very welcome. We are very pleased to see you. The Committee has wanted to ask questions of the Metropolitan Police for some time in light of recent events. We fully acknowledge that you have a role in policing London but you obviously have a national role as well. We are also conscious that the Metropolitan Police is 25% of policing in the country. It is a very important part of the policing landscape. I will start. Sir Stephen, could you give an assessment of the current state of the Metropolitan Police and also where you think things have gone wrong in recent times?

Sir Stephen House: Thank you. I should probably add that, although I am temporary Commissioner, I am also the Deputy Commissioner or was until recently. I have been there for four years, so my knowledge is slightly more in depth than it might have sounded when I introduced myself.

The state of the Metropolitan Police Service? You have outlined the size and scale of the organisation and the challenges we face: 34,500 police officers; 43,000 staff; a population in London approaching 9 million, which we believe will be 10 million by 2025. It is a large organisation with many operational challenges and many internal challenges as well, dealing with a lot of change that is going on.

I will go through it briefly. We have seen some real gains in operational in recent years. In the last five years we have seen a lot of violent crime come down. The previous commissioner's number one priority was to reduce violent crime within London, and I think we have succeeded at that in a positive way. There is still much more to do but robbery is down significantly and knife crime—particularly for under 25 year-olds in London—is significantly down as well. We have seen sustained reduction in shootings in London, which was a real problem many years ago and is now much diminished, due to an awful lot of hard work.

We are focusing very heavily on gang activity and organised crime. We have led on county lines for the United Kingdom and are the co-ordinators for county lines. That has done an awful lot to break up organised crime gangs and to rescue people effectively involved in



HOUSE OF COMMONS

modern slavery from their slavery positions when they were being used as mules on the county lines.

We have faced a lot of challenges with public order in the last few years. I sometimes go back over the last five years and miss out massive issues that the Met has dealt with, but in 2017 we had a series of terrorist attacks. Since then, we have had public order related to Brexit and we have dealt through Covid as partners with the other emergency services and continued our role. We have had Black Lives Matter demonstrations and dealing with that, and I will come back to that when I look at the internal challenges. We have had an awful lot of public order with Extinction Rebellion over the last few years as well, so dealing with all of that.

We are going through massive technological change, because we are trying to keep up with the technical challenges that we are facing as an organisation. Our command and control system is badly in need of replacement and we need to take advantage of the technical opportunities that are out there.

We will continue going forward, under my temporary command, looking at violence as the number one priority to make sure that Londoners can be as safe as possible. I will also add our murder detection rate. Although homicides are still too high, they are slightly down. Our detection rate is in the high 90% and one of the highest in the United Kingdom. That does not necessarily prevent murders but it brings the certainty of justice to the offenders and some little measure of comfort to the families of the victims.

When I look internally, I see real challenges and I want to be very clear. I have heard over recent months and weeks, "Does the Met get it?" Does it get the issues around the loss of confidence in the public? Does it get the issues around Sarah Everard and the horrific crime by our serving officer Wayne Couzens and other serving officers who are currently facing sexual offence charges and some who have been in prison? For example, there are two officers in prison now for taking photographs at a murder scene. Does the Met get it? I am quite clear that the Met does get it. The right thinking people in the organisation are angry with the people who have let them down so badly, but the anger is not enough. We need to do something about this, and I am sure we will get into it in more detail.

There is a significant campaign within the organisation to deal with this completely unacceptable behaviour, to root it out and to exit those people who are exhibiting that behaviour from the organisation as far as possible and in the right way. If they need to go through the criminal courts, they will do it. If it is a misconduct matter, get rid of them as soon as we can.

Q3 **Chair:** Is it just a few people?

Sir Stephen House: No.



Q4 **Chair:** Is it the culture of the Met that is the problem?

Sir Stephen House: Language is really important in this and people have talked about a few bad apples. Quite clearly that is not the situation at all. It is not a few bad apples. You cannot simply say that Wayne Couzens and a couple of other people have done something wrong. I would suggest that that has been the spearhead of the problem, but there is a wider issue within the organisation, which we acknowledge and we are dealing with.

We have a situation where black communities in London have a lot less confidence in the Metropolitan Police Service than the general population. The general population's levels of confidence, according to the MOPAC surveys that are carried out every quarter, are that 76% of the public trust the Metropolitan Police Service. However, when you look at the black communities who answer those questions it drops down to mid-50%, which is clearly not acceptable. We need to do more about that and we are, and I can talk about that in more detail.

Confidence is a big issue for us. It is not enough to say it is a few bad apples. There is an issue there. We need to address an attitude within the organisation of misogyny and of too many officers being insensitive to issues of race, gender and sexual orientation. We need to get more sensitivity when we are dealing with that and we are working very hard with our officers.

As an example, every one of my colleagues on the senior leadership team is out regularly talking to roomfuls of officers and staff about the problems that we face, tackling those problems head on and challenging behaviours. The majority of the feedback from officers and staff is that they too are angry about it because they feel under siege by this. They feel as though everybody is criticising them and not giving credit for the decent job that the vast majority are doing.

This is why I say language is difficult. It is not a few bad apples but I am still very confident that the vast majority of officers and staff are coming to work to do the job that they swore they would do when they joined, and to treat people fairly and without fear or favour.

Q5 **Chair:** You are saying that the culture of the Metropolitan Police is the problem. The culture of the police in London is such that it has a problem with women; it has a problem with gay people. Is that what you are saying?

Sir Stephen House: I am not saying that. I think it is wrong to say there is one culture. As I said to start with, the Met is made up of 43,000 people. Many of them do different jobs in different units in different ways and they have different subcultures. What I am looking at are the values of the organisation. The values of the organisation are very clear to people inside the organisation. It is about being professional, having integrity, courage, compassion and treating people with respect. That is



the common standard that we demand from all of our officers and our staff. If they don't live up to that standard that is where we bring in misconduct or, indeed, criminal prosecution. I don't believe that the culture across the organisation is the wrong culture, but I believe that there are challenges to the way our officers perceive the public and how they go about their job, and we need to deal with that.

Q6 **Chair:** Do you think that there is a problem when there is misconduct that it is often perceived that officers are not disciplined, and officers are often actually promoted? Looking at some of the officers involved with what happened at Charing Cross, a number of those officers who were involved in some horrific misogynistic "banter", as it was called, and behaviours that were bullying and intimidating, are still in the force and have been promoted. What do you think the public thinks about that?

Sir Stephen House: I think that the public's view of that will be shaped very much by what the media perceive and say and by what outspoken people say about it. We need to do a better job. The Met has been accused of being very defensive and over-defensive. We need to be much more transparent but we also need to get our message out in a strong, fair and honest way.

To deal with what you are talking about—which is the Charing Cross situation and what was called Operation Hotton—it was investigated by the Independent Office for Police Conduct for a couple of years. The behaviour started in about 2016. It came to light as a result of one of the officers blowing the whistle and telling us about it. It was referred to the Independent Office for Police Conduct that carried out the investigation. I think it investigated something like 13 officers. A number of those officers—as you say, a smaller number—left the organisation, either resigned before they were sacked or were sacked from the organisation.

It is important to say, and I am grateful for the chance of saying it here, that the IOPC made the decisions about those officers and it said what they should face: that they should face gross misconduct, in which case their jobs were at risk. The panel that looked at them was headed by an independent, legally qualified chair who decided what happened to them, not a senior police officer. If they did not face gross misconduct, and that was an IOPC decision, if you face only misconduct you cannot lose your job. That is not one of the tariffs.

Q7 **Chair:** Do you think that the IOPC was right in its assessment?

Sir Stephen House: I believe that it was right, yes. We engaged very early on with the IOPC. We took on board all of its learning lessons very early. I think we have had some positive feedback from the IOPC about how we took on the learning from Hotton, and some of that is around the supervision levels and the briefings and the team dynamics. We are looking at that very closely in a number of areas of the organisation.

Q8 **Chair:** Sorry, I must interrupt there because, fundamentally, the kind of



HOUSE OF COMMONS

level of misogynistic banter—as it was described—is nothing to do with briefings or supervision, is it? That is to do with people in the police force who should not be in the police force with those views: misogynistic hateful views towards women and gay people, and racism.

Sir Stephen House: I agree entirely, yes. We can go on to talk about vetting. Quite clearly, the people who lost their jobs deserved to lose their jobs. The point I am trying to put across is that the IOPC investigated about 13 people and it found a number of those people had no case to answer. They had not done anything wrong. I will give you an example.

One of the officers who was investigated was simply named as, “Well, he was a supervisor. He should have known about this”. The IOPC looked at it and found that he did not know about it and it did not think he should have known about it either. He could not have known about it. The IOPC said, “Therefore, that officer has no case to answer. How can that officer lose his job? That is just not fair in a just society”.

Chair: In a supervisory role, okay. I think perhaps we need to move on. I just want to say to you, though, that the perception of the general public, I think, is more sadly going back to Jack Regan or Gene Hunt rather than the modern, professional police force that we want to see in London. I will move on to Diane Abbott. I know that she has a series of questions following on from mine.

Q9 **Ms Diane Abbott:** Mr House, it is true to say that you came from Scotland with a mixed reputation. There was the case of Lamara Bell who was left in a car for three days before the police found her and got her to hospital. There was the case of Sheku Bayoh who died on a pavement minutes after being detained by police in Kirkcaldy. There was a general concern about a force-wide policy on stop and search, which meant that tens of thousands of people were stopped without suspicion of crime, including hundreds of children. Do you think you are a better person now?

Sir Stephen House: I think that is a very partial view of my eight years in Scotland. Let me point out that I have been a police officer for 38 years. I worked for the Met from 2001 to 2008 before I went to Scotland, so I think my career needs to be looked at over those 38 years. The incidents you refer to, the Lamara Bell and John Yuill case on the M9 were a horrific incident for which I apologised and took responsibility for when it happened. It happened on my watch in an organisation that was going through massive change. Am I a better person? I think that everything you learn from makes you a better person, so, yes, I believe I am, but I also believe I am a very highly experienced police officer.

Q10 **Ms Diane Abbott:** I want to come back to the question of stop and search, but I want to clarify the MOPAC survey on what Londoners think of the Met Police. The figure you gave was 70-something?



HOUSE OF COMMONS

Sir Stephen House: It is 76% trust the Metropolitan Police Service but when you dial into black communities that figures drops I think to 56%.

Q11 **Ms Diane Abbott:** We have figures and maybe the figures are wrong.

Sir Stephen House: You will have 51%, I think.

Ms Diane Abbott: Yes.

Sir Stephen House: The reason I know that figure is because, when asked the question, "How good a job do you think your police are doing in your local area?" the answer is 51% think we are doing a good job.

Q12 **Ms Diane Abbott:** That is the lowest recorded level ever measured by the Public Attitude Survey. Are you looking at the reasons for this drop in confidence?

Sir Stephen House: Of course, yes, we are. It is good to clarify the figures. I think we need to take the figures as whole. The 76% is a measure of trust by all Londoners and it is lower in black communities. Interestingly, it is higher, 81%, among Asian respondents and we are looking at why that is the case as well. The 51% is about how good a job you think your police are doing in the local area. Our initial research tells us that that is a response from the public of, "We are not seeing enough police officers in our local area".

In recent months we have put 650 uniformed officers on to the streets because we have been growing as an organisation. We have put 500 into town centre teams and an extra 150 into safer neighbourhood teams working in local communities. We are incredibly fortunate. Despite all the difficulties we have had as an organisation, we are an organisation where the public want more visibility of policing not less. They want to see more police officers. We think the 51% is basically that they want to see more officers responding to local concerns.

Q13 **Ms Diane Abbott:** Do you think the fall in confidence is just about not seeing enough police on the streets and not to do with the series of incidents that have happened recently, including Charing Cross?

Sir Stephen House: I am sure it will be a mix. I don't think it will be one issue but if you take the 76%, the trust, and the 51%, the difference, in my view, is the local aspect of it. It is people locally saying, "We don't have enough police service locally", and that is what we are trying to respond to.

Q14 **Ms Diane Abbott:** As you have touched on, 50% of black Londoners agree that the police treat them fairly, which is 14 percentage points lower than the average. Do you have any idea about why black Londoners have this low opinion of the Metropolitan Police Service?

Sir Stephen House: I am pretty certain that the view would be based on their own personal experiences, experiences of their family members, their perceptions and understanding of stop and search in London. The



HOUSE OF COMMONS

fact that you are more likely to be stopped and searched if you are young black man than if you are a young white man. The fact that, as we know, black communities are victimised far more by violent crime than corresponding white communities. They are disadvantaged in many different ways and crime is one of those areas where discontent is shown.

I think that it has to be said that policing and the Metropolitan Police Service is not the only public institution where black communities feel less confident than white communities do. There is a commonality.

Q15 Ms Diane Abbott: Yes, but policing is the kind of cutting edge to a person. That is the point about policing.

Sir Stephen House: I agree with you on that. We are at the cutting edge. Of course, the huge difference is if the black communities are unhappy with the NHS, it is about their personal health and so on. With policing, it is often about the use of force or the perceived use of force on stop and search or the way we deal with black communities. I completely accept that it is a real issue for the Met to deal with. We are doing a huge amount to try to deal with that, both externally in the community and internally.

If I get the chance, I would like to talk to you about our recruitment programmes to get more black officers into the organisation and we are hitting our targets with those. I think that is an important thing to raise. We work increasingly closely with black communities. You will be aware that the Mayor of London launched an action plan a year ago. We have responded to that very positively and are working very hard to meet his requirements. I think he is content with the progress that we are making. He certainly told me that he is content with the progress that we are making on that action plan. Our outreach into black communities is much better than it has ever been before.

The work with our IAGs is better. Our work with community members in our encounter panels to look at not just stop and search but use of taser, use of searching, not just stop and search, is giving us good results. We are getting feedback from the encounter panels, who are community members, telling us and giving us advice on how to go about refreshing and improving our training and our practice.

We also bring community members, particularly from diverse communities, into Hendon to help us with our training, to talk to new recruits about the local communities that they are going to join. When they join those local communities, they have to carry out a task in partnership with community members to get them to understand the history and the roots of the communities, so that they know the sort of community they are policing, the problems that they face. That includes whether police have got it wrong in the past and where criticism is perfectly justified from the community.

Q16 Ms Diane Abbott: Child Q is clearly sub judice, subject to an inquiry, so



HOUSE OF COMMONS

we cannot ask you about that. However, there has been a series of cases that have led to some concern about the conduct of the Met: the Bibaa Henry and Nicole Smallman case where police officers took photographs of a dead woman's body.

Sir Stephen House: The officers are in prison now, yes.

Ms Diane Abbott: They are in prison. There was Charing Cross. Actually, recent WhatsApp messages discovered, was it the diplomatic protection? Yes, I think *The Daily Mirror* did that. Then there is Stephen Port, which seemed to show a very unfortunate attitude to the gay community.

Then local to me was the strip search of Dr Duff and the thing about the strip search of Dr Duff. This was certainly at a police station. She had not done anything, a perfectly innocent woman, but what she did do is hand a legal advice card to a 15 year-old who your officers were stopping and searching. She was taken back to the cell, she was tied up, and she was abused. It took her nine years to get an apology and some compensation from the Met. Why did it take you nine years to realise that it must be wrong taking an innocent woman off the street, tying her up and beating her?

Sir Stephen House: Let me say that the Met has apologised unreservedly around Child Q. I was going to refer to Child Q. I can write to you and I would rather do that with more detail on the case you are talking about, the doctor, because I do not have the details. I don't know if you have, Louisa.

However, one of the things I did want to say to this Committee was that I think we certainly have a very strong view that misconduct investigations—whether it dips into criminality or not—take too long. We have reinforced our professional standards units with I think 100 extra officers to try to speed things up but they do take too long. I have no doubt that if you had the director general of the IOPC here he would be saying that he does not have enough resources. That may well be the case, but we would absolutely welcome a speeding up of misconduct investigations and a simplification of the regulations.

The reality is that chief constables all around the UK face a situation where they have officers in their organisations that they do not want and they cannot get rid of. They either cannot get rid of them quickly enough or they cannot exit them from the organisation at all because we are not in control of some of those decisions any more. Anything that this Committee can do to look at those, or get that looked at and reviewed and simplified to speed it up, would be great.

Q17 **Chair:** I am sure that you know that we have produced a report on police misconduct very recently. One of the issues there was police officers who were not willing to come forward and explain what had happened. There were "no comment" interviews; all of that. There were issues of delay on both sides.



Sir Stephen House: Yes, and I think that a root and branch approach—I am not suggesting that it is not our problem. We need to solve that; frankly, we would like to have fewer officers coming forward. We don't want it but, while we have problems to deal with, every officer who is dealt with and exited from the organisation makes for a better organisation. It may be a challenge for public confidence that this happens but the more officers that we can exit, who don't have the right values and attitudes, the better. That adds strength to the vast majority of officers who don't want these people working alongside them. It damages them.

The feedback we have from officers in Charing Cross at the moment is that they feel as though they are under siege the whole time. That they are all being branded in the way of the disreputable, disgraceful and unacceptable behaviour of the officers who have exited the organisation. It is a stigma that sticks to them and we all have to cope with that. We all have to cope with what Wayne Couzens did and what all the other officers have done. It is a drag on the efforts of all the decent people, the vast majority of decent people in the organisation. I can talk a little bit about Child Q.

Q18 **Ms Diane Abbott:** That would be useful. What I would say about Dr Duff, nine years to get an apology—I know you said you don't know anything about it but I am a Stoke Newington MP and it was certainly conclusive, so I would have thought the people who briefed you might have foreseen that I would raise Dr Duff. However, if you can talk about Child Q.

Sir Stephen House: Yes. We have apologised completely for that. That search should not have happened in the way it happened. The two officers involved did not follow the guidance, did not follow their training. As you would therefore expect, we have reviewed the guidance and stiffened up the guidance and retrained officers in that BCU. We are also looking at providing retraining to all officers across the Met in that and we are changing the permissions required. You now need an inspector's authority to carry out that kind of search. I am quite confident that will mean we will be far more discriminatory when we use those very intrusive powers.

We have engaged very strongly with the local council in the area and we fully accept the recommendations from the safeguarding report that came out and we are working through those recommendations now. We have apologised and we have offered to meet the family. I am happy to make that offer again to explain what we have done to try to fix the situation.

Q19 **Ms Diane Abbott:** Finally, about stop and search: you came down from Scotland with a reputation for using stop and search too much. I have seen the figures of the numbers of people you stopped and searched and you have made the point in the past—reasonably enough—that you stop and search the same proportion of white people as you stop and search black people, but I am interested in: what do you find when you stop and



HOUSE OF COMMONS

search? What is the proportion of people you find who have something when you have stopped and searched them, whether it is the white people or the black people?

Sir Stephen House: We find something with about 29% of the people that we stop and search.

Ms Diane Abbott: All of them?

Sir Stephen House: Of the stop and searches we carry out, and we carry out about 20,000 a month, we find something. There is action taken for about 28%, 29% of the people we stop—it varies obviously.

Q20 **Ms Diane Abbott:** What I am asking you is: do you find more among the black people you stop and search than the other persons you are stopping and searching?

Sir Stephen House: I don't think I can answer that question directly. I can certainly write to you. I am not unprepared to answer it at all. To clarify, I have always been very clear that you are more likely to be stopped and searched as a young black man than you are as a young white man. We know that. It is about three times more likely.

The other thing I want to add is that you asked: what do you find? We find something like 400 weapons a month when we stop and search people, mainly knives of some sort or other and we know that in homicide knives are used in the vast majority of cases in London. The reason we do stop and search is to find weapons. This is genuine, if someone can tell me how we can recover 400 weapons from the streets of London every month in a way that is not as intrusive as a stop and search, we would love to look at it and embrace it.

We are constantly talking to the Home Office and others about whether there is a detection system that can detect metal as people walk past and so on. There are some but they are not very good, frankly, they are not very accurate. That is why we do stop and search, to recover weaponry.

Q21 **Chair:** You will write to the Committee with the figures?

Sir Stephen House: I am happy to, yes.

Q22 **Chair:** Can I check, what has happened to the officers you referred to in the case that you were just talking about?

Sir Stephen House: In Child Q?

Chair: Yes.

Sir Stephen House: The two officers involved were relatively young in service. That is still being looked at by the Independent Office for Police Conduct. At the moment, they are on operating duties away from the public.

Q23 **Matt Vickers:** The National Audit Office's recent report praised the



HOUSE OF COMMONS

Government's action on its officer uplift programme and said it is on course to recruit its planned 20,000 increase in officers by 2023. Are you confident that the Government will achieve their recruitment target of 20,000 by next year?

Sir Stephen House: I am slightly less confident than I was on that. We are experiencing issues in the Met and I think other large forces are starting to experience recruiting challenges. For background information, our growth target for next year is 1,800 officers. To do that and to stand still, in other words to replace those who leave and grow by 1,800, we need to recruit just over 4,000 officers in the next 12 months. That means we need about 40,000 applications in the next 12 months, because we take roughly one in 10 of the people who apply to us.

The issue we have is that we are seeing record levels of employment inside London and the job market has become much more challenging with very high starting salaries offered to people that are now competing. It is a competition for us. As a result of that, we have recently changed our policy and we have gone beyond London to recruit and we are now recruiting nationally. That will bring us greater recruiting. The disadvantage of that is it can affect our diversity of recruiting. We know that but, when we open up beyond the M25, we see a 70% increase in the number of people applying to us, because people want to come to work in the Metropolitan Police Service.

We are seeing very strong figures in terms of gender balance, so we are seeing more and more women joining the organisation, particularly under our direct entry detective programme. Over 50% are women joining under that scheme, and we are seeing encouraging figures in relation to black, Asian and minority ethnic heritage officers joining the organisation. We are hitting our targets on those at the moment.

The challenge that we have—and we are watching it very carefully—is when we open beyond the M25, as I say, diversity can drop and we are putting in extra effort to target that. We have 50 officers who work full-time in an outreach team working in London communities running events to try to recruit people, particularly from communities who do not normally want to join the Met; for instance, black communities and other diverse groups. A recent one was held in Woolwich last week and we had over 100 people turn up to listen about joining the Metropolitan Police Service. We are doing a lot on the recruiting.

I am nervous about the competition we are facing from other jobs. The job market is very hot at the moment.

Q24

Matt Vickers: I think it was the Chief of Corporate Services who said that you are getting less than half of the volume of applications that you need to get that uplift. Do you think it is anything to do with the concerns about the Met's culture and standards that might be affecting that?



Sir Stephen House: Obviously we have looked at that, and it is a matter for concern. The evidence I would give is, with what happened to Sarah Everard and other reports of misogyny in the organisation, you would expect that women would think, "I don't want to join an organisation like that", but we are seeing record numbers of women applying to join the Metropolitan Police Service. About 39% of our applications and our new recruits are women. That is higher than it has ever been. Across the organisation we are about 29% women officers and that is going up all the time.

Our research tells us that what can put women off joining the organisation is fear of violent confrontation. Hence, a big proportion of the officers joining under direct entry detectives where they come in straight away as detectives to do investigations are women. We do not think there is a confidence issue there. Louisa?

Louisa Rolfe: No, certainly women thrive in the Met. I am one of a number of women in very senior positions in the Met and we have a really healthy network of women across the organisation as well.

Going back to some of the questions the temporary Commissioner has answered already, you talked about police culture and there are many strengths in police culture. We are very alive to the current concerns and absolutely determined to root out the issues that we have talked about already.

Some of the real strengths that we see from our officers are our real commitment to public service. Many people, when we ask them about why they joined the Met—and we certainly test this in our recruitment process—say it is because they are very committed to working with communities in London and making a difference every day. They are committed to public service, and we ask extraordinary things and expect extraordinary things of police officers.

You will have seen them working 24/7 through the weekend with extraordinary events, protests, but our officers are often running towards danger when others are running in the other direction. We do ask exceptional things of our officers but we also have challenges that we are very alive to and addressing very actively.

Q25 **Matt Vickers:** We talked about the BME population. Home Office statistics at the end of March 2021 noted that of the 43 police forces, the Met had the highest proportion of BME officers at 16%. That is obviously still well out of line with the 40% of the London population. What is being done? What are we putting in place to ensure that the force is more representative of the community it serves?

Sir Stephen House: I am glad you put the positive point in there. It is good in comparison, but it is not good in comparison to the figure of the population in London and we want it to be more accurately reflective of that population.



HOUSE OF COMMONS

It is also worth noting that there are more black and Asian officers and mixed heritage officers in the Met than in every other force added together in the UK. We are talking bigger numbers here, but not big enough to represent London accurately. What are we doing about it? As I say, we have 50 officers—and they are very diverse officers—working full-time in an outreach team. They go into local communities and they do not go to the normal places.

I have spoken to a couple of members of the team. They go to large supermarkets in areas with diverse communities. They set up a stand and they talk to people about joining. The feedback that they get is that even people who come up to them to say, "Look, I have no interest in joining the Met" are at least pleased to see that we are asking and trying to encourage people. We are doing a lot in that area.

We have a focused advertising campaign—and my professional colleagues will not like me calling it an "advertising campaign", a marketing campaign—in the communities to try to attract people who would not normally think about it. One of the things we are doing at the moment, and I have seen it myself on television, are short video clips with officers and staff from diverse communities who have been in the organisation for a few years talking openly with their families about the difficulties that they face.

We must be sensitive to the fact that, if you are a black man or woman in London and you make the decision to join the Metropolitan Police Service, you must explain that decision to people in your communities, sometimes to your family who think you are making a mistake, certainly to your community and to your friends, who may think you are making a mistake or even betraying your community. It is a brave decision to take, so we have these officers and staff talking to camera about why they are doing it and the reason they are doing it—as Louisa has just said, and I will not repeat what Louisa has said. We are doing focused marketing there.

We are offering extra awareness to candidates from Asian and black communities and other diverse communities applying to join. The reason we do that is because we know that disproportionately these communities will fail vetting. This is a vicious circle because it is the trust issue. There is less trust in those communities. When they are asked questions by us on vetting they do not always want to tell us everything. The irony is what they often leave out is not important, but the fact that they have not told us becomes more important.

Therefore, we have set up a process that the HMI has looked at recently to make sure that we do not knock out people from diverse communities through an over-focus on vetting. We basically explain to them as they come in, "Look, we are going to ask you lots of questions about vetting" and they are far more intrusive than people imagine, I think from reading the media, far more intrusive, "You need to answer them honestly and tell us and if you tell us honestly we can consider anything". We are doing



that. We are looking at candidates in a situation where English was not their first language, to make sure that they understand the processes and can help them through. Once people are in from diverse communities, they are each given a buddy, an established officer who can assist them in the first few years. We have put a chief inspector into every one of our local units to keep an eye on candidates who join from diverse communities to try to spot any problems early and to make sure that they get extra assistance if they need it to keep them inside the organisation.

Interestingly, there was a recent survey carried out about our retention rates among black, Asian and mixed heritage officers and our retention rates compare quite favourably with other forces, even smaller forces. When you bear in mind the volume that we are dealing with that is quite a positive sign, the extra effort that we are putting in to retain these officers. There is no point in us bringing in more officers from black communities if they go out very quickly, so we must work hard to retain them in what can sometimes be a difficult environment.

As an example, they found it very difficult during the Black Lives Matter demonstrations. We know that black and Asian officers were targeted by demonstrators, both black and white demonstrators, as traitors and they found that very difficult and needed extra support. They do need extra support. It must be acknowledged that anyone joining the Metropolitan Police Service from a black community is making a very brave decision, but they are making a huge contribution to public safety in London if they do so.

Q26 Matt Vickers: Last but not least from me on recruitment: when inspecting the Met's counter-corruption procedures, HMI found they were fundamentally flawed and noted that in the past two years the Met has recruited people with criminal connections and more than 100 people who have committed offences. What is being done to ensure that we have adequate vetting in place?

Sir Stephen House: It was a hard-hitting HMI report. There is no doubt about that. Frankly, I found it professionally very disappointing, some of the things that were found. The thing that you have focused on refers back to what I talked about before. For the people who have joined with criminal convictions, a decision has been taken on them at a very senior level by a group of people headed up by a commander or a deputy assistant commissioner, representatives from human resources, community representatives, representatives from our Black Police Association, to look at what the conviction is, when it happened and putting it into context.

If this was a conviction when they were 17 or 18 and they are now 25, and nothing has happened in between, and it was for theft or criminal damage and there is an explanation for it, sometimes we will take a view that we think this person deserves a second chance. We will not deny them a career in the Metropolitan Police. I personally believe that is the



HOUSE OF COMMONS

right thing to do. I think if you turn around and say, "Right, anyone with any conviction, it does not matter what it is, you cannot get into the Metropolitan Police Service" I do not think that is the right approach and people deserve a redemptive opportunity. That is what that is about.

We are very careful about who we are letting in. As I say, if I am asked I can get to it, but the vetting process is very intrusive, I believe. We have made it more intrusive. Vetting cannot catch everybody. It cannot stop bad people getting into the organisation, but it is a useful barrier to knock out people that we do not want. It only works if it is done properly, if it is carried out throughout people's service because people change and circumstances change, and it also only works if our systems effectively identify those people who need looking at, and we are working on that as well.

Q27 Matt Vickers: Next time HMIC comes to do that inspection will we expect a different result?

Sir Stephen House: You will see a very different result. We have a very senior officer working on this full-time going through all the recommendations to fix everything that they identified. Some of them are easily fixable and have been already fixed. One of them is much more difficult, which is a recommendation that we invest in technology to identify patterns of behaviour that are of concern. This would probably be tens of millions of pounds of computer and software that would sit above our systems and would look at internal e-mails for key words that were alarming, would check use of Metropolitan Police mobile phones that we have issued to our officers to check for the same thing, would look at the amount of overtime that is being worked.

If someone is working a lot of overtime, do they have a financial pressure on them? Is there an issue there? It would look at sickness records, is there a problem there? It would look at misconduct and bring together huge amounts of information. Are they in a police station, for example, when they are not on duty and why? Are they doing a lot of photocopying or a lot of use of a computer when they are off duty and, if so, why? What is going on there? It is a very sophisticated tool, it will cost a lot of money to bring in, but we need to embrace technology and use it far more.

We are very good and the HMI said this, when we identify bad and unacceptable behaviour, about investigating it and dealing with it. Our counter-corruption investigators are the best in the world, in my view. Our problem is spotting it early enough to deal with it.

Chair: Okay, I am going to move on to Gary Sambrook.

Q28 Gary Sambrook: In February the Home Secretary said to this Committee, "We have to really pull back the layers, not just in terms of attitudes but by asking what that culture is. What is that culture that permeates policing, and what are we going to do, collectively, to change



that?" Can you outline what you think a good workplace culture encompasses and to what extent the Met's culture reflects this and how far it has to go, bearing in mind what you said earlier about there is no one single culture in the Met, given that you have over 40,000 employees?

You did say there were lots of subcultures within the Met, so maybe try to outline what you think each of those subcultures are, how many there are, whether there is any particular workflow or streams or areas of work or job roles that you think sit within those different subcultures?

Sir Stephen House: That is a wide-ranging question. I will have a go at some of it and I will ask Louisa if it is okay to step in also. To reiterate, I think there is one set of values for the Metropolitan Police Service, which we instil from the start. Louisa talked about new recruits. I see on day two—and I have done for the last six months and I will continue to do so—every new recruit and talk to them about the standards and the values of the organisation and what we expect from them, so that we know that they have been told very early on.

That permeates through their training, so there is not just one input, "Right, this is how we expect you to behave." They will still swear an oath to Her Majesty—which contains everything that you would expect—to act without fear or favour, to treat people properly according to their human rights, but it is threaded through all their training. It is threaded through all our training for our sergeants and inspectors and beyond, and it is threaded through all our policies.

We have established a rebuilding trust taskforce inside the organisation, which is looking at implementing a wide range of changes to the way we operate. To focus in on one subculture, and I will do it and again I would repeat the vast majority of the officers operating in this unit do a good job, come to work to do a good job and, frankly, put their lives on the line to protect people, but if you look at the Parliamentary and Diplomatic Protection unit this is where Wayne Couzens was working, he did not join it directly but that is where he ended up and carried out his horrific crimes, we are looking at that, as you would expect, in a root and branch manner, and we are looking at the way they work.

I know possibly my earlier answer did not hit the mark, but in terms of culture is it about supervision? It is not about that, but supervisors can set tone and attitudes and deal with very low-level, poor behaviour, early on and nip it in the bud. That is what we expect supervisors to do.

Some of the things that we found in our review of Parliamentary and Diplomatic Protection were that the supervisory levels are too low, that the mode of working is that they do not see their supervisors enough and the supervisors do not know the officers well enough, simply because there are not enough of them. We must deal with specific issues like that.



HOUSE OF COMMONS

As you know, Cressida Dick brought in Dame Louise Casey, so that was us bringing her in early on as a result of everything that we had found, to do a complete review of the culture of the organisation and she is working hard to do that. She started in January and we expect her to finish towards the end of the calendar year, but she is not waiting until then. She is starting to feed back results to us in the next few weeks, so that we can start acting on what she finds. We also have Dame Elish Angiolini looking at us as a result of the Home Secretary's requirement, which also is very welcome.

We are working hand-in-glove with these two inquiries. I have already disclosed 3,500 documents to the Dame Elish Angiolini inquiry and will continue to meet any requirements that she has. Louisa, can I ask you to step in? I will try to regather my thoughts. It is a wide-ranging question.

Louisa Rolfe: If you have had an opportunity to read Sir Tom Winsor's annual "State of Policing" report there are some good points in there about policing, and as you said at the beginning the Met is a quarter of policing in England and Wales. Sir Tom draws attention to a couple of things about his observations of police culture, that there is a strong, pragmatic can-do attitude across rank-and-file police officers.

Police officers have extraordinary powers and exceptional discretion in the way that they apply those powers. Many work autonomously day to day or in small groups and, therefore, they are not directed every moment of their working day by senior officers. Therefore, we should expect higher standards of behaviour and we are clear in the Met about our expectations of values and ethics.

There are, as I said, some strong and commendable things about police culture. It is also worth remembering that officers are exposed to things that would shock most of us every day. They see extreme deprivation, awful child abuse, they attend the scenes of homicides, and they often run towards danger when others are moving in the opposite direction. The national wellbeing survey of police officers showed that 65% of officers are exposed to trauma in a year, and these things take their toll on people.

The qualities required to be a good police officer are many. They include personal bravery, intelligence, physical fitness, maturity, sound judgment, the ability to assess a situation very quickly, compassion—empathy is important—self-control, integrity, honesty, patience and perseverance. It is an exceptional role, and many people thrive and do it incredibly well.

The vast majority of police officers are incredibly committed public servants, so there are some real strengths in police culture. Also, we recognise that officers who are dealing with difficult things every day exposed to extreme events and trauma, we need to be careful that that does not develop in people a bias. If they are constantly dealing with homicides that are related to gang culture and violence between young



HOUSE OF COMMONS

black men, that they do not become very focused on young black men, that the answer is targeting young black men to address violence. We are alive to that and our training involves work on understanding bias.

We mentioned Child Q earlier. There is a wealth of research about the adultification of black children. We are alive to that and we are building that into our training, so that officers are consciously aware of issues and thinking about and understanding our history in England and Wales as well, the history of our relationship with our black community so that they understand that when they have an interaction someone's view of police might be shaped by parents' and grandparents' experiences of policing. We look back on our history and there are things that we think of and think that we would not want to police in that way now. We absolutely do not, and we must be conscious of that.

We expect a lot of our police officers, quite rightly, because of the powers that we have, but also there is so much of police work that is not always visible to the public. The brilliant results we have had in tackling serious organised crime over the last year, in tackling violence, the work we do with partners to reduce antisocial behaviour, the work we do every day to tackle things such as extreme child pornography on the internet, with a number of agencies nationally, complex investigations into money laundering and fraud, that you will not always see and are not always visible to the public, for good reason.

When we have these good conversations with our officers about expectations of ethics and values they will often say, "Are you doing enough to celebrate the hard work we do every day?" and we try to balance that, because it is not always a good news story to talk about the great things that happen. A lot of our conversations with our people are about being very balanced, being very open about what needs to improve, but celebrating the great things.

Chair: I am conscious that you must leave by 11.15 am so Gary, you have some further questions you want to ask.

Q29 **Gary Sambrook:** Yes, on women and young girls. Deputy Chief Constable Maggie Blyth has called for a callout culture. Can you go some way to describe how that callout culture is being instilled within the Met?

Louisa Rolfe: There are a number of things that we are doing. As Steve has said, it is important that our supervisors feel empowered and supported to tackle poor behaviour and set clear standards. I have been in policing more than 30 years. I remember the brilliant sergeants and inspectors that I worked for as a young officer, who would not tolerate poor behaviour, who I would have walked over broken glass for.

We look to support our people in our selection for promotion and our training, but also one of the things that we are doing with our Network of Women, but also this is not just about sexism and misogyny, we want an organisation that is anti-misogyny, actively anti-racism, actively anti-



HOUSE OF COMMONS

discrimination, so celebrating people who call it out and supporting them, so a strong whistleblowing policy. With our Network of Women one of the things that we have been doing and are now rolling out across the Met, we are currently doing it with my team in firearms and armed policing, is Operation Signa where we have an ability for people to make an audio-recording of their experiences. They can do it anonymously but we can then play it back and it is incredibly powerful for colleagues to hear.

Nothing frustrates me more as somebody who is determined to root out this, with people outside of policing saying, "Not all men" or inside policing saying, "Not all police officers" because we need to recognise and be alive to the fact that it might be our colleague, it might be somebody else.

It is ensuring that the voices of women in the organisation are amplified and if they are not able to voice a concern openly that we give them an ability to do it. We have a good approach to confidential reporting, but this adds to that and it provides a powerful playback to our workforce about the experiences of women. I work closely with Maggie and am supportive of the work that she is doing, and we at the Met have been absolutely determined to ensure that we support her work actively and everything that she is leading nationally is replicated in the Met.

Sir Stephen House: Can I also mention HeForShe? It adds to what Louisa has just been saying. HeForShe, as you are probably well aware, is a UN campaign that basically says misogyny and mistreatment of women is a problem for men to deal with. Men can fix this by altering their behaviour in a positive way.

The Met has embraced this. We now have something like 1,000 HeForShe champions who work very closely across the organisation with our Network of Women to identify areas where men can be more aware of issues, more aware of their own behaviour, help challenge each other to behave more appropriately towards women in the organisation and I think that working hand-in-glove with the Network of Women is starting to turn the tide in appreciation and awareness among officers that we can all do something about misogyny and racism within the organisation.

Q30 **Gary Sambrook:** A final question from me is that Sir Michael Barber's strategic review proposed a licence to practice and for it to be administered by the College of Policing and then have it revalidated every five years. Do you think this is something that you would support? If not, why not? If yes, how do you think that licence will be able to improve standards in policing?

Sir Stephen House: We will both have a bite at this. I would not be closed to the idea. We have seen in recent years an increasing push to professionalise the police service, so a new recruitment process basically means you come into the organisation in one of two ways, very shortly. One would be to come in as a degree apprentice and you undertake a degree course in policing, or you come in holding a degree. Effectively,



HOUSE OF COMMONS

that would mean in a certain number of years everybody inside the organisation would either have a degree in policing or would be studying towards a degree in policing.

This is not to say that people inside the organisation who do not have a degree are not good police officers. What it means is that, if they are a good police officer, if you put what they do on a daily basis in front of an academic panel, they would probably say, "The skills you have and the knowledge you have adds up to a degree anyway". However, we are not requiring everybody to go through a degree. There is a professionalisation of the way that people join the organisation.

The college has done much with policing practice to rationalise and homogenise how things are done across England and Wales and that is to be welcomed. There is a debate to be had about the licence to practice. I would not be opposed to it. I think every now and again checking that somebody is still up to snuff, doing things in the way that they should, is aware of recent legal developments, because the law changes all the time, is not a bad thing to do.

We expect it from doctors. We may expect it from nurses—I am sorry, I do not know—but we certainly expect doctors to know what the recent developments are and what medication and so on, and what treatments. We should expect the same of police officers, and there is constant change. It may well be that something like that could be looked at. I would not be opposed to it at all.

Louisa Rolfe: The only thing that I would add is we want to ensure that it adds value for our workforce, and that it does not become a bureaucratic exercise. I am sure that having worked with the college on many things that we could do this in a way that would recognise that our police officers every day of the year undertake training, continuous professional development, keep themselves up to speed with legislation, build new skills, and to give them proper credit for that under a licence to practice could be a positive thing.

Q31 **Tim Loughton:** Apologies for missing the beginning of the session. I will use a scattergun approach to various questions. Sir Stephen, on the recruitment and retention front, what proportion of your officers above chief inspector level are from the BME community?

Sir Stephen House: Sorry, I am not entirely sure. It may be in here. I do not have the figure at the front of my head, but if it is okay, I could write to you. It is an improving picture, I know that. The one thing I am very confident in saying, having looked at it, is our selection processes show no discrimination towards black or Asian minority ethnic candidates at all inside the organisation. When black or Asian candidates put themselves forward they do as well as, if not better, than white competitors so it is improving.



HOUSE OF COMMONS

You will be aware we have some direct entry processes, and some fast-track processes to get people through the ranks quicker. One of the big advantages in my view of policing in the UK is you join at a more or less single-entry point as constable, and you work your way through the ranks. That of course means that in years gone by when our recruiting of black and Asian candidates was very low, it is going to take time for them to get through the ranks. We have not seen the progression that we wanted to see, there is no doubt about that, but we are starting to see greater progression and we are supporting that with a couple of projects within the Met to give our black and Asian candidates for promotion extra support.

In terms of sergeant, around 11.4% of our sergeants are from black or Asian backgrounds. To give you a full answer, when you look at black officers only it is 2.6%, so that is low, and it is lower than the percentage of black officers in the organisation.

Q32 Tim Loughton: Okay. It is quite an important figure, and the trouble is I have been on this Committee for nine years and the answer you have just given me is virtually identical to an answer I had from your predecessors nine years ago. It is welcome that the proportion of new officers who are from the BME community has risen, but the real problem within the police force generally—not just the Met, but as you have said you have more black officers than the rest of the police force put together—is they do not progress. More of them disproportionately are subject to disciplinary proceedings, and too few make it through to the higher ranks.

I have just asked about how many are at chief inspector level and above and you have given me a figure for sergeants, which is way below the 16% representation within the police force. Do you acknowledge that it still is a major problem that you do not have enough black officers who make it through to higher levels, senior levels within the police force and stay there? Is that not still a major problem?

Sir Stephen House: It is a problem, but I want to put some context on it. In the Met at the moment, we have one assistant commissioner from an Asian background and that is out of five, and we have three commanders and that is out of about 16 or 18 commanders, who are either black or Asian. We are seeing progress in the most senior ranks.

On the most recent PC to inspector fast-track, where you come in as a police constable but you get fast-tracked through to inspector, 11% of the people on that fast-track are from black or Asian minority groupings, so 11% is a positive and strong figure. We are putting work into this. It is thoughtful work, it will have results, but I agree that it is still a problem that we need to see more black and Asian senior officers in the organisation.

Q33 Tim Loughton: You said you are concerned that you are not going to make your recruitment figures this year, because you have a one in 10



hit rate, roughly. What was the hit rate 10 or 20 years ago?

Sir Stephen House: I think it has been very stable. In my recollection it has been around that for quite some while. I do not think it has become more challenging. We are asking more from candidates than we used to 10 or 20 years ago. I think back to my recruitment process, and it bears no resemblance to the recruitment process that we ask people to go through now.

Q34 **Tim Loughton:** So you are much fussier, for the sake of a better word, in the people that you recruit these days?

Sir Stephen House: I think so, yes.

Q35 **Tim Loughton:** Why do you still have so many high-profile cases of, for want of a better phrase, bad apples? To go back to Child Q just now, you put that down to young in-service officers who had not been following their training. Surely, if your recruitment is so good and your training is fit-for-purpose, those most recently trained officers should be the best at following their training. What went wrong in a case like that? Is your training not fit-for-purpose, or is your recruitment still not fit-for-purpose?

Sir Stephen House: It is a rather binary position that you put me in. Our training is good. Our vetting and our recruitment are also positive and would hold up well in comparison to other public sectors. I am not using it as camouflage, it is being dealt with by the IOPC, which will tell you that the officers erred, potentially, and the IOPC will tell us in what way they erred. We have apologised for it, so we have acknowledged that we think that the officers did not follow their training and their guidance. I cannot tell you exactly why they did not.

Part of the reason, of course, is that the kind of searches that took place in the Child Q search are very few and far between. It was not a stop and search. It was a very intrusive and inappropriate search. It does not happen very often. I would be surprised if these officers had done it before. In other words, it is relatively rare in their service. They have dealt with something that they do not come across very often.

Q36 **Tim Loughton:** I do not want to generalise, but it was a pretty horrific case and we have heard a number of other pretty horrific cases. My concern is in terms of your recruitment. You have said that the recruitment market is difficult, and we acknowledge that the employment market is difficult, not least in London.

Other public services who have featured highly during the pandemic—for example the NHS—have managed to recruit a lot of people who have seen a public service excel during a time of crisis and want to be part of it. A lot of people who volunteered or have changed jobs because they were on furlough to help with vaccinations have now become full-time NHS members. Why has the same not been true for police, who also had a key public-facing role to play during the pandemic? Why can the NHS



recruit in London, but the police cannot?

Sir Stephen House: I do not know about the NHS recruitment, but I do want to challenge what you have just said. Frankly, I do not want to be confrontational, but you seem to be painting a picture that the NHS were brilliant throughout the pandemic, which we all acknowledge, and the police were not.

Q37 **Tim Loughton:** I have not said that at all.

Sir Stephen House: Well, sorry, that is what I got from you.

Q38 **Tim Loughton:** I have tried to contrast two public-facing, public bodies that had a major role to play during the pandemic. I have not said whether the police acquitted themselves well or not and I have not said that about the NHS. What I am saying is that as we come to the end of the pandemic, the NHS has managed to recruit a lot of people in the same economic circumstances where the police are apparently struggling. Why?

Sir Stephen House: One reason would be the NHS people have had big pay rises and the police have not.

Q39 **Tim Loughton:** So the NHS is being paid more on a comparable level than the police?

Sir Stephen House: I do not know if they are being paid more, but if you talk to officers, particularly the federated ranks, they will tell you that because of various pay freezes and low increases in salary over the last few years, their pay has degraded and the fear, of course, going forward on recruitment is that with the cost of living going up and inflation at the rate it is at the moment the pay rise—

Q40 **Tim Loughton:** That affects police officers and nurses alike. Are you saying that a nurse at entry level in London is paid more than a police constable?

Sir Stephen House: No, I am not saying that. I do not know that.

Q41 **Tim Loughton:** So why have you just made the claim that you did?

Sir Stephen House: What I am saying is that the NHS staff have had pay rises in the last few years, which police officers have not had.

Q42 **Tim Loughton:** However, the police are still getting paid more at a comparable level than nurses?

Sir Stephen House: I do not know. I am saying that I do not know what nurses are being paid.

Q43 **Tim Loughton:** With respect, that claim does not hold any water. If a police officer is still paid more than a nurse, then you cannot have a disincentive.



HOUSE OF COMMONS

Sir Stephen House: Someone joining makes a determination on, "That is the job that I am being asked to do and that is the money". If they do not think the money is enough and they do not see pay increases they may decide that they may be being paid more than some other job, but they still do not want to do it because it is not enough of a remuneration.

Q44 **Tim Loughton:** Do you think that pay levels within the police are an active disincentive for recruitment at the moment, whereas it is not in the NHS?

Sir Stephen House: I cannot make any comment about the NHS really. I do not know. I know they have had pay rises in recent years that police officers have not had, but I do know that there is increasing concern in policing about levels of remuneration.

Q45 **Tim Loughton:** Can I turn to an operational level? Do you think you have enough powers to deal with demonstrators from Extinction Rebellion and the spin-off organisations?

Sir Stephen House: I would particularly focus on that in my answer in relation to the phrase of "lock-ons" which people are probably familiar with, gluing on or locking on arms within a metal canister or tube, locking themselves around vehicle axles, throwing themselves—as we have seen just last week in XR—to the top of petrol tankers and so on. That is an area where we would be interested in more powers to deal with it, particularly around trying to prevent these things happening.

The reason why I say that is, while XR's demonstrations have been almost 100% peaceful, they have not been 100% lawful. They cause a significant amount of disruption to London life and a significant amount of unhappiness among the general public in London. It is not that people disagree with the cause, but they disagree with the disruption that is being caused.

Much of the disruption is down to people gluing themselves on to various buildings, to the pavement, to each other, or using lock-ons. My officers have asked me, and I agree with them, if we could have more powers to deal with people locking on. These would in preference be preventative, in other words it would be back to stop and search, to give us the power to stop and search, for example, in the vicinity of known disruption stop and search people who we believe may be carrying equipment used to lock on. If we could prevent them doing that, we would save hours and hours of disruption and thousands of officer hours, which could be better spent doing other things.

Q46 **Tim Loughton:** Do you not have that power now? You cannot stop people, you have intelligence that there are going to be people gluing themselves to London Bridge, or whatever, but you do not have the power now to do stop and search and search for glue or locks and chains?

Sir Stephen House: It is not a very clear power that we have at the moment to do that, and we would like clarity on that.



Q47 **Tim Loughton:** Would the policing Bill change that?

Sir Stephen House: I believe there are some measures in the policing Bill to give us extra powers on stop and search in relation to lock-on equipment.

Q48 **Tim Loughton:** You have just described some of the recent demonstrations as peaceful demonstrations. Do you regard those Extinction Rebellion spin-off demonstrators who completely disrupt the traffic, who block emergency service vehicles, who prevent people from going about their daily business, as peaceful?

Sir Stephen House: Insomuch as they are not violent, there is no violence involved.

Q49 **Tim Loughton:** Violence can be described in different ways. Simply because they are not punching people in the face it does not mean that the consequences of what they are doing is not violent.

Sir Stephen House: We talk in terms of disruption, effectively. We have been very clear, I believe, and have gone out of our way to be clear, that there is a difference between peaceful and lawful. We think that most of the demonstrations are peaceful; they are non-violent. They are disruptive and they are unlawful, and we have dealt with them as such.

In the last week we arrested a couple of hundred, but in previous XRs we have arrested 2,000 people in one week, which is the most the Met has ever arrested in one event in that period. We have dealt robustly with these people, in my view, but we need to be clear that what they are doing, while peaceful and not causing violence to officers or other members of the public, is still highly disruptive to London, the economics of London and the daily lives of Londoners, who want to get on with their lives. We do deal with it in a robust manner.

Q50 **Tim Loughton:** My final question, and a completely different subject, you made reference earlier to problems with getting rid of duff officers and the Chair referred to a report that we produced on the IOPC also. Can you elaborate on why it is hard to get rid of those bad apples, and what needs to change to take swifter preventative action before they cause any more trouble?

Sir Stephen House: One of the classic problems for us is that, if an officer has carried out an action that looks like misconduct but also may be criminal, it will then get referred to the CPS. While this is not a criticism in any way, shape or form of the CPS, that means there are parallels going on. The investigations can go on in parallel, sometimes.

Sometimes it is easier if the criminal investigation goes first and the CPS makes its decision, and if it then prosecutes we will follow on with the misconduct process. If the CPS does not prosecute and decides that there is not enough evidence, we will then look at misconduct, because it is a lower bar, to see if we can go ahead with misconduct. Sometimes those



HOUSE OF COMMONS

two get in the way and there are times when probably out of frustration I think to myself I would rather just sack this person now than wait 18 months for them to go to court, possibly get found not guilty and then we have to go through the misconduct process. Some more clarification on that would be easier.

Q51 Tim Loughton: Clarification from where?

Sir Stephen House: Clarification is not the right word. What I would like is a simplification and possibly a faster route to get people out and an acceptance that this person may have broken the law. I am not talking about the more serious issues but some minor infraction of the criminal law. They are not going to get a custodial sentence. They are likely to get probation or a fine. To sack them 18 months before that judgment is found would be a far harsher penalty, because they would lose 18 months' worth of pay and we would get rid of them quickly and justice would be seen to be done quicker. I would like that to be a possibility for us.

Q52 Tim Loughton: I am not clear how this happens, but in other jobs surely people are sacked, and then if it transpires that they may have committed criminal activity that is dealt with separately and later. I still cannot quite see what is stopping you sacking somebody who has clearly messed up on their job for incompetence and are clearly not up to that job. If it later transpires that there was criminal activity, then that is a separate matter, when they are out of the force and away from doing any more damage, surely.

Sir Stephen House: It is complex, and I would like simplification. The issue there would be, if I could try to explain it, if we went down that route and sacked somebody we would then be subject to criticism, "You have shortcut the criminal process" because if you then go back to the CPS and say, "Right, we have sacked this person and it is three months later. Would you now consider investigation?" they would probably say, "Well, proportionately, it is not worth it. It is not in the public interest because you have sacked them, it is a minor offence, it might not get to court, and it might not get a custodial sentence. We will probably leave it to lie." The danger then is policing is seen to be subverting what is the superior—

Q53 Tim Loughton: Are they not two different things? What you are primarily concerned with is sacking somebody who is not doing their job properly, in just the same way that any other business can sack somebody because they are not doing their job properly. Why is it different from criminal?

Sir Stephen House: No, sorry to interrupt. That is not what I am talking about, if somebody is not doing their job properly, they are a lazy cop. That is not what we are talking about. There are professional ways of dealing with that poor performance. That is not misconduct. I am talking about someone who is rude to the public regularly, who is stopping and



HOUSE OF COMMONS

searching people because of their ethnicity. That may tip into criminality, chances are it probably would not, but it would still potentially be looked at by the IOPC, and might get referred to the CPS. This all takes time. There are court delays, as we know in London and all over the UK, and it takes longer than it should, and it dents public confidence.

If you look at Hotton, for example, the Charing Cross thing, it started in 2016, came to light in 2018, investigations started in 2018. We are in 2022 when it hits the media. There are too many examples of it taking far too long.

Chair: Okay, thank you. I am going to move on to Carolyn Harris.

Q54 **Carolyn Harris:** The Met is going to change its focus on how it investigates rape. What were the academic findings that were done that have led you to change this focus?

Sir Stephen House: Louisa is the expert on this and she will answer it. I sat through the presentation by the academics on Soteria Bluestone and it was hard-hitting stuff. We are taking on board all the learning from that, but Louisa knows far more.

Louisa Rolfe: Through my national work I have a lot to do with Sarah Crew, the national lead for rape and I know that she has appeared here and spoken about her work as well on Operation Soteria. The findings in the Met were very consistent with those in Avon and Somerset and other forces that have been part of the first pilot.

There are three key areas. The volume of caseloads that our officers are dealing with, we all know that rape reports have gone up significantly over recent years, but the significant caseloads that our officers are dealing with and the impact that has on them as individuals in terms of the traumatic impact, but also the impact that might have in terms of it might wear down their empathy and compassion for victims, so one is about overwhelming caseloads.

There was a finding about our approach to victims and a clear steer from the academics around a more procedurally just approach, so explaining at every stage and not assuming. Officers are dealing with a lot of cases and have to ration their time, and they might make assumptions about a victim's understanding of the justice process, but the value of taking time to explain why a decision might have been made, whether that is by the police or the CPS or the court system and at every stage applying a procedurally just approach.

The third important aspect is around shifting the focus from victims to a much more perpetrator-focused approach to rape investigations. We have an adversarial justice system in the UK, which has many strengths, but the burden of proof is on the prosecution to prove beyond all reasonable doubt somebody's guilt. In cases of rape in particular I work a lot with Sarah because as the domestic abuse lead a significant proportion of rape cases, I think nearly 30%, happen in a domestic abusive relationship. In



HOUSE OF COMMONS

those cases, the matter becomes a matter of consent. We know from our own rape investigations in London, but also nationally, that stranger offences thankfully are a small proportion of rape caseload, and in stranger attacks the prosecution and conviction rates are much higher.

In the cases where there is either some existing relationship or a long-term abusive relationship or just a recent acquaintance, I think frankly it is far too easy for a savvy defence team to pick holes in a victim's account and to wilfully misinterpret a normal manifestation of trauma as a lack of credibility. Sadly, what we have seen over many years is the justice system adjusting to focus on shoring up the victim's account, so a truly intrusive look at victims' phones.

In the Met we have responded positively on this work. It is important so we have invested in our focus on perpetrators from intelligence, but also our Predatory Offender Units who, since their creation, have made more than 3,000 arrests. We focus very much on digital evidence, so we have invested nearly £30 million in new capability in our forensics teams. This is not about looking at victims' phones. This is about ensuring that in the circumstances where we do need to look at a victim's phone, because the defence are alleging there is evidence on that phone that will prove a pre-existing relationship or something relevant to the case, then we can do that very quickly, in a matter of hours, as opposed to taking a victim's phone away. These days people live their lives on their phone, so it is important that we are supportive of victims.

Those were the key things. They are very consistent elsewhere. We take this incredibly seriously in the Met and we are working closely with that academic team, as are forces nationally, to ensure that we take on board that learning and we support our people.

I spent time with officers who investigate rape a couple of weeks ago, introducing the new HMI lead on Violence Against Women and Girls. They spoke passionately about the work that they do, how they work incredibly hard and how disappointing it can be when, sadly, a jury might find it easier to believe a perpetrator who scrubs up well and looks smart in the dock, than a victim who is showing what those who are informed would understand as trauma. We are trying to influence the justice system from the bottom up as well to be more trauma-informed.

Q55 Carolyn Harris: Nothing you have said is new. We know that victims are reluctant to come forward, because of the way that they are treated, very often the way they have been treated by police, and not being believed. We know that specialist investigation units within a constabulary work better.

I can go back to the early 2000s when I was working with victims of rape and domestic violence and we were talking about new pathways, SARCs. We had all these lovely units where women—and men—felt more comfortable. It is 2022. Why is it only now? The Met themselves had a specialist unit, which they disbanded. Why is it now we are reinventing a



wheel that worked better than the current system?

Louisa Rolfe: I think it is different. I want to be clear; the Met has not disbanded specialist units. We still have specialist investigation teams. They might not be called Sapphire, but they are still the same specialist investigators. They now work more closely with our CSU teams who investigate domestic abuse, for very good reason. They are under the umbrella of public protection locally based on our BCUs. They have not been disbanded. They are still there; they are still the same specialist, dedicated officers working to support victims, who care very much about getting this right. We are building on things like the SARCs, the specialist Sexual Assault Referral Centres that are based across London, and The Havens, which are important to that. This is about the next level of that work. We are not reinventing the wheel.

You are right, there are sound principles in here, things that enable us to get this right, but I think a good holding up of a mirror and being clear about how the justice system has influenced our approach, about how too many officers are second-guessing what a prosecutor might say, and understanding how the pendulum has swung since our learning, whether we go back to the Jimmy Savile investigations, to the R v. Allan case and how all of those things may have shaped our approach, and recalibrating and being clear and basing it on those sound principles that we know work, but using the latest academic evaluation.

More than 1,400 of our officers spoke with those academics, so they have a rich understanding of the way the Met operates. Last year we trained more than 6,800 officers with SafeLives and Domestic Abuse Matters. Of course, it has proven to increase officers' empathy and understanding of abuse, and SafeLives gave us positive feedback about the culture and empathy of our workforce in the Met. These things do not hit the headlines but I know they are doing this.

Q56 Carolyn Harris: Can I stop you there? You talked about building on the SARC. I was talking with people who were operating SARCs back in 2005; again, it is 2022. Why has it taken this long for the Met to now be talking about stuff that we were doing in South Wales a long time ago? Your own colleague, Matt Dukes when he was the chief constable, we were talking about it then. It is a long time. It is a big city. There will be people who experience rape as an occupational hazard, shall we say. They are not reporting this. Why is the Met taking so long to prioritise this as an important issue and making it a standalone unit?

Louisa Rolfe: To be clear, The Havens have been in London for a long time, so they are not a new thing. They were some of the first in the UK. I remember working with Sarah Crew to set up the SARC in Bristol and we were copying The Havens' model at the time. I know how long they have been operating here. It is not that we are slow to the party here, but we are not reinventing the wheel. We are trying to build on that good history and we have been clear in the Met for a long time that violence is our priority. Some of the most heinous violence is these offences of rape



and violence against women and girls. We are clear about how important this is. I agree with you that it is really important that, for example, the most vulnerable women, sex workers, certainly in our Violence Against Women and Girls strategy we have set a very explicit objective that every charity and specialist organisation supporting victims of violence against women and girls including sex workers across London will have a trusted relationship with contacts within the Met. Whether we are talking about addressing community confidence around race and inclusion, or violence against women and girls, at the heart of that are our officers having daily contact with people who have lived experience.

We have talked about the training. We bring community members into our training. I was talking just a couple of weeks ago with Women's Aid about whether we could work with charities, four charities across London, to have community placements for our trainee officers as well. There is an awful lot going on to improve our approach now, but it is not new.

Carolyn Harris: Will that bring in organisations from outside of London, where your officers could maybe learn some fantastic good practice? I would recommend that you take up any offer that you get. Thank you, Chair. I know you have to go.

Q57 **Chair:** Thank you. I know that we are drawing to a close, but I wanted to ask Sir Stephen a question about what was reported in the press on 23 February that you had been critical of the Mayor of London for his role in the departure of Cressida Dick, claiming due process had not been followed, and you asked the Home Secretary to review whether the Commissioner had been unfairly treated. There is obviously a review that has been set up led by Sir Tom Winsor. What are you looking for out of that review? What outcome would you want to see?

Sir Stephen House: As you have very accurately said—so I will not go back over any of that—I am looking to Sir Tom Winsor to look at what happened, and he has made it very clear he is going to look at the process that was followed or not followed. He is not going to look at performance per se. This is about whether a process was followed that is quite clearly laid down in statute. I am delighted he is doing that; I think he is a great choice for doing it. He has already reached out and wants to speak to a lot of people about what happened, and in what order it happened and when it happened and what the time pressures on all of it were. I am looking for what I would expect from Tom Winsor, which is an open, honest and fairly to the point report on it.

Q58 **Chair:** Is your issue that you think the process was not followed, or is the process itself flawed?

Sir Stephen House: I do not think the process was followed. I did make a very full statement about it, and I stand by that statement. I do not think the process was followed properly in this case.

Q59 **Chair:** Right, okay. Thank you. One final thing. We have talked about BME representation within the Metropolitan Police. We know that it is



HOUSE OF COMMONS

about 16%, but the figure for London's representation is about 40%. Do you stand by this statement that the Met put out in 2019 where they said that they estimated it would take another 100 years to reach racial parity in the Met?

Sir Stephen House: No, I do not.

Q60 **Chair:** Do you think we could do it quicker than 100 years?

Sir Stephen House: I think the point of that was, "Look, if we don't change things and get better at this it is going to take 100 years to do this." It was not an aspiration; it was a threat.

Q61 **Chair:** Any idea how long, then?

Sir Stephen House: Very difficult, but I genuinely believe that we are making progress on this. The Met took the lead working with the Home Office and the College of Policing to redesign the national recruitment process twice, not just once, but twice because it was not giving us what we thought was a fair result. We are determined about this.

Q62 **Chair:** I am conscious of what Tim Loughton said about getting answers nine years ago that were very similar to the answers being given today around ensuring that we have a representative police force at all levels of the police.

Sir Stephen House: I cannot speak for what was said nine years ago. All I can speak to is the genuine determination and effort that is going on inside this organisation daily to do this, and that is what is happening.

Chair: Thank you very much for your time. I know that you do have another appointment, so we are very grateful for you appearing before us today. Thank you.