



# Home Affairs Committee

## Oral evidence: [Policing priorities, HC 635](#)

Wednesday 15 March 2023

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[Watch the meeting](#)

Members present: Dame Diana Johnson (Chair); Ms Diane Abbott; Paula Barker; Simon Fell; Carolyn Harris; Marco Longhi; Tim Loughton.

Questions 328-426

### Witnesses

**I:** Sophie Linden, London's Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime.

**II:** Tom Whiting, Interim Director General and Chair, Independent Office for Police Conduct; Kathie Cashell, Director of Strategy and Impact, IOPC.

**III:** Abimbola Johnson, Chair, Independent Scrutiny and Oversight Board.

Written evidence from witnesses:

[IOPC](#)



## Examination of witness

Witness: Sophie Linden.

Q328 **Chair:** Good morning, everybody. Welcome to the Home Affairs Committee's latest session on our policing priorities inquiry. This session is an opportunity to examine accountability, conduct, and public trust and confidence in policing. We have three panels this morning, and I am very pleased to welcome Sophie Linden to our first panel. Ms Linden, could you just introduce yourself and explain the role that you have?

**Sophie Linden:** Of course. I am Sophie Linden, the deputy mayor for policing and crime in London.

Q329 **Chair:** Obviously we want to talk to you about the Metropolitan police in terms of the inspectorate's "Engage" process and how that is going, but just before we do that, I want to talk to you about violence against women and girls. I am sure you saw the publication of further statistics yesterday about the number of allegations of violence against women and girls in relation to the police. That gave a snapshot over a six-month period, between October '21 and March '22, which I am sure that you, like me, were very shocked to see. This is now more information about what is going on in terms of the police and violence against women and girls. We have a whole catalogue now of stories and allegations, which is very difficult for the police. I wonder particularly about the Metropolitan police. I think there is a problem across all policing, but you are speaking on behalf of the Metropolitan police and about your role there. What do you think is the problem that the Metropolitan police have with women? What is the issue?

**Sophie Linden:** If I could start with what you were saying about the NPCC statistics that were published yesterday, I was aware that they were coming. It is shocking when you see them published like that, but I have been working very closely with Maggie Blyth, because, with a different hat on, I also lead for the Association of Police and Crime Commissioners on victims. I really do think that Maggie Blyth has done a very good job in improving transparency. It is really important that the public can see what is happening within police forces nationally, and those statistics show us.

With regards to the Metropolitan police, the Mayor and I have been worried for a while about what is happening within the Metropolitan police. Obviously, we have had really high-profile cases, but it is not just the high-profile cases. It is also a number of misconduct cases and issues within the Met. That's why the Mayor asked the previous commissioner to set up the review that Baroness Casey is leading into the culture within the Met.

I think, and the really high-profile cases we have seen have shown, that the culture within the Metropolitan police is one that needs radically to change. There is a real issue with the way in which, internally and externally, women and girls are being treated. We can see that in terms of the confidence that women have in the Met, which has fallen, as it has among other communities. Also, there is an issue around detections and



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around those offences we put within violence against women and girls—rape, sexual offences and DA. Those detection rates are really plummeting.

There are two things going on. There are cultural problems and an issue around the service that is being delivered, particularly to women victims. They have meant that trust and confidence have really fallen.

**Q330 Chair:** Would you say that the Metropolitan police is institutionally sexist, misogynistic?

**Sophie Linden:** I think there is a real issue within the Metropolitan police in terms of the way it treats its women officers and staff, and also in terms of the way that victims are treated. Baroness Casey is looking into the culture of the Metropolitan police. We expect her findings shortly, and I will take extremely seriously what she says about that. She has been in the Met, and her team have been within the Metropolitan police for over a year now, so what she finds will really be the evidence of what is happening within the Metropolitan police.

The other thing we have seen from Baroness Casey's interim findings—her interim report was published in November—is that there has been a significant issue with the Metropolitan police's ability to get rid of those officers who should not be there, which is those officers who are sexist, racist or homophobic. Those misconduct proceedings have not been tough enough and they have not been fair enough. We can see that in her interim findings, where she says there is systemic bias within misconduct, whereby Black officers in particular are being treated far more harshly than white officers, and we can see that. There are significant systemic problems within the Metropolitan police.

**Q331 Chair:** Why do you think it has taken so long for this all to come to light? To be fair, it has been known for a very long time that there are problems within the police—the way, say, officers who are known to be domestic abusers have been allowed to carry on with no action taken, as well as the culture that you have talked about. This has been known for a very long time, hasn't it? What has changed? Why is there this attention now?

**Sophie Linden:** I don't think that there has not been any focus on what has been going on within the Metropolitan police, or nationally, but obviously, you and the Committee will know that there have been some significant cases, as well as some significant reports, such as the HMICFRS report on violence against women and girls, which talked about an epidemic of violence. That has meant, rightly, that that focus has been there.

We have been focusing in London on violence against women and girls, and what the Metropolitan police should be doing, for a number of years. For example, we have really looked at the detection rates, as have other people and other forces, for rape and sexual offences within the Metropolitan police.



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MOPAC and the London Victims' Commissioner published a rape review in 2019, which really set out what was happening with rape offences and what was going wrong in relation to victims withdrawing because they weren't being properly supported and the investigations were not being led in the right way. We put significant officer time into developing a programme, which turned into Operation Soteria and then became funded by the Home Office. There is a real focus, and a new review is going to come out shortly from Baroness Casey on this; it is not that there hasn't been focus on particular areas, especially within the Met and led by MOPAC, and looking within the Metropolitan police.

**Q332 Chair:** I want to ask you this. Obviously, we have had the very high-profile cases of Wayne Couzens and David Carrick more recently. Are you confident that we are not going to see cases like that again? I am particularly focusing on the fact that you are recruiting a large number of new officers. There are issues about the vetting of officers you have in post as well. Are you confident?

**Sophie Linden:** In order to have confidence, you have got to really understand and be assured about the leadership of the Metropolitan police. I am really confident in the new leadership of the Met with Sir Mark Rowley and Lynne Owens; I am really confident in their drive and their understanding of the significant issues that they are grappling with and the progress that the Metropolitan police have to make. I have confidence in that.

In order to be able to be really confident that this will never happen again, we also need to make sure that there are changes within the processes and procedures whereby misconduct is dealt with. At the moment, it is difficult to exit officers out of the Metropolitan police, because of the statutory regulations around misconduct procedures. The commissioner has lobbied for change. The Mayor has lobbied for change. We have written to the Home Secretary about that.

For example, we think that if you are found guilty of a serious offence, it should be automatic that you leave the Met. There should also be, when there is that allegation, automatic suspension. We also think that if you fail vetting, for example, when you are within the Metropolitan police, it should be automatic that you no longer can serve within policing.

**Q333 Chair:** But you're not confident that that—

**Sophie Linden:** No, I am confident. If we get changes—

**Chair:** If you get changes. So at the moment you're not confident, because of the—

**Sophie Linden:** Yes, I am confident that everything possible is being done to make sure that we do not get cases like David Carrick and Wayne Couzens again. If David Carrick joined the Metropolitan police now, he would fail vetting, so those things have changed. What I am trying to say is also that we know that people can get within policing that do the wrong



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things. I have confidence that the leadership of the Metropolitan police are doing everything they possibly can to ensure it doesn't happen again.

**Q334 Chair:** In the recent case that came to light of a police officer who had masturbated on a train, he was actually convicted, but he wasn't dismissed from the Metropolitan police. He is still serving, as I understand it. I think he is probably part of the review of over 1,000 officers, where they are looking over the last 10 years at the disciplinary action that was taken against officers. But as I understand it, that officer is still in post, although he is not in a position where he is front-facing with the public. That seems to me—

**Sophie Linden:** That is unacceptable—it is unacceptable—and the current leadership of the Metropolitan police have made it really clear that that is unacceptable. That decision was made in the previous regime. The current leadership have made it very clear that that is a decision that would not have been taken under the present leadership of the Metropolitan police, and it is being reviewed as part of Project Onyx, where they are looking right across the piece on all those previous allegations of sexual offences that Sir Mark Rowley has promised to report on very shortly.

**Q335 Chair:** “Very shortly”—is it by the end of this month?

**Sophie Linden:** It was by the end of this month, yes.

**Q336 Chair:** So we will know, out of those 1,000 officers, how many are going to be dismissed?

**Sophie Linden:** We should do. We are waiting to find out. A lot of work is in train around Project Onyx, looking at the over 1,000 cases of allegations over the last 10 years. That is ongoing. We have been working with the Met on that to make sure that—I have a lot of confidence. I have visited the domestic abuse unit that is looking at these cases. There are really good officers absolutely focused on making sure they rid the Met of those officers who shouldn't be in there.

We have also been working with them to make sure that there is outside expertise from the violence against women and girls sector, so that they have that different view of the cases as well—to make sure that there is that scrutiny but also some advice around it. Sir Mark has promised to report by the end of the month. I am sure he will, and I am sure it will be very clear as to how far they have got in looking at the cases—how many have been dismissed or how many are actually in the gross misconduct or misconduct process. As I said before, it can take time to dismiss and to get through those misconduct processes.

**Q337 Chair:** I think the public would still be very shocked if you are saying that, at the end of the month, the commissioner may say, “Well, we're still having to go through further disciplinary action,” particularly in relation to the case I have just highlighted, where someone with a conviction for indecent exposure was still given a final written warning, I think. It wasn't seen as gross misconduct. We all know, don't we—I have been talking about it this week—how indecent exposure can often be a



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gateway offence and can lead to much more serious offending, as we saw with Wayne Couzens? Yet that officer is still in the Metropolitan police today.

**Sophie Linden:** He is and, as I said, the current leadership of the Metropolitan police have said that that would not have happened under their leadership. It is unacceptable. He is not on frontline duties, but that doesn't give—

Q338 **Chair:** He still has a warrant card, hasn't he?

**Sophie Linden:** I totally understand why people are really concerned about that. In terms of the drive and the commitment of the present commissioner, Sir Mark Rowley, I have absolute confidence that they will get through these processes as quickly as they possibly can, but you know and I know there are really complicated, complex regulatory regimes that they have to operate under. What would be really good is if the Government move quickly—if there was a review—to change those so that cases like that do not remain within the Met.

**Chair:** Okay. I can see that lots of members of the Committee want to come in on this. I am going to take Diane, Paula and Carolyn, and then we are going to move to Tim.

Q339 **Ms Abbott:** First of all, could you raise your voice a little? It may be me, but I have difficulty catching what you are saying. How long have you been the deputy mayor for policing and crime?

**Sophie Linden:** I was appointed in 2016.

Q340 **Ms Abbott:** So you have been in that role for seven years.

**Sophie Linden:** Yes.

Q341 **Ms Abbott:** When did you first become aware that there was an issue about the Metropolitan police and women and girls?

**Sophie Linden:** As I said, we have been—

**Ms Abbott:** But when did you first become aware?

**Sophie Linden:** The rape review in 2019 was a real issue for me in terms of what it covered—

Q342 **Ms Abbott:** So 2019.

**Sophie Linden:** Looking back, there has always been an issue around violence against women and girls and the ability of the Metropolitan police to properly address what is happening in London. I was aware of that since I came into office. The rape review in 2019 gave me a real insight into what is happening in terms of serious sexual offences.

Q343 **Ms Abbott:** So once you became aware—I am not sure whether you are saying 2019 or when you first came into office—what did you do?

**Sophie Linden:** What we did in terms of—



**Ms Abbott:** No, you.

**Sophie Linden:** Apologies. What I did in terms of the rape review in 2019 was say to the Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime, which I head up, "We have got to do something about this. We can no longer have little, small changes at the margins. We have to have systemic structural change in the way, for example, that rape investigations are led."

I enabled and said to officers, "You should put significant time into this. Put aside investment to be able to underpin that." Then we lobbied the Home Office around, "Actually, this is about practices right across police forces." We got the Home Office to fund that, and that has turned into Operation Soteria, which I am sure the Committee has been briefed on. It is a really significant programme of change.

The reason I am looking at that is because, within that, it really showed how officers were treating women, some of the rape myths they were operating under, and the way in which they treated victims, rather than actually investigating the perpetrators of those crimes.

Q344 **Ms Abbott:** This will be my final point about violence against women and girls. As you say, you became aware of it in 2019. Why is it only now that we are having a serious programme of change?

**Sophie Linden:** I do not agree with you that it is only now that we have a serious programme of change. We have had a programme and we have developed programmes of change not just since 2019—since I came into office, we have had programmes of change. We have also been scrutinising the detection rates and what has been happening within misconduct since 2016, and in 2019 as well. I am afraid I would beg to differ that it is only now that we are doing this.

Q345 **Ms Abbott:** So why are you having these very serious cases, as the Chair has spoken about, that are just coming to light?

**Sophie Linden:** With the serious cases, myself and the Mayor asked the previous commissioner to set up the review under Baroness Casey over a year ago. That is going to report very shortly. The reason we asked for that to happen is that we were not satisfied with the progress. We were concerned with what was happening in the Metropolitan police. MOPAC is not an investigatory body—we have oversight and scrutiny. We wanted more capacity and a spotlight put on to the Met, and that is why we asked for that review to take place.

Q346 **Ms Abbott:** Okay. I know my colleagues want to come in on this, but I want to ask a few more questions about the Met and race. You will know as well as I do that there have been issues about the Met and its relationship with London's Black community going back 40 years, to my knowledge. Were you aware of that when you became deputy mayor for policing and crime?

**Sophie Linden:** Of course I was. As you know, Diane, I have been a councillor in Hackney and I have lived in Hackney since I was 16, so of



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course I was aware of that. And I was absolutely aware of that from my previous roles in the Home Office as well.

Q347 **Ms Abbott:** So, once again, what did you do?

**Sophie Linden:** In terms of what I did from the Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime, in 2016 we published a review of misconduct processes within the Metropolitan police, which showed the disproportionality. We published it again in 2019, which showed that there had been very little progress in terms of the disproportionality within the Metropolitan police in the way it deals with misconduct processes. We pushed and tried to drive change within the Metropolitan police. Again, we were not satisfied with that change. I was not satisfied, nor was the Mayor, with the pace of change, so we asked Baroness Casey to undertake a report. That was obviously internally—

Q348 **Ms Abbott:** I do not want to prolong this. Sir Mark Rowley has resisted characterising the Met as "institutionally racist". How would you characterise the force?

**Sophie Linden:** I think there are significant, systemic problems within Metropolitan police. There are racists within the Metropolitan police. They are now setting out to be an anti-racist organisation, which is to be welcomed. Baroness Casey will be reporting shortly, and I am sure that she has looked at not just race, but misogyny and homophobia, within the Metropolitan police, and that report will be a significant moment for the Met.

In terms of what I think the Metropolitan police should be doing, while Sir Mark has talked about systemic bias and racism within the Met, he absolutely accepts that there is a significant problem. I obviously looked at his evidence when he came here before Christmas, and he was really clear that he does not think that this is a case of a few bad apples. He is very clear that there has got to be significant organisational change.

Q349 **Ms Abbott:** Just finally, as you will know, the racial disparities in the Met's use of stop and search go back 40 years. It was racial disparities in stop and search that triggered the 1981 Brixton riots. When we asked Sir Mark Rowley about that, he said the reason they were disproportionate is that "young Black men" are "more likely to be murdered than young white men." Now come on: this has been going on since 1981. Are you really telling me that that disproportion is to do with the fact that the young Black men are more likely to be murdered?

**Sophie Linden:** I am obviously really aware of the history of stop and search and the history of the tensions and the community tensions that have been caused by that. I was in Hackney in 2011 when we had riots, and I did a significant amount of research and work with the community around that. In terms of the disproportionality in stop and search, after the murder of George Floyd, I led a significant piece of work with the Metropolitan police and the community really looking at trust and confidence. Stop and search was a clear issue within that. We have put in





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place a number of things around stop and search, around the transparency, publishing a race audit—

Q350 **Ms Abbott:** Okay. Just to follow on from what Mark Rowley said about the disproportionate use of stop and search being to do with the murder rate for young Black men, the data show that most searches are conducted for drugs. How can you explain the difference?

**Sophie Linden:** The data that we publish on our dashboards and that the Metropolitan police publish as well does show that. It also shows that, if you look across the boroughs, there is a significant difference in the disproportionality of stop and search.

Q351 **Ms Abbott:** Let's rest on this point, because many people want to come in. On the one hand, Sir Mark Rowley is telling us that it is all about the murder rate but, on the other hand, your figures show that the stop and searches are all about drugs—or it is claimed that people are stopped and searched for drugs.

**Sophie Linden:** I am totally aware of what the figures show in terms of that. The Metropolitan police use stop and search a lot—it is a valuable tool—in order to try to suppress the violence. They have been very successful in suppressing the violence. I am not suggesting that that is just because of stop and search; it does take a number of weapons off the street. In terms of the drugs, that is something that has been fed back to us on a number of occasions, particularly around our action plan on trust and confidence within the Black community. We are doing a piece of research at the moment around what the link is between that type of stop and search and whether it does actually reduce violence. What can we see, and how effective is it?

**Ms Abbott:** Okay. Stop and search has been an issue since 1981, and no single thing causes as much disaffection between the Black community and the Met as that disproportionality in stop and search, but I go back to the Chair.

**Chair:** Paula and Carolyn, do you want to come in specifically on the questions of violence against women and girls?

**Paula Barker:** Yes.

**Chair:** Do you want to come in on those points now? Then I will go to Tim.

Q352 **Paula Barker:** Morning, Ms Linden. Thank you for joining us. I want to go back to the 1,000 officers who are being reinvestigated, if I may. I am wondering if you could give us some figures. Of those 1,000, how many are suspended and how many are taken away from frontline duties, as you explained earlier? Those who are not on frontline duties, as the Chair has already said, still hold a warrant card. What sort of duties are they doing if not on the frontline? My concern is that even if they are on back-office duties, whatever those may be, they are taking calls or dealing with inquiries, so that potentially, as in the particular case the Chair mentioned, they are coming into contact with vulnerable women or girls.



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**Sophie Linden:** I am afraid I would have to write to you with those particular figures, as I haven't got them in front of me. I will get those figures from the Metropolitan police and write to you about them. In terms of whether or not a police officer is suspended, the number of suspensions has increased since the new leadership of the Metropolitan police. I totally understand the concern of not just this Committee, but members of the public—it is one of the things we have been pushing—that where there are allegations that officers have perpetrated domestic abuse, sexual violence or violence against women and girls, they are still able to have contact with the public. That is why we have been really pushing for changes around specific offences where there should be an automatic suspension.

Q353 **Paula Barker:** Of the 1,000 officers who are being reinvestigated, some, if not all, will go through potential dismissal procedures. What sort of engagement is going on through the process now, during the reinvestigation stage? What sort of process is being done with the Police Federation regarding this?

**Sophie Linden:** There are discussions within the Metropolitan police with the Police Federation. I presume the Police Federation will be looking at those cases. You would have to ask the Police Federation about its role on this, I'm afraid.

Q354 **Paula Barker:** When you write to the Committee with those figures, could you also write about the types of duties that those officers are expected to do when not on the frontline? I am concerned about the potential for them to have any sort of interaction on cases that specifically relate to violence against women and girls, if any of those 1,000 are being reinvestigated for that specific issue.

**Sophie Linden:** Of course.

Q355 **Carolyn Harris:** Let me just take you back to the Chair's question about the police officer who was found masturbating on public transport. Presumably, there is a legal conviction against that individual police officer. When I was a school governor, I had to go through a DBS check. If I didn't pass my DBS check, I couldn't be a school governor. What kind of retrospective checks are we doing on police officers who may have done offences that would lead them to fail a DBS check, and can we dismiss them?

**Sophie Linden:** There are a couple of things within that. That is one of the changes we are pushing and have asked the Government for in terms of their review of the police regulations, when a police officer has committed a specific criminal offence such as that. I totally agree in terms of indecent exposure; I think it should be absolute zero tolerance on that. If you are convicted for indecent exposure, you should not be a police officer. Could you repeat the other part of the question—what has happened to the police officer?

Q356 **Carolyn Harris:** So if a police officer has a criminal conviction but is still in post, they would fail a DBS check. As a school governor, a dinner lady or whoever, you have to regularly have a DBS check and, if you can't



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pass, you haven't got the job. Does that not apply to police officers as well?

**Sophie Linden:** Of course, there is the vetting that takes place when you first apply to be a police officer. If you fail vetting, you should not be able to be a police officer. One of the big changes that Sir Mark and we are asking for is that if you fail vetting again, you should automatically not be a police officer, because that is not the case at the moment. I think members of the public and, I'm sure, you—well, you know—find it surprising and quite shocking that it can bar you from joining the police, but if you're in already, it doesn't stop you remaining.

In terms of what the Met and nationally the police are doing, Sir Mark calls it data washing. They are passing all the names of the Metropolitan police officers through the police national computer and the police national database, to look for matches. That is a piece of work that is happening at the moment, so that they can follow up those that flag and see what they should be doing in terms of exiting them from the Metropolitan police, or misconduct proceedings.

Q357 **Carolyn Harris:** I am very glad to hear that.

I have just one other quick question. A lot of what we hear is historical. We have had evidence from people who have said that when they have reported rape, they have had a conversation with a police officer who has actually named the perpetrator and obviously has a friendly relationship with them. Presumably, as time moves on, you won't have that historical influence, which is bad practice. How confident are you that this will all be cleaned up in the renewal process?

**Sophie Linden:** I have a lot of confidence that this will not happen again in the same way, because we now have that focus as the Metropolitan police, but also nationally. We can see that from the statistics that you started with, from the National Police Chiefs' Council. I have a lot of confidence that we will not be in the same position. It will take time, because of the numbers involved and the processes involved, but I have a lot of confidence. For example, Sir Mark Rowley, since he was put in place as the Metropolitan Police Commissioner, has set up an anti-corruption unit. He has transferred a significant number of officers into that unit. The domestic abuse unit that I spoke about earlier is looking at all those cases of officers who should not be in the Metropolitan police. Also, Sir Mark has set up a public-facing hotline in order for members of the public to be able to ring in anonymously—it is quite important to many people not to be able to be known—and report officers. And they are working through all that.

There are the technicalities of misconduct, but there is also an incredibly important push from the leadership of the Metropolitan police around standards. That is important as well, because we don't want just to be talking about what happens at the end of the process, when officers have done things that they shouldn't have done. This is also about setting the right standards, promoting the right standards, and making sure that those standards are adhered to.



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**Carolyn Harris:** Thank you.

**Chair:** Thank you. Tim Loughton.

Q358 **Tim Loughton:** Thank you, Chair. Ms Linden, I guess you have probably seen at least three Met Police Commissioners during your tenure as deputy mayor. You mention the importance of leadership, and the one consistent thing in those six or seven years is that you have been the deputy mayor responsible for police and the Mayor has had the role of the commissioner, effectively, for police, so why is the Met in special measures now?

**Sophie Linden:** The reasons the Met are in special measures now—in terms of the actual report, it shows the key issues around victim care and the Met not providing the care, the assessment of victims, when they ring in: the THRIVE process and the emergency response. They are also in special measures because of their—one of the other things is around their IT programmes, around CONNECT and Command & Control. But I suspect you are asking—you know the reasons they are in special measures. In terms of what have MOPAC and I and the Mayor been doing in the years before the special measures, we have constantly been picking at the issues of victim care. I chair an oversight board. For a number of years, we have been pushing and doing oversight, but unfortunately the Metropolitan police did not move quickly enough or well enough in order to really deal with the issues that we were raising and the issues that we were showing to them in terms of the data that we were providing and the work that we were doing around victim satisfaction. We have the victim satisfaction survey, which we had, through our oversight board, very clearly pushed, and we tried to get changes within the Met. They did change a little bit, but not enough.

Q359 **Tim Loughton:** Why didn't they listen to you?

**Sophie Linden:** That is a difficult question for me to answer. You may well have already had the previous leadership of the Metropolitan police come in and give evidence. I think they did not listen enough. We have already had the HMIC inspector, Matt Parr, talking about the defensiveness of the Metropolitan police. They were very defensive, and they did not look and listen enough. They did not put in place enough changes. But we ought to also think about the context in which they were operating. It is not an excuse, but it is part of the context and the explanation. We have had austerity for 10 years. The Metropolitan police numbers fell below 30,000 in 2018 and did not start rising again until 2020.

Q360 **Tim Loughton:** Not every police force in the country is subject to the same austerity measures. It is in special measures, so I think it is—

**Sophie Linden:** I think that seven police forces in the country are now subject to special measures, which is quite a high percentage.

Q361 **Tim Loughton:** And quite a few are good or outstanding, but the Met is probably in the most parlous state of all of them. All this research you



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commissioned, all these surveys you commissioned, and all the concerns you expressed—they did not listen, so why didn't you blow the whistle?

**Sophie Linden:** We did blow the whistle in terms of the reports that we were publishing. That is why the Mayor and I asked the previous commissioner to set up the Baroness Casey review into the culture of the Metropolitan police, because we knew that there was something significantly wrong and we wanted to have a real root-and-branch look at that. That is why we asked the commissioner to set that up, and the review will be reporting shortly.

Q362 **Tim Loughton:** One of the things that I think the Committee has been most alarmed about—we went to Scotland Yard recently for a briefing on this, and Mark Rowley has given evidence. I think we all share your greater confidence in Mark Rowley. He certainly does not seem to be in denial about the extent of the problem and what needs to be done about it. But to carry on the point that has previously been made, the Met have just over 35,000 serving officers. Sir Mark Rowley said that about 3,000 Met police officers—almost 10%—are “not properly deployable” due to concerns over their health or their performance. There are reportedly another 500 officers suspended or on restricted duties because they have been accused of serious misconduct, and Mark Rowley told the BBC that 100 officers are on “very restrictive conditions” because they cannot be trusted “to talk to members of the public”. Then we have 1,000 or so who are being investigated, and there is absolutely no way that those full investigations are going to be completed by the end of this month. Regardless of austerity measures, about 10% of the manpower of the Met are not able to be proper police officers. That is an appalling indictment of where they are. How did it get to that?

**Sophie Linden:** Sir Mark and Lynne have done a really extensive root-and-branch look at where their police officers are, and we have had the statistics that he has been given. They have got to that by not having a strong enough grip from the centre into the basic command units. They have also got to that point because they have set up, on a number of occasions, what we call “initiativitis”: in order to deal with one specific problem, they set up a specific taskforce or a specific unit, which is an age-old way in which many police forces have responded to some issues. There has not been a clear enough grip on what is happening. There has not been a clear enough grip on HR procedures. Some of those officers who are not deployable will be officers who, quite rightly, have been taken off frontline duties. Some of them will have been injured in the line of duty.

**Tim Loughton:** That is a small part of it.

**Sophie Linden:** The question is how quickly they could be returned.

Q363 **Tim Loughton:** You keep referring to “they”. Is any of this your fault?

**Sophie Linden:** In terms of the role of myself and the Mayor, we have been very clear for a number of years that the Metropolitan police need to change and to reform. We have done the oversight and the scrutiny. We have laid out bare, in terms of reports and the dashboards that we

publish, what is happening within the Met. Because we were not getting the changes that we wanted to see, we asked the former commissioner to set up the Baroness Casey review. You know the history of the Mayor losing trust and confidence in the previous commissioner, and what happened there.

Q364 **Tim Loughton:** Sure, but is any of this your fault?

**Sophie Linden:** If we did not know what was happening within the Metropolitan police, I would take responsibility for that. We knew that there were significant problems. We did the oversight—for example, on victim satisfaction and victim care—which is one of the key reasons why the Metropolitan police are engaged. We have published victim satisfaction surveys—

Q365 **Tim Loughton:** You keep going on about what you have published—all your victim surveys and everything. Is any of this actually your fault?

**Sophie Linden:** The reason why the Metropolitan police are in special measures is poor leadership and management, so it is—

Q366 **Tim Loughton:** You are responsible for the leadership of the Met.

**Sophie Linden:** I am responsible for the oversight and the accountability—holding it to account.

Q367 **Tim Loughton:** So none of this is your fault?

**Sophie Linden:** The Mayor and I have been robust in holding the Metropolitan police to account. We got to the point where—

Q368 **Tim Loughton:** Can I ask one practical question, as you are not going to say whether it is your fault or not? How often do you go and visit a police station in the Met area?

**Sophie Linden:** I try to visit the frontline or go on visits to the Metropolitan police at least once a week.

Q369 **Tim Loughton:** So you will go out on patrol with ordinary officers?

**Sophie Linden:** Not just on patrol. I do, of course, go out on patrol and on emergency response. I visit specialist command units and have regular meetings in New Scotland Yard, but I know you are not asking me about the central New Scotland Yard. I go out regularly with frontline police officers, because I think it is incredibly important for somebody in my position to understand what is happening in London, and how frontline police officers are operating.

Q370 **Tim Loughton:** Do many of those officers effectively whistle blow to you?

**Sophie Linden:** When I have conversations with police officers, I always ask them, “What would make your job easier? What do you need?” A lot of the conversation is about IT and working practices. Some of them have, of course, spoken to me about difficulties in the job—of course they have.

**Chair:** I am going to go to Simon Fell and then come to Marco Longhi.



**Q371 Simon Fell:** I have two different topics I would like to raise. I will come back to the discussion we had around conduct in policing, and some of the structural challenges in the Met.

When we went to see the Metropolitan police a few weeks ago, they were really clear about the scale of the challenge they are leaning into, and how difficult it is going to be as they start to root out bad apples. That is not the right way to describe them, but I mean people who are corrupt and breaking down trust in the Met. There is going to be public outcry about that, and some very public cases coming to light. I would be interested to understand how long you expect that process to go on for, and by what metrics you are measuring whether it has been good?

**Sophie Linden:** I think that process is going to be a long process for a number of reasons. As I have said, I have absolute confidence in the leadership to drive this as quickly as they can. Regulations make it a longer-term process. If there are then criminal offences that come out of it, that is going to be a longer-term process—especially in London, where we have a huge court backlog. Unfortunately, I think the process will take quite a while. We will still be having cases coming to court in two or three years' time, I think, because the misconduct process takes time, and then the courts take a lot of time.

In terms of the metrics, around whether the Met has transformed enough and made significant progress, I will be looking at what has happened with the misconduct process and the disproportionality, and what has happened with complaints and the way they are dealt with by the Metropolitan police. We have also got to look at what the standards are by which Sir Mark Rowley is holding the Metropolitan police to account.

Lynne Owens, the deputy commissioner at the moment, is developing performance-management metrics. We will hold the Metropolitan police to account for those performance-management metrics.

**Q372 Simon Fell:** Thank you. It is hard to grasp how difficult this is going to be for the institution. Couzens and Carrick have knocked trust and created a barrier for many people who need the police but do not feel they can reach out to them now. You suggested that we are about to go through a period of two to three years of similar cases—although hopefully not as bad—coming to light, being in the media and very public. What is your plan to try and build trust and an honest dialogue with the public again while that is going on?

**Sophie Linden:** That is a very good question. It is a really difficult issue because, as Sir Mark has also said, as the cases come out, it knocks confidence. We somehow have to get the message across that, while those cases will be difficult and will knock confidence—especially that of women, I am sure—the reason the cases are coming out is that the issues are being dealt with within the Metropolitan police. It is a really difficult message to land that it is good that they are coming out because it means the leadership is working. It means they are being driven out.



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In terms of what we are doing in relation to trust and confidence, we know from the work we have done within MOPAC that the significant drivers of trust and confidence are, of course, how the Metropolitan police engages with the public and the way it treats them. Also, this is why it is so important that Sir Mark Rowley's turnaround plan is not just on trust, confidence and engagement, but looks at driving significant improvements in performance.

We know, because of the research and work we are doing, that trust and confidence are also driven by the service that Londoners get. The service that Londoners get at the moment is not good enough in terms of the emergency response, which is one of the reasons why the Met is in special measures. The plan around that is that the Mayor has invested significant money in the Metropolitan police around engagement and community-led training for police officers to improve the way in which they understand and interact with the communities they serve. In his most recent budget, he is also investing, for example, £2.5 million in the call centre, so that when Londoners call the Metropolitan police, their calls are answered as quickly as possible, but victims and their needs are also properly assessed, which is another thing that has been part of the "Engage" process.

**Q373 Simon Fell:** I take your point on performance. One of the challenges that Sir Mark outlined to us when he was here was around the sheer number of cases that officers are having to deal with that are mental health related. You mention the call centre. I think a call goes in every three and a half minutes that is mental health related. There is a dispatch of officers every 20 minutes to mental health cases. What is the plan to start to drive down non-crime demand on policing, which is taking up an awful lot of time and obviously hindering that performance improvement that you are trying to get to?

**Sophie Linden:** The increased demand from mental health is not just within the Metropolitan police in London; it is across the country. I am sure we all know that, as other services have had to contract because of the way in which austerity has worked, the police have become—they should not be, but they have become—the responders. That is not right for those in mental health crisis.

Police officers will do their best—they really will do their best—but they are not the right people to be responding and supporting those in mental health crisis. We are discussing that with Sir Mark and working to support Sir Mark in that. For example, we know from work they have done and looked at that it can take a police officer 14 hours from the report coming in that somebody is in crisis to handing them over to the relevant people within the NHS—14 hours of police officer time.

We are having discussions with the NHS, and Sir Mark is having discussions with the NHS, as to what can be done about that. It is a significant and difficult issue because somebody quite rightly has to be supporting and caring for that person in mental health crisis, and we have to ensure that there are appropriate hand-offs. I know that, in other parts of the country, they do it extremely well. In Humberside, they do that





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extremely well, with the right person for the right call. The Metropolitan police is looking at that, and they are bringing forward proposals as to how that can be implemented within the Met.

Q374 **Simon Fell:** Do you have an idea of what the timeline is for bringing those in?

**Sophie Linden:** They are developing the proposals. I sign off investment proposals. I am expecting a proposal on that quite shortly.

**Chair:** I am just conscious of time, and I want to bring in Marco Longhi.

Q375 **Marco Longhi:** When recently questioned, by a colleague of mine actually, Mayor Sadiq Khan described key performance indicators having all worsened—knife crime, to mention one—as being a success for him. Do you agree with him?

**Sophie Linden:** I don't think he described those key performance indicators as worsening.

Q376 **Marco Longhi:** He did. He is on film saying exactly that.

**Sophie Linden:** The statistics around knife crime and homicides in London show that they are decreasing. Violent crime in London is reducing. We are not complacent in any way. As we all know, one homicide—one murder—is one too many. Those statistics show that the crimes are reducing. Knife crime for under-25s is reducing. Burglaries are reducing. Gun crime is reducing and is lower than it was in 2016.

Q377 **Marco Longhi:** Well, I must have seen a different set of stats to the ones you are referring to. He was clearly asked about very specific crime indicators all having worsened, and he described them all as a success. I see your role, and that of the Mayor, as holding the police to account, and all of this is happening on your watch. When I listen to responses to questions from my colleagues, it seems as if you are not accountable for any of these outcomes.

**Sophie Linden:** Not at all. The statistics speak for themselves. Homicides are reducing, and gun crime is reducing. Those are the statistics I am speaking to.

Q378 **Marco Longhi:** So you think you have been successful in your role?

**Sophie Linden:** I think we are making progress. There is still a lot of work to do in terms of reducing those crimes further and reducing other crimes as well. We can see that burglary has reduced, and robbery has also reduced and has not yet come back to pre-pandemic levels.

What we have done is not only hold the Met to account and do that oversight, but the Mayor has significantly invested in the Metropolitan police, with over £1 billion, and 1,300 additional officers are now on the streets of London because of investment from the Mayor.

You talk about the statistics for violence, but we have set up England's first violence reduction unit, with a significant investment into preventing



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violence and working with young people to make sure they do not become involved in violence. That, and the work of the Metropolitan police, is bearing fruit.

**Q379 Marco Longhi:** If part of this whole process is to address the all-time-low confidence that the public have in the Met police, do you not think that part of your role, not just that of Sir Mark Rowley, is to accept that things have gone very badly wrong and that you and the Mayor have a role to play in that? Culture flows from leadership, and you and the Mayor have been in a position of leadership. It has happened on your watch—violence against men and women. All these things, like stop and search, are happening on your watch. Do you not feel able at all to recognise that things have not gone well?

**Sophie Linden:** I think I have said on a number of occasions this morning, and the Mayor and I have said this on a number of occasions, that there needs to be significant improvement in the Metropolitan police. The reason we asked Baroness Casey to do the review is that we recognise that there are significant problems. We do recognise that, and we have taken action to ensure we understand exactly what is happening. We have also taken action to invest in those areas where we know not only that there has not been enough improvement, but that there are actually significant problems. We know that through the “Engage” process. We knew that already. We have invested in that.

**Chair:** Okay. Thank you. We could probably go on for quite a long time, and we have a number of questions we have not been able to ask. I think we will write to you, because we would like a response on a number of the points we have not been able to cover. Specifically, would you like to reflect on the accountability issues we have discussed this morning and on whether you and the Mayor feel that the accountability structures are fit for purpose? Would you like to see any changes to the accountability structures that are in place? That seems to me to be something you might want to reflect on. We are hoping to have Baroness Casey in front of the Committee as soon as we can after she has published her report, so that we can ask her further questions in the light of what we have heard today, certainly in terms of the culture in the Metropolitan police.

Thank you very much for attending today and for answering our questions, but we will be writing to you with further points we would like to have information on.

### Examination of witnesses

Witnesses: Tom Whiting and Kathie Cashell.

**Q380 Chair:** We now move to our second panel. We are slightly behind time. I ask everybody to keep their questions and answers as succinct as possible; that would be very helpful. I invite the panel members to introduce themselves. Mr Whiting, would you like to start?

**Tom Whiting:** I am Tom Whiting. Since December, I have been the interim Director General at the Independent Office for Police Conduct.



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**Kathie Cashell:** I am Kathie Cashell, Director of Strategy and Impact at the IOPC.

**Chair:** As I said in my earlier comments, we are looking at accountability structures as part of our policing inquiry. We have a number of questions for you. I am going to turn to Tim Loughton to start.

Q381 **Tim Loughton:** Thank you. Mr Whiting, what state is the IOPC in now, would you say?

**Tom Whiting:** I will talk about how we are currently performing and the new strategy that we agreed back in May. Our first strategy, which was put in place once the IOPC had been created at the beginning of 2018, came to an end. We reviewed how that strategy had gone and agreed a new strategy at our unitary board in May.

The major focus is on four key priorities for the new strategy to address. The first is around awareness of the IOPC—the police complaints system—and how to make complaints and how to access it.

The second priority under that strategy is around accountability—accountability in a broader sense than the IPCC, or the IOPC in its first four years, used to address it. That is delivering accountability through what I might call our traditional work of the independent and core investigations that we do, through oversight of the police's own handling of complaints, and through the work we do to review where complainants have come through to us as the relevant review body.

The aim is to concentrate all that work in the areas that, when we go out to talk to external stakeholders and communities, and do our own research work, they tell us are of greatest concern to public confidence. That focusing of our operational work under that new strategy was quite a big change. That is about accountability.

The third element is about learning and change. It was a big focus for the IOPC in its first four years to identify more learning recommendations out of our work, and to share those with forces and to seek agreement to them. We know that the thing that most drives confidence and accountability is that learning needs to be identified, shared and, critically, implemented. It needs to lead to change, and communities need to see that that change has taken place. That is the priority that is about learning and change.

The fourth is to ensure that we are performing as an organisation. Some of that is about looking at living within reduced resources, looking at our estate and looking at our ICT systems and some of the things that you would traditionally expect to see. So we have a new strategy.

You asked about our current performance. Our timeliness has traditionally been measured by investigations completed within 12 months. We are getting 90% done in 12 months now, and did last year. We have introduced a new focus on getting them done within six months, because some can be done a lot quicker. We get 40% done within six months.



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We have got more to do on timeliness still, to bring the average timeliness down, but also because we still have cases that run on beyond 12 months. I would say that 90% is 90%, but I think we now need to focus on the ones that take more than 12 months.

If I look at a measure of the quality of the investigations that we do, we used to be in the mid-60s per cent., but now 82% of the decisions we reach at case to answer are upheld at panels. If I look at awareness of us, people are more aware of us than they ever have been.

Q382 **Tim Loughton:** How do you know that?

**Tom Whiting:** We commission some work through Yonder. We get it done independently. They go out and do public perception tracking, and they ask a range of questions. They ask questions about awareness, about negativity towards policing, about confidence in making complaints and about confidence in the IOPC. I was going to come on to talk about that. We do external research with Yonder.

Q383 **Tim Loughton:** Let's cut to the chase on awareness. One of the big issues in the report we produced last year is the general lack of awareness and confusion about who the IOPC or its previous incarnations are, what you are responsible for and how you are doing. Do you not think that what is claimed to be a greater awareness of the complaints body is actually a greater awareness of complaints against the police, not least because of what has gone on in the Met, which we have been hearing a lot about through the study on policing? What is the evidence that people now know, "Oh yes, the IOPC are the body who oversee these complaints. This is how I can make my complaint to them, and I'm now aware of them where I wasn't before"?

**Tom Whiting:** We ask specific questions such as, "Do you know of the organisation?" We also ask questions to understand how deep that knowledge is and how much people actually know about what we do. People will have heard more of us not just as a result of the work we do to engage and talk to communities, but because they will have heard of the investigations and seen those breaking out in the news. That research tells us that people are more aware—that needed to grow once we switched from being the IPCC to being the IOPC, because, originally, awareness dropped when we became the IOPC—but it also tells us that the knowledge of what we do is not deep enough, and that is one of the areas that we need to concentrate on.

Q384 **Tim Loughton:** Have you published that research?

**Tom Whiting:** Yes.

Q385 **Tim Loughton:** I am not sure that we have seen it. I get asked questions by Yonder, as all colleagues do in opinion polls, and there are some fairly basic questions about awareness of the IOPC. I think most people, who perhaps do not have the same interest in it as members of the Home Affairs Committee, will say, "Oh yes, police complaints; I'm aware of that," but could not actually tell you what IOPC stood for—we struggle



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sometimes—but also just in terms of trying to differentiate between a complaints process and the complaints process body that you are.

Last year we were told by the Government that the IOPC would publish a new strategy with a focus on increasing public confidence in the complaints system. That is part of it; first, people have to know who you are and what you are responsible for, and then they need to have confidence that you are good at your job. You have given us some stats, which on the face of it are going in the right direction—timeliness was certainly a big issue before. What progress has been made on that piece of work?

**Tom Whiting:** On the new strategy?

**Tim Loughton:** On the strategy for increasing public confidence specifically. You have set out those four things, but none of them is directed at public confidence.

**Tom Whiting:** The overall purpose of the new strategy is improving confidence in policing, and it is doing that by making sure people are confident in the police complaints system. What progress have we made since that strategy was agreed? A lot of work is being done to go out and engage directly with communities, and that is through our stakeholder engagement programme. We are working on some front-of-house things like updating our website. We have developed a new approach to the type of work we want to take on, which I described as being more targeted—using the research from Yonder and what stakeholders tell us, so that we are taking the cases in for investigation and looking at our review work to make sure it is in those areas that are most germane to public confidence. That has been quite a big change, and we are now targeting that work differently.

Q386 **Tim Loughton:** Let me stop you there. You started off by talking about increasing public confidence in the police. Is it the job of the IOPC to increase confidence in the police?

**Tom Whiting:** When we talked about what the IOPC is, overall, seeking to achieve, we talked about it as a vision in which everyone can have trust and confidence in the police. The work that we are doing to try to address that is by making sure that people have confidence in and know how to access a police complaints system.

Q387 **Tim Loughton:** That's a different thing, isn't it?

**Tom Whiting:** Well—

**Tim Loughton:** Your job is not to restore confidence in the police. Your job is to restore confidence in the process for people to be able to complain about the police—so when the police screw up, effectively. As we found in our report, there is a problem of a lack of confidence in the way that the complaints procedure works. My contention would be that you still have some more work to do—it is encouraging that you have set out this strategy—to improve public confidence in your processes before we get on to the much bigger challenge of how you improve confidence in the police,



which starts with the police themselves, surely.

**Tom Whiting:** I think you ask a question that we get asked a lot. Certainly, when we talk to external stakeholders or talk to our own staff, they ask exactly the same question. It feels like there will inevitably be a conflict, sometimes, between investigating the case, as we do—being driven by the evidence and doing it without fear or favour—and drawing the conclusions that we draw, which will sometimes be very difficult and unsettling for those who are hit, but we will continue to do that.

I think when we ask ourselves the question, “Why are we doing that?” we are doing it because we, with others—and I completely agree with the point that you make on the senior leadership of policing—so that policing will take on those lessons, because that is what will drive confidence and accountability.

What people will say is, “This has happened. I don’t want it to happen again. I don’t want it to happen to another person or another family.” The confidence in that will come from learning being identified and shared, it being taken up by forces and implemented, and that leading to change. I think the purpose of doing all of that is that, ultimately, communities have more confidence.

**Q388 Tim Loughton:** One final brief question. You have been in the job for a few months now. Obviously, last year, we lost both the chairman and the director general of the IOPC, because that was the same person. A recommendation from this Committee is that that is maybe not a unique but an extraordinary form of governance for any board. Having been in the DG/chairman’s chair for some months now, have you come around to that view too?

**Tom Whiting:** Ultimately, the view on our governance is a decision for the Home Office to make. An independent review of the IOPC is taking place. That is part of the public bodies review programme, and the Minister and Secretary of State have signed off the terms of reference for that review. It is going to look at that question, which has been asked in the terms of reference

**Q389 Tim Loughton:** Okay, we know all that. What is your view?

**Tom Whiting:** My view is that there being an independent chair is a model that could work. I also think that the current model has made significant progress with the organisation, building on what the IPCC was, and its governance. There are some critical aspects to I think lessons learned from the IPCC days about a single line of accountability and about independence that need to be—

**Chair:** I am going to have to ask you to be a little more succinct in your answers. It was a specific question, there. I do not know if you want to say anything else, but please just answer that specific question.

**Q390 Tim Loughton:** Would you be happy to give up half your job, if you were offered the job permanently?



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**Tom Whiting:** I believe it is a model that could work—

**Tim Loughton:** So that's a yes.

**Tom Whiting:**—but I think that the current model has also worked. I—

**Chair:** Okay, so it's a yes and a no.

**Tom Whiting:** I would like to protect the things that I think the current model improved in any review that takes place.

**Chair:** Right, thank you.

**Tim Loughton:** We will take that as a yes and a no then. Thank you, Chair.

**Chair:** Okay, thank you. Simon Fell.

Q391 **Simon Fell:** Thank you, Chair. Can we just talk about officers coming forward to you with complaints about colleagues' behaviour? How well do you think that is working, and what do you think needs to be done to improve the system?

**Tom Whiting:** Police officers coming forward through whistleblowing?

**Simon Fell:** Yes.

**Tom Whiting:** I think it is clear, in both Home Office and College of Policing guidance, that officers are expected to report internally through the ranks first. There is also a clear expectation on them, under their standards of professional behaviour, that, "You will report wrongdoing." It is not just that "You will do it," but "How you will report it."

We are a prescribed body that you can come to, externally, on your own force. We see some reports coming through. We don't see a huge number coming through. Also, whistleblowing-type allegations will be raised internally with a force and will then appear to us as a referral, but they won't be labelled up as having originated from a whistleblowing complaint. More will land on our desks than gets labelled as whistleblowing, but not that much comes through to us.

How effectively is that working? We do not gather data, other than the ones that the director refers through to us as the relevant body, but what we have seen through the super-complaint work we did into police perpetrating domestic abuse through Operation Hotton—and this has been found in the interim Louise Casey findings—is that people are not comfortable raising complaints within the force. They do not have the confidence to do so.

They particularly do not have the rights of a complainant; they do not have the rights to regular updates, and they will not have the right to see the outcome. If it was a complaint from a member of the public and they were not happy with the outcome—and we change 37% of complaints,



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when they get reviewed through to us—they would have the right to review through to an independent body such as ourselves.

We have advocated for the changes in legislation that would be required to give people who raise complaints and are police officers the status of a complaint.

Q392 **Simon Fell:** You would prefer that that power came to you.

**Tom Whiting:** I would prefer that police officers raising complaints have the power of a complainant, so that they have more rights to regular updates and the right of review through to us. At the moment, they say they do not have the confidence to complain—they do not see what happens and what the point of complaining was, because they do not see an outcome of it. That change would help to change that.

Do I think all complaints should just come through to us? No, I don't. The fix needs to be that people have the trust and confidence and feel comfortable in the culture and have confidence in the leadership of their own organisations such that they can raise it internally. Coming through to the exception mechanism should be kept as the exception.

Q393 **Simon Fell:** Can I ask what your interface is with forces to drive better whistleblowing practices? I am thinking specifically that we have seen some of the most egregious behaviours within the Met being very publicly reported on around closed WhatsApp groups and all that. What is your role in trying to encourage officers to speak up there? How are you then taking lessons from the very visible problems in places like the Met and cascading that to other forces where, in our understanding, we will be seeing problems coming from in the future?

**Tom Whiting:** I might ask Kathie to talk about that, because she has been leading all the work. There is some really good work around encouraging people to complain in the violence against women and girls space and how the oversight work would share it. If you're okay with that, I will invite Kathie to talk about it.

**Kathie Cashell:** Thank you. It is a real issue, and I think Tom has raised some of that. Ultimately, people have to have confidence that when they raise those issues, they will be listened to, and there will be a robust investigation with an outcome that they can understand. That is where it starts.

In our oversight work, as we call it, we have force liaison for each of the police forces, which will look at the practices there and encourage it. As Tom said, a lot of the referrals that come through to us are a result of people calling out poor conduct. Where we can, we try to celebrate that and recognise those people for it. It has to be the norm, not the exception.

People need to feel protected and that it is not just a requirement on them, but something they will be thanked for doing. There were particular problems we found, as Tom mentioned, in the super-complaint we looked at: where police officers are not just calling out poor conduct, but actually





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victims themselves—particularly victims of domestic abuse in the force—it is really difficult for those officers to come forwards.

We made a number of recommendations, which we will follow up through our violence against women and girls work. They were around ensuring that the support that is there for officers understands the particular barriers for those people coming forwards. For example, we have suggested that there is a senior officer in the force who could lead on those issues, both to be someone to come forwards and oversee those investigations and to ensure those people have the confidence that it is being taken forwards.

There are lots of routes where people can raise the issues. I do not think the routes are the problem; I think it is about those people feeling supported and confident that a robust investigation will result from that.

**Simon Fell:** Thank you. That is really helpful.

Q394 **Paula Barker:** I have a couple of questions, but I just wanted to ask you a follow-up from that, if I may. You have just said that it is difficult for some officers to come forwards—we are specifically talking about violence against women and girls. When you went to the police force, you went in the full knowledge that you are there to uphold the law. I am just wondering why it is difficult for anyone who sees a colleague who is so flagrantly breaching that code—that honour and respect for the badge—to come forward, quite frankly.

**Kathie Cashell:** I think there are two groups. One is the group you have described, which is calling out that poor behaviour. It is a requirement in the professional standards to call out poor behaviour or misconduct when you see it. I agree with you: I think you would expect every police officer to do that—to uphold the standards that they are adhering to themselves. What we have seen in a number of our investigations—I would quote Operation Hotton as the most concerning one, I suppose—is that when you are working in a culture in which perhaps that kind of behaviour is normalised, it is not something that other people are calling out.

Requiring an individual to do that means potentially taking the consequences of doing that, which they might be concerned about—whether that is being ostracised, being bullied and harassed themselves, or an impact on their career. They are working in an environment, obviously, where they rely on their colleagues to support them and help them out in very difficult situations. I think it is incredibly difficult as an individual if you do not feel that the leadership will support you in that—that you will not be thanked and protected for calling it out. That is the general point.

I think where you are a victim yourself, and the perpetrator is a police officer and you are as well—potentially in the same force—there are other things that go on top of that. We talk to people in the super-complaint around the impact on their career, their being seen as not being tough enough, their being ostracised and their being moved rather than the



alleged perpetrator. There are a number of different issues, but I agree with you that we need a service where that is the norm—everybody calls it out. We have to rely on those officers who are upholding the standards and who want to protect and improve those standards to be the officers who call it out. But they have to be protected.

**Q395 Paula Barker:** You mentioned Operation Hotton, which was one of my questions. What assessment has been made of the action being taken by the Met in response to the IOPC's Operation Hotton findings?

**Kathie Cashell:** I know that Tom sits on the Met's turnaround board as an adviser and critical friend. We know that a number of those recommendations have been picked up and are featuring in that turnaround plan. I do not know whether Tom wanted to say any more.

**Tom Whiting:** It is early days. I have been to one of those board meetings. They have set that up with a number of external organisations to join them. I would say that we attend as an adviser—as a critical friend. I think there are a couple of purposes for that. One is to make sure that the themes we have seen are being built into that plan. Also, if we see good practice that there might be through oversight work or from work with other forces, which we can feed in and use to challenge, we want to be part of making sure that that is brought to bear to support the leadership of the Met.

**Q396 Paula Barker:** Are you confident, specifically in relation to Operation Hotton, that things are progressing, and do you have confidence that it is going in the right direction and at the right pace?

**Tom Whiting:** I would say it is early days. I think we have seen that the themes picked up in Op Hotton are being addressed through the plan. What I would like to see in the future is that, when we are out talking to the communities and our youth panels, as we do, they are feeding back to us that they have noticed a difference in frontline policing. That would be the ultimate reinforcement that we would really like to see.

**Q397 Paula Barker:** Finally, you said that the inspectorate's inspection last year into vetting, misconduct and misogyny raised issues that you had been concerned about for some time. What specifically were you most concerned about? What work are you now doing with other police watchdogs and forces to ensure that there are tangible outcomes?

**Tom Whiting:** There are two themes. Kathie will talk through the detail of the violence against women and girls plan that we have this year, but there are two themes that we have picked up. One is around detecting behaviours, which was an issue that was picked up in the super-complaint.

**Q398 Paula Barker:** What behaviours, sorry?

**Tom Whiting:** Identifying when behaviour is inappropriate and misogynistic and knowing what to do about it. The second, which we have been talking about, is around people having the confidence to call it out and speak up. They are the two themes that have been very common themes we have seen from previous work. There is some history to that,



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but I will let Kathie talk through what we have seen, because it is in some of your work.

**Kathie Cashell:** It is. There are a number of issues that are recurring across a number of reviews. There is the HMICFRS review. There is the super-complaint, which we have mentioned, and there are also the interim findings from Louise Casey's review. In terms of the reviews that are happening post the two awful cases we saw, which Lady Elish is looking at, I think we are going to see similar themes coming out.

There are things around identifying misconduct as misconduct. That is particularly difficult where we have seen that discriminatory behaviour and sexual misconduct are not identified as misconduct as often as we would like. There is the over-reliance on the criminal outcome—saying, "Okay, well it's 'no further action' on the criminal outcome," but not then thinking about whether it raises questions of misconduct and whether this is a person fit to be in the police force. They are different considerations. Obviously, there was a huge amount in there about the vetting, the numerous routes into policing and the different risk appetites. There was a question in the earlier session about failing vetting, and I am not sure that it is completely clear when you fail vetting. What that report showed is different risk appetites in different police forces.

We have seen in some of the really high-profile and horrifying cases that red flags have not been picked up much earlier. We talk a lot about dismissal and whether that is happening. We welcome the review into that, but a lot of those cases never got to the point of having a misconduct investigation. Then there is leadership and supervision across the force, so that you are picking up those conduct issues and improving performance. We have talked about rights for victims and people coming forward to call those things out.

There are a range of things we are seeing. It is frustrating when those things are not new. The HMICFRS report mentions the fact that our previous organisation highlighted the abuse of authority for sexual purpose, which was called out in 2014 as the biggest issue in terms of police corruption. Recognising that has taken too long. All that work needs to come together into something that is actually going to lead to sustainable change.

Q399 **Chair:** Why do you think your report in 2014 did not get the attention it deserved?

**Kathie Cashell:** It is a difficult one to answer. It got some attention. We asked for and got a change to the mandatory referral criteria to us, so that it was listed as a specific thing under corruption, to help with recognition. We then did a lot of work with police forces to make sure they were recognising it and referring it to us, and we have seen a huge increase in the referrals. The NPCC also did some work on action planning about raising awareness. Work has been done, but not at the pace that we would have liked to see.



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**Q400 Ms Abbott:** I want to ask you a specific question about the length of time your inquiries take. The sense in the community sometimes is that when you say “IOPC inquiry”, you are just kicking everything into the long grass, in the hope that people will have forgotten about the issue by the time you report.

I am not asking you to comment, but I am thinking of the case of the shooting in Streatham of Chris Kaba. The community were told that it would take nine months to conduct the inquiry. This was a man on his own in a car. There were police officers in a car. One got out, shot the man in the head and killed him stone dead, and nobody can understand why it takes nine months to investigate that. This is one thing that really undermines community confidence in your organisation. Is there a reason why your inquiries take so long?

**Tom Whiting:** I will answer a couple of points at the same time, if that is all right.

**Ms Abbott:** That is fine. I just want to know why your inquiries take so long.

**Tom Whiting:** We said at the outset that that inquiry would take six to nine months, and at the moment we are confident that it will come in within nine months.

I would make a couple of points. One is that police officers have different powers. They have the power to use force in a way that members of the public do not, and there is confidence that needs to go into policing that sits behind those powers. When a police officer uses force—it may not be a fatal shooting; it could be a Taser discharge or any use of force—a lot more work needs to be done to look at whether that use of force was appropriate, because they can use force in circumstances and frequently do, than would be needed if it was a member of the public using force. There is a lot more that needs to be assessed. People often think, “If it was a member of the public, you would come to a conclusion much quicker,” but police officers have that authority to use force, and that needs to be assessed very differently. That is one point.

The second point, which we frequently see in investigations, is that when you are calling in experts such as forensic experts—you need a range of expert reports—some of that work takes quite a long time at the moment. There is quite a backlog in the system, so it can very easily take three months to get a report done. That would be the case if it were a member of the public too. Those are two key points that I would make.

As I said, at the moment 90% of investigations are getting done within 12 months. That is a big improvement for the organisation on what used to be the case. There are still 10% taking more than 12 months, and that needs to be a focus for us; I am spending quite a lot of time on that. We just launched quite a big review of our overall investigative processes, and we are putting in some new systems, which hopefully will help us generally to speed investigations up. But 90% are within 12 months, and there is a big focus on the ones that are taking more than that.



**Q401 Ms Abbott:** What about the role of the Police Federation? There is an idea that one of the reasons that your inquiries take longer than you would expect in any other part of the public sector is that at every point the federation tries to protect its members.

**Kathie Cashell:** We have been asked about that here in the past and by stakeholders. Co-operation with our investigations is really important for public confidence and the timeliness of our investigations. You will know that we asked for and received a change to the legislation. It is now clear in the professional standards of behaviour for police officers that they are expected to co-operate as a witness when there is an independent investigation. That has been really helpful.

We have issued guidance that sets out what we think co-operation looks like. We have published that and spoken to the staff associations about it. We have also made it clear that we will consider non-co-operation to be a potential breach of professional standards. That is helping. Over the years, that has improved. We still have some cases where we would like more co-operation in a more timely fashion, but it is improving.

**Q402 Ms Abbott:** Are you saying that it isn't the federation slowing things down, or that it is?

**Kathie Cashell:** There is a range of things—Tom has mentioned some of them—that can make investigations take longer than we would like. Some of that is around getting the information we need as quickly as we can from everybody involved. There is something around the experts. Something that your other witnesses spoke about is the complexity of the legislation and guidance that we all have to work through. As you know, it is not just our investigations that need to be improved; it is the end-to-end timeliness of that. There are things within the system itself—the way it is set up and the way it operates—that result in things taking longer than we would like and it being quite challenging. It is open to error and legal challenge at various points. I wouldn't like to point the finger at just one thing. There is a culmination of things that can make things take longer than we would like.

**Ms Abbott:** Before I hand back to the Chair, I just want to make an observation. I am not asking for a response. I am relieved that you did not mention austerity. The deputy Mayor mentioned austerity more than once in response to our questions, and I think it is extraordinary that she or anyone else can talk about austerity in relation to well-known, systemic failures in the Metropolitan police force that predate austerity.

**Q403 Carolyn Harris:** Let me come back to the question about your dual role, Mr Whiting. It is a very powerful position to be in. How much influence do you have over the final outcome of an inquiry?

**Tom Whiting:** Of an investigation?

**Carolyn Harris:** Yes.

**Tom Whiting:** It goes back to my point about a single point of accountability, which is one of the big changes to the structure that the



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previous commission had. All decisions are made in my name as the director general, but that decision making is delegated to our decision makers. Our decision makers are usually our middle to senior managers and directors, and who becomes the decision maker depends on the case.

Q404 **Carolyn Harris:** So you do not actually have the power to say what the outcome of that individual case would be.

**Tom Whiting:** I could draw a decision up to myself—

Q405 **Carolyn Harris:** You have the ability to do that?

**Tom Whiting:** I have the ability to. The former director general did that very rarely during his nearly five years. The majority of decisions are delegated to decision makers.

Q406 **Carolyn Harris:** That was my next question. Given the cloud under which your predecessor left, I would be interested to know whether he had any influence over any decisions made in his name during his tenure. Has there been any kind of review to look at those decisions?

**Tom Whiting:** If you don't mind, I won't talk about the circumstances of his departure, but we did look back to see if there were any decisions that had been taken that we were concerned about. There weren't.

There is an important decision-making role for the director general. It is not just about whether you take decisions up to yourself or who makes them; it is your role to ensure that the organisation is supporting that decision making effectively through having robust and properly resourced legal advice.

We are doing a lot of work on quality at the moment, and ensuring that we are thematically checking and dip sampling. We get a number of our big decisions externally reviewed periodically to ensure the process is robust. Making sure that those arrangements are robust and that your organisation is set up for robust decision making is a really important part of the director general's role, rather than just saying, "I am going to draw these decisions up to me personally."

Q407 **Chair:** I have a few questions. In our report on police misconduct, one issue we highlighted as a concern was complaints being sent from the IOPC to the CPS, and the CPS not responding and dealing with them in a timely manner. I know there was an exchange of correspondence about this. One outcome is that there is going to be an agreement between the IOPC and the CPS about how cases are dealt with. Has that agreement been reached? Do you not have standard arrangements in place for dealing with cases that you feel the CPS should be looking at?

**Kathie Cashell:** There is a lot of work going on. We have talked about signing an MOU. I think that is in the drafting stages and we don't actually have signatures on it yet, but there is a lot of joint working going on about how we can improve those arrangements, particularly around having a single system for the cases that have been referred. I do not think we have actually signed it, but there is a lot of work going on to ensure that



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we are getting early advice and talking much earlier in the case about what would help the CPS move that through quickly.

Q408 **Chair:** So there are not lots of cases sitting with the CPS, about which you are thinking, “What are they doing?” because it has been several months and you have not heard anything? Is that not the case?

**Kathie Cashell:** I do not have the numbers on me—we can certainly send them to you—but in the main they are fewer in number and a lot of conversations are happening. They are complex decisions; I do not want to speak for the CPS about how they make those decisions, but there are some that are complex and they will work through them. We support them to ensure that they have what they need.

**Tom Whiting:** In the big cases that I have looked into, I have seen that dialogue working constructively. I am meeting the DPP as part of my first two months of meeting people. If there are any issues, I have the opportunity to talk and discuss it with him.

Q409 **Chair:** Right, thank you.

I wonder if you can help me. I had a conversation with a chief constable who said to me that there are options for chief constables to dismiss a police officer fairly quickly if there is clear evidence of criminal activity or behaviour that brings the force into disrepute. Is that correct? Can police officers be dismissed fairly quickly? This is obviously around disciplinary matters. Is that your understanding as well? What we have heard this morning is about how long it takes and all the difficulties with the procedures that are in place. I know the Mayor is making representations to change that, but do chief constables actually have some underlying power to dismiss?

**Kathie Cashell:** I will start by saying what I said earlier, which is that the system is incredibly complex. There are a number of different processes. There is the misconduct process; there is the unsatisfactory performance processes, which can result in gross incompetence; and the vetting as well. There are a number of different systems, so although it feels like it should be a really simple answer, often it is not. That said, there are abilities to fast-track hearings, which means that you would not have a full panel and an LQC when the evidence is clear, such as in the sort of cases you are talking about where there has been a criminal conviction. My understanding is that there are abilities to do a fast-track hearing.

There is also something that we have set out in our statutory guidance. Sometimes when there is a criminal allegation, the misconduct is put on hold until the criminal allegation is complete. I think there is more scope to run them in parallel. You do not necessarily have to wait for the criminal outcome to hold a misconduct investigation and potentially have a hearing, because they are different tests for different purposes. There are routes to do that, but they are not simple, and they may be likely to be challenged. None the less, I think there are things that exist now that could be used more. That is not to say that I do not think the system could be reformed in a helpful way.



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Q410 **Chair:** Sir Mark Rowley told us that he has a view about legally qualified chairs being part of the problem. Do you share that view?

**Tom Whiting:** We are not calling for legally qualified chairs to be abolished. That is a submission that we have made. We do think the operation of legally qualified chairs should be reviewed to see whether it is effective. I say that for a couple of reasons. We have previously raised some concerns about decision making. We have seen this in some of the cases we have brought forward. I observe that that is in the context of the new sanctions guidance that has come out from the college. There is a question as to whether that sanctions guidance is being consistently applied.

We have talked about the complexity of the system, and Louise Casey has talked about the quasi-judicial nature of the system. These hearings are very akin to a judicial process. LQCs have raised issues about indemnity for them, and I think we need to look at the quality of the investigation that is coming into the panel. I think all of that needs to be looked at to take a decision on whether the LQC chairing the panel is the problem that sits behind some of the changes in the numbers that have been reported.

Q411 **Chair:** But you are not calling for them to be removed.

**Tom Whiting:** No, we are calling for a more holistic review of the operation of LQCs.

**Chair:** Thank you very much indeed. Again, we could have gone on for much longer. We appreciate you coming today. If we have any other questions, we will write to you. Thank you for your time.

### Examination of Witness

Witness: Abimbola Johnson.

Q412 **Chair:** We will now move to our third panel. You are very welcome. Would you like to introduce yourself to the Committee?

**Abimbola Johnson:** My name is Abimbola Johnson. I am chair of the independent scrutiny and oversight board, which reviews the police plan of action on inclusion and race.

**Chair:** I think you have been listening to the evidence that we have taken this morning.

**Abimbola Johnson:** I have, yes.

**Chair:** Diane Abbott, I am going to come to you first of all.

Q413 **Ms Abbott:** So far, what is your assessment of the commitment and the action from police forces to deliver on the race action plan?

**Abimbola Johnson:** I think the commitment is inconsistent and I do not think that the action is visible enough. Some chief constables are very clearly committed to progressing the race action plan, some have been quite silent about it, and a few have been actively obstructive about





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pushing it forward, which is a shame. In terms of progress, you see a clunky structure in policing, with 43 different police forces and various levels of ranks of officers. There are also various different leads and committees who need to have sufficient insight into the race action plan, to be sufficiently resourced, and to have support to push it through. Therefore, we are seeing an inconsistency in delivery.

However, some key forces have been identified as ice breaker forces, so to speak, such as West Midlands, Hampshire and so on, who have positively dedicated themselves to demonstrating progress in relation to actions. They attend more regular meetings with the national police team—those meetings are called either ice breaker meetings or task and finish groups—where they report on their progress against specific actions and the sub-actions within those, so items of progress within an overall heading of action. They highlight the areas that they think are progressing well. What they are not as good at is highlighting areas that they are not doing as well, and we have raised that with them. There are varying levels of commitment and varying levels of action.

**Q414 Ms Abbott:** What is the commitment of the Metropolitan police force to delivering the race action plan?

**Abimbola Johnson:** Speaking quite frankly, I think that the Metropolitan police is a really key force in terms of delivery. The focus of the race action plan is on Black communities. More than half of Black Britain lives in London, so obviously the Met is a key force to show that delivery.

Mark Rowley's predecessor was quite quiet in relation to the race action plan. Now, under the new leadership, I have had a meeting directly with Dame Lynne and Sir Mark. I know that Andy George from the National Black Police Association has also met them on at least two occasions to discuss the race action plan, as has the new leader of the Met BPA, so conversations have taken place.

There is a juxtaposition between the national race action plan and the activity which is being run by MOPAC and the Met in relation to a local race action plan. I would like to see more communication between those teams and more joined-up working. What I do not want to see—what nobody wants to see—is a completely different structure being established for the national race action plan. The race action plan needs to be embedded into the fabric and the structure of policing that already exists. Where there are police forces like the Metropolitan police, who have outwardly committed to certain programmes, we need to see better joined-up working between those structures and what is happening on the national side.

**Q415 Ms Abbott:** How well does the Met engage with the Black communities and young people in developing and delivering the plan?

**Abimbola Johnson:** Are you asking how the Metropolitan police engages with delivering their local plan, or how they have engaged when it comes to the national plan?



**Ms Abbott:** In relation to the national plan.

**Abimbola Johnson:** The national plan is developed by a central team. Amanda Pearson, who was a Met police officer at the time, was programme director. She has now moved over to become chief constable at Devon police and has moved out of the race action plan. There were some Met officers in key positions in terms of the original structure and development of the race action plan, and there are Met officers who remain in the structure at the moment.

Community engagement is a different side of things. There is the national team's commitment to community engagement, and then there are the local variations that you see in community engagement. Speaking quite frankly—I am a Met area resident—there are some good pieces of work ongoing between the Metropolitan police and Black communities. There are some organisations like Black Thrive that hold regular meetings, and a lot of charities and NGOs who are successful in speaking to people with lived experience and are trying to hold the police accountable in that respect.

As to whether there is actually a clear structure between community engagement with Black communities and the national race action plan, that is something that the race action plan is not delivering to a level that we would like to see as a board. We have raised that with them and that has been accepted. It is a priority that they are putting in place this year.

When you look at the responses that were given to the race action plan survey that was run last summer, you can see a low response rate from those from Black heritage groups—only 10%—and a very low number came from people aged under 35. When you think about the groups who are most likely to come into contact with the police, it is younger people, and when you think about the focus of the race action plan, it is on people with Black heritage. We have challenged the programme about their commitment to bring communities into the mechanics of the race action programme and to discuss progress with them more publicly, rather than just waiting to have final products and then delivering that conclusion.

Q416 **Ms Abbott:** How would you characterise the Met's engagement with your organisation?

**Abimbola Johnson:** I would say that it is not as strong as it could be. I want them to be a really key force that pushes the national programme. I want them to be right at the forefront of a lot of activity, showing not just areas where they are doing well, but publicly accepting areas in which they are failing. It is not at that point yet, but I know that better discussions are taking place under the new leadership.

Q417 **Ms Abbott:** Absolutely finally, survey results indicate that trust and confidence in policing among Black people has further declined in the last year. What would you say is the reason for that?

**Abimbola Johnson:** I think that, in general, trust and confidence in the police is a topical area, with the number of stories we have seen coming



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out in relation to what is happening with the police. I think the reluctance you see in police rhetoric to accept that there are ongoing institutional failures means that there is further distance between some community members and the police.

One of the key issues that we have raised, as a board, is that we feel it is important for the police to accept institutional racism if they are going to fully commit to becoming an anti-racist police force. That commitment is one that they themselves came up with prior to the establishment of my board and the race action plan as it currently stands. Therefore, there is some feeling that if there is a reluctance to even name and label the issue as it currently is, how genuine will the actions that follow behind it be?

**Q418 Chair:** At the start, you said that there were forces that were promoting the race action plan and doing good work, but you also said that there were some that are obstructing. Can you say which forces are obstructing the race action plan?

**Abimbola Johnson:** If you were to look through the rhetoric that comes from certain senior leaders in policing and the things that they say—what they categorise as extraneous or distracting programmes of work—it can be quite clearly seen that there are some people in policing who do not support the aims. I would say that I think that number is relatively small. Overall, there is dedication to the race action plan or there is a sort of neutrality towards it, and then there is a small number who view it as a nuisance.

**Q419 Chair:** Do you feel able to tell us where—

**Abimbola Johnson:** These are not direct conversations that I have had with those chief constables, but in terms of the rhetoric that you can see, I think it is quite clear that there are people in policing who are not supportive of things that they would describe as woke, and that they would say are distractions. I will leave it there.

**Q420 Paula Barker:** Morning, Ms Johnson. We have heard that there are ongoing concerns about how Black and minority ethnic officers are treated more harshly in the misconduct and disciplinary process. Do you think there is enough independence and external scrutiny in the processes?

**Abimbola Johnson:** Are you talking about misconduct proceedings?

**Paula Barker:** Yes.

**Abimbola Johnson:** The experiences that Black and minority ethnic officers are having in relation to misconduct proceedings are not exclusive to the police. I work as a practising barrister, and one arm of my practice is working in professional regulatory hearings. You see across the board, when it comes to professional regulatory regimes, a disproportionate number of people who come from minority backgrounds who are brought through those systems. Often, it is indicative of the idea that a lot of this relies on reporting by colleagues or line managers to bring it up through a system, and therefore if you have a culture or issues that embed racism



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into their processes, of course you are going to see a reflection of that in the number of people who come through those systems.

One of the workstreams in the race action plan is around internal culture and inclusivity. It is a recognition that the police need to be more culturally aware of the different experiences that people of different backgrounds have; of the different ways that people have of communicating; and that the expectations of professionalism need to be adjusted for different people's cultural backgrounds.

As to whether there is sufficient independent oversight of misconduct proceedings, you have heard from the IOPC that it is a complex structure. You have heard that there is already some criticism about the use of legally qualified chairs, but the other side of that is that a legally qualified chair is an independent reviewer of the process. They are regulated by their own profession, and therefore they have professional standing to review these matters. But it is a whole system that needs to be considered and needs to be looked at. There are pushes to ensure that there are more chairs who come from Black and racially minoritised backgrounds, that you have more diversity in terms of who sits on panels and that you have better reviewing of the reasons why people have come through systems to act as checks and balances.

**Q421 Paula Barker:** On legally qualified chairs, do you think that it would be better to retain them—you made the important point about increasing how many people come from a Black or minority ethnic backgrounds—as opposed to giving chief inspectors more powers? Do you think that that is better?

**Abimbola Johnson:** I don't really understand why the solution would be to give chief inspectors more powers, given that policing itself has an issue with racism. I do not see how simply shifting that power over to a different side of the equation would remove or eradicate racism. The entire process needs to be looked at, and we need to consider whether anti-racist policy is being used in detecting, investigating, supporting and, finally, concluding when it comes to police misconduct matters.

**Q422 Simon Fell:** Can I just ask about the support that is given to victims? Victim Support told us that increasingly it is becoming an in-house service for the police. I would be interested to hear about your concerns for Black and minority ethnic victims who are getting that support from a force, rather than from an independent body. What are your thoughts on that?

**Abimbola Johnson:** One of the concerns that people from Black communities have raised in response to surveys—both those that have been run by the race action programme and those that we have seen externally—is that the police is not a trusted institution. There is already a hesitance among people from those communities to even call the police in the first place when they are in a position of vulnerability. There is an argument that heavy involvement of the police at any stage of an

investigation may not be welcomed by those who are already cynical about the institution.

There are really strong charities. The Victims' Commissioner has raised the fact that they would like to see victim support moved out of policing and towards more specialist organisations. We are working in a chronically underfunded criminal justice system. I think the answer to a lot of these things is better investment, looking not just at the funding structures for policing, but at how you are funding and supporting partner agencies. If you want improved victim support, what is the Government doing to push to ensure that that structure is properly funded and training is offered to those individuals to ensure that that can be done?

Very often, we see a competence creep in policing, because they have to pick up areas that are not properly resourced, but that they need to run in order for them to do their job. That is why we have seen a creep of policing into areas such as mental health provision. I think they themselves would rather that that was handled by people who have particular expertise, because it is such a complex aspect of care that needs to be provided to members of society.

**Q423 Simon Fell:** Thank you; they have been very clear with us about that. Are there any models around the country where this is working well—where forces are handing off to partner organisations and better reflecting the needs of victims, rather than the in-house model that we seem to be shifting towards?

**Abimbola Johnson:** Thames Valley police have a good structure with their violence reduction unit and their community work. They have recently won awards around a lot of that work. There are areas of London where I would say that there is better use of resourcing around that, but again that is not London-wide. When I work in my various roles as a criminal defence barrister, I definitely see that some of it comes down to the way things are locally funded, and therefore the priorities that are put in place in various areas—things like out-of-court disposals, the prioritisation of engagement over enforcement and moving people away from the criminal justice system. It is not a nationally consistent picture, but Thames Valley police is a force that I have seen doing some of that work particularly well.

**Simon Fell:** That is incredibly helpful; thank you.

**Q424 Chair:** You talked about the Met having its own local race action plan, and the national race action plan as well. Do most forces have their own local race action plans? The Met is not unusual in doing that?

**Abimbola Johnson:** The Met is slightly unusual. What has happened with other forces is that the national race action plan was released and then local forces drew from it their own structures for implementation. They prioritised it slightly differently depending on geographical make-up and local sensitivities towards different areas. With the Metropolitan police, prior to the national race action plan being released, MOPAC had already started to develop an action plan in relation to racism and policing, so it



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was a pre-existing structure. The national race action plan was then released, and now what I would like to see is better consideration as to how those two work together at a local level with the Metropolitan police.

Q425 **Chair:** Do you know whether that discussion is going on about how they can better work together?

**Abimbola Johnson:** I don't think the discussions have been as developed as they could be. There has been a lack of clarity as to who the points of contact are going to be at various times, because there has been quite a lot of movement with the Metropolitan police. But I think that is more settled now and, moving forward, a priority for this year is to see challenge and collaboration between the national race action plan teams and the Metropolitan police teams.

Q426 **Chair:** You have said that one of your big concerns is inconsistency. What do you think needs to be done to get consistency across all 43 police forces? How do we do that, given that you have already said that our structures don't help?

**Abimbola Johnson:** There is pushing the chiefs level—the chiefs' council—to recognise that it is an evidential-based programme. Based on the evidence that we see and that Ms Abbott has highlighted on stop and search and the fact that pretty much every use of force by the police has racial disparity, for whatever reason, it is clear that there needs to be a commitment to the race action plan. That is the evidential basis and it needs to be addressed by senior leadership.

But for me the key aspect is middle management: where do we see the rank and file in policing sitting with this? I have heard stories that when the Stephen Lawrence inquiry report came out, local police leaders went to their units and said, "We're institutionally racist. We have to accept that. Right, let's crack on." That left people feeling bereft. Officers of colour were saying, "Are you saying I'm a racist? What does this actually mean?"

We need to see the showering down of nuanced discussion about what being anti-racist means and an understanding of the nuances of the definition of institutional racism. It does not mean labelling every single police officer as racist, but it does mean being willing to challenge the existing procedures and processes because they have consistently failed communities for a number of decades, and thinking about what policing can do about that. For this plan to work, it needs to be felt at a one-to-one level. It needs to be felt when a police officer is on the street and interacting with people, with changes in their behaviour, interaction and insight. If that message is not trickling down to the rank and file in policing, it is going to be lost.

**Chair:** That is very powerful. Thank you very much for your evidence this morning. We appreciate you spending time with us. I hope we will be able to keep in touch to see how this develops.

**Abimbola Johnson:** Yes. I am very happy to reply to any further questions that you may have.



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**Chair:** Thank you very much. That concludes our session this morning.