



HOUSE OF COMMONS

Home Affairs Committee

Oral evidence: [Policing priorities, HC 365](#)

Tuesday 25 April 2023

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Members present: Dame Diana Johnson (Chair); Lee Anderson; Simon Fell; Tim Loughton; Alison Thewliss.

Questions 460-554

Witnesses

I: Lynne Abrams, Deputy Director, Interpersonal Abuse Unit, Home Office, Chris Philp, Minister for Crime, Policing and Fire, Home Office, Sarah Swinford, Director of Crime Reduction, Home Office and Rachel Watson, Director of Policing, Home Office.



Examination of witnesses

Witnesses: Lynne Abrams, Chris Philp, Sarah Swinford and Rachel Watson.

Chair: Good morning, everybody. This is the eighth session of our inquiry into policing priorities. This session is an opportunity to question the Minister about the issues that we have found in the course of our inquiry so far. We have our final session tomorrow, when we will be meeting with Sir Mark Rowley, the Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police.

Minister, first of all, would you like to introduce yourself? I can see you are very well supported by the civil service today, so perhaps the officials could introduce themselves as well.

Chris Philp: Yes. Thank you, Dame Diana. It is a pleasure and privilege to appear before your Committee this morning. I am here in my capacity as Minister of State for Crime, Policing and Fire and also combating drugs, just to complete the set. I have had that position since the beginning of November, so I'm just coming towards the six-month point. Perhaps civil service colleagues could now introduce themselves as well.

Rachel Watson: Good morning. I am Rachel Watson, the policing director in the Home Office.

Sarah Swinford: I am Sarah Swinford, the crime reduction director in the Home Office.

Lynne Abrams: I am Lynne Abrams, a deputy director heading up the interpersonal abuse unit in the Home Office.

Q460 **Chair:** Thank you. We will have a series of questions for you. I would like to start. Minister, you said that you have been in post since November, so I wonder whether you might like to give the Committee your overview: what are the key problems with policing today in England and Wales?

Chris Philp: Well, let's just start by talking about the picture as a whole—if I may, Dame Diana. The first thing we need to do is—

Chair: I want you to concentrate on the problems, as you see them, since you have been in post.

Chris Philp: The challenges we need to meet include making sure the police have adequate resources, which is why we are making sure, and I made sure, that in the police funding settlement for the financial year we are just starting, frontline policing and police and crime commissioners have £550 million extra, compared with last year. Resourcing is the beginning.

In terms of officer numbers, we are on track to have record numbers of officers across England and Wales. The figures are coming out tomorrow morning at 9.30, and hopefully that will be confirmed. Resourcing is



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always the first challenge, and very good progress has been made in the two areas I have just described.

The second issue that I encountered was this. I am concerned to make sure that police are spending their time on the right things—protecting the public, catching criminals and preventing crime—rather than on things like paperwork, bureaucracy, and non-policing activity. And let me give you two examples of where we have been able to make progress in the last six months.

The first is in the Home Office counting rules, which had police officers spending a lot of time recording information that was duplicative or unnecessary. We announced some changes a couple of weeks ago that will save, the NPCC estimate, 443,000 hours of police officer time each year; and we are looking at whether we can make further changes to further reduce the administrative bureaucracy. So those are 443,000 hours that can be spent protecting the public and catching criminals, not filling in paperwork.

There is a second area where I think police are spending time not on what you and the public would probably consider to be policing activity. This is in connection with mental health. The police are spending time with members of the public suffering mental health issues where no criminal offence is being committed and there is no threat to safety or life, but the police are acting as the responder and spending a lot of time with those cases.

It can often take quite a long time to hand those cases over at a hospital. So we are working with the DHSC, NHS England, mental health trusts and ambulance trusts to make sure that medical professionals provide the care that is needed. This will free up, we estimate, up to 1 million hours a year of police time, which can be spent fighting crime, but, critically, those individuals—members of the public—will get the right medical treatment, because obviously police officers are not in a position to provide specialist medical treatment. That is the second area.

The third area is this. We clearly have some challenges around conduct and police integrity. I am sure we will discuss this in great detail, so I am not going to labour the point, but obviously the Casey report into the Metropolitan police was deeply concerning. We mean to make sure that standards of conduct are uniformly high—not just in the Met, but across policing in England and Wales. I suspect that you will be asking more about this, so I will not expand further, but that is an area of concern.

We are keen to make sure that the police are concentrating on the basics—preventing crime, protecting the public and prosecuting criminals. Anything else, in my view, is, frankly, a distraction. Common-sense policing and focusing on those basics is critical.

Some crime areas are of concern, as I am sure we will discuss. Prosecution figures for things such as rape are much too low and need to



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be higher; some work going on in that area is showing some early signs of success, but that is a particular area of concern.

But on crime in general, it is worth noting that since 2010 overall crime has fallen by 50% according to the crime survey, which is the ONS's principal source of data on crime. Domestic burglary is down by 56%, robbery is down by 57%, theft is down by 52% and violence is down by 38%, which I think we can all be extremely pleased about.

Q461 **Chair:** I asked you about what the problems were. You have identified that resourcing and the number of officers were a problem and that how police officers were using their time was a problem.

Chris Philp: Forgive me; I said that the first two were challenges that I believe we have met because of the record number of officers that we are on track to deliver and the extra half a billion pounds of funding.

Q462 **Chair:** With the greatest of respect, Minister, my question to you was about the problems that you had identified since you came into post in November. I know that you have been trying to move on to what you have proactively done, but you explained to me that resourcing was a problem at the beginning and that more money had gone in.

Chris Philp: Forgive me; I did not say it was a problem. I know that was your question and I answered it in part. I said that those were challenges that have been met. I did not say that they were problems. You are putting words into my mouth, with respect.

Q463 **Chair:** My question, Minister, was about what the problems were. From what you have just said to me, I am identifying that you were saying that resourcing was a problem because more money has gone in—

Chris Philp: I did not say that. They were challenges that are being met; I did not say that they were problems.

Q464 **Chair:** So there are no problems, then, in the police force. Is that what you are saying to me? There are only challenges.

Chris Philp: I did not say that either.

Q465 **Chair:** My question to you was, "What are the problems?" There are no problems—is that what you are saying to me?

Chris Philp: I did not say that either.

Q466 **Chair:** What are you saying?

Chris Philp: I said that there are some challenges, which are being met, in the areas of resourcing. I said that there were some problems, essentially with non-crime and non-policing activity that were taking up police time, that we have fixed in the case of the Home Office accounting rules and we are in the process of fixing in relation to mental health.

Q467 **Chair:** There is no need to rehearse all that again. I am just trying to get a picture of what, since you came into post in November, you have identified as key problems in policing—just going through the list that you



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have given to us around resources, officer time, numbers of officers and some of the specific problems with offences such as rape and serious sexual assault.

Chris Philp: That is a problem.

Q468 **Chair:** Okay. What I am really trying to get to is this. You came into post in November. Obviously, a lot of what you have been describing are issues that have been around for quite a long time. We know that over the last couple of years many issues have come to light with policing in England and Wales. You referred to one of them—around the culture, which you were saying was a problem.

Chris Philp: Yes.

Q469 **Chair:** I want to ask you about the Casey review, which was about the Metropolitan police. What is your view on whether what Baroness Casey found at the Metropolitan police is something we should also be concerned about in police forces across England and Wales? Is that a problem?

Chris Philp: First of all, I do think that these issues of integrity and standards are a problem.

Q470 **Chair:** In all police forces?

Chris Philp: Yes. Although the Casey report specifically related to the Metropolitan police, I think there are elements of what she identified that will be present and problematic in other police forces around the country.

From a Home Office point of view, we are not viewing this as an exclusively Metropolitan police challenge; we are responding on a national basis. We are taking Baroness Casey's report very seriously. Most of her recommendations are, of course, for the Mayor of London and the Metropolitan police, but where there are recommendations for the Home Office—for example, whether it should be easier to dismiss police officers guilty of misconduct—we are energetically and actively taking forward work in that area.

Q471 **Chair:** What does "energetically and actively" mean?

Chris Philp: Actually, before the Casey report was even published, the Home Secretary and I initiated a review into the police misconduct and dismissal rules. We discussed that in December and initiated it in January.

Q472 **Chair:** When will you make the decision?

Chris Philp: I have had an interim report already, earlier this week. We are going to get a full report from officials in the next three or four weeks, and I would expect to be in a position to make a public announcement to Parliament very shortly after that, meaning in the next month or two, subject to the usual write-round clearance.

Q473 **Chair:** So within a month?



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Chris Philp: The next month or two. The objective of that is essentially to make it easier for chief officers to dismiss police officers where they identify evidence of misconduct. It is something that Mark Rowley raised with me in my first week as Police Minister back in November. Other chief officers have raised it as well. One of the reasons why in the Met and elsewhere these issues have festered for so long is that chief officers and chief constables have not been able to take action on dismissal where they have felt they needed to.

Q474 **Chair:** Is it your view that the police service is institutionally racist, sexist and homophobic?

Chris Philp: That is not a description that the commissioner, the Home Secretary or I have adopted.

Q475 **Chair:** What do you think then?

Chris Philp: It is not a description we have adopted. We think there are areas of concern where action is needed.

Q476 **Chair:** Which are?

Chris Philp: There are challenges with those areas, and action is needed to bring about improvements. You are meeting Mark Rowley tomorrow, so you will obviously reach your own view, but his turnaround plan is one I have confidence in. It is one that the Mayor of London Sadiq Khan has said he has confidence in, and it is a turnaround plan that Baroness Casey herself has said she has confidence in.

Q477 **Chair:** Just so I am clear, you are saying that you do not accept what Baroness Casey said about the institutional racism, sexism, homophobia and misogyny in the Metropolitan police?

Chris Philp: That is not a description that the commissioner, the Home Secretary or I have used or adopted.

Q478 **Chair:** Do you stand by what Sir Mark said—that the systems are racist, sexist and homophobic? Is that a position you take?

Chris Philp: I think there are some significant problems in the Met around those areas. The Met needs to take action, and the Mayor of London, as the politician principally responsible for overseeing the Met, needs to take action. Where the Home Office needs to take action—for example, as I said a minute ago, by giving chief officers increased powers to dismiss police officers where there are problems—we will take action as well.

Q479 **Chair:** Just on the Casey review, Baroness Casey diagnosed the Met with a case of initiative-itis. We know that the Home Office has lots of strategies, proposals and plans to address crime and policing issues. Do you recognise that as being a problem within the Home Office? Has it got a problem with initiative-itis?

Chris Philp: That is an interesting question. Any initiative on its own is, generally speaking, rational and makes sense and tries to do the right



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things. I think this probably applies to Government in general, not just the Home Office, but one needs to be mindful and careful not to try to launch so many initiatives that the system, whether it be Government Departments or external agencies such as the police, end up getting overwhelmed.

I would not say that there are too many, but I do think we need to be careful not to overwhelm the system with too many ideas and initiatives that, in isolation, all make sense but cumulatively are more than the system can operate with. All Ministers in all Departments need to be mindful of that.

Q480 **Chair:** Do you think the Home Office has too many initiatives?

Chris Philp: Respectfully, that is not what I said. There are a lot of initiatives; that is true. I didn't say there were too many. I just think we need to be mindful of not overloading the system.

Q481 **Chair:** Are you satisfied that there will be meaningful and lasting change in the Met this time? We have had lots of plans and strategies for dealing with the problems in the Met over a number of years. What makes it different this time?

Chris Philp: That is a fair question. First of all, I think Mark Rowley and Lynne Owens have an extremely high and serious level of intent to bring about fundamental change. As I said a second ago, it is not just the Home Secretary and I who have confidence in that leadership team; it is the Mayor of London Sadiq Khan and Baroness Casey herself as well.

From what I have seen in the last six months of the way Mark Rowley and Lynne Owens are approaching this, they are doing it seriously and with intent and professionalism. They have made significant changes to their top team. Of the layer below the commissioner and deputy commissioner—the assistant commissioners and deputy assistant commissioners—slightly over half have changed in the last six or seven months. I know that they are trying to bring about change not just at the leadership level but throughout the entire organisation. Where these issues occur, it needs commanders of frontline units, and inspectors and sergeants, to really want to bring a change about—constables as well—and call out inappropriate, bad behaviour where they see it, and for that then to be taken seriously.

It is not easy to change the culture in an organisation with more than 35,000 serving officers, but I think that Mark Rowley and Lynne Owens are doing everything that you would want and expect them to do. They are doing it seriously and professionally, and I do have confidence in them. It is obviously not an easy task.

Q482 **Chair:** How long have they got?

Chris Philp: Well, I don't want to impose arbitrary or artificial time limits. We expect action urgently and I think that we are seeing action urgently. In fact, on the dismissal issue that I mentioned, as Mark will probably explain to you tomorrow—I urge you to ask him about it a little bit—he is



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taking action on dismissals already, even ahead of us changing the sort of formal, national rules. The number of officers that he is dismissing for misconduct reasons was substantially higher in the past six months than it was before. He is being proactive, for example, on that issue.

Q483 **Chair:** So are you thinking two years before it is turned around?

Chris Philp: I am not going to—first of all, “turned around” is difficult to define. I am not going to put our—

Q484 **Chair:** Do you know how you will have judged whether it is turned around or not?

Chris Philp: Well, I think the judgment of turnaround will be around the public’s experience of crime detection and prevention. Part of this is about public confidence and just the police preventing, detecting and prosecuting crime—doing the basics of policing. That is part of it as well as the cultural issues.

I want to hear from frontline female and ethnic minority officers that they feel completely comfortable doing their job and that they feel completely equally treated compared with everybody else. Those are the sort of things that will indicate success.

What I want to see now is action. I am seeing action. The Home Secretary gets a weekly letter from the commissioner updating her, as Home Secretary, on what he is doing. We want to see the Mayor of London grip this more tightly—

Q485 **Chair:** Does the public get to see anything then? You are saying that you have not got a timescale in mind, but the Home Secretary is getting a weekly letter. How do we know that progress is being made?

Rachel Watson: If I may come in on this, Chair, His Majesty’s inspectorate of constabulary and fire and rescue services put the Metropolitan police into the engage process well before Baroness Casey’s report was published. Mark’s turnaround plan is being assessed by it and by the police performance oversight group, which represents all elements of policing, and on which the Home Office sits. That group meets quarterly and assesses progress against the plan. It will be up to HMICFRS to determine when it is satisfied that the Met has improved enough against the cause of concern that it found that the Met will be able to disengage.

In terms of the initiative-itis, which in fact we know that the commissioner and deputy commissioner have also remarked on, they have more than 600 different recommendations from different authorities that they have to take into account. They are deliberately stepping back to look at the fundamentals and at what will make the fundamental change. Therefore, we do know, from the monitoring that exists, that they are very alive to the risk of lots of initiatives rather than actual fundamental change, which is, of course, what we are all looking for.

Q486 **Chair:** I suppose that that is very reassuring to know, and I know that other Members want to come in and question you, but I just want to be



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clear: are there any milestones that we should be looking for the Met to meet in the next three months, six months or nine months? When we had Baroness Casey in front of us, she was talking about a couple of years, maximum, to see fundamental and real change. I just want to be clear: are there steps along the way that we can look to, to see that that change is happening?

Rachel Watson: Within the turnaround plan, there are, but I am conscious—I am wondering now about the extent to which the HMICFRS progress is published; it tends to be more in internal documents. Within the system, there will be, of course, the next PEEL inspection, which we would expect to happen next year. That will be the point at which we have an absolutely clear inspectorate view of how the Met is progressing.

There do not tend to be published updates after each PPOG, although the minutes are published so those are accessible to the public. Certainly, at the next PEEL inspection, if not before—if the Met has made significant progress before, of course, then HMICFRS might announce that it is out of the engage process, but otherwise it will be at its next PEEL inspection that we get the full assessment of how it is doing.

Chris Philp: And that is expected next year?

Rachel Watson: Next year, yes.

Chair: It is interesting that the Home Secretary is getting a weekly letter. Obviously, this Committee is very concerned about the Casey review and wants to make sure that there is follow-through. My question is really about how we know that progress is being made. We do not want to get two years on and for the Committee to be meeting again with the Policing Minister and having exactly the same conversation about the problems in the Met that have not been addressed.

Q487 **Tim Loughton:** Ms Watson, is the Met Commissioner's weekly "Dear Suella" letter published?

Rachel Watson: It is not published, no.

Q488 **Tim Loughton:** Why not?

Rachel Watson: I believe it is an internal update he has chosen to give to the Home Secretary. The Commissioner has, of course, published an awful lot of updates; he very regularly publishes updates. There was one just at the beginning of this month about the progress on Operation Onyx and some of the other activity that the Met has to root out corrupt officers and to kind of wash all its workforce through both the police national database and the police national computer. So the Commissioner himself publishes regular updates, and of course we would also look to the Mayor to be publishing progress. It is worth remembering that one of the recommendations of the Casey review was a quarterly board chaired by the Mayor, rather than a deputy mayor or anyone of the Commissioner's choosing, and we would be looking to that to give public declarations of progress as well.



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Q489 **Tim Loughton:** But the weekly letter is probably more interesting, so why shouldn't the public see that?

Chris Philp: It is a private communication between the Commissioner and the Home Secretary. There is obviously a long-established principle that there should be a safe space, if I can use that phrase, for communications between public officials and Ministers. But as Rachel said, we have the official public PEEL inspection next year, we have quarterly PPOG meetings, and Baroness Casey has recommended that the Mayor of London chairs quarterly meetings. He has not done that historically, which, frankly, I think is a mistake on the part of Sadiq Khan. I think it would be reasonable that the Mayor's quarterly oversight board publishes an update for Parliament and, indeed, for the Home Office to have a look at.

Q490 **Tim Loughton:** Are those quarterly boards open to the public?

Rachel Watson: At the moment we do not have the details of how they are going to work. They are a recommendation of the Casey review that I understand the Mayor has said he accepts, so it would be for the Mayor to take that forward. I do not know whether they would be open to the public, but—

Q491 **Tim Loughton:** Do you think they should be open to the public?

Rachel Watson: Fundamentally I think that would be a matter for the Mayor. I would not seek, as a Home Office official—

Q492 **Tim Loughton:** I am asking your opinion. Do you think it would be helpful if those meetings were open to the public and not behind closed doors?

Chris Philp: It is ultimately a decision for the Mayor of London. I have some sympathy for the concept that if he wants to hold the Met to account he might want to do that behind closed doors. I think it would be helpful, however, for the Mayor of London to publish an update following those meetings for the public in London and for Parliament to have a look at. I would certainly think it is reasonable for him to publish an update quarterly.

Q493 **Tim Loughton:** The point I am trying to make, Minister—you might comment on this—is about public confidence. Why is it that public confidence in the police, and particularly in the Met, is so low?

Chris Philp: Baroness Casey wrote a several hundred-page report outlining the issues around historical and, in some cases, current conduct. But building confidence in the police goes beyond the culture and values and conduct issues, serious though those are; it extends to the public seeing the police doing the basics by being visible on the street, arresting more criminals, preventing more crime. A combination of fixing the conduct issues and doing the basics of policing—common-sense policing—right are the ingredients necessary to restore public confidence.

Q494 **Tim Loughton:** Okay, but the point is that the public do not have confidence in the way the police are supposedly looking after them. An



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awful lot of things have been done out of public sight that have only come to light in view of high-profile and quite shocking cases of individual misdemeanours, to put it very lightly. Two examples that we have just given—holding the Met Commissioner to account through quarterly meetings and by regular updates to the Home Secretary—are again being kept out of the public domain. The Home Secretary has the authority, as does the Mayor, to summon the Met Commissioner to her office at any time for a frank and confidential update. Do you not think it might give some reassurance to the public that this is being taken seriously that there are publicly available, regular updates that are as frank as possible about the nature of the problem and the level of competence and urgency with which the Met is now addressing them?

Chris Philp: The point you are making about information being available to the public is reasonable. In terms of where that is available, the next PEEL inspection will obviously be published. As Rachel has already said, the Met Commissioner is providing regular public updates on these issues. Also, on the point I made a moment ago, when the Mayor establishes the personally chaired oversight board—which, frankly, he should have done previously—I think it would be reasonable for that to provide a public report following each of the meetings. Whether he wants to let the public into those meetings is a matter for the Mayor. I can understand why he might not, but he should be providing a public update afterwards.

Q495 **Tim Loughton:** It is ultimately a matter for the Mayor, and it would not be appropriate for the Home Secretary to direct him, but in your view, would it not be an important move towards establishing greater confidence among the public, given the greater transparency? Should your view, and that of the Home Secretary and the Government, not be that those meetings certainly could and should be public?

Chris Philp: You are asking me a question slightly on the fly. My instinctive, off-the-cuff feeling would be that a public update after each of those meetings, explaining what had been discussed and what was going on, published by the Mayor, would be appropriate and help to give the public the information and reassurance that you are rightly saying they need. Whether all the meetings should be public, internally—I hesitate to say that the Mayor should do that, because it may inhibit the conversation.

Q496 **Tim Loughton:** Why do you hesitate?

Chris Philp: Look, I don't want to make Sadiq Khan's arguments for him; maybe you get Sadiq Khan here and ask him directly. But it is harder to have free and frank conversations between Ministers—or, in this case, the Mayor of London—and officials or people like the Commissioner if they are held in public. I do not think it would serve the public interest if those discussions were inhibited in any way. Having served as a Minister for the last four years, that would be my feeling as well. But I do think that publishing the outcome afterwards would be reasonable.

Q497 **Tim Loughton:** I cannot think of a time when this Committee has had a Minister in private rather than in public. It is part of the work that we do.



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On your reference to asking a question on the fly, well, all our questions are asked on the fly; we do not tell you what we are going to ask you. It would just be nice to have your view. Frankly, I think we should have as much transparency as possible, and that is an obvious route to doing it.

Chris Philp: My view is that the Mayor of London should publish a report back to Londoners and for Parliament after each of his quarterly meetings.

Tim Loughton: So you don't think they should be held in public.

Rachel Watson: May I add one other thing? Both the Commissioner and the deputy mayor—and, sometimes, the Mayor—appear regularly before the London Assembly and are held to account publicly by them for progress as well. That is part of the mayoral model. We very often see those sessions and they are publicised. I do not have at the top of my head how regular it is, but they are pretty regular.

Chris Philp: I would also encourage this Committee to get the Mayor of London to appear and explain the Met's performance.

Q498 **Tim Loughton:** We are never reluctant to ask the Mayor of London to come and speak to us.

May I ask about the uplift programme? As you have said, the actual figures are coming out tomorrow morning. You have just said that we are on track for record numbers of police officers. Does that mean that we will have reached the 20,000 target that the Government came up with?

Chris Philp: The figures are embargoed until 9.30 tomorrow morning and I am under strict instructions not to offend the Office for National Statistics by pre-emptively giving an indication, but I think I have said before in the House that I am very confident we are on track both to deliver—indeed, exceed—our 20,000 target and, in doing so, to have record numbers of officers in England and Wales. But I cannot offer any confirmation, because we need to wait for the report tomorrow.

Q499 **Tim Loughton:** Okay. Let's put it this way. If the figures published at 9.30 tomorrow did not show that there are an additional 20,000 officers, would you be disappointed?

Chris Philp: Yes, very.

Q500 **Tim Loughton:** Good. How disappointed would you be if those 20,000 officers turned out not to be terribly good?

Chris Philp: I would be disappointed by that as well. Clearly, the police have recruited a large number of new officers in recent years, who are therefore, by definition, less experienced. It is really important that the sergeants and inspectors who oversee and mentor them give them the support and training they need. We have a well-developed training programme. About half the PUP officers either have a degree or have come through the degree entry route, which obviously gives an additional level of training.



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As they get trained up, I confidently expect these extra officers to have a real impact, despite the fact that many of them are relatively new. Of course, that is not to say that they are young; some of them have joined mid-career. It is worth pointing that out. I expect them to be visible on our streets, so that the public—our constituents—can see more police on the streets, particularly in hotspot areas where there is significant crime, and I expect them to spend their time investigating, following up and prosecuting crime. Those are the outcomes that I expect as a result of this. It will take a year or two for all of them to get trained up, but that is what I am expecting to happen, and I will be very disappointed if it does not.

Q501 Tim Loughton: The NAO review of the police uplift programme stated that parts of the new intake do not meet current or future local policing needs. It is concerned that focusing just on police officer numbers can undermine police chiefs' flexibility to recruit the sort of people they need to specially trained staff roles. We heard from Mark Rowley and others that the rush to tick the box when it comes to recruitment numbers has in some cases meant compromising on the quality and suitability of some of the police coming in. We have heard that some of the most notorious people, who are now in jail, chose routes into the police that are soft options. They got in through various speciality forces, and then progressed to the Met, because they could not join the Met directly. Are you worried in any way that this has been a numbers game, and that we might not have been as scrutinous of the quality of the people coming in as we would have been if the Government had not promised to create 20,000 additional officers?

Chris Philp: There is a lot in there. First, on the acceptance rates for applicants, I think there is quite a high bar. Rachel, can you remind us what it is?

Rachel Watson: Roughly 10 people apply for every police officer who ends up being recruited; they fall away at various points in the process. We have not seen a change in that in the course of the uplift. It is not that more people are getting through.

Chris Philp: That 10:1 applicants-to-entrants ratio should give some reassurance. Your second point was about particular types of people. The Home Secretary rightly took the decision, back in the autumn, to keep open the non-degree entry route. Certainly, some officers have degrees, or want to go through a degree-equivalent process, but a lot of people wanting to join the police do not have a degree and do not want to get one. We are leaving that entry route open, and that will increase the flexibility that chief officers have. By the way, some chief officers do not want to use that flexibility, but others definitely do. That partly addresses your point about making sure that chief officers have choice.

On quality standards and vetting, which I think you were sort of hinting at, that has been a problem, to go back to Dame Diana's first question. The College of Policing will shortly introduce a revised statutory set of guidance on vetting to make sure that people are properly vetted. Say an officer



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passes the vetting, gets hired and goes through their probationary period. At the moment, if they fail vetting five years later, which could include after a move from a specialist force to the mainstream force, that does not automatically result in dismissal. We are actively looking at that in the review of dismissals that I mentioned. Without giving too much away, Mark Rowley has asked us—I do not want to pre-empt the result; we will be making an announcement shortly—to change that, so that if an officer fails re-vetting five, 10 or 15 years into their career, including after a move between force x and force y, that would result in dismissal. If that change were made, it would address your concern about people moving around, or bad behaviour coming to light later.

Q502 Tim Loughton: The NAO gives what, on the face of it, is quite an alarming figure: by the end of next year, as a result of the uplift programme recruits, 38% of police officers will have under five years' experience. On the upside, you could say that we need a clear-out. Certainly in the Met, if we are to attack the culture and some of the systemic problems that we have seen, we need to sweep away a lot of people who are unable to adapt to a new culture, and bring in some new people. At the same time, it means that a lot of on-the-job experience is not there.

How much does that worry you? Are you saying that because of the new and ongoing vetting procedures, you are satisfied that the 20,000 have been properly vetted to come in in the first place, albeit these new schemes don't come in yet, and that there will be new thresholds, on an ongoing continuous professional development scrutiny basis, and that they will be assessed to see whether actually they didn't cut the mustard after a year, two years, three years or whatever it may be?

Chris Philp: I think Rachel wants to come in, but I will just give you a brief answer first. Yes, I have substantially increased confidence that the vetting has been improved on entry. We are still going through the process, but if we make the changes I described, that will be an ongoing vetting requirement throughout someone's entire career, so if they fail vetting 10 years later, that can result in dismissal. I think that will help a lot.

On your point about 38% having less than five years' service, it is, as you say, both a challenge and an opportunity. It is an opportunity in the sense that it provides fresh blood—a lot of new people with different attitudes, which is probably a good thing in some forces. It brings new energy. Some of those people are joining mid-career, so they are not necessarily all very young. But I think it does mean that we need to pay particular attention to training, supervision, mentoring and, in some cases, retaining some experienced officers, like sergeants, inspectors and above, longer—beyond even their 30 years—to make sure we have got that supervision and oversight in place.

Q503 Tim Loughton: Can you elaborate on retention, because that is something we haven't covered? Obviously, it is encouraging, in terms of raw numbers, to have new people coming in, but we have lost quite a lot



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of experienced people. It was quite telling that the head of the Police Federation, when asked by us whether he would recommend people joining the force and whether he would, if he were of suitable age, join the force again, said no. That was interesting. Clearly, we have a problem with retaining existing, experienced officers.

Chris Philp: Rachel is itching to come in, but I respectfully do not agree with that. Let me give you a couple of bits of data to substantiate what I have just said. First, each year about 6% or 7% of officers leave the force. About half of those—in fact, slightly over half—are officers who have reached the 30-year service mark and are retiring. Only about 3%—it may even be 2.5%—of officers leave voluntarily before the end of their service. I think a 2.5% to 3% annual voluntary attrition rate—people leaving before retirement—is actually not too bad.

Secondly, we did a survey of new recruits through the police uplift programme—I think we surveyed several thousand of them—and we found that somewhere in the region of 70% to 80% of them were having a positive experience and about the same proportion planned to make policing their long-term career. I would point to those two bits of data to say that I respectfully do not agree with that Police Federation assessment. But Rachel has been itching to come in—

Q504 **Tim Loughton:** Before we go on, may I give you one bit of data, which seems to conflict greatly with what you have just told us? In the year ending 31 March 2022, there was the highest number of annual leavers from the police service since comparable records began. It was 8,117 full-time equivalent officers, which was 2,099—or 35%—more than the previous year. That seems to conflict with your figures.

Rachel Watson: Respectfully, I do not think it actually does. We have more officers than ever before, so of course we have more leaving, in absolute numbers. Of that figure—I do not have the breakdown in front of me—more than half was officers retiring. We saw during the pandemic people putting off retirement and not leaving in the numbers they normally would; therefore, we did have a spike upwards. We also have more officers new in service than we have had at any point previously in policing. It has been consistently the case that new officers are more likely to leave than other officers. This is not something new to the police.

Tim Loughton: Say that again, sorry.

Rachel Watson: It has consistently been the case that new officers—anyone new to a job is more likely to leave than someone who has been in it for a while, because people arrive and think, “Do I like it, or don’t I?” and actually the proof of the pudding is in the eating. You always get a higher proportion of people leaving in their first couple of years.

Q505 **Tim Loughton:** What percentage?

Rachel Watson: Around one in 10, and that has been consistent. We did not used to collect very good figures on policing before we started the uplift, but anecdotally, all our modelling assumed that around one in 10



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new officers would leave in their first one or two years, and that has been shown—

Q506 **Tim Loughton:** So the uplift figures tomorrow will be net figures, so if 10% of those 20,000 have left, you have found 2,000 replacements.

Rachel Watson: Net, yes. It will be real officers working at the moment.

Chris Philp: It is a good question. In terms of the gross numbers, in the last three years we have recruited somewhere in the region of 48,000 officers—

Rachel Watson: Somewhere in the 40s.

Chris Philp: In the high 40s. Then some people have retired or left early, which gives you the net figure. Without wanting to pre-empt tomorrow's announcement, that will be in the zone of 20,000 net.

Q507 **Tim Loughton:** Can I turn to a different issue? We produced a report on the IOPC, since when there is a new head of the IOPC and various things have gone slightly AWOL—

Chris Philp: A new interim head.

Tim Loughton: There is a new interim head, indeed, but the head we interviewed is no longer there. The review of the Independent Office for Police Conduct is ongoing; how far has it got? It is in a slightly precarious position at the moment, is it not?

Chris Philp: I believe it is due to report in the summer. Perhaps Rachel can correct me if I am wrong.

Rachel Watson: That is my understanding.

Chris Philp: When I met the new interim chief executive, one of the points I made to him was that I would like to see IOPC investigations happen a lot faster. That is important for the people who make the complaints, as they get resolved more quickly, and it is also important for police officers, who sometimes end up with a sort of cloud hanging over them for a long time. I think the investigations need to happen more expeditiously—faster—and I said that to him just a few weeks ago when we met.

Q508 **Tim Loughton:** That is entirely what the Committee said in our report. Another thing we said was that we questioned—we questioned your predecessor about this—the governance issue around having the same person performing the roles of chairman and chief executive. When one of them leaves all of a sudden, you have lost two key roles within that organisation. I think the case is overwhelming. Certainly, the IOPC is an outlier in terms of corporate governance. We made the recommendation that those roles should be separate; have you now come around to that view?



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Chris Philp: That had not been brought to my attention previously. On the face of it, that sounds like a very sensible suggestion. Perhaps I could take that away and look into it, but on the face of it it sounds reasonable.

Rachel Watson: May I add that the review will be looking at that, among other aspects of the IOPC? It was before my time, but my understanding is that originally the decision was taken to have one role, a clear line of accountability and a clear decision-making responsibility. But we absolutely see other arguments, so we await the results of the review. That is a very strong argument.

Chris Philp: Tim is right: almost every other public body I have encountered has a separate chair and chief executive, and almost every large corporation has the same. Tim is making a reasonable point.

Tim Loughton: I think we have it on the record that the Minister has said that is a very sensible idea and it is extraordinary that it does not happen in the IOPC. We can take that as read. Thank you, Chair.

Q509 **Chair:** That is very helpful. We have been discussing the uplift programme, and I think it is worth reflecting on why it was needed. Minister, I know you are not very keen on admitting to any problems or mistakes that were made, but I do wonder about the loss of police officers from 2010 onwards. A large number of police officers left, many of them experienced officers. On reflection, was that a mistake?

Chris Philp: You are talking about things that happened before I was in Parliament.

Chair: I am just asking for your view, because now you have had to bring in the uplift programme to deal with the huge reduction in police officer numbers.

Chris Philp: In order to make the judgment about whether a particular course of action was or was not a mistake, you have to think about it holistically. Obviously, the coalition Government in office between 2010 and 2015—

Chair: I understand all the issues of why the decision was made. I am just reflecting on it.

Chris Philp: I think the context is important. I am not a historian, but they were obviously grappling with very substantial financial challenges, including an enormous deficit, which they inherited from the outgoing Administration.

Chair: You don't need to rehearse that argument.

Chris Philp: That is the context in which it happened.

Q510 **Chair:** I am just asking you about the experienced officers who were lost during that period, which has now resulted in you having to have an uplift programme to bring in all these new officers. Do you think, on reflection, that it was a mistake to get rid of those experienced officers?



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Chris Philp: When you say “get rid”, that implies that people got fired. What happened was that people left voluntarily, because they reached retirement age or because they just decided to leave, and they were not replaced, so this idea that experienced officers were intentionally fired is not an accurate representation.

Q511 **Chair:** I am just trying to get to the reasons why you had to introduce the uplift programme and whether it was a problem for the police service to have lost so many officers and to have had so few officers serving our communities.

Chris Philp: I would make a couple of points. First, I know you do not want me to say it, but there were very difficult fiscal conditions—

Chair: We do not have time—

Chris Philp: As the former Chief Secretary said, there was no money, and difficult choices had to be made. The other thing that has changed is that crime has become a lot more complicated in the last few years—digital evidence and so on—which means we need more officers. We are now, happily, in a bit of a better position fiscally, which gives us the space to hire—

Chair: One of the problems, Minister, that we have identified in our inquiry is that the lack of experienced officers has resulted in some of the problems that we now see around, for example, the investigation of rape cases and serious sexual assault. I think we should just reflect on decisions that were made earlier, how they are now playing out while you are the Policing Minister, and the problems that you have and are trying to address. I will call Lee Anderson next, and then I will come to Simon Fell.

Q512 **Lee Anderson:** Thank you for coming, Minister. I am going to basically rehash some of what has already been said. I recently spent some time with a senior police officer in my neck of the woods who told me that, I think, nearly half of officers now—and the figures are getting worse—have less than five years’ experience. I would imagine that if that were the case in any of the workplaces that I have ever worked in, they would be in a pretty poor state. I know that we have done things in the recent Budget with the pension cap, which the same senior officer told me may help to retain quite a few officers, but what else can we do to make sure that the majority of serving officers have lots of experience?

Chris Philp: It is a fair point, Lee. As the Chair said, the figure is that 38% of officers will have less than five years’ service, which of course means that 62% will have more than five years’ service. But there definitely is a challenge with wanting to retain more of the experienced officers to oversee the new ones, act as mentors, show them the ropes and all those kinds of things that you would expect to see.

I think the recent change to the pension rules is helpful in retaining the most senior officers. Local forces have the power to keep officers on beyond the 30 years if they cover the pension cost, and I would encourage forces to do that if they feel that they need to keep on those experienced



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officers, whether they are sergeants, inspectors or further up the chain of command—for exactly the reason that you set out.

Personally, I am a bit sad that people sometimes hit the 30 years quite young. My wife's uncle retired from Thames Valley as an inspector, or chief inspector, at the age of 48. He joined when he was 18; he retired at 48. People like that can make a contribution beyond the 30-year retirement point. Particularly given what you said and the figures that I mentioned, that is more important now than ever before.

Rachel Watson: Can I come in briefly? One of the things the police uplift programme has done is to start a much bigger focus on retention. For example, there is a retention toolkit that now goes out to all forces. There is a bigger focus and we have done a lot of learning on what keeps officers in. Of course, that is focused to an extent on newer officers, but equally it has application across the force.

The other thing is that all forces have tutor constables. The funding for them has been provided out of the uplift. The College of Policing has developed a role profile and training and is looking towards accreditation to ensure that new officers get proper support, senior support and oversight.

Q513 **Lee Anderson:** Okay. Minister, when I spent time with our senior police officer, she had a few asks, but the main ask was for help with mental health. Police officers are spending far too much time as mental health workers, and they are not qualified to be mental health workers. I am not saying they are wasting their time with these people, but somebody else should be doing this work alongside the police. What can you do in your role to make sure that our police are supported? They could be investigating crimes rather than being mental health workers.

Chris Philp: You are completely right, and your chief officer is completely right as well. In fact, in my first week in this job, everyone, including Mark Rowley, the Met Commissioner, made this point. I went to visit the emergency response team in Croydon—in my borough in south London—and the frontline officers made exactly the same point as well. That is definitely the case—what you are saying is definitely true.

There is quite a good case study of where this has been sorted out, in Humberside. The previous chief constable Chris Rowley—who is now in Lancashire—and his successor Lee Freeman pioneered the model called "Right Person, Right Care" in partnership with the local NHS in Humberside. That basically said that where a member of the public was having a mental health episode, no crime was being committed, and there was no threat to life, public safety or the person's individual safety, it is for the hospital system—the ambulance and hospital—to look after that person, not the police. That is better for the individual as well. Also, when the police take someone to hospital—in particular if the person has been sectioned under section 136—the handover to hospital staff needs to be quick. In some cases, it takes 10 hours or more, which is obviously very bad for the patient, because they are not getting the mental health

treatment they need, but it also means that a couple of officers are sitting there in A&E for hours and hours as well.

The Humberside model basically fixed that. They rolled it out with the agreement of the NHS and the local ambulance trust, and it has worked. From memory, they think that on Humberside alone it is saving 15,000 hours of police time per year. I want to roll it out nationally. We have spoken to DHSC colleagues about it, and the Health Secretary and Maria Caulfield, the Minister there, are on board. We had a meeting in December to get this kicked off, and by agreement with the HSE, NHS England and others, we are developing it and calling it a national partnership model. That basically takes what I described in Humberside and applies it nationally.

I expect all the documentation to specify how that will be done should be ready by the summer—by July. We will then get it rolled out around the country as quickly as we can thereafter. The estimate that I have received from the NPCC—from former chief constable Alan Pughsley—is that across the country this could save nearly a million hours a year of police time that could be spent fighting crime. In addition, equally important is that those members of the public who have mental health problems can be treated by medical professionals, which is what they need.

Q514 Lee Anderson: I guess saving a million hours a year is quite a few new officers. I would like to see the figures on that.

To switch to something else, the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act is a brilliant piece of legislation, but we were told at the time by certain groups that it would affect liberties in this country. Is there any evidence that that is true? Also, I have not seen much evidence of it actually working on the streets of London, where we are still seeing people gluing themselves to pavements and creating a nuisance, tying themselves to bridges and so on. Is it working?

Chris Philp: I do not think that the PCSC Act—I was the Bill Minister in the MOJ for the Bill—curtails civil liberties. In fact, I think we need to go further to prevent protestors from deliberately and intentionally obstructing members of the public going about their day-to-day business. The right to protest and free speech, which obviously we all support, does not extend to stopping—

Lee Anderson: So why are the police not doing something? Why aren't the police carrying out their job?

Chris Philp: Let me finish, Lee. The right to protest obviously does not extend to deliberately stopping members of the public getting their kids to school, or getting to hospital for an appointment or to their place of work, and so on and so forth. That is why, first, we are strengthening the legislation with the new Public Order Bill currently going through Parliament—we had what I hope is the last bit of ping-pong yesterday evening—and, assuming their lordships agree to the position, we are hoping to get Royal Assent as early as next week. That will clarify the definition of what constitutes serious disruption—I think it defines it as



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anything more than minor inconvenience to the general public—which will give a clearer statutory basis for the police to act.

I talk to the police a lot about this—both Commissioner Mark Rowley and Assistant Commissioner Matt Twist, who is in charge of that bit of the Met—and I have made clear the public expectation that the public are able to go about their lawful, daily business. We had a meeting in No. 10 about this back in December. The police made it clear that they wanted the definition of serious disruption to be delivered. By next week, I hope we will have done that. I expect the highways to be kept clear.

Q515 Lee Anderson: Last year, during the jubilee celebrations on the Mall, there was one person who jumped in front of the procession. He was removed by officers within 20 seconds, and the procession went on. Why can't the police do that now? They have proved they can do it, given the right occasion, so why can't they do it and let people go about their business right now, today?

Chris Philp: Wilful obstruction of the highway is an offence under section 137 of the Highways Act 1980—I am speaking from memory here. It is a criminal offence—am I right?

Rachel Watson: It is indeed.

Chris Philp: Good. Thank you. I expect the law to be upheld. There is some case law that says that in relation to that offence the police and the courts need to take into account articles 10 and 11 ECHR rights to free speech and free assembly and so on, but I think—as you do as well, clearly—that the balance is in the wrong place. That is why we are clarifying the definition in the legislation.

Q516 Lee Anderson: Let me have another go, Minister. In a couple of weeks we are going to have a coronation—a wonderful, beautiful event—in our great country. If anyone gets in the way, they will be removed quickly, but if a group of XR turn up today on Whitehall, the road will be blocked off and they will be left there. Why is that?

Chris Philp: Because there is this balancing exercise with the right to free assembly and protest. I have made my view very clear: the right to protest does not extend to deliberately and intentionally setting out to obstruct other members of the public. I have made that view clear to the police and it is why we are clarifying the definitions in the legislation currently going through Parliament.

Q517 Lee Anderson: Do you think the police are reluctant or do not have the confidence to remove these protesters?

Chris Philp: I think we have had a couple of helpful legal judgments recently, which make it clear that when disruption gets beyond a certain point the police can and should intervene. I certainly expect them to, but we are strengthening the law as well.

Rachel Watson: It is worth adding that by January this year the police had arrested nearly 2,000 Just Stop Oil protesters, so they are making

arrests. Of course, we see the examples of when they do not do that, which are very frustrating, but under this Minister and the Home Secretary's direction, we have seen a real uptick in determination.

Q518 Simon Fell: Thank you for joining us. I want to return to the points made earlier on workforce planning. You said a few minutes ago that crime has become a lot more complicated, and through this inquiry we have heard about some of the challenges facing policing and law enforcement more widely in trying to gain skilled people who can lean into areas like cyber-crime and fraud in particular. We have heard anecdotally about the Met poaching people from the NCA and vice versa, the civil service poaching people from both of them, and challenges with differential pay scales. What are your thoughts on the strategy to deal with that, given that fraud is currently the No. 1 crime in the UK?

Chris Philp: That is a very good question. I will answer it, but first, for the record, let me say that ministerial responsibility for fraud sits with the Security Minister, Tom Tugendhat—

Simon Fell: I know, and we will come back to that.

Chris Philp: Yes, so for a detailed dive on fraud, Tom is the person to talk to, but the point you make is a reasonable one. Crime is getting more complicated, and fraud, particularly online fraud, is getting more prevalent. A fraud strategy—long-awaited—is due to be published very, very imminently. It will go through all this holistically, but it will include the workforce element. Specialist training and specialist officers are very important to making sure that fraud is investigated. We have some good capabilities in the National Crime Agency, the City of London police and the Metropolitan police in particular, but I expect we will need to build that further.

The other element that I think will help us to fight fraud, particularly online fraud or online-originated fraud, which is the majority, is the Online Safety Bill, which is progressing through Parliament, and for which I was the Bill Minister at one time, when I was at the DCMS. That Bill makes fraud a priority offence—in schedule 7, I think—which means that the big online platforms, such as Facebook, and category 2A search engines like Google, have to take proactive steps to prevent fraud, and if they do not, they can be fined up to 10% of their global revenue, I believe.

What is critical—I have flagged this to the NCA and the Met—is that policing engages with the regulator, Ofcom, as they draft their codes of practice, to make sure that the codes of practice specifying how these big online firms discharge their duties are tough enough. If the Committee has any views on that, I suggest that you feed those in to Ofcom as soon as possible. I have asked policing to do that so that the codes of practice are really tough.

Q519 Simon Fell: I recognise that this is an issue that needs lots of different actors to deal with it properly, but part of it is about workforce. The NCA has a cyber specials programme, which runs, but perhaps not to the level



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we would hope it might. I do not want to pre-empt anything that comes in the fraud review, but there is a gap there. I am interested in your thoughts around policing. What more can be done to try and attract people in from the private sector, who have the experience and might be willing to be seconded in, or to look at differential pay scales or something to that end to try and hang on to the dedicated, good people that we already have working in this area?

Chris Philp: You mentioned cyber specials, where special constables that have a professional background in, for example, IT or financial matters can be recruited as special constables to add extra capability. That is a programme that we really need to push. We definitely need to have a drive towards recruiting people with those capabilities, particularly, as I say, in the National Crime Agency, the Met and the City of London. From a recruitment, workforce and training perspective, do you want to amplify that, Rachel?

Rachel Watson: I will just add that the College of Policing—I don't know if it has been a witness here—is working on a pathway for cyber professionals to look at potentially accrediting, and that could, over time, lead to pay supplements in the future, but they are looking towards a proper pathway for cyber professionals. Also, in the new training that we have, there is an element of cyber included in all of it to give everyone at least a very basic grounding. For those with talent, experience and ability, the college is working on how to develop that at the moment.

Q520 **Simon Fell:** The concern here is that if you are a victim of fraud, you make your report to Action Fraud and get a reasonably woeful response back—I am being generous by saying “reasonably”—and nothing much happens after that. We need industry to step up. We need appropriate levies to be placed on those who drive a lot of this crime. Some 70% of fraud comes from online channels at the moment. We also need to make a few arrests and make sure people feel like their collars are being felt. There is a gap there. I am coming round to a cheeky question. Do you think, given that this is the single largest crime type in the UK, that fraud should sit under your portfolio rather than the Security Minister's?

Chris Philp: Departmental portfolio allocation is a matter for the Home Secretary, and I would not want to trespass on her prerogatives. I agree with your general point that this is a huge, growing crime area. There are obviously issues with Action Fraud that you have alluded to, and I would expect those to be addressed via the fraud strategy.

You mentioned the role that companies have to play here—online companies and banks especially. I will just repeat what I said about the Online Safety Bill. This has the potential to be transformational by forcing the likes of Google, Facebook and so on to act as proper gatekeepers and not let fraud get promoted online in the first place. If you can cut that off at the source, that will have a really dramatic effect. The codes of practice that Ofcom are drafting are critical for that.

Q521 **Simon Fell:** If I can just move on to productivity, when can we expect to



see the findings from the review of productivity in policing?

Chris Philp: Which Alan Pughsley has taken on. I believe it will be in September, but where there are things that we can do sooner, like the Home Office counting rules, we have done that already. He has also been contributing to the mental health work, and we will, I hope, be able to make some announcements over the summer. Where we can take action quicker, we are doing that. I am not waiting for the review to conclude.

Q522 **Simon Fell:** You talked about the Humberside model in your introductory comments, and in discussion with other Members as well. That is certainly a useful thing for us to hear, because it has come up time and again during this inquiry—the sheer amount of time that is taken away from frontline policing in looking after mental health, in particular. What I am curious about is the funding for that and what that model looks like. I realise some of this must sit with DHSC, but the reason the police are backfilling is that there are not the trained, available staff within the Department of Health and the NHS. Can you give us some detail on what that looks like?

Chris Philp: The provision of those services is obviously for DHSC and the NHS, which in the autumn statement received an additional £3.3 billion over and above its spending review '21 settlement. As a general point, the NHS is investing heavily in additional mental health capacity, and in things like places of safety for people who are suffering mental health crises. What I spoke about earlier, and what they have already done in Humberside, forms part of what the NHS is trying to do anyway as part of the service that the public and Parliament expect it to offer in any event to people who are suffering acute mental health episodes. It won't be a financial drain on the police; that is very clearly agreed.

Q523 **Simon Fell:** My concern is that the police are just pushing a problem to the NHS that they are unable to deal with. I know this is perhaps an unfair question to you—it should go to a Health Minister—but do they have the funding to fulfil that role, or are we just leaving the NHS with a problem?

Chris Philp: Obviously, we are working closely with DHSC and the NHS to make sure the capacity is available. As I say, it has been done in Humberside, so we have a really clear case study of how this works. There is no suggestion in Humberside that people with mental health problems have fallen through the cracks and been neglected, so we have a very good model that we can replicate. As I say, I think it is better for patients to be looked after in a medical sense, rather than have police officers try to deal with it.

Q524 **Simon Fell:** I think we probably all agree with you there. On the doing less point, obviously this is difficult but low-hanging fruit. What else do you think the police should be doing less of to get them back on the frontline?

Chris Philp: I have already mentioned the changes to the counting rules that we announced a few weeks ago and that are due to come into force in



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about two to three weeks. I think they are coming into force on 12 May, but it is fairly soon, anyway—the next few weeks. The police were basically dual recording information. We think that, at the very beginning, that will save us 443,000 hours of police time. That includes issuing revised guidance on malicious communications, because we don't think the police should be investigating hurt feelings. The malicious communications offence has a certain threshold, and we don't expect investigations or crime recording to happen if that threshold has not been met. Certainly, there are some opportunities there.

There are some other areas. This is still work in progress, so I don't want to say too much. You may have picked up from witnesses that there is a feeling in policing that the amount of work required to prepare case files for the Crown Prosecution Service, including some of the work around redaction that has to be done prior to the case file sharing, is imposing substantial burdens on policing. Alan Pughsley's productivity review is looking at that, and we are working constructively with the Attorney General's office and the CPS—particularly the Director of Public Prosecutions, Max Hill—to look at this in a collaborative, constructive way. That is still work in progress. If you ask police officers, I think they would mention that area as another one that might merit attention, but it is more complicated to address.

Q525 Simon Fell: We appreciate that. We have heard through the inquiry about the challenges, especially in areas like rape and sexual assault, of getting a decent evidence package through to the CPS. It cuts both ways, and that is a very difficult thing to address.

For my final point on the changes to counting rules, I am afraid I am going back to fraud again. The challenge that I see with that is that if you are a victim of fraud, you will have multiple offences against you on the route to the fraud being committed against you in the first place. You may be a victim of identity theft, you may then be impersonated, and a fraud will occur—a theft of some kind. With your review of those, in that example, does that get compacted down to one?

Chris Philp: No. The changes to the counting rules do not affect fraud.

Simon Fell: Okay. That has made me happy.

Chris Philp: I am glad.

Q526 Chair: When will the review of productivity and policing be published? When are you expecting that?

Rachel Watson: I would say around the summer.

Chris Philp: Around the same time. I think he said September, didn't he?

Rachel Watson: September—I haven't got a specific date yet, but certainly that sort of time this year.

Q527 Alison Thewliss: Given that much of this is devolved, I will not delve too deeply into things that concern England, but I do want to pick up on



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some of the points that Simon Fell made about expertise within the police. When we took evidence on the Economic Crime Bill last October, Andrew Gould, the detective chief superintendent of City of London police, said, "One of my sergeants has just been offered 200 grand to go to the private sector. We cannot compete with that. That is probably the biggest risk that we face within this area at the moment." How does that tie into those that leave the force voluntarily? Are you tracking those who are being tapped up to go and work in crypto for the private sector? How are you making sure that that is well funded? If you can be offered a lot more money than you will get working for organisations like City of London police, why would you stay?

Chris Philp: Those offers from the private sector are obviously a challenge. When looking at those salary comparisons, one has to keep in mind the fact that the pension arrangements for the public sector in general, and the police in particular, are much more generous than in the private sector. I think the employer contribution component for the police is worth about 31% of salary and the average private sector equivalent is 6%, so when making these comparisons one has to adjust for that 31% compared to 6% pension differential. Of course, in the police there is also a great deal of security of tenure because, absent misconduct, police cannot be, for example, made redundant. There is a lot more job security than there would be in the private sector. It is worth making those two points. The public service element is extremely important as well, and we all obviously experience that—I hope—as Members of Parliament. Having said all that, clearly the number you mentioned is a very large one, and that is of concern when it comes to retention. Rachel, do you want to comment on the data collection point that Alison made?

Rachel Watson: Many forces now do exit interviews. This is encouraged. In fact, many use exit interviews as a way of retaining officers because they find they can actually persuade officers to stay if they start thinking about leaving, because of precisely that public service element that the Minister alluded to. In the data that we have on what attracts people to policing in the first place, unsurprisingly salary is not the No. 1; it is public service, the interest of the job, and the options for progression—because the pay as people get further up the ranks is still competitive, although of course it doesn't compete with the kind of salary you were talking about.

We also expect the Police Remuneration Review Body to take account of that and of the competition from other sectors when looking at setting pay scales. We expect that to report to us within the next month or so. That is the mechanism we have for trying to ensure that policing remains both value for money but also competitive. There is the capacity for chief constables to make targeted variable payments to help retain certain specialisms and to target certain harder-to-fill roles, although of course those payments cannot be quite as high as £200,000, so that that remains a challenge.

Q528 **Alison Thewliss:** Realistically, it just isn't going to compete, is it? If people are being offered that, you just can't compete.



Rachel Watson: What we are not seeing, though, is difficulty; it is clearly challenging, but at the same time plenty of people are still coming through. As I mentioned earlier, the College of Policing has the cyber pathway to encourage officers. We also have the ability—this is not very often used—for officers to go out for a while and then come back into policing again. It is not a one-way door. There is perhaps more that can be done to encourage perhaps going out and then coming back with those skills. It is not that once they leave, they have to leave forever.

Q529 **Alison Thewliss:** But if you're a graduate leaving university with an IT-related degree, you are not really wanting to go into policing, are you?

Rachel Watson: I think that is the challenge that the public sector tends to have against some private sector and City roles; yet, none the less, it does carry on recruiting high-quality graduates. Police Now, for example, targets particularly the sort of high-quality graduates who might otherwise be going into precisely those roles or into banking. It has a very, very high success rate in attracting really high-calibre graduates. We funded about 500 to 600 new recruits into detective roles in the last year, and they actually tend to stay. We assumed that Police Now people would come in, do their two years and then leave. In fact, I think about 80% of that figure stay and say they intend to stay in policing because the quality of the job, the public service and the interest are sufficient to keep them.

Chris Philp: Speaking for the Met, which has had some challenges attracting people for the reasons we discussed at the beginning, the detective entry route does not have any trouble attracting people at all, which is interesting. I guess the pitch to people who might join and stay is that there is no other career that enables you to exercise powers to arrest criminals, or detect and prevent crime—there is no other job that lets you do that. For some people, rightly, that is more important than the money.

Q530 **Alison Thewliss:** In terms of that pursuit of criminals, we also heard during the evidence sessions on that Bill from Bill Browder, who said: "What I have learned is that the law enforcement agencies effectively refuse to open criminal cases unless they are 100% sure that they can win without any tough fight on the other side." Given some of the people that you are trying to prosecute here, they are extremely well lawyered-up. The scales are not even in that regard. Those you are trying to prosecute for economic crime, particularly at the higher end of that, will make it very difficult for you to do it.

There is a risk aversion because there is no full cost recovery—there is no cost cap for those kinds of economic crimes: money laundering, property issues. As part of the Economic Crime Bill that is currently in the Lords, are there any plans to tighten up those kinds of loopholes and put a cost cap in the Bill, so the police force is not inhibited in taking forward those types of prosecutions?

Chris Philp: I think that is a Tom Tugendhat question; it falls into his area. Perhaps the best thing would be that I ask Tom to write to you on that point, rather than trying to answer for him—unless anyone can add to that?



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Rachel Watson: I cannot, I'm afraid.

Q531 **Alison Thewliss:** Okay. I was going to ask about the effectiveness of measures as part of the Economic Crime (Transparency and Enforcement) Act, which received Royal Assent last March. Is that also more of a Tom Tugendhat issue?

Rachel Watson: I'm afraid it is, sorry—it is colleagues elsewhere in the Home Office.

Q532 **Alison Thewliss:** Okay, fair enough. Certainly, lots of arguments have been made in this place about bringing in a failure to prevent economic crime as well, as there is a failure to prevent in health and safety legislation and also in the Bribery Act. Are you able to comment on whether you think a failure to prevent economic crime would have an effect on reducing economic crime and improving prosecutions?

Chris Philp: I do not want to comment on legislation that is for another Minister, but the prevention of economic crime, as well as its prosecution, are equally important. I mentioned the Online Safety Bill before, in answer to Simon's questions; using the powers in that to prevent online fraud is extremely important—and having tight money laundering regulations to prevent money coming into this jurisdiction from unpleasant places around the world. It is important. I know Tom is particularly focused on that. As a general point, prevention and prosecution are equally important.

Q533 **Alison Thewliss:** Do you think we take fraud seriously enough?

Chris Philp: Yes, I do. You will see the fraud strategy. I know it has been long-awaited, but I understand that publication is imminent. You will see in that strategy that there is a comprehensive, whole-system approach to tackling it. So, yes, I do think it is taken seriously. It affects so many people; I think it makes up 41% of all crime. All of us know someone who has been a victim of this. Some of us may have been victims ourselves. It is extremely serious and does need to be tackled. Ultimately, we all pay the price because banks have to levy higher charges, and so on, to cover the cost of refunding it.

Q534 **Alison Thewliss:** The figures are quite eye-watering. UK Finance said that in the first six months of 2022 criminals stole £609.8 million. Take Five to Stop Fraud Week last week had figures which say that impersonation happened to 45,367 people, with £177.6 million of losses. That is significant, is it not?

Chris Philp: Absolutely.

Alison Thewliss: It doesn't really feel as though there is a policing response to match that.

Rachel Watson: The Government did allocate £400 million towards economic crime, including fraud, as part of the spending review 21. We are also expecting 400 specific fraud officers to be recruited by 2025. Out of the police Uplift Programme—which we hope we are on track to deliver—we allocated 725 officers to regional organised crime units. So,



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again, that would help bolster the response there. As the Minister says, the fraud strategy is clearly crucial and we will be publishing that soon.

Q535 **Alison Thewliss:** But if you are not recruiting these people until 2025, that is £609.8 million every six months, potentially, going to criminals.

Rachel Watson: I understand that 400 officers are being recruited between now and 2025, so it is not a case of none of them arriving until 2025.

Chris Philp: Yes, that recruitment is under way.

Q536 **Chair:** Thank you. I just have a few questions that I would like to come back on. One is around the review that you are having currently in the Home Office about powers to dismiss and to give chief officers more powers around that. I just wondered what your reflections were about that, when we know that many of the chief officers who are in post have been in post for some time and have failed to deal with bad behaviour within the police. And I just wondered how you feel that giving them additional powers will actually help, when you are dealing with the same group of people who have failed to use the powers they already have.

Chris Philp: First, turnover of chief officers is relatively high, so I think that something like half the chief officers are relatively new. Secondly, I think these issues have a salience that they did not have three or four years ago, because of the terrible individual cases that we know about and because of the Casey report and other reports as well. So I think that the chief officers are now much more alert to this compared to previously.

Thirdly, they may not have taken action in some cases—in some cases, they tried to take action, but were prevented from doing so. I have heard about cases where a chief officer has wanted to dismiss a police officer for misconduct and has tried to do so, but the process, as the Committee will know, involves a legally qualified chair who basically ultimately takes the decision, not the chief constable. They have been unable to get rid of someone who has then stayed in the force. So you have got a chief constable who wants to get rid of Officer X, for good reason, but they have basically been stopped from getting rid of them by the system as it currently operates.

So, in defence of some current chief officers, they have not always had the powers that they needed; the matter has been out of their hands, to some extent.

Q537 **Chair:** Does that sound then like you are thinking that you want to remove the legally qualified chairs?

Chris Philp: I do not want to pre-empt the result of the decision, because we haven't taken the decision yet, but that is an option we are considering.

Chair: Okay. All right.



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Chris Philp: We have not made a decision, so I do not want to pre-empt anything.

Q538 **Chair:** Okay. I just want to ask you as well about another issue, because you have talked about common-sense policing and wanting to get—I guess—back to what people perhaps think police officers should be doing. I just wonder if you could provide the Committee with evidence, if you have it in the Home Office, about dealing with non-crime hate incidents and how much that is taking police away from their other responsibilities. What evidence is there of that?

Chris Philp: It is difficult to assess precisely, although we may have some data from the police activity survey that supports it, if that is available.

However, in that 443,000 hours saved that I mentioned at the beginning and again more recently, that includes the effect of the revised guidance on malicious communications, making it clear where that threshold is, besides removing some of the duplicative reporting. So that is in the 443,000.

Do we have any data from the police activity survey that illuminates this at all?

Sarah Swinford: *indicated dissent.*

Q539 **Chair:** There has been an awful lot made of this non-crime hate incidence. So do you actually have some evidence anywhere to back up what has been said?

Chris Philp: As I said, within that 443,000 hours saved, that includes, as I said a second ago, the clarification of where the threshold is for malicious communications, which is where some of this stuff ends up—

Q540 **Chair:** But you cannot tell me what it is, though, in terms of the hours saved.

Chris Philp: No—I mean, it is substantial; it is not a tiny fraction. I can write to the Committee with the exact estimate, but it is a substantial chunk of the 443,000.

Q541 **Chair:** “Substantial”?

Chris Philp: Yes. I am not saying it is half, but it is not 1%. It is a meaningful proportion of it.

Q542 **Chair:** Okay. If you could provide us with that, that would be very helpful.

You have talked a lot about how crime and policing has changed in recent years. I am very conscious that the last time that there was a royal commission on policing was over 50 years ago. Is it now time to have another royal commission to look at what policing should be doing and to look forward to the next 20 or 30 years?

Chris Philp: I should say that there are no current plans to do that; it is not something that is currently being considered. Again, I have not sort of thought deeply about this, so I am answering a little bit off the cuff.



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My instinctive feeling—I would obviously be interested to hear the Committee's views—is that royal commissions take quite a long time and absorb a great deal of energy. My own preference is to focus our time, energy and attention, and the time, energy and attention of police officers, police and crime commissioners and so on, on driving improvement by investigating more crimes, prosecuting more crimes and protecting the public—driving those basics, and sorting out the misconduct and culture issues that we talked about earlier. We should focus on getting those things sorted out.

If we have a big royal commission, it may, besides taking a long time, distract all of us collectively—politicians, civil servants, the police, and police and crime commissioners—from this mission to improve these basic things. That would be instinctive, off-the-cuff response, but I have not thought about it deeply. If the Committee have thoughts on it, I would be very interested to hear them.

Q543 **Chair:** Okay. I started off by asking you about what the problems were in the police forces, and you very nimbly side-stepped that and talked about challenges. I just want to complete the circle. What keeps you awake at night in terms of policing?

Chris Philp: Goodness me. Well, there are some immediate things, such as making sure the coronation is policed safely and effectively, which are of immediate concern. I am always concerned about any further individual incident that may occur that would shock all of us—things like the Carrick and Couzens cases. I want to make sure there are no other cases like that.

Q544 **Chair:** We have been told that there are going to be more cases—perhaps not at the extreme end of the scale, but there are going to be more misconduct cases.

Chris Philp: And as you probably know, we are doing an exercise to check every serving police officer and member of police staff against the police national database, to check all of that thoroughly. But that worries me, as you would expect. Those two specific things keep me awake at night.

We have not talked about drugs today. I am concerned about the effects that drug addiction and drug-dealing gangs have on the fabric of our society. I am worried about the effect that addiction has on individuals who are addicted. I am worried about what does that do for acquisitive crime, because they steal things to fund the habit, and I am worried about the violence associated with drug gangs, particularly as a London MP representing Croydon in south London. Obviously, we see that in our own borough. Those things worry me.

Q545 **Chair:** Well, I am sure you know that we are in the middle of writing a report on drugs. In fact, you gave evidence recently to the Committee. I am sure that might help alleviate your problem sleeping when you read our report and the recommendations that we make, which you might wish to take up. I am very conscious that you have brought three civil



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servants with you today and we have only heard from one. Is there anything that the other two officials who you have with you want to say to us that they have not had an opportunity to say?

Chris Philp: I would definitely encourage that, although we have very harmonious relations between officials and Ministers in the Home Office. I should put that on record.

Chair: Clearly, if you brought three officials with you.

Sarah Swinford: From a crime reduction point of view, I was here in case we got into the antisocial behaviour side of things that have just been launched, or if we got into neighbourhood crime, acquisitive crime, serious violence and homicide—the kind of areas that are very clear priorities—and what exactly has happened around them. ASB has just been launched, as you know. Since the start of the Parliament, we have got really good stats on driving down crime in those three areas, so I can talk to any of the detail on that, but I have nothing particular to add on the police focus that we have had here.

Chair: Thank you.

Lynne Abrams: I am here in case there were questions around things such as violence against women and girls, and rape and sexual assault. In particular, the Minister referenced concerns around rape charges and rape prosecutions, mindful that we have a programme called Operation Soteria, which is aiming to transform the police and CPS response to rape and to rape investigations and prosecutions. I can answer any questions related to that.

Chair: Clearly, the Committee produced its report on rape investigations and prosecutions recently. We are following very closely the progress on the end-to-end rape review and on the very limited increases in investigations, prosecutions and convictions. We obviously want to see far more, but we will continue to follow that; perhaps we will have you back again to discuss that specifically. Can I thank you very much for your time today? I think we have had a good gallop through a number of issues around policing. We will be having our final session tomorrow, and then we will be producing a report in the summer. Again, thank you very much for your time today.