HOUSE OF COMMONS

Home Affairs Committee

Oral evidence: Policing priorities, HC 635

Wednesday 2 November 2022

Ordered by the House of Commons to be published on 2 November 2022.

Watch the meeting

Members present: Dame Diana Johnson (Chair); Lee Anderson; Carolyn Harris; Gary Sambrook; Simon Fell.

Questions 1 - 41

Witnesses

I: Dr Rick Muir, Director, The Police Foundation.

II: Martin Hewitt QPM, Chair, National Police Chiefs' Council; Festus Akinbusoye, Prevention Lead, Association of Police and Crime Commissioners; Andy Marsh QPM, Chief Executive, College of Policing.

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Examination of witness

Witness: Dr Rick Muir.

Q1 **Chair:** Good morning, everybody. Welcome to the Home Affairs Committee session this morning. This is the start of our first meeting on our new inquiry on policing priorities. We will have two panels this morning. We are very grateful to start with Dr Rick Muir, the director of the Police Foundation. We are looking forward to your evidence this morning. Then we will hear from our second panel in about 45 minutes' time.

To be clear, our intention in the policing priorities inquiry is to look at what a modern police service that is fit for the 2020s and beyond looks like, the challenges that policing faces in achieving that, and what balance police forces in England and Wales should strike between a focus on preventing and solving crime and carrying out their other functions. Dr Muir, perhaps you could set the scene for us, in terms of what policing looks like at the moment, the report that you published earlier this year, what your view is and where you think policing should go.

Dr Muir: Thank you for the opportunity to talk to you today. The main thing from our report is to describe all the changes that are going on in the environment around policing, including changes in terms of technology. In the last crime survey, 60% of crime affecting victims in England and Wales was fraud and cyber-crime—forms of crime that did not really exist in the same way 20 years ago. There have been changes in terms of a more complex society and more complex social needs. The police are now dealing increasingly with problems around mental health, missing persons, homeless people—issues that have all increased in recent years. There are more complex crime types, more victims coming forward, particularly violence against women and girls—things that were not reported in the past but now are being reported.

The world around policing is changing significantly. Our analysis is that policing has yet to keep up with the pace of that change. We think there are three basic challenges. One is capacity. The police on their own do not have the bandwidth to deal with all the stuff that is coming through the door, and they need the rest of public services and society to help, particularly to prevent some of those things from happening.

The second challenge is around capability, having the right skills, technology, leadership, learning and development culture that enables them to deal with those challenges.

The third challenge is around organisation. Our analysis is that policing does not have the right organisational platform upon which to deliver those capabilities. The 43 force system, which we have had since the 1960s, means that there is still a system where most of the resource is locked in locally. That is really important. Local policing is really important, but our analysis is that you also need to be able to deal with

cross-border crime. You need to be able to deliver specialist capabilities. We argue that you need a stronger strategic centre in policing to do some of the things that can only be done nationally. Those are the kinds of challenges that we think the system needs to address.

Q2 **Chair:** The data that we have seen on forces' responses to emergency and priority incidents show that in 2016-17—this is going back a little way—only 24% of the incidents that forces responded to were crime-related. Could you say something about how police forces are managing to focus their efforts when they are actually not doing what most of our constituents would think they should be doing, which is preventing and solving crime? They are not dealing with that in the majority of cases.

Dr Muir: The first thing to say on that is that preventing and solving crime is a core police function and always has been, but it is not the only police function and the police have always done lots of other things. If you look at the demand data, you can see that most of the things that the public are calling the police about do not result in a crime being recorded. That does not necessarily mean all of that is not related to crime. There will be some things that are not captured in those figures; for example, you see something suspicious in the street and it might be related to crime, but when you call it in it does not result in a crime being recorded.

I still think that what you might call welfare-related demand and safety-related demand, which is non-crime, makes up the bulk of calls that are coming through. That is because policing is not just about crime. It is better to think about policing as being about order maintenance and risk management, essentially. There is risk out there. There is harm out there. We need someone to get there who has the powers to impose a provisional solution. Often, the police cannot solve these problems. They are about imposing a solution, because they have the power to de-escalate a situation.

There are lots of issues, such as mental health crises and vulnerable children going missing. There are lots of these things that are not about crime. They may have some relationship to crime, but where there is a core police function. The problem we have is that it was not as if there was some kind of moment when the Government said to the police, "Here are all these extra things we want you to do and here is a budget to do it". Particularly the response function of the police is very general. They respond, and always have done, to all sorts of incidents. The number, range and diversity of those incidents have been increasing. There are lots more people in mental health crisis. There is lots more street homelessness, and lots more people are going missing, from care in particular. That requires a police response.

There is additional stuff as well, particularly things such as legislative change; and what gets called public protection functions in policing, which is safeguarding children and vulnerable adults, and monitoring violent and sexual offenders in the community. These were additional

requirements that have built up over time that the police are now expected to fulfil. That has imposed an additional set of requirements on them as well. That is crime-related, but it is asking the police to do a lot more in the territory of risk management than they did in the past.

Q3 **Chair:** There has not been a royal commission on policing for many years, has there? You have described all these additional changes and additional work that the police now have to do. The foundation has stepped into the role that a royal commission would have had, looking at this.

Dr Muir: There is a history of royal commissions. If you look back through the history of policing in this country, there were regular royal commissions through the 19th century and into the 20th century. The last one was completed in 1964. There are often calls for a royal commission.

Because the Government had made it clear they did not want to do a royal commission and that they had their own reform programme that they wanted to proceed with and address the immediate issues they were dealing with, we thought, "We will do a report ourselves". That was trying to be more strategic than we often are in debates about policing in this country. I mean strategic in two senses. One is thinking about the future—looking 20 years ahead and saying, "What kind of society are we going to be in? What kind of policing do we need to police that society?" Secondly, it is looking at the whole system. Rather than looking at its individual component parts, it is trying to look at how the whole system knits together. That is what we tried to do.

Q4 **Simon Fell:** Your strategic review made 56 recommendations. I am not going to ask you to name them all. I was wondering which you consider to be the most important.

Dr Muir: There are three significant ones. One is around prevention. Obviously you can recruit more police officers, but demand on policing is almost infinite; in practical terms, it is almost infinite. We need to try to find ways of preventing some of the forms of crisis demand that are causing particular pinchpoints at the moment, whether that is mental health or missing persons—those kinds of issues. We need to get really serious about prevention.

There are lots of things that need to be done at the local level to do that, but we argue in the report that one of the reasons we do not do prevention nationally is that it is nobody's responsibility. We argue for a crime prevention agency, which would be a national agency responsible for crime prevention. In particular, it would be responsible for those things that require national action.

I am not talking about an organisation that gets involved in local prevention stuff. It would be more about, for example, fraud, which is the single biggest crime type affecting victims in England and Wales. We do

not really have a systemic prevention strategy in relation to fraud. We should have one. We argue that a crime prevention agency would be responsible for delivering that. Prevention is the first thing.

The second thing is that we talked about having a licence to practise for police officers, which is a big recommendation. It is based on what exists in nursing and for doctors, which is about trying to transform the culture in policing to one where learning and development is prioritised. The evidence we looked at, which was what frontline officers were telling us, is that they do not think their training is providing them with the skills they need to do the job.

We need a real transformation of the learning and development culture and we think a licence to practise would be one way of doing that. It would give officers ownership of their learning and development, provided that they are also given the time to do the learning and development. That is really important.

The final thing is the organisational changes we talked about. We have never really had a proper look at what is done locally, regionally and nationally. The assumption at the moment is that most things get done locally. We have some things done regionally in ad hoc collaborations between forces, but much more could be done regionally, which does not have to be done 43 different ways. That would save money and develop specialist capability. Those would be the three big things.

Q5 **Simon Fell:** I am glad you touched on fraud, because I was going to ask about this. You are right: it is the No. 1 volume crime in the UK. We lack the expertise, skills and resourcing to deal with it in the way the public would expect us to. To your mind, what does a response to a deeply technical and involved problem such as fraud look like?

Dr Muir: That is a very good question. The problem is that fraud has always existed, but 20 years ago it was essentially a white collar crime affecting business. It is now a volume crime affecting 5 million people a year. The internet is responsible for that transformation. If you look at the police workforce, less than 1% of it specialises in economic crime. You have 40% of the crime and 1% of the workforce specialising in dealing with it. That is a real challenge.

Prevention is key, as I said. Because a lot of it originates from overseas, it is unrealistic to expect local police forces in the UK to be able to apprehend many of these people. We should try and we should work internationally to try to do it as well, but it is really important to try to prevent it, as I was saying before.

Then we need to make it much easier for the victims to report and to access support. It is a really confusing landscape of organisations in this space. It is often not very clear who you should report it to. Is it a crime matter? Is it a trading standards thing? All of that is really complicated. Victim support services are often quite generic and not really tailored to

fraud. In fraud cases, people basically want to get their money back. The victim support services that are provided are not really set up to help them with that.

The final thing is that I do not think there is much point carrying on handing out fraud investigations in large volumes to uniformed officers in local forces. It is the wrong place for them to do it. We have done surveys of officers and they say, "We would rather this was done by specialist investigators. We do not have the capacity to do it. These are really long and complicated cases and we have so many other things—sexual crime, violent crime, antisocial behaviour—to be dealing with".

I would give fraud investigation, or most of it, to dedicated investigators, probably located at the regional or national level, rather than just handing stuff out to local forces that do not prioritise it. I know why they do not prioritise it. They do not prioritise it because it does not rank high enough with violent crime, sexual crime and all the other things they are dealing with. You can ask them to prioritise it, but I do not think they ever really will, so deal with it regionally or nationally on the investigation side.

Q6 **Simon Fell:** We have picked on fraud, but there are other examples. Fraud at the moment ostensibly sits within City of London police. Would you see it being sponsored by a particular force or sitting outside of that as an agency, with support from ROCUs or whatever?

Dr Muir: A lot of the investigations could be done at the regional level alongside the ROCUs, provided those ROCUs have significantly increased capacity and capability to do this. There are moves in that direction at the moment. You need to expand that regional capacity.

I am open-minded on the question of whether it is City of London police or the National Crime Agency that gets involved. There are arguments on both sides, to be honest. It is really important that we have clarity over who leads nationally on that. There are capabilities that the NCA has, for example, that would be useful in this space, particularly when you are dealing with online fraud, which is very international. Equally, the National Crime Agency is not a victim-facing service in the way that the police are, so I can see both sides of that argument.

Q7 **Simon Fell:** You touched on the 43 force model that we have at the moment in your opening remarks. You are absolutely right to say there needs to be that connection between the local force and the local community. People need to see that they have that responsive police force in their area. What does a better model look like to you?

Dr Muir: In our review, we argued that you did not need to merge the 43 forces. When you get into this debate, everyone says, "43 is not the right number". The wrong place to start is with a number. You need to start with form follows function. What should be done locally? What should be done regionally? What should be done nationally? Locally, it

should be local crime investigation, dealing with antisocial behaviour, neighbourhood policing, safeguarding and 24/7 response.

I would put a lot more of the specialism at the regional level, which would be specialist capabilities, such as firearms, and operational support functions, such as horses. Also, you could move some of the business support functions to that level as well. I do not think you need 43 different HR departments. Some forces are doing this already. They are already recognising that by collaborating on some of these back office functions.

I am not arguing that you need a national force. England is too big for that. You could have a national force for Wales probably, in terms of population size. That would be workable. I am not saying it is the right thing to do, but in terms of the size I think it would work. England is too big for a national force. If you look at what they have done in Scotland, they have improved the quality of their specialist capabilities by having them done once, rather than eight times, and they saved a lot of money.

England and Wales also saved a lot of money because we have been through an austerity programme and people have sold police stations, rationalised a lot of back office functions and so on. HMICFRS has repeatedly found that more money could be saved through increased collaboration. Scotland saved twice as much as it thought it would at the beginning of the merger. To me, that says that there is money to be saved. I am not saying that just to save money. I am saying that that is money that could be invested in frontline policing that does not need to be invested in back office functions. Doing more with the regions would be a big step forward.

Q8 **Simon Fell:** In your opening remarks you spoke about the importance of moving to a preventive model and about prioritisation. When I talk to my local police force, especially the neighbourhood policing team, they spend an inordinate amount of their time dealing with mental health issues, parking issues—things that really are not in their domain at all. No one else is there to deal with them, so they end up in the police's lap. If you are shifting to a model where you are going to prioritise crime—what is on the police job description and what they should be doing, if you are prioritising in that way—there is an obvious problem that these issues are not going to be picked up by the police anymore. I am curious to know what your thinking is around that and what resourcing is needed elsewhere, whether in local authorities or traffic authorities, to start to deal with some of these things that are currently on the police's plate.

Dr Muir: It is right that the police have quite a general response function. In relation to 24/7 response, it is right that they have that because you need somebody to have responsibility for all the other stuff that no one will deal with. To be honest, they are people who probably need the powers of police officers. Often those will be situations where there will be conflict. There might be criminality. There is often a danger of harm and risk, so the presence of an officer with those powers can

help to de-escalate that. It is important that the police have that general response function.

We have to be really clear. Are we deploying police officers to things where their skills and powers are going to be the most effective way of dealing with the risk? I will give you an example of something that I do not think would fit that. If you talk to anyone who works on response, they will say they spend an inordinate amount of time in hospital, essentially guarding people with mental health problems waiting to be assessed by the NHS. I do not think anyone thinks that is a good use of police officers' time.

It should be within the remit of the national health service, I would have thought, to make sure that, where there are people waiting to be assessed, they are properly looked after and that there is proper security in place. I do not think you should take often two police officers off a shift to sit there for hours and hours waiting for someone to be assessed in hospital. That is not a job that it is necessary for a police officer to do, but they end up doing it because no one else will do it. That means working with the NHS to deal with that.

Another example would be what the role of the police is in prevention. The police have always had a preventive role. If you go back to Peel in the 19th century, that was the principal role: to prevent crime, rather than even to investigate crime. It was about having a deterrent effect through a police presence on the street. The police role in prevention is really important, but it should be about the police having a preventive mindset. When they are responding to things, they are thinking, "How can we stop this happening again? Who do I need to refer this to, whether it is social work, youth work or whatever, to deal with the fundamental problem?"

It is not about the police delivering the preventive work. For example, I heard the other day about a programme where they were looking at troubled families. I am not sure whether it was part of the troubled families programme nationally, but it was a thing looking at families that have multiple problems. They had PCSOs going in there to work with the families to try to address some of their problems, including getting to know the kids. They were talking about PCSOs playing computer games with the kids.

I can sort of understand why they ended up doing it, because they are thinking, "This family causes so many callouts. How can we stop that happening?", but to me that should be a job for youth workers or social workers, rather than for police community support officers or police officers. It is about policing having a preventive mindset but then working with others to deliver the prevention.

Sometimes the problem is that the police get dragged into doing the prevention because they think no one else is going to do it. It comes down to resources and working relationships with the NHS, local

authorities and others to make sure that, if there is a problem like that, they can deal with it. Then the police can focus on doing the things that we want the police to deal with.

Q9 **Lee Anderson:** Public perception of our police forces is really important. Sometimes the perception of my constituents in Ashfield is not through the local police force. It is through what they see on TV and down here, especially with the protesters we see out on a regular basis. They know that, on a lot of occasions, there is, or appears to be, a lack of action to move some of the protesters we have seen, especially on Whitehall. How do we change that perception? Are we doing enough for you?

Dr Muir: You are right about perception. It is sometimes unfair on local policing that they tend to see things that are happening in other forces and it feeds back, or even indeed in other countries. That often has an impact, because people tend to see policing as one thing. Things can happen all over the world and in different parts of this country that can affect people's perceptions of policing. That is just part of the territory.

On protests, it is a difficult balance to strike, and policing is all about balance, particularly when you are doing enforcement action. They will get criticised for being too heavy-handed and they will get criticised for not being heavy handed enough, so I do not envy police officers having to make those decisions. It is clear that their role is to facilitate democratic, lawful, peaceful protest, but obviously to make sure traffic can also flow freely and so on, so they have to be able to deal with obstructions and use the law in that way. We also have to trust the police to use their discretion, because these are operational matters, so I would not want to second-guess the people on the ground in some of these situations.

Q10 **Lee Anderson:** The skillsets needed and the staff required for police forces up and down the country are different in different areas. For example, I know in Rochdale and Rotherham we have had problems with grooming gangs. In Lincolnshire, it is more rural crime. In London and the City it is different crime all together. Is the training different for a police officer in each area and, if not, should it be?

Dr Muir: It varies. Policing a rural area is quite different from policing London, Greater Manchester or whatever. It varies, rightly. We need to be clear that the professional standards should be the same across the whole country. We argued in our report that the College of Policing should have more powers to make some of those professional standards mandatory. Currently, there is authorised professional practice that chief constables should follow, but are not legally obliged to follow. That can lead to variation.

Where there are areas of policing where the risk is high, the evidence base is really clear about what works and these are things that are key to public confidence; the standard of training should be the same across the country. For example, stop and search is probably the most controversial

police tactic. There is still huge variation in training around stop and search, and the implementation of that training. We know what works well, in terms of doing stop and search effectively and in ways that command confidence, but it is still not being done consistently enough. I would make some of the training standards around that mandatory across the whole country.

Q11 **Lee Anderson:** My local police tell me that morale of police officers is affected by weak sentencing in court. You can get prolific criminals off the street and then a week later they are back on the street. How does that affect morale? Do you think courts are doing enough to help police?

Dr Muir: Morale is affected by failings in the rest of the criminal justice system, absolutely, yes. Sometimes that might be about sentencing, but sometimes it is just about the fact that there are such long waits to get things through the criminal justice system—the fact that victims drop out and do not want to continue with an investigation because it is taking too long. We know that post covid, because the courts were closed, there are backlogs and so on.

We talked about royal commissions. I was supportive of the idea of a royal commission into the criminal justice system. Policing has its problems, but the problems are much worse in the courts, probation and the prison system. We should have a royal commission into that.

Chair: That is very interesting.

Q12 **Carolyn Harris:** You have touched on the different kinds of crime. Crime today is completely different from when I was a youngster. To give you an example, over the last five weeks I have had police in my house. I suppose it may be connected to the fact that I am a Member of Parliament. My bank account got scammed three times in three weeks, I have had malicious emails sent somewhere else regarding trying to harm me and I have done some DV training. They are three completely different subjects, with the same police officers on all three things.

How can we expect those police officers to have in-depth knowledge? They could never solve my bank issue. They could not solve it, but they had to be involved. What skills are we going to need going forward for police to be able to deal with all the issues they are expected to?

Dr Muir: I agree. As policing becomes more complex, there is this idea of omnicompetence that took hold during the austerity period, which was that police officers should be able to multitask, essentially, and do lots of different things. Of course, it is true that a constable is always going to be multitasking. Someone on response is going to be dealing with all sorts of stuff. Because crime is becoming more complex, you need more specialisation in the police workforce to deal with things like fraud, cyber-crime and domestic violence. There is specialisation in these areas, but it needs to go a lot further.

We should move away from this idea that you can just train one person once to deal with all these different things. We need to have specialisation. In a way, it should be like the NHS. You go to the GP to have a general look, but then, if there is a serious problem, it gets passed on to a specialist. We need more specialism in policing.

Q13 **Carolyn Harris:** I really worry about the raft of extra duties that the police are currently expected to undertake, when I think about how much youth work and social work they are doing. Every conversation I have with the police around a specific hot topic is not really their job to be worrying about. There is a perception that people have when they complain. They email me and say, "I reported X and X, and the police have not got back to me". There is a nostalgic view that the police should be telling the complainant everything. We know that that is not possible, and rightly so.

I have to give a shout out for South Wales police Swansea. They have been absolutely fantastic. They really are brilliant in trying to get involved and to be preventive. How can we have police officers who are more representative of the areas that they are working in?

Dr Muir: It is really important that the police are connected to the community, absolutely. That is the foundation of our model of policing. That means trying to recruit people locally. That is a problem in London, where housing costs are high and a large bulk of the officers are commuting in from outside London, which then affects the diversity. It is important that the police reflect the community. Peel said that the police are the public and the public are the police. The police need to reflect the community.

It is important that we make sure that the police workforce reflects the diversity of the communities that we have. That has improved a bit, but not enough. Particularly in terms of black recruits, it has not improved a great deal. It is much better in terms of Asian recruits into policing. That is important and it is really important to do good community policing. During the austerity period, neighbourhood policing got seen as a bit of a nice to have. You understand why because, when you are dealing with life and limb, you think that the most important thing is just to get there, respond and then to investigate crimes that you detect and pick up.

Neighbourhood policing is fundamental. If you look at what happens to public confidence in the police over time, it goes up when you invest in neighbourhood policing and it falls when you stop investing in neighbourhood policing. That is what we have seen over the last 20 years. There is a good evidence base for neighbourhood policing. There is really good evidence that neighbourhood teams doing problem-solving activity in local communities is effective at reducing crime.

If we are worried about resources, the other thing we need to do is follow the evidence base. I know that the College of Policing does a lot of work on this. It is really important that officers are aware of what works and

neighbourhood policing is one of the things that works in terms of both reducing crime and improving public confidence. Those are the two big things we want to see.

Q14 **Carolyn Harris:** The Police Foundation's review suggests a new mission for policing is needed. I think—and this is personal—that this demand for a degree to go into policing means that we are losing a huge amount of talented people who are brilliant at the hands-on stuff but are not academic. We all know that being academic does not necessarily mean that you have the common sense to deal with the local policing—the stuff that can get into the nitty-gritty of a community. Do you think we need a new mission for policing and why?

Dr Muir: There are two things there. One is about entry routes. I am supportive of the new entry routes because the job has become more complex and the training needs to be to a higher level, but—and this is not the case—you should never need a degree to join, and you do not. That is the key thing. You get one on the job, and that is the right balance. If you do not have a degree, you can join and you will get one on the job.

The important thing on recruitment is that we need multiple ways of joining. The old days, where everyone joined as a PC, do not reflect the complexity of police work that we are now seeing. We are seeing a lot of forces now do direct-entry detectives, for example. I know a lot of people who, mid-career, are now joining the police in detective roles. They are probably the sort of people who do not want to roll around dealing with pub fights on Friday and Saturday nights, to be honest with you, but they would quite like to be a detective. That is fine. Isn't that fine? We need people who are going to be able to get out there and do some of the rough stuff, but we also need people who are going to investigate fraud, cyber-crime and so on. You need multiple routes in.

We need clarity about the mission so that crime is caught, but it is not the only thing. As I said before, it is about maintaining order and upholding the law, and there is a whole range of things that flow out of that. We need to be really clear about what the functions are that the police perform. In our report, we set out five core functions.

The key thing is, when looking at a particular risk, is the deployment of a police officer to deal with that necessary? Are they the right person to deal with it? Is a person in uniform, with the power of arrest, and the power to stop and search people, necessary to deal with all the things that they are currently dealing with? As I said before, for some of the things they are currently being pulled into, it is not necessary, but that means that the rest of the system has to come in. We need to be clear about the role of the police, and much more systemic about thinking about the role of health, local authorities and others in preventing crime.

Q15 **Gary Sambrook:** Thank you for coming today. In your written evidence, you said that the current pattern of stop and search is not justified, is

ineffective and creates a significant barrier to trust and confidence. However, if you look at recent polling on stop and search, it maintains very high support among the general population, including support for stop and search in every ethnic group. Why do you think taking away a power that has so much public support will end up increasing the legitimacy of policing?

Dr Muir: We should not take away the power. It is right that the police have the power. They have two powers. One is the power under PACE to stop and search someone if they suspect that they are carrying an illegal item. The other power is the section 60 power, where they do not need to have suspicion.

The "do not need to have suspicion" stuff is where there is a lot of tension. We should set a higher threshold for the use of that power. It is not very effective in detecting weapons, for example, and it causes a lot of community disquiet. Having said that, it is really important that the police have the power to stop and search people if they have suspicion that they are doing something they should not be doing.

It is really important not to generalise across the whole country about stop and search. It is used very intensively in London. It is used much less in some other large urban areas that also have lots of problems with violence, sexual crime and so on. It is not used as much in the west midlands or Greater Manchester as it is used in London. There is a specific thing in London about the large-scale use of stop and search that is causing community disquiet. If you look at the confidence in the police in London in the last few years, it has fallen. It has particularly fallen among black people in the London public attitude survey, so there are real issues there. It is important not to generalise from London to the whole country.

The key thing with stop and search is that I would not use it on the scale that it is being used in London. You should use it proportionately. There is really good evidence that, if you use it well and fairly, and think about the way in which the communication is done, people can come away from the encounter without feeling that they have been humiliated or disproportionately targeted and so on. That is really important.

The Independent Office for Police Conduct report looked at stop and search interactions. If you read that, a lot of those interactions are not following the best practice. My solution to that is to follow the best practice. We know what works in terms of doing stop and search in a way that is fair and commands public confidence, so let us train and make sure people are following that standard. At the moment, not enough of that is happening.

It is linked to another thing, which is that there is not sufficient emphasis in police training, we argue, on communication skills. Thousands of police officers around the country have really good people skills. That is why they are in policing. I am in no way arguing that they are not doing that,

but, if you look at the training, it does not get as much emphasis as officer safety training, for example. If you want to keep officers safe, it is really important that they can de-escalate situations, and they have those communication skills. If you want to do stop and search in a way that means that someone who is being stopped and searched, and is completely innocent of any crime, does not come away feeling that they have been humiliated, the communication is essential. That is where a lot of this falls down.

Q16 **Gary Sambrook:** You make the point about it being generic. It does not come across in the written evidence that that should be separated. It has a generic feel, but it says that the current pattern of stop and search is not justified. If you were to look at the recent stats, which say that there has been an increase in the arrest rate on stop and search from 11% to 13%, is that not an indication that it is actually working the way it is? I do not see another power, or another way in which you can police, that leads to 66,000 arrests within that time period, and has taken thousands of weapons off the streets. That seems to me like a perfectly justified power that is being used.

Dr Muir: It is a justified power. It is about using it proportionately and in a way that follows the best practice. If you do that, I do not have a problem with it. It is interesting that the find rate tends to go higher the less of it you do, because the less of it you do the more of it is intelligence-led. If you look at HMRC's work on this, intelligence-led searches are much more successful. That is where, for example, there is information that has come from a third party, rather than just the officer themselves thinking, "I am concerned about this".

I am not arguing against the use of the power at all. It can be effective. It is important that the police have it. As with all police powers, it should be used proportionately and it is really important that the communication is done well.

Q17 **Chair:** I wanted to ask you about the Met. It has national responsibilities as well as responsibilities for policing London. Do you think that those should be separated out? Was that one of your recommendations?

Dr Muir: It was not one of our recommendations, although, on reflection, it is a good debate to have. The reason that we did not recommend shifting some of the Met's big capabilities was that we thought that it delivers those national capabilities very well, particularly in terms of counter-terrorism, which is world-leading. You see very little criticism of the way the police do counter-terrorism. The Met delivers that capability very well.

Q18 **Chair:** It is just the local policing that it is not very good at.

Dr Muir: It clearly has a lot of problems. In particular, as the Casey review made clear, it has a lot of problems in terms of misconduct and behaviour, which I think the new commissioner is now taking on. For me, the problem in the Met is not that it is doing counter-terrorism or

diplomatic protection. The problem is that it lost sight of the ethics and conduct issue. Now the intention is to try to grip that more.

Q19 **Chair:** That leads me to my final question, which is about the report that came out this morning from HMICFRS. Do you have any comments on that?

Dr Muir: It is a very robust, well-evidenced report and it is very damning about the state of vetting in particular. To me, it says that the vetting units need more capacity to deal with the flow of people that are now coming through. I would have preferred that we had recruited a bit more gradually, rather than rushing to recruit to hit a target. The problem is that, when you do that, you hear in the report that people feel under pressure to let people through, because the force is worried about not meeting its numbers.

We need to think about quality, not just bums on seats. The College of Policing and some of the other national regulations are really good on this. The national regulations and best practice are there, but they are not being implemented by the forces effectively. That is an example. When I said that the college should have some mandatory powers over professional standards, vetting would be another one where everybody should be reaching those national standards, rather than there being such inconsistency in decision making, training, resourcing and so on.

Chair: Lucky for us, we have the national college with us this morning, so we will be able to put those questions to it. Thank you very much for your evidence this morning. That has been very helpful in setting the scene for us as we start the inquiry, and for identifying the questions that we should be asking in the coming session. Thank you for your time.

Examination of witnesses

Witnesses: Martin Hewitt, Festus Akinbusoye and Andy Marsh.

Q20 **Chair:** Thank you very much for attending our session this morning. I am going to get you to introduce yourselves to the panel.

Martin Hewitt: Good morning, everyone. My name is Martin Hewitt and I am chair of the National Police Chiefs' Council.

Festus Akinbusoye: Good morning, everyone. My name is Festus Akinbusoye and I am the police and crime commissioner for Bedfordshire and the lead for prevention for the Association of Police and Crime Commissioners.

Andy Marsh: Good morning. My name is Andy Marsh. I am chief executive chief constable of the College of Policing.

Q21 **Chair:** I would like to start us off where I asked the last question in the

first panel. There is a very disturbing report that came out this morning from HMICFRS. Having looked at that, I wondered what the problem that the police have with women is. That is the thing that occurs to me. What is the problem there?

Martin Hewitt: I have spent the first couple of hours this morning responding in the media to that report, which is a very difficult report for the service to receive. As I said there, a number of the particular examples will be quite shocking to members of the public.

There is a lot of work that has been going on in relation to this. As has already been alluded to, we have had issues. There have always been issues and we have done lots around culture. Once it became known that the kidnapper and murderer of Sarah Everard was a serving police officer, that shocked the organisations into a difficult place and into having to address some of the issues in relation to the culture that we have, and still have, in parts in the service, and what we need to do about them.

An enormous amount of work has been taking place during the period while this review has been undertaken by HMICFRS. There is the work that you will be aware of through our national co-ordinator to deal with all the aspects of violence against women and girls. Importantly—I chair the group at the centre that oversees this—it is not just about looking at how we deal with reports that come from externally, but, getting to the crux of your question, how we deal internally with the issues that we have to face. We are still facing those issues.

Every chief constable over the last year or 18 months has gone back through, into their organisations, and done a number of things. One of those things that has just been alluded to by Rick is looking at how well each organisation is adhering to the code of practice in relation to vetting and the practices. That work goes on. Another thing is creating a culture in the organisations where it is very clear from the top that the kinds of behaviours that we have seen, and some of the behaviours and the sexism and misogynistic behaviours that you refer to, are unacceptable.

Q22 **Chair:** Is this misogyny endemic in the culture of the police?

Martin Hewitt: Misogyny is endemic in society and the police are representative of society. It is more important that we root that out in our organisation because of the role that we have as a service and the powers that we have. It is even more important than it is in any other organisation, where all these issues exist, so that we really get a culture of calling out behaviour like that.

The really important point is that every force has gone through all the issues that are being dealt with through their misconduct processes. They have been accelerating their processes. That has meant—we have all seen it—story after story of officers where their behaviour emerges and they have been sacked from the organisation. While that is really

challenging to our reputation, and trust and confidence in the service, from my perspective it is really important that we carry on doing that. We will see more negative stories, because the organisations are dealing with those issues. We have to deal with those where they exist.

We have already spoken this morning, in your first panel, about how things have changed and particularly the impact of technology and social media. Many of the awful stories that have emerged have been where officers are sharing information and having conversations in a social media context. We have to deal with those. All I can say is that this is absolutely at the top of agendas for all the chief constables. We are dealing with the issues, both externally and internally, that get to the core of your question. We will carry on doing that. We will work and implement the recommendations that have come out of today's report. There are 43 recommendations in a number of areas.

Q23 **Chair:** You were not really surprised then. I was looking very briefly at some of the things in the report about senior officers pursuing women officers for sex, viewing pornography at work, insulting comments about women and their appearance, and this issue with the booty patrols, where police officers were stopping pretty women. You were not shocked by that then. You knew this was all going on.

Martin Hewitt: I did not know that that was all going on, obviously. I find that behaviour shocking and disgusting, quite frankly. As has already been said, people need the police to keep them safe and make them feel safe.

Q24 **Chair:** It is 52% of the population actually—women.

Martin Hewitt: Yes, precisely. People call the police when they have issues, they are at their worst, they are scared and they are frightened. They have to be able to trust that the police officers who are turning up there are turning up to do the job they are there to do and to do that job properly. There are various examples. You have given some there and there are more in that report. It is an awful report from the perspective of the service, with those examples . We have to deal with those and we are dealing with those, but we have to work through and continue to do that.

Sadly, that will mean that there will be more stories of officer X being sacked for this and that behaviour. I am comfortable with that, because we have to be open and demonstrate that we are not prepared to accept this kind of behaviour in our organisations.

Chair: I do not know if any other member of the panel wants to say something.

Andy Marsh: Recognising the problem, it is shocking and unacceptable. I have been in the police since 1987. I have been chief constable of two police forces before this. When I joined the police, only 10% of our workforce was female. We are now at about 34%. A question came up, which we will probably return to, on new entry routes. The new entry

routes are attracting a much more diverse range of candidates. There used to be only one way into policing. Now there are three, with multiple facets feeding off them.

Rick talked about a degree holder apprenticeship detective as an entry route. That is attracting 14% of black and ethnic minority candidates, and 60% of entrants on that route are women. The first thing I would say is that policing is changing, and thank goodness for that. We need to address this problem and root it out.

What is the College of Policing doing about it? We are responsible for training, knowledge, skills and best practice. One of the areas of best practice that we have shared is some training that is about the abuse of police powers for a sexual purpose. That is the most accessed. It shows how seriously police forces are taking it. The most accessed of our learning packages in the last 12 months is about abuse of authority for a sexual purpose.

I feel so strongly about this problem of misogyny and sexism that, in my first week at the college, I asked for the guidance on the outcomes and sanctions for gross misconduct to be rewritten to take into account how seriously this impacts on public confidence if we do not address it properly. Those deciding what happens when gross misconduct is found—that is either chief constables or legally qualified chairs—will take into account the impact on public confidence and use the most appropriate, most serious sanction available, to make sure that those behaving in such a disgraceful way exit the service.

Q25 **Chair:** We will come on to this in some of the later questions. You were talking about recruitment. Clearly we will be discussing recruitment. There is the vetting. I was looking at the list of people who have got into the police who have, I assume, racially aggravated violence, someone who had exposed himself seven times over a two-week period, and someone who was known to be a pimp. There is clearly a big problem, as this report highlights, with the vetting process. You are saying it is good that we are getting more people through, but we want the vetting process to work effectively, do we not? That is not the case at the moment.

Andy Marsh: Yes, of course. The college has a number of levers it can pull to ensure consistency over good practice and standards. One of those levers is the authorised professional practice on vetting, which was last reviewed and rewritten in April 2021, so quite recently. As the well-evidenced report identifies, in some cases there is a lack of compliance with that good practice. In other areas, such as checking social media accounts, the vetting authorised professional practice needs to be reviewed and rewritten. I guarantee that I will do that within the timescale stipulated.

Festus Akinbusoye: Anyone who read this report will be absolutely astounded by some of the examples that were given. I can assure you

that, with many of my colleagues, we have been talking about this this morning. Many are asking very scrutinising questions of their chief constables, because police and crime commissioners are elected to scrutinise and oversee the work of their police force, especially that of their chief constables.

One thing that I feel very strongly about is that policing needs to drop the defensiveness when this kind of challenge comes up. I have to be honest: Martin and Andy have been very open—I have not sensed that defensiveness—but within some elements within policing, there is this defensiveness. I am not a police officer, but I used to be a special constable. I am someone who has seen at first hand the amount of power that police officers have, which puts them in a unique position compared to the average member of the public—even you, Madam Chair. With that level of power must come an accepted level of scrutiny. More of our police officers and police staff must be willing to accept that, quite rightly, the public expect questions to be answered and standards to be set much higher.

Many police and crime commissioners, as far as I am aware, are investing more money into the professional standards department. That is what we are doing in our collaborative partnership in Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire and Hertfordshire. I chose to go and see for myself how this extra investment is being deployed by the chief officers, and some of the changes that they are making and the outcome that they are seeing. I have to say to you that it was a very concerning report and many of my colleagues will be asking their chief constables, as I have done this morning, how well they know what is going on within their business.

Q26 **Gary Sambrook:** Andy, there was a piece in this morning's report about how, in one force, half the misconduct proceedings were against police officers who had served less than two years in post. You mentioned just now the changes to the vetting process that came in earlier last year. Do you think that those changes are working? Do you think that they have filtered down enough or do you think they are the wrong changes? The evidence suggests in this report that, for new recruits, it does not seem to be working at the moment.

Andy Marsh: Can I clarify? Is the question about initial training or vetting?

Gary Sambrook: It is about the whole recruitment process. That was the original one, but because you mentioned vetting I have decided to go on to that.

Andy Marsh: Policing, certainly in my service, is recruiting at an unprecedented level, with a much needed and very welcome uplift of 20,000 officers over a three to four-year period. What that means in reality is 50,000 new people entering policing during that time period. That is a huge opportunity to change the culture of policing for the better and to improve it.

The attrition rates for student officers who drop out or leave the service through other means tends to be about 7%, which is too many, but when you compare it to other sectors, it is not as high as you might read and is reported in some aspects of the media.

Is the vetting working to make sure that we are getting the right people in? The answer is absolutely, for two reasons. One is that the process as it exists now is not being applied with sufficient consistency and rigour. The second reason is that there are improvements in the vetting process that we need to make in the authorised professional practice. Clearly, that is not doing its job to the extent that we would expect. However, there are many tens of thousands of fantastic, vocational, public-spirited people coming into policing.

In terms of the initial training, we have heard a lot of evidence today that the job is incredibly complicated. If we are to avoid putting in layers of managerial process and rule-setting, checking and rechecking, we need critical-thinking, well-informed professionals who understand what good looks like when they are initially attending and when they are investigating, so that they can deliver the sort of service that the public expects.

As the chief exec of the College of Policing, it is my job to do the very best within affordable boundaries, so that policing can do just that with the widest pool of new recruits from across the whole of society. I am really happy to answer any other questions specifically about training when you need.

Q27 **Carolyn Harris:** What will the police force of the future need to do in order to increase trust in the police? One of the conversations I regularly have with my local police officers is how there is no trust from the community in the police. Very often, that is due to national issues, not local issues, but they pay the price locally for that. What do we need to do to improve that trust?

Martin Hewitt: The first point is that all these issues that we have just spoken around over the last couple of years have really dented people's sense of trust and confidence in policing—the confidence that you can trust the police to do what they need to do—so we have to keep working very hard in relation to dealing with those issues and root out the people who should not be in the service.

The conversations that have already happened in the previous panel around neighbourhood policing or local policing, or whatever we want to call it, are critical to the service, however far forward we go. How I would describe it is that connectedness with the local community. People want to feel that the police are there, that they understand the problems and are doing what they can to assist with them. That is a really important point in terms of maintaining that degree of connectedness through however we configure neighbourhood policing, local policing or whatever we call it.

It is also a really important point that that is very local. There will be impressions of the police that come from media and national stories, but a lot of this is about how I and those around me feel we are connected with our local police service, so we need to make sure that that is happening.

We have to address people's understanding of the role of the police—Chair, you made the point in the earlier session about the 24%—because most people think the police are there for crime, which we obviously are, and we need to be doing that, but the vast majority of calls for service that all forces across the UK are dealing with are not to deal directly with crime. We are finding ourselves in other spaces, being the emergency service that will respond. We need to be able to have a narrative with the public that explains that situation.

When you talked about the crimes that had impacted on you in a digital way, that takes us into another place about how we better get into that. It links into the prevention point, because the reality is that, when your bank account was impacted, you would have been one of thousands of victims who may well be all over the place, and the offender may not even be in these islands, so the ability for South Wales police to investigate that crime is fairly limited.

We have to be involved in how we do prevention and work with agencies and organisations at regional, national and, increasingly, international levels to deal with that criminality. Some of this is about thinking of the role of the police in a different way. If someone came and damaged your house, it is a straightforward investigation in the way that we would understand. When someone has impacted on your bank account remotely, it is a very different role that the police are playing, and we need to look collectively at what our expectation is of what we should be doing and what we can be doing.

We always have a victim care responsibility to members of the public, but it is really maintaining that connectedness at a local level, and then taking that step back to look at what our role can be. When it comes to those kinds of issues, we need to be having a collective prevention aspect, because the big players in that example are your bank, the systems that your banking runs on, and the systems that other people are using to access them.

We, collectively—by "we", I do not mean just policing; I am including Parliament—need to be impacting those organisations in a preventive sense to make sure they are doing everything they can to ensure that it is very difficult to penetrate your online banking and commit a crime. It is about looking at it from a slightly different perspective. Someone punching somebody outside the pub is still the territory that we have always been in.

In terms of what happened to you—there are lots of other examples that we could give—we need to redefine our role and work with all the other

people who we need to work with, including having the legislative framework and the weight that Government can give to ensure that everyone who needs to be playing their preventive role is playing it.

Festus Akinbusoye: I agree with what Martin said, but another thing that I wanted to highlight is that I have found, in my role as commissioner, that, to all intents and purposes, police officers are absolutely good at their jobs. I do not want to leave anyone with the impression that there are any police officers—or none who I have come across anyway—who are sat down in a police station, waiting for a job to do. There just is not one—not that I am aware of, anyway.

One thing that policing really needs to start getting better at doing in the 21st century is explaining to the public what it does, how it does it and why it does it. A lot of the perception of policing nowadays, as far as I see, is driven by social media. An incident happens. There is a video clip that is about 10 seconds long, and that gives you a snapshot of what has happened.

Maybe that is all there is to it, but if I use the example of a vehicle stop, until I became a special constable, I just thought the powers that the police use to stop someone in a vehicle were exactly the same as stop and search. Having been stopped and searched six times myself, I did not realise that the powers were different. If I was to see a vehicle stop online, as happened with one of your colleagues was some years ago, and it was on social media, and if the police did not follow due process and did not do their GOWISELY properly, everybody piles in and all of a sudden it spreads.

I am saying to myself, "Why was no one explaining to the public that the powers that the police use to do A are different from those that they use to do B?" There is a process that they have to go through. Maybe that is something that the college will want to take on in due course—that process of explaining to the public what the police are doing, how they do it and why they do it. That explanation to the public is so crucial and will help to re-address some of the misperceptions that also lead to these trust issues.

The other thing that I want to mention very briefly is community policing. Fundamentally, what do the public want from their police? They want you to be there when they need you, dealing with the issues that they have, and, hopefully, the criminals get locked up. When there are issues with the criminal justice system, the police get the blame, because, as far as the public are concerned, the police are the start and end of the entire criminal justice system. Again, there needs to be a better level of explanation to the public about how the whole criminal justice system works.

That is why some police and crime commissioners are investing a lot more in victim engagement officers, so that they work with victims of crime when an incident occurs and they know that there is a time when it

passes over from the police to the courts, and then the judges. Those are things that really need to be done.

About 10% to 11% of my entire uniformed police workforce are dedicated to community policing. As Rick mentioned earlier, during the austerity period, community policing was pretty much disbanded in many forces. If they were there, they were mostly on paper, but they were mostly doing response-related work, not the early intervention, prevention and diversion work.

Now, with the added number of officers coming in, as Andy mentioned, there is a great opportunity to invest again in community policing, but I must say to you that the fact that too many officers are stuck in A&E and dealing with mental health jobs means that our communities are not feeling the full benefit of this uplift in officers, in my view.

I can just say very lastly that, in Bedfordshire, I asked the force to provide me with some data on what I call the non-police police jobs that our officers are doing. In one of the smallest police forces in the country in terms of funding, the response team alone spent 53,000 hours on mental health jobs alone, and an average of 174 minutes in A&E waiting for a handover in the hospital. That was the equivalent of 28 full-time police officers. That is an entire response team doing nothing but dealing with mental health jobs alone. Many will be new recruits who cannot be on the streets patrolling while they are sat in A&E or looking for a missing person. That needs to change.

Andy Marsh: May I mention three things that are important in answering the question around trust and confidence? The first thing is that the police need to be there for people when they need them. That means when they telephone them and when they expect to attend because something very serious has happened. That was why the College of Policing was very pleased to share the evidence base on why it is valuable to attend burglary of people's houses: to reassure the public, and to solve and reduce crime.

On each of these three things, there is a payback. If we are to get the basics right, we need the time to do it. We need to address the non-police demand that Festus has articulated.

The second thing that will rebuild trust is performance. We need to be effective at cutting crime, catching criminals and keeping people safe, and the college, working in partnership with the NPCC, intends to declutter the environment, so that officers have the skills, knowledge and time to do just that.

In terms of the second payback, they cannot do that if the criminal justice system is not working more effectively. Up to three years to get a rape trial to court is simply unacceptable for everyone, so the criminal justice system needs serious reform and improvement.

The third area that will rebuild trust and confidence is standards of expectation about what matters most to the public, whether we are talking about burglary attendance or rape investigation, as well as standards of conduct that we have heard so much about and that have let us all down incredibly badly.

If we are to sustain and bring a 43 force model to maximum performance and maximum optimisation, we need an influential and effective College of Policing. I have been in this job for a year, and that is what I intend to do.

Q28 **Chair:** When is the commitment around attending every report of burglary going to happen?

Martin Hewitt: It is happening now in all forces. Many forces were already attending whenever someone's house was burgled, because we absolutely understand the impact.

Q29 **Chair:** Is that happening now across over all 43 police forces?

Andy Marsh: Some chiefs were, understandably, rather put out. I know that South Wales was, saying, "We do that anyway". My old force, Avon and Somerset, has a fantastic grasp of its data and told me that 93.6% of burglaries of dwellings were attended in person. You could say, "What about the 6.4%?" Those are rental houses where there is perhaps no one in, or no one to attend and speak to. There will always be a small amount of slippage.

Festus Akinbusoye: That is right. Many forces are already doing that. My force has been doing that for about two or three years now. The latest data show that we have seen a reduction of about 21% in burglary. The evidence is very clear. When this happens, the success rates are very good, so it is something that many of us support.

Q30 **Carolyn Harris:** Well done to South Wales police again. High-profile cases will always make the news more than the good news local stories, because they do not sell papers. In order to get trust and confidence back in policing, we need better vetting and better discipline processes when we do find a bad cop, as it were. What is your view and how do you see that progressing?

Martin Hewitt: You are right, and that work is under way, as I said at the beginning. Every force has gone back and looked at all those cases that are working through their system. We are dealing with those cases, and dealing with them quickly. We are getting the chief constables in a place to do it, and we are removing people from the organisations who fail to meet our standards. Really importantly, we are also being transparent about that factor as well.

That does create some bad stories, because it is more police officers being sacked, but it is really important for us to go through and be clear that we are doing that. Quite a bit of attention has been placed on some

of the hearings that are chaired by independent, legally qualified chairs, and there is some evidence to suggest that they take a more lenient view than chief constables would take if they were chairing a panel.

The really important point is that there is work ongoing around that. I wrote to the Home Secretary to ask that that situation is looked at, and she has accepted that we will look at the misconduct processes. It is important that any process has due process and is fair, but it very much must take into consideration the impact on public trust and confidence, because that is the fundamental point we are talking about. That is very much the case when it comes to chief constables, and we need to look at that system to ensure that nobody who falls below the standards we expect remains in the service.

The final stage of that process, which can be problematic, is the police appeals tribunal. Even in cases where an officer is dismissed because of the finding, sometimes a police appeals tribunal will seek to reinstate. We have certainly been in situations where forces have had to resort to going to judicial review processes to challenge the decision of a police appeals tribunal. Very clearly, we need to get that system working.

The system needs to be looked at to ensure that all the relevant parts are acting appropriately, and that it is done fairly and at the right speed, because one of the other challenges that puts anybody off reporting, whether that is reporting a crime or reporting internally, is if you think this is going to take another 18 months for something to happen. It needs to be done at speed, but it has to be against a prism that is about public trust and confidence that, when you ring the police, you can trust that the person who turns up at your door is going to behave appropriately.

Carolyn Harris: It will be a painful process, but it will be well worth it.

Martin Hewitt: The phrase that I often use, without being flippant, is that it is going to get worse before it gets better. It is a really important process that we go through as a service, so that we can cleanse ourselves where there are pockets of toxic culture or behaviour that is just not acceptable.

Andy Marsh: If I may just add to that, the college provides specialised training for officers who lead professional standards and anti-corruption units. We deliver about 60 a year. We also deliver specialised training for anti-corruption and professional standards investigators. As we heard in earlier questions to Rick Muir, there has been, over the last 10 years, a build-up of a deficiency of specialist officers in the right jobs, particularly investigations. We are moving with specialised training to rectify that.

The second thing is that we have authorised professional practice on anti-corruption work, and we gather and disseminate good practice to keep our workforce honest.

Q31 **Carolyn Harris:** Many professions have scrutiny, if you like, and a renewed mandate. With politicians, it is a ballot box. How would you feel about police officers having a licence to practise, with it being reviewed after five years?

Andy Marsh: As we heard earlier, Rick made a recommendation of a licence to practise. In principle, I want the best possible training, accreditation and standards for police officers, but we have to move in a way that is practical and achievable for the service. The College of Policing, for most of the highest risk, most specialised roles, delivers accredited training and annual reaccreditation.

I will give you an example in an area that perhaps the public are not fully aware of. If you use a police firearm as an authorised firearms officer, you have to have a certain amount of training per year, licensed by a training school or a firearms range by the College of Policing, and anyone in the command structure—bronze, which is tactical, or silver or gold, which is strategic—needs to be licensed and accredited annually by the college. The same is true, by the way, of senior investigating officers, public order commanders and 21,000 public order officers who respond to protests across England and Wales.

I would love to give you an exact percentage, but a very substantial number of police officers and some police staff are accredited and licensed. One of the areas that we are looking at now, with Home Office partners, is whether, following the tragic shooting in Plymouth, firearms licensing officers should be annually accredited and assessed by the College of Policing.

In principle, I agree that is a healthy direction for any profession to take, but we may spend some more time talking about the degree apprenticeship and the new entry routes. We are undergoing some significant, revolutionary changes in policing at a time of massive uplift, and what I would always want to do, as the College of Policing, is to achieve as much as possible to the benefit of our public as quickly as possible, without breaking the system or losing the people in it. My opinion is that to move to that right now would be a step too far.

Festus Akinbusoye: There is no set view of the APCC on this, so if I am speaking in a personal capacity, there is some merit to this, given, like I said at the beginning, the scale of responsibility and powers that police officers have. Doing it on a five-yearly basis, as was recommended, is a bit of a concern to me, because, within a year of someone joining policing, they could go rogue, for want of a better word, and then no one knows about it. Do we then wait until the fifth year before that is flagged up?

One thing I have to mention is that the vetting departments across all of policing are already massively overwhelmed with the vetting of the very welcome intake of new officers. As far as I am aware, that is presenting some challenges with the re-vetting of current officers, so chiefs are

having to prioritise their resources. Do you want to prioritise the vetting of a new intake or the re-vetting of officers?

One of the assurances that I have been able to get from my force, for example, is that wherever any serving officer has been flagged up in any complaint by the professional standards department, the re-vetting process is escalated, so anyone that comes on the radar will get that vetting priority. Again, it is about people coming on to radar when it is too late, and that is a bit of a concern.

Like I said, policing carries risks all the time, and my concern with this proposal, even though I am generally in favour of it, is the extra demand that it will place on a very overburdened vetting department.

Q32 **Chair:** Martin, is that the case for all police forces in terms of the ongoing vetting of serving police officers? Is that not being routinely undertaken because of the pressure with the new uplift?

Martin Hewitt: It is not just the new uplift, but undoubtedly there is and always has been a pressure on the vetting units to do what they need to do. In answer to your question, I am very keen to look at anything that we can do to improve where we are, but I am also very practical and I want something that is going to make a difference.

In this arena, the work that is being done to really look at the vetting processes needs to be done very clearly, so we need to make sure that, when someone comes in, the horror stories that the Chair referred to are not happening.

We then need to use people's annual appraisal process to identify changes and deal with them. We are trialling, in a number of places, continuous vetting, where, if someone pops up on certain systems, that automatically raises a flag, which is useful.

One of the challenges that we have with lots of organisations is that currently the vetting process is largely manual and we need to get to a place where we have a much more automated process, particularly where a lot of what we will be catching and looking at is sitting in other systems, so we need to do that element.

Whenever people go into a specialist or sensitive role, there will be a re-vetting process. At the higher levels of vetting, you are automatically re-vetted every certain numbers of years. Through the years, I have been accredited to lead firearms, to do public order and to be a hostage negotiator, and all those things exist for the higher-risk issues, but I do not think that we should just come up with something that is generic, particularly given, as we have already said many times, the range of things that we are expecting police officers to do.

A generic licence might not add a huge amount of value, but in terms of standards and behaviours, it absolutely needs to be locked in around vetting and professional standards.

Q33 **Simon Fell:** We have touched on trade-offs and prioritisation. Festus, you talked a lot and very eloquently about the amount of time your officers spend hanging around and waiting for things to happen that are outside of their control. What do you think the police should be doing more of and less of in terms of their prioritisation?

Festus Akinbusoye: That is a very difficult question, because I have since found that policing is one of those roles where it is very difficult to say no when a call comes in. I can tell you what I know one or two forces are doing that I am aware of, which is that, when a mental health job comes in, they just say no. I am anecdotally informed that the demand for those calls has fallen by about 60% to 70%.

What I am trying to do in Bedfordshire—somewhat controversially—although it has got people talking, is to start sending bills to local authorities and to the mental health teams every quarter. I am going to start that from next year, because it is simply becoming unsustainable.

There is no need for a police officer to be sat in an A&E with a gentleman who is suffering from dementia. He is not under arrest. He has not committed any crime. I do not see how we can sustain that. Nor is it acceptable for an ambulance callout to be cancelled just because a police officer is at the scene. That cannot continue.

That is an area where we need to have much more cross-departmental working at the governmental level to start trying to address this. Locally, what I see some PCCs and police chiefs trying to do is to take more robust action, especially around mental health jobs but also around missing children. In cases of children who go missing from care settings and are not back home by their curfew time of 10 pm, for example, all that happens is that a call for a police welfare check comes in, and the police cannot say no. In my view, those are some areas where we need to start seeing less direct police involvement.

Q34 **Simon Fell:** A lot of the issues in my constituency are due to centralised budgets that are set in silos from Westminster or Whitehall or wherever it is, and they do not address what is truly a local need, so you end up with the police doing this backfilling function, because they are the force of last resort, for want of a better phrase.

In terms of local budget-setting, would you sitting down with your equivalents in your local NHS bodies and other resource departments to understand what the local need is, and divvying up how best to allocate budgets, be a better way of doing things, or would it be better to have a clearer direction from Whitehall on where responsibilities lie, so that you have that clarity of judgment rather than local pooling?

Festus Akinbusoye: The dilemma that many forces face is that a police and crime commissioner, in consultation with the public, sets the strategic policing priorities. They know what their communities need, and then the budget allocation that they have and how that is going to be used within the force is agreed with the chief constable.

However, the demands that are non-policing related will eat into that resource availability, and you cannot say no, so there is already some element of flexibility in how resources are allocated. It is just that the mental health team will have their budget, and that is their core business and they will stick to it. With policing and education, it is the same thing, but there is this crossover between each.

In terms of some of the things that we are trying to do in Bedfordshire, which many other police forces already have, one is what are called street triage nurses, where you have mental health teams, paramedics and police who travel around together to a job where there might be a police need, a paramedic involvement or a mental health requirement. Some police and crime commissioners have funded the mental health nurses in their force control room and are doing that on a full-time basis, effectively.

There is this crossover between funding from the mental health trust as well as the police. That is happening, but I can say to you that the level of demand from what I would describe as non-policing police demands is growing. Somehow, we need to find a way of reducing that, so that the police can focus more of their time on doing what they are supposed to be doing.

Andy Marsh: In terms of what the police should be doing, the College of Policing runs a What Works database of crime reduction over 200 measures. It includes such things as hotspot patrol, which is a 15-minute patrol in crime hotspots, and it has proven to reduce crime, so we are working in an intelligence-led way to do that. Other examples include attending burglaries, spending more time doing high-quality investigations on, for example, rape and serious sexual offences, which are crimes that matter most to the public, and investing in neighbourhood policing teams, which are equipped to do multiagency problem-solving to prevent crime in the first place.

We are in Festus's force today, looking at the brilliant work that it is doing on offender management. The most recent addition to our smart practice website is four things that police forces can do to prevent homicide, in a homicide prevention framework. That evidence is fantastic. The police need time to do it without reducing some of the non-police time.

Here is another thing that the police need to do and, historically, have not done sufficiently in my time in policing. If you had the chair of the Police Federation here, he would tell you the same. They have not invested in adequate continuous professional development for all our staff and officers. Some of our very specialised and highly skilled people, like Martin, have been trained and accredited throughout their whole career in public order command, firearms command and other things. What about the response officers? What about the neighbourhood police teams?

This is difficult for people like Festus. He and I want them out on the front line. I want them serving the public. We have to invest in the right training, skills and knowledge, so that they access this database, and then we have to give them the right leadership so that they have the time to deliver it and fulfil their vocation for the public.

Martin Hewitt: I will not repeat what the others have said. Our fundamental contract with the public is that, when there is an emergency or they are in distress, we will turn up. Fundamentally, we have to do that. The question that you asked about local versus national is key, because, when we talk about all this non-police demand, if you like, or non-crime demand, we are talking about a public sector response to a person who is vulnerable or in distress, whatever it happens to be, and I never have a problem with us turning up. If a report comes in that there is a person who is behaving strangely, harming themselves or other people, or scaring people, of course we go.

The challenge is that we then stay, because we are largely the service that will go, because we will always go to that. I remember sitting on the management board over the river in the Met, when we agonised about how we reduce the non-police demand. You would come up with lists of things and then at the very end, in a business sense, you would say, "That is not our job. We cannot afford to go there", and we would end up saying, "Yes, but are we really going to leave someone lying on the ground at the side of the road?"

The challenge is how, at a Westminster level or, as you alluded to, at a local level, those other services are then coming in so that that person is not the same person on the side of the road four days later. In your constituency, your police will talk to you about the repeat individuals—for example, the children's home mentioned by Festus, with repeated instances of going back. In that children's home, the policy is, "If Joe Bloggs has not come back by 10 pm, we have to report that to cover ourselves". I understand why the staff would do that. We then get involved and we end up trailing around, when that is not, I would argue, a missing child; that is a child who does not want to be where they are supposed to be. You get into all sorts of other issues around that.

For me, it is about the public sector response to the issues—the preventive aspect—but we will always turn up when there is an emergency, because that is what we do and what we are contracted to do. Then you add all the other points that others have made about particular crimes—the most harmful crime, things that make people fear crime, and the people who make people unsafe.

Q35 **Simon Fell:** Can I just pick you up on something you said about the core purpose of policing? We have talked a lot about burglary and fraud. With the policy now being to attend every burglary, that sits in quite stark opposition to where we are with fraud, cyber-crimes and online crimes of all kinds, where the experience for most people is that, if they find out

how to report it, it disappears into a black hole and nothing happens; they are very unlikely to get some form of victim response. You are certainly not going to get an officer knocking on your door asking what happened and how it occurred.

I am interested in your views on what you think that does to public confidence. A crime has been committed against an individual, but the response is simply not there versus an analogue crime of a burglary, where there is now a very visible response. What should we be doing to try to improve for those more complicated crime types—beyond moving into prevention—and to respond to people who are victims of those sorts of crimes?

Martin Hewitt: It does have a negative impact on people's perception. It comes to some of the things we have already said about the public view, which is that anything to do with crime is, "It is the police". For me, the point is that we have to view how we play our role in those crimes differently. The burglary is physically located in a police area, and you have all that investigation that you can do. With fraud, there are multiple victims everywhere and the offender is not here.

I still think that the process we have at the moment is not good enough to make people recognise that you are taking this seriously and dealing with the crime. Rick made the point earlier about getting your money back. In a burglary, the first agency that is the most important organisation to you is the police. If, while I am sat here, someone is stealing money out of my bank account, the first organisation that I am going to want to speak to is the bank, because the bank will probably, or might, put the money back in.

We have to accept that we are in a different place in terms of the role that policing needs to play. It needs to make sure that people can feel, "I am reporting a crime to the police and they are taking this seriously". We have to be really clear with people about the expectation of what that looks like. It is not forensic officers turning up and looking for fingerprints in your burgled house. It is a different thing.

It is then how we do the prevention, which in many cases is educational. The bank account is one example. The one that exercises me a lot is my children, when they are on their laptops and their computers, and the vulnerability there. This is a lot about how we educate people to be secure and safe in all of our own virtual worlds.

Where it is really important that the Government and politicians are involved is in how we exert pressure on all those organisations that have the real crime prevention opportunity—the banks, the organisations that move the transactions, the applications and the programmes. It is all of those things that none of us can physically touch in the way that we can physically protect our house or car or whatever. It is about how all of us, collectively, put the pressure on to ensure that everything is being done as much as it can be.

Going back to some of the stuff that Rick said, you are clearly not going to deal with all that on a force-by-force, local basis, but we need to be working at that regionally, working with the National Crime Agency, and working internationally, as we do, to make sure that everything that can be done is done in this complex legal framework, where the laws, quite frankly, struggle to keep up with the opportunities for a criminal in fraud and cyber in a way that we have never seen before.

For the first 25 years of my service, things moved, but they moved reasonably slowly in the methods that criminals used. The last five or 10 years, technology-wise, have transformed that out of all recognition. The way we are vulnerable today, we were not vulnerable six months ago, so that has to be big-level, international work. It is about how we do the prevention and put pressure on all the people who can help in that, and then, at the end, we need to understand, so that we get the intelligence picture, and we need to make you, as a victim, feel that we understand, we get it, we take it seriously and we are doing what we can do to prevent it from happening again.

Festus Akinbusoye: Herein lies the conundrum that police chiefs and police and crime commissioners face, in that what we are seeing is that a growing number of crimes that our residents are facing are online. Having a bobby on the beat, as many of us would want, is reassuring and comforting, and so on and so forth, but a bobby on the beat cannot deal with your child being groomed in their bedroom, even as they walk past your home. The public want to have the police on their streets, but the real threat and harm is happening in your very own home. That is a real challenge.

Q36 **Gary Sambrook:** Festus, in the written submissions from all the groups here today—the Police Foundation, the College of Policing and the National Police Chiefs’ Council—they all mentioned the 43 force framework of policing across England and Wales. Do you think there is some merit to the idea of helping behind the scenes on those HR and legal elements, and the consistency? What do you think is the police and crime commissioners’ joint view, if there is one, on how we can change that framework?

Festus Akinbusoye: We all believe very strongly in the local democratic accountability of policing. I feel strongly that the more removed it is from the communities, the more difficult it is to keep tabs on it, for want of a better word.

However, there are areas where we should be seeing more collaboration. HR and vetting is one of them. I cannot understand, as one of my colleagues was saying to me this morning, why we have 43 vetting units, all of which have disparate outcomes. In some forces, vetting can take six weeks, and in others it will take six months for the same role. I do not understand why we need to have that level of complexity and divergence in vetting, so HR is definitely one of them.

From an operational level, I could disagree with the Police Foundation on this. The 43 model is reasonable, in my view. We have some very good regional organised crime units that are now in place. Just relating back to the previous question, the National Crime Agency is now embedded with some of the ROCUs, so the regional collaboration is there now and they are working reasonably well. They probably could do better, but that is very much at a tactical, operational policing level. I do not see the same level of collaboration around things like vetting and HR, and that is probably an area in which we need to do more.

Q37 **Gary Sambrook:** It was probably about 10 years ago to this month that police and crime commissioners came in. I have a distant memory of campaigning in the rain and the dark in November, which had a 12% turnout for police and crime commissioner elections.

Festus Akinbusoye: It has got better since then.

Q38 **Gary Sambrook:** Yes, we have come a long way in the last decade on police and crime commissioners, because I do not think that the previous system worked. It was normally just councillors who sat on a regional board. It was very opaque and difficult to get through. I am glad that you raised those points, because the reason that you are here is that this is about transparency and accountability in policing. A large part of what you are responsible for, and for which people will point to you as a failure or a success locally, are those elements that are being proposed to be joint.

I am glad that you have a scepticism about it. It would be interesting to know what the other views are. I have a distinct and ingrained scepticism of centralisation of any type, because it becomes more distant from accountability and transparency, and it is very important, as I hope you all agree, that the more local it is, the better it is for people on the ground.

Martin Hewitt: The question of whether we should have 43 forces or a different number is the wrong one. The real question, as alluded to earlier by Rick, is, "For all the things we ask the police to do, what things need to be done at a local level, and what things are better done regionally, nationally and, increasingly, internationally?" Let us think about that rather than some wholesale restructuring that would take forever and cost a fortune.

The other point is the one that Festus made. What the NPCC is all about, as well as some co-ordinating, is how we drive collaboration, by which I do not mean that force A and force B come together and create force C. I mean some of those things that we all have to do. Festus's force is in a tri-force collaboration and has been for some time, and there are others. We need to be sensible, and not use our independence and our legal independence as, "I have to do it my way, and you do it your way."

Let us think about those things that we are better doing collaboratively, either for efficiency or effectiveness, and often both. Let us collaborate

and get everyone to play their part, because some things are local and others, quite frankly, are international, and there is no point in trying to do them 43 times locally. That is how I would see it. We just need to ask the right question and then challenge all those in leadership positions to deliver.

Andy Marsh: I agree with Martin. Some things can best be delivered only locally through a locally known police leader and services accountable, through a police and crime commissioner, to the community.

However, when I was chief constable in Hampshire and the Isle of Wight, I was a founder member of enabling services collaboration with the county council and fire and rescue, which now provides HR, finance and other services for over 120,000 employees, at low cost and high effectiveness. I do not believe that we have yet reached anything like optimum collaboration on what I would generically call enabling services, and I welcome Rick Muir's findings in his excellent report.

Q39 **Lee Anderson:** Are police and crime commissioners a help or a hindrance? You can give me a politician's answer on that one, if you want to. If we have to keep them, should they be more regionally based, such as a midlands one, rather than county-wide?

Martin Hewitt: We need local, genuine governance and accountability for policing. We have a system in this country where we are operationally independent to do what we do, but, quite rightly, the public needs to be able to hold us to account. I agree that the previous system did not seem to work terribly well, and we are now 10 years in. Provided the relationships between the police and crime commissioner and the police chief constable are appropriate, good relationships, that system can work and each knows its place.

The question is clearly there in all the levelling-up conversations about whether you take that to a larger level. The key question on the level is about maintaining that relationship and genuinely being able to say you are representing the views of the public in whatever the scale of that area is. As you well know, we already have Mayoral models in London, Manchester and West Yorkshire.

Chair: I am going to ask other members who want to say something to be brief, because we are running out of time. We have opened up a whole issue here.

Andy Marsh: I will be really brief, and it is right that Festus has the last word. I have worked with three different police and crime commissioners in two police forces, and I have witnessed the immense value of locally accountable police services that they have brought. For example, in my last police force, the previous commissioner, Sue Mountstevens, extracted a commitment from me on appointment in 2016 that I would

not reduce the number of PCSOs and beat managers in neighbourhood policing—753.

That is a commitment that I was happy to make publicly, and she helped communicate that to other agencies, and then took a pivotal role, as Festus does, in negotiating with other services and agencies in that area about how we reduce the police demand and make this criminal justice system work better for local victims of crime and for residents. The system is what you get out of it, and I have found it to be very productive in two forces.

Festus Akinbusoye: It is almost like asking the Prime Minister if the Chancellor of the Exchequer is a help or a hindrance. It depends on which way you choose to look at it. The first iteration of PCCs certainly provided some challenges to policing as a whole, and we are now on the third iteration of police and crime commissioners. Each time, it has improved, and both PCCs and chiefs are better appreciating and valuing what both bring to the table. It is only going to get better over time. I would say that we are now more of a help and support to policing overall and to our public than, say, 10 years ago, and that will continue to get better.

Q40 **Chair:** I am really sorry. We are running out of time, but there are a number of questions that I would still like you to answer, so if I just raise them with you now, you might be able to write to me.

The Institute for Government said that the proportion of recorded crimes being charged is at its lowest ever level. I wondered if you could address why that is. That is one thing.

The other thing that we have not had much time to discuss relates to the College of Policing, and the use of data and research evidence allowing and helping police forces to make decisions about priorities. I wondered whether we could have some information about that. We would like to hear a bit more about the What Works Centre for Crime Reduction and the National Crime and Justice Laboratory. That would be very helpful.

I just wanted to ask a question about the Masons. Today, we have talked about transparency and openness, and the misogyny within the police force. Is being a member of the Masons still prevalent and a problem in the police force?

Festus Akinbusoye: I had one or two members of the public raise this with me during my election campaign. When I came into role, one of the questions that I asked the chief constable was, "Is this true?" His answer was, "Categorically not so".

Chair: If that is the answer, that is what I am interested to hear.

Andy Marsh: I have never been a Freemason, nor have I been asked to join that particular club. I have been in the police, as I said, for 35 years, and I have seen masonic influence. It has waned to the point of not being the issue that maybe it once was. The very fact that you are asking the

question, though, shows that there is a perception that still needs addressing.

Chair: What we are interested in is transparency and openness. In the light particularly of that report this morning, one wants to question and see what is going on in the police.

Martin Hewitt: Likewise, I have been in the police for 30-something years and have never been approached and never been a member. I knew it was there in the 1990s, but it has very much waned, as far as I am aware. It pops up periodically when something particular happens. Transparency about the way that we behave and, when you are talking about Masons, the influences being exerted in the way that issues are dealt with, particularly internally within the organisation, is a valid question.

Q41 **Chair:** That is very helpful. We have talked a lot about balance and how you get this right. Do you have examples of police forces around the world that have got to grips with some of the new challenges facing policing, and are providing community policing but also dealing with things like fraud, the internet and all that? If you have examples that you think we ought to look at, that would be very helpful to the Committee.

One other question is more fundamental. The police force is a command and control operation. We have been talking a lot today about officers using their discretion, and creative thinking about how you work with other public sector bodies. Could you say something about the tension between that command and control, and wanting the creativity to make things work on the ground?

If you could write to us with any of your thoughts on those questions, I would be very appreciative. I am really sorry that we are running out of time. We are always against a hard stop, because of Prime Minister's questions on a Wednesday; you can imagine that there is a great deal of interest in that.

Can I thank all three of you? This has been an excellent panel. It has really helped us to understand the challenges you are all facing, and we look forward to hearing more from you. We will also take forward the questions that you are raising with us now into future panels.

Martin Hewitt: Might I just offer one other thing that we might write to you on? It was mentioned in the earlier session, and was on the criminal justice system, which is really important. There are some important issues about how the system is or is not working, and the police's role in that, but also the perception around trust and confidence, where there are failings in the system. I would be happy to put some thoughts in that might assist your review.

Chair: That would be great. We did a recent report around rape investigations and prosecutions. You will know that in that report we made clear recommendations about the criminal justice system and the

issues that needed to be addressed, so yes, please do write to us. Again, thank you.