



Constitution Committee

Corrected oral evidence: The rule of law

Wednesday 25 June 2025

10.30 am

Watch the meeting

Members present: Lord Strathclyde (The Chair); Lord Anderson of Ipswich; Baroness Andrews; Lord Beith; Lord Bellamy; Lord Burnett of Maldon; Lord Foulkes of Cumnock; Baroness Hamwee; Baroness Laing of Elderslie; Lord Murphy of Torfaen.

Evidence Session No. 9

Heard in Public

Questions 133 – 142

Witnesses

[I](#): Chris Nelson, Police and Crime Commissioner, Gloucestershire Constabulary; Serena Kennedy, Chief Constable, Merseyside Police.

Examination of witnesses

Chris Nelson and Serena Kennedy.

Q133 The Chair: Good morning and welcome to this meeting of the House of Lords Constitution Committee. Today we are hearing from Chris Nelson, the Police and Crime Commissioner for Gloucestershire Constabulary, and Serena Kennedy, the Chief Constable for Merseyside Police. I extend a warm welcome to you both and thank you for making the time to give evidence to our committee.

As you know, we launched an inquiry into the rule of law some time ago. We have spoken to and received evidence from a whole gamut of people. Something that has come up continually is the role of enforcement and police in terms of carrying out and upholding the rule of law.

My first question is for you both, but perhaps if Mr Nelson goes first and then the chief constable, that would work. What is it that you understand, think and feel that the local police in your area understand by the rule of law? What part do the police play in creating and maintaining a culture of respect for the rule of law? We will move on to ask about enforcement and many other things during the rest of the morning.

Chris Nelson: Thank you very much for that introduction, my Lord. If I may, I will just make a little statement before I give my response to your question. I just really wanted to put on record about Police Constable Ian Minett of Cheltenham Response B shift, who died suddenly over the last weekend while on duty catching criminals. His lovely and close family can be hugely proud of his service and achievements. I am also hugely proud of how Gloucestershire Constabulary handled this sad situation, from officers providing emergency first aid and CPR to how they supported his family with care and compassion.

Officers have to deal with life and death situations daily: running towards, not away from, danger and experiencing huge workloads and mental health stresses to help keep us all safe from harm. The wider police family—whether it is warranted officers, police community support officers, police staff, special constables or volunteers—are to be commended for their public service. It is one of the best professions and public services we have and I for one am deeply thankful for all they do on our behalf. I just wanted to get that off my chest first.

The Chair: Thank you very much for doing so. May I comment immediately? We very much join in condolences for your colleague who has died and echo your sentiments about public service, the role the police play and just how important that is, and I hope that that will come out during the course of the questions.

Chris Nelson: Thank you very much. Public service is something I feel really passionate about. I will tell you just a little about myself. I had a pretty full military career over 30 years, then went into business, then

local politics, and then to where I am now as police commissioner. Public service is something that is very special to this country.

You asked a question on the rule of law and respect. I have given it a lot of thought over the last few days, and it is one reason I am here today in person, because it is a really important subject. You could ask: is the rule of law all about the criminal justice system or the police? They are kind of equivalent; when you ask questions about the rule of law, you are also asking questions about the criminal justice system and police.

You also asked a question on respect. The phrase I tend to use is trust and confidence. For me, it is one of the most important issues of the moment. Ever since Covid and the murder of Sarah Everard, we have had a perfect storm of events. Black Lives Matter, George Floyd, etcetera, have all contributed to a drop in trust and confidence or respect.

If you look at the figures from the Crime Survey for England and Wales, you see that in around 2020, about 75% of the population had trust and confidence in the police, in law and order, but it is now about 10 percentage points less than it was just five years ago. Some academics attribute the drop to 20 points, not 10 points, and obviously it depends on who you ask and what reference plane is used to assess the extent of that drop. Ever since 2020, what I have noticed is that there is a relentless media pressure—almost on a daily basis—highlighting bad news stories, particularly within the police but also the criminal justice system, prisons, etcetera. That pressure has contributed towards the drop in confidence.

When I was preparing for today, I thought long and hard about trust and confidence and created a really long list of things that I thought were affecting respect or trust and confidence. I bracketed them into two groups: operational environment and leadership environment. If I may, I would first like to talk about some things that I put in the operational environment.

The first point is that, post 2024, there is a shortage of resources across the whole of the criminal justice system and policing, leading to reduced visibility of officers on the beat and inadequate relationships with the public. I do not think police are dealing sufficiently with volume crime. Crime is up 25% and 999 call numbers are up 20%. There is a rapidly changing face and nature of crime. There is more on the internet, often international: fraud, scams and child sexual assaults. There are increased police workloads, longer investigations, more paperwork, masses of digital evidence data, with longer times spent solving crimes, yet the solved rate nationally is quite low, just 13%.

Post lockdown, increasing mental health problems in the public are a major issue. This includes school absences, abuse of animals, working-age people on benefits, complex emotional needs, chronic anxiety, eating disorders, self-harm, suicides, ADHD, and alcohol and drug addictions—I could go on.

There is a lack of real resilience in the public, with rising expectations of the public on the police, and I will give you a little example. There are a lot more people cycling at the moment. Often they have cameras on their helmets, and we can get swamped with information from cyclists who believe they have been abused on the roads.

Public complaint numbers across all public services have gone up. There is declining faith in the establishment and in institutions, and a loss of trust generally. The public and media perception at the moment is that the police are doing two-tier policing. We are spending too much time on non-crime hate incidents, covering protected characteristics, and stop and search and use of force discrimination issues.

All those accusations and perceptions undermine neutrality and the impartiality of the police. Police really should enforce the law without fear or favour, and if police are not perceived to be following the law, why should the public, they ask themselves? Our policing by consent model relies on trusting the police to be fair and just.

Turning to the leadership environment—that second major area which is having an impact on trust, confidence and respect—the first issue is declining force performance. If you look at the number of forces in what we call “engage”—the public calls it “special measures”—before 2020 and this trigger point of Covid and Sarah Everard, we only had two forces in engage. Since 2020, we have had nine forces in engage. There are plenty of issues to do with leadership and senior officers, and you see that with engaged forces. Very few chiefs who go into engage survive contact and usually leave for one reason or another. Not every chief will leave, but most will.

There has been regular use of what we call Section 38 for performance, which was part of the 2011 Act that created the police and crime commissioners. More recently, looking at the statistics, there has been a rise in misconduct cases for senior officers, particularly since 2023. That may be due to an increasing focus within police forces trying to tackle male violence against women and girls.

There is insufficient leadership and management training throughout all levels of command within policing. This can lead to poor performance issues not being addressed, and then, because they have not been addressed, they become misconduct problems, and then you also get toxic cultures. Too often, officers have to be abstracted to train, adding to day-to-day pressures with forces.

At the start, I talked about my military experience and I am often making comparisons with the military and policing. In my world of the military, I probably spent a quarter to a third of my 30-plus years in leadership training, management training and specialist training. The police spend much less time in training, but then police do not have the resources that the military has. If you look at discussions over the military, we are talking about 2.3% to 2.5% of GDP, and the recent NATO discussion talks about an aspiration of taking it up to 5%. But if you just look at police—

which deals with internal security in the main rather than the external security of the military—we only have 1%, so there are not enough officers. In the military, when you go on long courses, you do it between postings and are not abstracted in the main from your unit, whereas in policing, every time an officer goes off on training, he or she is generally abstracted, and that adds to all sorts of pressures within the system.

I will make one final comparison on the military. We always had a saying in the military: there is no such thing as a bad soldier, just a bad officer. You could apply the same statement to policing. In other words, leadership and management training are absolutely essential to performance. You could say that for just about anything, but when you are talking about a uniformed service, it is particularly important.

There is a shortage of candidates for chief constable jobs, who often lack senior experience in other forces. They need the opportunity to make mistakes early in their career so they can get better as they go up and get promoted. Officers should be promoted earlier and allowed more direct entrants. There is too much reliance on competency-based interviews and not enough on annual reports and 360-degree feedback. Finally, there could be better selection and mentoring of promising police officers throughout their career.

If you look at all that together under operational and leadership environments, you have the answer to why trust and confidence in the police and law and order have gone down.

The Chair: Thank you very much indeed for that; that was a very full reply and a good background. Let me just turn to the chief constable. You will have heard all that. You come to this with an enormous range of experience in the north-west of England. Just to reiterate, the question is about the role of the police in creating and maintaining a culture of respect for the rule of law, what your understanding of the rule of law is and how it impacts policing in your area.

Serena Kennedy: Thank you, my Lord. Apologies that I cannot be there in person, but it speaks to the last point. I am the cohort director for the aspiring and future chief officers of the future. I am leading the Executive Leadership Programme, which is the programme that any aspiring chief officer needs to complete before they apply to be one. I hope that gives some reassurance that we are taking the leadership of policing very seriously.

Picking up on the question around what role the police play in creating and maintaining a culture of respect for the rule of law, the question sets out that we absolutely have a really important role to play in creating that culture of respect for the rule of law. It is just that: we need to remember that we are part of the system and have a role to play in creating that respect, but it is not the totality of policing to create that respect.

I will make just three points. First, it is really important to remember the operational independence of policing, as set out in the policing protocol. I know we are going to come on to enforcement, but while we have a role in enforcing the law, we are operationally independent of the Government and it is really important for police leadership and chief constables to be very cognisant of that in their decision making.

The second point—which the commissioner mentioned—is policing by consent. We are very proud of policing in the UK. Indeed, our model of policing by consent and that consent coming from the public and not necessarily the state in relation to the decisions that we make is the envy of many other places internationally.

The other point is that we abide by our code of ethics, which is set out by the College of Policing: we need to police with fairness, respect, integrity, trust and legitimacy. Of course, our decisions need to be absolutely lawful and in line with the code of ethics. An important point that the code of ethics sets out is that we also need to have the ability to apply discretion, common sense and professional judgment to the situations that we are faced with, because of the complexity of what we are dealing with.

Our overarching principle is that we are committed to keeping our communities safe, as I outlined in those three points. That is what every police officer, staff member and volunteer comes to work to do every day.

The Chair: Let me bring in Lord Murphy, who has a question. We partly touched on this, but perhaps you want to expand.

Q134 **Lord Murphy of Torfaen:** We have touched on trust and confidence, and I absolutely agree that there is huge respect for the police in this country. The issue of policing by consent is unique to our country and is a great thing. But do the public have confidence in the police in order to enforce the law? I am not particularly thinking of high-profile issues such as Sarah Everard and the rest of them, which of course are well known to everybody; I am much more concerned about how it affects ordinary people, if you like.

If you had your car stolen, your house has been burgled, your phone has been stolen on the streets of London, or if you look at the issue of shoplifting, they are not huge issues in terms of the crimes that are high profile, but they affect the lives of lots and lots of people in this country. When those crimes go not just undetected but forgotten, I wonder whether that has an effect on confidence in the police. I guess a lot is about money and the number of police officers we have, but is it only that or is there something else?

Chris Nelson: Again, it is a very important question, and I guess it goes to the heart of the relationship between commissioners and chief constables. When I sit down with my chief, I am forever having discussions about issues like this. When I am out and about talking to the public, they invariably talk to me about the volume-crime things that you

have talked about: antisocial behaviour, shoplifting, car theft, cycle theft, house burglaries, low-level drug dealing. Those are the things that they talk to me about. They do not tend to talk to me about murders, sexual assault, rape and things like that: they are more interested in the volume crime.

But when I am talking to my chief and raising these issues, I will get into discussions over things that we call THRIVE, an assessment of threat, harm, risk, investigation, vulnerability and engagement. My chief will talk to me about THRIVE and murders, rapes and serious sexual assaults. Clearly, a police officer tends to focus on the threats and safety issues that are more of a risk to people. Policing often tends to be focused on those areas, which is why volume crime has not had the attention that the public would like to see over the years.

One strength of the commissioner process is that I am the voice of the people. I listen to the public, have those debates with my chief, and we try to figure out how we can square that circle within available resources. It is not easy and a lot of volume crimes get forgotten about. You will know that, over the last few years, shoplifting has had a lot of attention in the public and the media, and we have become better at dealing with shoplifting. But it is at the crux of that operational environment. As I said, if we do not find a way to deal with those volume crimes, we are going to struggle to improve trust, confidence and respect in the rule of law.

How can we do it better? The Government are right in focusing on neighbourhood policing. They have said they want 13,000 more neighbourhood police officers. Really, that is at the core of policing and crime prevention. If you have more police community support officers and officers within neighbourhood police teams, you can build up relationships with the local population, get intelligence on the bad people, follow up on that and make arrests. A lot of these perpetrators who do things like shoplifting and house burglaries are often repeat offenders, so if you arrest a few of them, you can have a big impact on volume crime.

So how you deal with it is by having a good relationship between the chief and the commissioner and trying to find a balanced approach, with more money from the Government and more focus on neighbourhood policing. That is the way you try to address that.

The Chair: Can we ask the chief constable if she has anything else she wishes to add to that?

Serena Kennedy: I would agree. The phrase enforcement is interesting because I suppose it means different things. From my perspective, enforcement means taking positive action, whether it is making an arrest or voluntary attendance and somebody attending through the criminal justice system.

I absolutely agree with the commissioner that the public have every right that when they need us, they ring us or use a digital contact—I am

showing my age as an officer now by saying “ring us”—we answer that phone or contact and, if a response is required, we get to them as quickly as possible or at a time that suits them. Then, having attended, if the matter is a crime, we take a crime report and investigate it where there are positive lines of inquiry and solvability factors. At that point, there is obviously a decision about the appropriate outcome, whether it is a criminal justice outcome or some other outcome. So I absolutely agree that, whether it is volume crime or serious and organised or complex crime, our communities deserve us delivering the very best: the excellence in the basics, as I would say.

The difficulty comes because there is so much unseen crime that the public are not aware of and that policing is also having to deal with and make very difficult decisions about. We also need to remember that 80% of what policing deals with—80% of what is reported to policing—is not actually crime-related. So we are also balancing 20% of demand being reporting crime—whether it be volume, serious and organised or complex—versus 80% of demand that is just not crime-related. So there are issues around demand and complexity. But all chief constables and police leaders are absolutely committed to trying to get that right: that when somebody rings us, we get there and do a good job when we get there.

However, I know that we are not getting it right all the time, which is why trust and confidence have fallen in terms of police response, impacted as the commissioner set out in many of the high-profile cases, but also reports of outcome rates being at only 13%. Again, it is part of a broader system. We are part of a criminal justice system where the decision around that enforcement and going through the criminal justice system is not just down to policing. It is where the system needs to work together in relation to enforcement and positive outcomes to make sure that the criminal justice system is working together to put our communities at the heart of that decision-making.

The Chair: Lady Andrews, you had your hand up.

Baroness Andrews: I did, my Lord. The chief constable reflected on what I was going to ask her, which was whether she had seen the sort of impacts and the drop in confidence and trust since 2020 that our other witness had mentioned. I am just wondering actually whether she would say that that is in fact something that followed from Covid, which is a specific point that was made. If so, what does that feel and look like, particularly in relation to the rule of law?

Serena Kennedy: Absolutely, I would say. If you spoke to my front-line staff, they would definitely say that Covid impacted in terms of the relationship between policing our communities and the rule of law. You may remember the four Es in terms of engage, explain, encourage and enforce. Speaking for my own force of Merseyside, I would say for three-quarters of Covid we were very much in the engage, explain and encourage, because the legislation was changing frequently. Actually, the overwhelming priority was to keep our communities safe, support our

colleagues in the NHS, and stem the flow of demand going into the NHS by people abiding by the Covid legislation. But there was definitely a sea change, in that people saw us as the law enforcement arm of the state, if you like, which impacted trust and confidence. My officers still talk about that being a turning point in terms of the way in which some members of the community treat them.

The reason I say that is that, prior to Covid, people's only contact with policing—unless they had called for us—might have been if they had been issued with a speeding fine. All of a sudden, it was bringing us into contact with a whole cross-section of our community that would never have had any contact with us, and for a reason that they did not like. They wanted to be with their families and had views about vaccines and lockdown, so they had very different considerations and saw policing differently as a result of that.

Baroness Andrews: Do you think that affected the principle of consent? Do you think it has weakened the notion of policing by consent and therefore an underpinning of the rule of law in that way? Do you think it is a permanent change?

Serena Kennedy: Oh, gosh, lots of questions there, Baroness. It is really difficult to separate, because an awful lot of things happened during Covid in terms of major incidents. For me, they were some of the darkest days as a policing leader, and I was really ashamed of some incidents that the commissioner listed. It is really layered in terms of the impact of trust and confidence.

Nationally, we saw it dip, in my force but I am really pleased to say that trust and confidence are improving in my force area of Merseyside. In our latest survey, 74% of our communities have confidence in Merseyside Police, and nine in every 10 say that we have their support. That has risen since Covid. I absolutely agree that it is about our relationship with communities. We cannot be complacent in our policing; we need to really work hard, listen to our communities, hear what their priorities are and make sure that we are responding to them and working with our partners. The important thing is that a lot of what people in our community tell us are their priorities are not necessarily policing matters. So we have to work collaboratively with our partners when we hear the needs of our communities, work with our communities to solve those problems together, and improve trust and confidence in policing and the public sector overall.

The Chair: We will bring in Lord Anderson before I let the commissioner speak, who I know is very keen to play a part in that, but you might do it in reply.

Q135 **Lord Anderson of Ipswich:** Thank you both for coming. My question is first to you, chief constable, though I will certainly be interested in what the commissioner has to say as well. The question is, how do the police communicate with the public and how could this be improved to increase trust?

Within that, I have two areas you might like to focus on. First, how would you assess the current state of relations between police and traditional media? The second question relates to communications with the public after a serious incident. There have been two recent incidents in the north-west—the Southport killings last July and the Water Street incident in Liverpool last month—where the decision was taken to give personal details of a suspect immediately after arrest. Of course I understand the need to ensure a fair trial on the one hand, and the imperative of doing what you can to defuse any risk of public unrest or disorder on the other hand. But what happens, bluntly, when the suspect is a Muslim asylum seeker and what course do you think is best calculated to improve public trust and confidence?

Serena Kennedy: Goodness me, lots of questions there. I did an hour-long lecture at Liverpool John Moores University last autumn on police communications following Southport. Speaking more broadly in terms of the way in which police communicate with members of the public, we really have to, and do, invest a lot of time in this. I am blessed with an outstanding communications team in terms of our external media reporting, social media reporting and internal comms, which is a really important part of communications.

Yet in our survey—the survey I spoke about from which we know that 74% have trust and confidence—only two-fifths said that they feel informed about what is happening within Merseyside from a policing perspective. It is really interesting when you see where they get their information from. We assume that the world thrives on social media now and that that is where we get all our news, and actually, this survey is a really wide cross-section: young people, middle-aged people and more elderly people. Thirty-one per cent of people said they get their news from Facebook, but 27% said they still get their news from TV. If I take local media and our local *Liverpool Echo*—every area has a local newspaper—40% of people still get their news from the local paper. Whether that is reading it online or actually buying a hard copy, that is where they are going for their news. We need to make use of technology. There are things like Nextdoor, which is an online platform where you can really get the information out quickly into localities and much smaller communities.

On your question about assessing the relationship between the police and traditional media, the review done by the College of Policing following the Nicola Bulley report sets out very clearly that there was a cooling of relationships between police and traditional media on the back of the Leveson Inquiry. I have just said that I am blessed with an outstanding media team. What I would say from a Merseyside perspective is that we have a really good relationship with the traditional media, and we have always maintained that, throughout the Southport investigation, right from day one when the tragic events of 29 July happened. Obviously, it would be remiss of me not to pass on my thoughts to the families of Elsie, Bebe and Alice, and all those affected by that. Right from day one, through into October, with the additional charges that were announced,

and through into the trial in January, our relationship with the traditional media was very good and in line with the College of Policing's guidelines that were set out post the Nicola Bulley review.

Post-Leveson, there is a lack of experience and a real nervousness, and the National Police Chiefs' Council is working really hard to make sure that we improve those relationships and give our communication teams adequate training to build those relationships with journalists. This speaks to the commissioner's point about leadership; it is really important that police leaders recognise the importance of communication and own the communications strategy.

On the Executive Leadership Programme, we have spent a lot of time talking about that and covering communications. What I have said to the aspiring chief officers is that there will not be a line that gets signed off if I have not read it, because it is so critical, given the impact on trust and confidence. So it is that much greater recognition of the importance of understanding your communities, how to communicate with them and which channels to use, the skills within your leadership and communication teams, and recognising hugely the impact—either positively or negatively—it can have on your communities if you get it wrong.

You asked about the two incidents. The thirst for information was immense, and the challenge we had with the Southport inquiry was not with the traditional media but with social media. How do you control the misinformation and disinformation? I spoke about the lecture that I did in October, and I did a lot of research post the events of July to look at what academia tells us about how to manage social media. I have to say there were no silver bullets in there. We did every single thing on the checklists that they produce: as soon as you hear misinformation or disinformation, you need to correct it, you need to have regular briefings, give regular updates and manage your stakeholders. Hopefully, the stakeholders would speak positively about the way in which we communicate with them very quickly and regularly throughout a critical incident.

You also know—because I was called to give evidence at the Home Affairs Committee—that I wanted to give out more information to help my fellow chief constables, who were struggling with disorder as a result of what had happened in Southport, but was very clearly told that I could not release more information due to the right to a fair trial. As you will be aware, the Law Commission is now having a look at what the guidelines are and revisiting the Crown Prosecution Service media protocols—I am sure they have already done it—because they had not been renewed for 19 years.

As the National Police Chiefs' Council, we are now working really closely with government and other law-enforcement agencies on how to counter the challenge of social media misinformation and disinformation. At the moment, I do not think there is a good solution—there is no silver bullet—so we need to do that work. I am looking forward to the academic

studies that are ongoing on the back of Southport, which may come up with some help for us.

You referenced the Water Street incident, where, by contrast, the details were released very quickly about the ethnicity of the suspect. Your question was whether policing should be doing that from my perspective and whether I would have done the same if the subject was a non-white person. Speaking as the chief constable of Merseyside—which is all I can do—yes, I would have done that. We would have released the information and been prepared for any impact that came as a result of that.

But it was interesting watching the social media commentary, in that, as quickly as we put out the information following the Water Street incident, the narrative on social media changed to try to portray a different narrative. So even when you put more information out there—the correct information—the conspiracy theorists online, where they do not like it, make up even more outrageous things. That is why we need to do more work with other law-enforcement partners, Governments, and internationally, where we can get the learning from.

The Chair: Lady Hamwee has a quick supplementary.

Baroness Hamwee: It is about communication one-to-one with victims, whether there is room for thinking about how the police portray themselves, and how that impacts on trust and confidence. I know it is very poor form to use anecdotes, but I am going to.

Recently, a family member of mine was pushed off the road by a very large truck on a motorway, which wrote off the car. The driver did not stop. The driver behind had a dashcam, so the police saw what happened on the footage. I have seen it; it is quite distressing. She eventually got a letter from the police saying, "We've tracked down the driver. We're not going to prosecute; he's going to be told he has to go on an awareness course. He'll have to pay for this himself", and it ended—this is really the point—"We hope you're happy with this outcome". At a psychological level, it was quite useful because it kept up the level of her anger, which got her through the whole incident. But as I say, it wrote off the car; she was very lucky not to have been seriously hurt. Is there something more that the police could be thinking about there in terms of one-to-one communication with victims?

Serena Kennedy: It is really difficult for me to comment.

Baroness Hamwee: No, and it is not in either of your areas.

The Chair: It is a very good example of what is going on, and maybe the commissioner and the chief constable will want to comment on it as they think it through.

I will bring in Lord Foulkes, who has a specific question for the commissioner about his role.

Q136 **Lord Foulkes of Cumnock:** As you know, we do not have police and

crime commissioners in Scotland; we have the Scottish Police Authority. The chair of the police authority resigned last year, saying she found it difficult because the chief constable really reported directly to the Minister. I am not clear exactly what the police and crime commissioner does in England. The operational decisions are all made by the chief constable and the law is made by Parliament, so what do you do?

Chris Nelson: Could I go back a little and deal with some other questions, and then I will come back to the Lord's question?

Lord Foulkes of Cumnock: That is fine. It is a difficult question.

Chris Nelson: I am looking forward to answering that direct question. But first, Baroness Andrews focused on the important thing that trust and confidence are very much at the core of this issue of policing by consent; if trust and confidence go down, it will undermine policing by consent. If you do not have trust and confidence, you do not have intelligence coming in to police officers—into neighbourhood police—because they do not really trust or respect the local force, which makes the job harder for police officers to actually catch the criminals.

You also get a lot more opportunity crime because people think they are not going to be caught. For instance, if you look at average speed cameras, everybody is rigidly on the limit and no one speeds because they know that if they speed, they will get a ticket. Generally, life is not quite like that. So we need to do better on enforcement, charge rates and so forth.

You asked the question whether it was permanent. No. The chief is talking about her area, and it sounds like she is doing really well there if it is back up to 74% from 2020. Not every force is in that position, and we all need to work hard to improve our levels of trust and confidence. I do not think it is permanent; it will get better. We are in a bit of a trough at the moment. At the beginning, I started talking about leadership and operational issues, and the chief was talking about the leadership course. The College of Policing is doing lots of good work to get to grips with the leadership issues, and within the government reform agenda, strengthening the College of Policing will be a really good improvement.

Regarding Lord Anderson's questions on communication with the public, again, it is a very important issue. Generally, police are quite humble and modest. They often do the job and then move on to the next job. To use a bit of a political phrase, they do not milk all the good news, and they do not really sell all the good news that I see every single day when I am out and about talking to my force in Gloucestershire. We are too nervous about GDPR, sub judice, fair trials, et cetera, and this wider issue of trust and confidence trumps a lot of those issues. I am for ever saying to my chief, "Let's make sure that we put out the good news that we have arrested a couple of people for something that we know that the public are concerned about".

On Facebook—which I find is my main medium on social media—most police forces are not very good engaging with the public. They transmit and announce things on Facebook, and then if you look at the comments below, generally police forces do not jump in and comment because it takes a lot of effort. But certainly on my Facebook page, I pride myself on finding and spending the time to comment on what people say, and that really helps to direct the agenda and what people are saying. It deals with gossip and all the rapidly moving rumours that can happen and relate to a particular case. So policing could do more and be more proactive in communicating with the public because it would help with trust and confidence.

Another thing—which is perhaps a little more controversial—is that sometimes the police are too transparent. When they get some bad news about misconduct or an officer being disciplined, they use what I call megaphone press releases and put it out, and it gives the impression that policing is full of bad apples, which is not the case. Whereas if you look at the NHS, the military or other public services, they do not use the same megaphone press release for bad news. I am not saying hide it or do not do anything and go down the reputational protection approach that, say, the Church really has got wrong over things like sexual abuse. Put all the information on the website, but why do we need to megaphone out all the bad news? It just feeds this agenda that the media loves and drives down trust and confidence.

On the anecdote issue, as the chief said, without seeing the detail it is really hard. But taking the example of cyclists, we get lots of cyclists who provide information about an incident, and when our experts look at it, they realise that there is not enough information to charge or do something like that. So sometimes the advice that will go back to the person who sent in the information is that it is inappropriate to charge, even though you might say the lay observer thinks, “Oh, this is definitely something that’s wicked and must be prosecuted”.

Baroness Hamwee: My point was not about the detail of the incident; it was about an ill-worded letter from the police. It was the communication.

Chris Nelson: We do have that problem where officers will perhaps send out a standard letter; for instance, I have seen examples where an officer will say, “We have investigated all reasonable lines of inquiry, and we have not found anything” and closed the case. Sometimes when people know there is CCTV evidence available, they can get very frustrated.

We need to spend more time and attention on how we close down a case—even though police officers are swamped with hundreds and hundreds of cases—and do better at looking after our victims. There is a code of practice for looking after victims, and the example you quote has not passed it.

Baroness Hamwee: Possibly we should be honest about not having the resources.

Serena Kennedy: In terms of public satisfaction, what academic studies say is that it is often not the outcome that matters, it is the way in which we have treated the individual when we have come into contact with them. We might have to tell them that we are really sorry but there are no lines of inquiry and it cannot be taken any further, but how we have treated them on first contact, how we have kept them updated—exactly the point you make—and how we finalise our contact with them, is actually more important and has more impact on trust and confidence than the actual outcome.

I could not agree with you more on the time we need to spend educating our officers and staff around the way in which we communicate, so that individuals feel valued and listened to, and that we have taken their issues seriously.

Q137 **The Chair:** Let us come back to Lord Foulkes' question; what are you for?

Lord Foulkes of Cumnock: I hope you are not going to let Mr Nelson dodge my question.

Chris Nelson: I had forgotten about Lord Foulkes. Just on the relationship thing, all the academic research that I have seen is that people are not necessarily upset if their crime is not solved or someone is not arrested. But what they do get really upset about is how they have been treated and how they have been valued. Relationships are in many ways more important than solved rates, which is a funny thing, because police often chase solved rates, but they do not put enough attention into the VCOP, the Victim's Code of Practice, and how we respond to victims.

Your question, Lord Foulkes, was a very interesting one on the Scotland side of things, which as you know is very different to the rest of the UK. Police commissioners replaced police authorities in 2012. The problem with police authorities, certainly in England, was that you would get councillors being elected for their local wards, and then they would volunteer for the police authority for which they were not specifically elected. They did not really have the democratic mandate that a police and crime commissioner has, whereby they put themselves in front of the public specifically for that role. They are also specifically accountable; so every four years they are up for re-election and if they do not do very well, they will be hoiked out and lose their position.

In terms of what we do, you are right, policing is operationally independent. The chief highlighted that earlier. I tread on eggshells if ever I am chatting to the chief about operational issues, so that I do not upset her and infringe upon her train set—her world. But a commissioner also has very important things to do, as I said, around being the voice of the public, listening to the public, listening to concerns over volume crime and things like that. We set the budget, we hold the chief to account; those are the most important things.

But again, it is complicated. The Home Secretary gives out Government grants. In my force in Gloucestershire, 50% of our money comes from the Government and 50% or so comes from local council tax. It is all tax, but it is felt slightly differently.

Lord Foulkes of Cumnock: There have been a number of conflicts between commissioners and chief constables, and I can see why because in your earlier comments you have really been second-guessing the chief constable. You said they should not have megaphone diplomacy; you have made a number of other comments about their operation. Do you not think that explains why there have been these difficulties between commissioners and chief constables?

The Chair: When you reply, could you bring it back to the rule of law, otherwise we could spend the whole of the session on the role of police commissioners.

Chris Nelson: There is perhaps too much made about commissioners and chiefs not getting on with each other. I have had an extremely good relationship with my chief, as have many others. When we work well together, then the whole is greater than the sum of the parts. In many ways, chiefs have an enormously difficult job; if there were not commissioners, for instance, it would make it harder, although some might say it would make it easier. I will give you some examples. When there is a shortage of resources, and a chief makes her or his operational decisions to cut, say, neighbourhood police or crime prevention activities or horses or whatever, it is unlikely that the chief will get the blame and the hassle in social media. It will be the commissioner that is put in front of the cameras. So a good thing there is that the commissioner takes a lot of the heat that the chief would get otherwise.

There are lots of other examples as well where the two are working together, discussing things. It is a very lonely job being a chief. It has immense responsibilities, and I have often had very personal, confidential discussions with the chief, respecting the individual at the top of their service, talking through difficult issues—like institutional racism, which has a big public perspective—and talking things through from different perspectives. Commissioners are better if they are older and have had various careers. It is hard being a younger commissioner dealing with a chief who has 30-plus years of experience and may resent a younger politician talking to them.

Lord Foulkes of Cumnock: Does the chief constable agree with all that, by the way?

Serena Kennedy: Just on the last point, my Police and Crime Commissioner is in her 30s, and we have a very good working relationship. So I do not think necessarily that age plays out and **Emily is the—**

The Chair: I am just going to stop you there because we have to get on and you have answered the point. Lady Laing.

Q138 Baroness Laing of Elderslie: You have both spoken about priorities, and the difficulty of balancing priorities. Mr Nelson, you interestingly said about volume crime that if you arrest a few people for fairly minor offences, that can make a big impact. We can all understand that; but of course, what we are looking at is the rule of law, and how the rule of law is upheld in our country today.

Can we examine the relationship between a perceived lack of action on certain types of crime, which might lead to diminishing confidence in the legal enforcement authorities and therefore consequently weaken the position of the rule of law? In looking at that, should the police possibly place greater focus on tackling the most visible crimes, such as shoplifting—let us call it retail theft or something else, because shoplifting makes it sound as if it is not really a crime, whereas it is—or the increase in the theft of mobile phones, for example? Would it be likely to instil greater confidence in law enforcement and therefore in the rule of law if that priority was changed somewhat?

Chris Nelson: The simple answer is, yes. As I said earlier, the trust and confidence of the public is very much influenced by how police deal with volume crime. Shoplifting—or retail theft as you have alluded to it—is a really good example where police forces generally did not deal with that very quickly for a few years. There was this perception that for anything under £200 they were not going to turn out, which was a false perception and more to do with the criminal justice system than policing. We have really put a lot of time and effort into improving how we respond to retail theft and assaults on staff, and that has made a huge difference. We have had lots of discussions with big retail outlets like the Co-op, Safeway and Tesco because, like most volume crime, it is not just a job for the police. For instance, with house burglaries, people can do a lot by installing lights, alarms, and prickly things on top of their fences to make it difficult for offenders to climb over. The world is full of examples where you have to take a holistic approach when dealing with crime; by working together with crime prevention measures, you can make a huge difference. So yes, dealing with visible crimes is one easy way of improving trust and confidence.

The problem is THRIVE—Threat, Harm, Risk, Investigation, Vulnerability and Engagement—and high-risk stuff, and the issue that the chief will have of focusing on murders and all the rest of it. One chief once said to me, “You can solve just about any crime on the planet if you throw enough officers at it, but we have to make tough choices because we do not have unlimited quantities of officers”.

Baroness Andrews: I would like to develop that idea because these crimes, whether they are retail theft or theft of mobile phones, seem to have no victim in many instances. Maybe the victim is, in fact, the rule of law. We seem to be agreeing that the rule of law is conditional and that it only really applies seriously to serious crimes. Would you agree with that? Is there anything that can be done to identify the victims of crimes that are not only less visible, but somehow have become rather acceptable because they are people redistributing, shall we say, forms of

wealth between each other? Is there an answer to this? Can I start with the chief constable?

Serena Kennedy: I would absolutely disagree in relation to the importance placed on volume crime. I said it in terms of my earlier time. All my fellow chief constables would be in absolute agreement that when a member of the public reports a crime to us, they should expect us to answer the phone. We should get there quickly, if that is the appropriate response, or make a scheduled appointment, which often suits them. We should then investigate that crime where there are lines of inquiry to be followed.

I agree that there has been a challenge with retail crime over recent years, but we are all committed and focused on that issue. Likewise, with crimes such as burglary, they invade the place where we should feel our safest. Again, all chief constables have committed that every victim of burglary will receive a visit if that is what they want, so that we put the victim at the heart of our decision-making. We absolutely agree that the volume of visible crime is incredibly important.

We also have to remember that we are balancing dealing with serious and organised crime, complex crime, terrorism crimes and crimes impacting on the vulnerable, often online, so they are not visible and are not playing out in our communities; we have a duty to those victims as well. So that is where we have a difficult balancing act, as the commissioner spoke about; we need to make sure that we have the resources to deal with those.

Policing and the wider system also have a role in explaining the complexities of what we are dealing with and making sure that people understand everything that policing deals with. That is not to say that if you have been a victim of retail crime, or a victim of burglary, that that crime is any less important to you as an individual or to us as an organisation. But people need to understand that it is not just visible and volume crime that we are dealing with; we cannot put all our resources into dealing with visible crime because we do have that duty to, as I say, fight terrorism, protect children, tackle organised crime, tackle public place drug dealing. Those are the things that we also need to deal with.

Baroness Andrews: Do you think you also have a wider responsibility to say that these sorts of crimes, the volume crimes that we have been talking

about, are corrosive in terms of the way people believe in the rule of law, the way it should be observed, and the way it affects them? Do you think you could see a way of doing more to amplify that argument?

Serena Kennedy: I am sorry, I do not understand your point, Baroness.

Baroness Andrews: The perceived failure to deal with volume crime, for all the very good reasons you say, has an impact on how people perceive the rule of law, and in a way it corrodes the notion of the credibility of the

rule of law. Is there something more that you could practically do, given all the huge pressures on you which we completely understand?

Serena Kennedy: I absolutely agree in terms of the impact on trust and confidence. I suppose it goes back to the communication point about educating our communities about all the work we are doing, right from how we prevent these crimes happening in the first place—there is a real key role there around prevention—to when we are tackling them and taking positive action, and when we have positive results, communicating that out, as well as reporting about all the other stuff that we are dealing with. It is not just about reporting on the high-profile homicides or high-profile organised crime cases, although we absolutely need to report out and reassure our communities that we are tackling those. We quite often deal with quality of life issues; those things that are really impacting and playing out in our communities. That is why neighbourhood policing is so important. That relationship with our communities and different ways of communicating with them to get the message out.

Q139 Lord Burnett of Maldon: Can I ask a question that follows on from the discussion that Baroness Andrews was just having with the chief constable? It concerns barriers to tackling and preventing crime. I appreciate that in the discussion we have had so far there has been a good deal of mentioning of resources—that is, money—but in the current and in the real world, giving lots more money to one public service inevitably raises the question of where it is going to come from, and what other public service is going to suffer. No doubt money might be part of the answer, but I would imagine that all commissioners and all chief constables, while grateful for whatever extra they get, are not expecting a sudden degree of largesse which is going to transform the position.

Obviously, we have seen a recovery in the number of police officers over the last five or more years, which went down substantially after the financial crisis. You both mentioned the 13,000 neighbourhood police officers. I was very struck by the observation that 80% of contacts from members of the public to the Merseyside Police have nothing whatsoever to do with crime. I would be intrigued to know what proportion of energy, as it were, is absorbed by that. It is well known, for example, that the Metropolitan Police took something of a position about reducing its involvement in mental health problems which have been put on to the police to resolve because other public agencies are not dealing with them.

But I just wonder whether both commissioners and chief constables are looking really closely at what police officers are actually doing to try to strip away process and encrustations that have been imposed upon you over the last decade or two, and to get back to what really matters.

One example I have very much in mind, which I discussed with a number of chief constables when I was Lord Chief Justice, is frustration at the degree of complexity that has now become the norm in producing files to go to the CPS in really simple cases; shop theft being an example which was cited to me. What I am interested in knowing is whether there are things you can do to get more product from the resources that you have.

Chris Nelson: If I could start with your question, my Lord; I take your point about resources. A commissioner will talk about resources at every opportunity and try to get more resources into policing, but you will bear in mind that I am ex-military and have wider experience. Just looking at things like the NHS, people talk constantly about wanting more resources, but there is not a bottomless pit of money. That was why, when I looked at trust and confidence, I split my analysis to deal with the operational environment and leadership. In my role as the joint lead for performance within the Association of PCCs, I go to the HMI—His Majesty's Inspectorate—Engage Process, and PPOG meetings. Two things come across constantly; one is resources, the other is leadership. If you take resources away—and I understand that—then you are left with leadership, and that is where the chiefs come in. That is why it is so important that they have the right experience, that they are supported in the right way, and that commissioners work well with their chiefs. A good force with the same resources can do so much better than a force that is perhaps not led the best. A good chief can make sure that they select their leaders, give clear direction, have a plan for the future and review processes. Some forces out there have been truly exceptional in their performance, and it is generally acknowledged to be due to the chief constable. So if you have no extra resources to deal with barriers to tackling crime, the focus is to ensure that you have the quality of leadership that I have talked about.

If I may go back to the question from Baroness Andrews about shoplifting and retail theft; one reason why it has been badly handled in the past is because it is an apparently victimless crime so has not previously attracted the attention that it now has. You need to look at the detail of retail theft. There are three types of perpetrators: serious and organised criminals, addicts—whether drugs or alcohol—and those with cost of living problems. You have to deal with each of those issues. If you do not, you are making shoplifting and retail crime a gateway crime; people will move on to something else because it was so easy for them.

Finally, I would just like to say that I do not think it is victimless. When I was knocking on doors and talking to people the other day, I met a person who had just been shopping in their local Co-op when someone came in with a bag and put loads of meat and things like that into the bag and walked out. This person I was talking to then spoke to the operator behind the till, and he said, "Oh yeah, he'll be back in 10 minutes and steal all our chocolate". He was outraged. That is one thing you can say about the British public; they have a sense of fairness. If they believe that has been undermined, they will be outraged. So there was a victim in that case; it was the observer. It is a good example of how, just by looking at the detail of shoplifting or retail crime, you get to the heart of how much confidence the public has in their police, in the rule of law and order, and respect for law and order. It gets to the core of the issue.

Lord Burnett of Maldon: I would be very interested to hear what the chief constable has to say about whether the processes that the police

have to work around and through, and the non-crime example of mental health activity, is really impeding their core work.

Serena Kennedy: I would set this in context in terms of the point that was made earlier on; for me, I am very clear with my officers and staff that our number one priority is improving trust and confidence in our communities, for all the reasons we have said. All 43 chief constables are in agreement that we are not spending time saying what we cannot do because that is not going to improve trust and confidence. We have to be very clear that, when our communities need us, when they contact us, we will answer the phone and we will be there. We will provide a quality service to them.

In terms of what is preventing that, it is the realisation of the complexity of what policing is dealing with now. While there has been an uplift of 20,000 officers, in my own force I am still over 400 officers short compared to where we were in 2010. And yet in 2010 we had 100,000 reported crimes per month and in 2022 we had 170,000 crimes.

In terms of officer time, they are spending 35% more time at every single incident they are dealing with because of the complexities of the information that officers are now required to record: details that are required for various referrals, for all the right reasons; I am not saying that they are wrong reasons. The maths really does start making an impact; when you have all those extra crime reports and incidents that you are dealing with, and fewer officers than you had in 2010, it does start to play out.

But I absolutely agree, there is a massive role for policing to work with partners to identify those areas where policing has taken responsibility for things that are not theirs, such as mental health, through the Right Care, Right Person model. We need to unpick and find the right agency, the right partner, the right person to pick up that demand.

As you said, my Lord, in relation to things like criminal justice processes, changes have been made which mean the officers are spending a lot more time having to build files to secure the charges. That is what policing is doing at this moment in time. We are all wrestling with our savings challenges, and it is those big ticket items that are going to make the difference. If we can make efficiencies and be more effective in those areas, it will actually free up more officer and staff time so that we can be more visible in our communities.

The other thing that I would say, especially as I am the national leader for prevention, is that we have a role in preventing crime. If we go back to Peelian principles, Peel said that we should be thinking around preventing the crime rather than actually investigating it; the absence of crime is what we should be aiming for. Things like the Violence Reduction Partnership—or the Violence Reduction Network, as it is known nationally—are really good examples of where we can work together with partners to identify those young people and those families who are more at risk of their young people either becoming exploited or becoming the

exploiters, and how we can seek to support those individuals, those families or people within those postcodes to prevent them ending up coming through the criminal justice system. We need to understand where there are inefficiencies and what creates those. Are they created by IT issues or tech issues? Are they created by things that other partners have inflicted on us, or where other partners have expected us to pick up demand, and how do we work together as a system to resolve those problems?

Sometimes it is about doing things that we might not think of as the role of policing. I will give you an example: I have some dedicated PCSOs that deal with people missing from home, especially looked-after children. Some people would say they are carrying out the role of a social worker, but the PCSOs are building relationships with those young people. They are problem solving why those young people are going missing, and we see fantastic successes where those young people are no longer going missing. We have examples where young people were coming into contact with the criminal justice system, ie they were being arrested, and some great successes where those people are no longer going missing. The care home are not having to ring us to report them missing, and policing is no longer having to spend time trying to find them and then doing an interview with them once they have returned. We are not having to deal with them as offenders through the criminal justice system because they are no longer getting arrested. Actually, those young people are now thriving and doing really well in their education system and within in their home. Is that the role of a police community support officer, or is that the role of a social worker? Well, I would argue it is probably not the role of a PCSO, but we know that our colleagues in children's services are overstretched and they are never going to be able to perform that role. By investing and using a police resource slightly differently, I am cutting demand into my contact centre and cutting demand into my criminal justice system. I am not criminalising young people, and I am probably changing their life chances.

So there is that argument around the preventative approach that we need to take with partners, and we all need to be part of the conversation. Sometimes we need to do things slightly outside our remit as well.

Q140 Lord Bellamy: Could I ask a specific question in relation to non-crime activity in the so-called non-hate crime incidents? From a rule of law perspective, this area seems somewhat anomalous, since the police are being involved in matters that are not actually a breach of law or a crime, and seem to involve quite a bit of discretion and sometimes, apparently, private disputes or intemperate language. What difficulties do you see from a policing point of view in the existence of this concept? If we did not have it at all, what difference would it make to you from a police perspective?

Chris Nelson: That is a very interesting question and there has been so much controversy about this. It started out as a way of trying to protect the nine protected characteristics and give police some sort of a

searchlight or traffic light feeling as to how much of a problem those issues were in various communities. So it was well-intentioned but it seems, you could argue, that it is a bit out of hand. Sir Stephen Watson of the Greater Manchester Police has just made a statement that he thinks it is past its sell-by date. We have had the *Telegraph* reporter there and a huge amount of coverage, which did not do policing any good at all.

When you recognise the importance of trust and confidence and what the public feels about the rule of law and that sense of British fairness, you have to listen to that side of the argument. Even though the concept of a non-crime hate incident was created for the right reasons, is it really achieving the right results? Is it falling into that woke bucket and undermining trust and confidence, annoying the heck out of the British public and making them angry with the poor police officers who are simply trying to enforce the law and do the right thing?

I for one think that at the very least it needs to be reviewed, perhaps by committees like your good selves and others, to provide guidance to the authorities as to whether we are doing the right thing or whether you think we should change.

Lord Bellamy: Chief Constable, do you have a view on this difficult issue?

Serena Kennedy: I would agree with the commissioner that there absolutely needs to be a review. Clearly, there was a review several years ago under the former Government, which is the position we are dealing with now as policing. But it is clear it is not working and it is impacting on trust and confidence, so it needs to be reviewed. It is a very difficult set of circumstances. What we cannot lose is the ability to hear the views and voices of those members of our community who are being impacted and living through this, but it is the way in which we deal with it—the legislation, the process, the guidance—that needs to be reviewed. I do not think we can switch off from listening to our communities and hearing the impact that it is having on their quality of life, but are the police the right organisation to be dealing with that and taking the action that we are taking at this moment in time?

Q141 **Lord Beith:** If you are in a section of the community, or indeed a whole community, where there is a perception that the police are biased, perhaps based on stop and search figures and things like that, is it not going to be pretty difficult to believe in the rule of law?

Chris Nelson: Yes, very much so. We have talked about protected characteristics, but probably the three areas of bias that are the most important are racism, misogyny and homophobia. Those are problem areas within all sections of our communities, and policing is a reflection of the community in which it lives and operates. But, because of the power it has to arrest, policing needs to hold itself to a higher quality and needs to address within itself those three issues of racism, misogyny and homophobia; and we are doing that.

There is a lot of work to do, certainly in my force, and I know the Met has done a huge amount of work to address those issues over the last few years and is making big progress. It goes to the core of trust and confidence and what the public thinks about law and order, because if you are seen to not be impartial and fair and neutral, and you are full of biases, then it is going to affect that sense of British fairness and policing by consent. So we really have to address bias. My force uses the phrase that it wants to be, "A non-discriminatory force dealing with all the nine protected characteristics", and that is a good approach. Each force tends to do its own thing. These are not easy things to address and it comes back to leadership. A good chief focusing in on those cultural issues will ensure that their force operates at a higher plane and achieves perhaps the level of confidence that the chief talked about in her force area.

Lord Beith: Chief constable, within the minority of those who do not have confidence in the police in your area, based on the figures you gave us, are you fighting a losing battle because there are wider perception issues which make people think the police may be biased and which undermine both their concept of policing and their belief in the rule of law?

Serena Kennedy: I do not think we are fighting a losing battle. I absolutely know that the trust and confidence gap within our black communities is less in Merseyside. We are reflective of that national picture where trust and confidence is lower in communities from ethnic-minority backgrounds, but from a Merseyside perspective, and nationally, we are working incredibly hard to make sure that we are improving trust and confidence in those communities that feel there is bias and disproportionality in the system. Policing cannot argue with that in terms of the Baroness Casey report, the Macpherson report, the *Macpherson Report 22 Years On*, the Angelini inquiry, and the work that was done by the Independent Scrutiny and Oversight Board on our Police Race Action Plan. Those reports all set it out very clearly in terms of disproportionality and bias within policing. We absolutely have to own it and we have to accept it, which we do, and we have to have a national plan to tackle it; but I also agree with the commissioner about the importance of the very local leadership of chief constables around setting the tone and culture within their own forces.

It is really important to understand the detail and the data and understand where you have disproportionality in your systems, from the perspective of attraction, recruitment, retention, progression and promotion, but also, as you set out, stop and search, the use of force, first time entrance into the criminal justice system and first time entrance into the prison system. In terms of disproportionality, as I know from my own force, it is really important that you know your detail, know your data, and that you are doing something about it. That is why inclusion has been one of my priorities as chief constable for the past four years. We need to retain that focus on inclusion and to maintain our work around diversity, equality and inclusion to make sure that we are improving trust and confidence in all our communities, particularly where

the confidence gap is lower; and that we are improving what policing looks like across those nine protected characteristics—and for those where there is not a visible difference—so that our communities can see themselves reflected in our workforce.

Chris Nelson: In my experience working with HMI on the Engage special measures forces, we always talk about how the force should not just be dealing with the symptoms of problems but the causes. The issue of bias is very relevant, in the sense that a police force can just look at stop and search and use of force statistics and try to address those symptoms, but what are the cultural issues within a force that are causing discrimination and bias within stop and search and use of force? We need to deal not just with the symptoms, but the fundamental causes about why we are having bias within any given force.

The Chair: I am going to turn to Lady Hamwee. I am afraid I have to ask you for short answers as this is the last question and then we must go.

Q142 **Lady Hamwee:** This follows on from references to bias, trust, and confidence. Could you each say what you think the impact of new technologies used by the police, or to be used by the police, may be? Should I start with the chief constable?

Serena Kennedy: We absolutely need new technology. Policing nationally and locally is not going to make the savings that we need to make. We need to do things faster; we need to be more efficient and more effective. We need to use AI and digital tech for many of our processes. It needs to be industrialised. It needs to be done once across policing nationally to free up capacity so that we have the capacity to deal with increasing demand and increasing complexity. But in doing that, the important thing is that we make sure we have engagement with our community, scrutiny panels, independent advisory groups and ethics panels, both locally and on a national scale, so that we take our communities with us on that journey. Where there are concerns about whether there is bias in those systems, we can be open, honest and transparent and take them on the journey with us, as opposed to introducing something which causes concern, impacts on trust and confidence, and we are then on the back foot and having to do it retrospectively. We need to get ahead and work with our communities as we are wanting to introduce new tech.

Baroness Hamwee: Can I follow that up very quickly? You have used a lot of important terms there. I was going to ask you about ethics, but you have mentioned that. How about transparency? Is that something that troubles you, for instance, with facial recognition?

Serena Kennedy: I did say the word transparency. We need to be open and transparent and bring in our communities, both nationally with national stakeholders and locally, and work through this together. As we have found with facial recognition, we are now having to build trust and confidence and reassure our communities. If we are introducing new tech—I do not know what that is—we need to take the learning, probably

from facial recognition, to ask how we can instil trust and confidence as those new platforms become available that will make us more effective and more efficient, and ensure that communities go with us on that journey.

Chris Nelson: I can think of three examples in my own force where technology has improved trust and confidence. The first one is remote videos within the force control room. If you report domestic abuse, you can see the face of an officer, you can talk to an officer straight away, and that has really improved the experience of the victim dealing with such an intimate and painful problem; that is one example. Another one is CCTV in the centre of our towns. The presence of CCTV reassures the public and helps with trust and confidence, and it certainly helps following up on crimes and enforcement because they can use the CCTV to deploy officers.

The final one, again, is force control room and 101; 101 is the most used way that the public talks to the police. We have had problems with wait times and the length of time that you are on the call; new technology can make big differences, reduce the wait time and reduce the total time talking on 101 and on the single online home web pages, and all that really helps trust and confidence.

The Chair: I am going to call this session now to an end; we have gone a little over time. Thank you.