



Home Affairs Committee

Oral evidence: [Serious and organised crime](#), HC 903

Tuesday 24 February 2015

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Members present: Keith Vaz (Chair), Nicola Blackwood, Mr James Clappison, Michael Ellis, Dr Julian Huppert, Tim Loughton, Yasmin Qureshi, Mr David Winnick.

Questions 1 – 94

Witness: **Karen Bradley MP**, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Modern Slavery and Organised Crime, gave evidence.

Q1 Chair: May I call the Committee to order and welcome the Minister for Modern Slavery and Organised Crime? Minister, we were keen to have you in before Parliament was dissolved. I am sorry we have kept you so long, so it might sound like a very odd thing to say but congratulations on your appointment, which was over a year ago. It goes to show there has been nothing controversial in your brief so we did not need to call you in before now. Today we are looking at the issues of serious and organised crime—including human trafficking—and I would like to start with your work, which Members of the House have been very impressed with, on human trafficking. Are you satisfied that the Government are doing enough in respect of disrupting those who are trafficking people from different parts of the world into the United Kingdom?

Karen Bradley: Thank you very much, Keith, and thank you to the Committee. I did begin to think that maybe I would fail to come before you, given your programme of work. I know how busy you are so I am very grateful to have the opportunity to be here and to start with modern slavery, which has been—in the just over 12 months I have had this ministerial role—a significant part of my work.

First of all, I think credit should go to those that first raised the issue of human trafficking, and that includes Anthony Steen, Peter Bone, Fiona MacTaggart, John Randall, and of course Frank Field, who have been incredibly instrumental in making sure that we were aware of this. But also credit to the Home Secretary for taking this on and making it a real mission to make sure that we are at the forefront of everything happening on modern slavery and human trafficking globally. The programme of activity, which you will know about—the Modern Slavery Bill—having all been there for the votes that we had in the House of Commons, is a very comprehensive piece of work, but it is not the only thing that we are doing. Your question, Chair, about whether I am satisfied that we are doing enough does link into all the work we are doing through the Modern Slavery strategy because I don't think it will be a surprise to anybody in this room, but legislation is only part of the answer. The Bill is incredibly important for raising awareness and for giving law enforcement the tools and weapons they need to get the prosecutions. I think the only way we are going to protect victims is by catching and convicting criminals.

Q2 Chair: Yes, and that is my second point. If you look at the estimates of the Human Trafficking Centre they say that there are 2,744 people, including 602 children, who are potential victims of exploitation—an increase of 22% on 2012. How do you as a Minister know that the strategy that has been adopted—the new powers that you have had from Parliament—is disrupting these people? Is it numbers you are looking for, numbers of prosecutions? Is it people you liberate from slavery? How do you know that it has been successful?

Karen Bradley: That is a very good question. The number of people that have been referred into the National Referral Mechanism and the number of people that the Human Trafficking Centre estimate as being victims, is not the total of victims here in Britain. Home Office Science did some work taking the information we know and then extrapolating that out to show that the number of victims is 10,000 to 13,000. Now, how do we know that we are having success? We will only have success when that number of victims starts to come down.

Q3 Chair: But that is only an estimate, you see. This is the problem for this Committee in looking at the subject. We like to go for prosecutions because people go through the courts, they are sent to jail and you disrupt the organised groups. How many prosecutions did you have for human trafficking last year?

Karen Bradley: Not enough. I will be quite blunt with you, not enough.

Q4 Chair: What is the number?

Karen Bradley: The number is—let me get it; I would not want to give the Committee false information. I will come back to you with the number in a second. The number is not enough. It has not been enough. That is why we want to increase the penalties and that is why the Bill is so important. One of the problems we have is that for some of the victims of trafficking, the Crown Prosecution Service have not prosecuted the perpetrators for human trafficking offences. They have prosecuted them for rape, for instance, where a life sentence is available.

Q5 Chair: Indeed. Obviously someone may pass you a note, which is fine by us because you cannot be expected to know every single figure, but would you know how many people you have then released from modern slavery last year?

Karen Bradley: The number of people who went through the National Referral Mechanism—so those are identified victims who have the support that they need—in 2013 was 1,746. But of those, fewer than half were given the conclusive grounds decision, which is one of the reasons we have reviewed the National Referral Mechanism because we need to make sure that we are finding as many of those victims as possible, making sure they are referred into the NRM and getting them out at the other side as conclusive grounds victims of slavery, giving them the support and dedicated support that they need.

Q6 Chair: Thank you. The UK-French agreement on Calais said, “Ministers will set clear and ambitious targets to ensure the full impact in the fight against organised immigration crime”. Mr Loughton, Mr Winnick and I went to Calais. It was very clear to us that this was organised trafficking. Illegal migrants—this is quoting the *Telegraph* of 29 October—were asked to choose from a package,

“a classic package”, which meant they travelled on the back of a lorry for £2,000 or “a guaranteed VIP route” in which migrants crossed in a car with a complicit driver for about £4,000. This is organised immigration crime. Mr Ellis will deal with other aspects when he gets to ask his questions but would you concentrate on Calais? How are we disrupting these people who have made an industry out of bringing illegal migrants from Calais?

Karen Bradley: It is not just Calais—clearly, Chair, I will talk about Calais—because we know, for example, in Albania that there is a significant industry of organised criminals who work to create back stories for unaccompanied asylum-seeking children and for victims of slavery. We must not allow ourselves to be in a position where we are fuelling that demand. We have to make sure that we give the right support to victims, and that we target the perpetrators not the victims. That is why the statutory defence in the Bill is so important.

Q7 Chair: How many people have you prosecuted as a result of activities in Calais?

Karen Bradley: I do not have that number to hand but I will of course write to you.

Chair: Will you write to us and let us have it?

Karen Bradley: Of course.

Q8 Chair: One final question from me on the NCA because we have got Keith Bristow in. You are the Minister for the National Crime Agency. We are a fan; we like the National Crime Agency. However, we are concerned about asset seizures. We are very concerned that in the *Evening Standard* tonight Keith Bristow has said that he does not think that the NCA is going to be able to recover anything like the £1.3 billion that is owed to the taxpayer by serious criminals. He does not think that is going to be recovered. So we have an organisation that costs us £0.5 billion a year that now tells us—and we have Mr Bristow in later so he can answer for himself—that we are going to get nothing like the £1.3 billion that people owe the taxpayer. Indeed, he says that only £124 million of that figure is likely to be ever seized. That is a very small amount of money when you look at what is owed. Are you concerned about this?

Karen Bradley: I have been concerned about asset recovery since the first day I came into the job. In fact, one of the very first tasks I undertook was to visit Madrid, where the CPS and other prosecution services were working with the Spanish to determine what were the barriers that stop us recovering the money, because the problem is that this is a technical legal issue—

Q9 Chair: Sure. But why have a law that says to criminals, “We are going to seize your property and assets” knowing full well that we are never going to seize their property and assets? It may be technical and complicated—most laws are. Why have a law that does that? Why have an agency that is chasing them when we know we are never going to get the money back?

Karen Bradley: I don’t accept that we can never recover the assets.

Chair: Well, Mr Bristow says that.

Karen Bradley: But let me just refer to that point. We did ask the National Crime Agency to look at what was recoverable, because they inherited an enormous stock—shall we call it—of unrecovered debts, some of which are over 10 years old. I think it is important that we

understand what is recoverable of that stock, but what I am interested in as well is the flow and I want to see courts issue more confiscation orders.

Q10 Chair: What is the point if you cannot get the money? What is the point of issuing? We understand your passion. We do not expect you to go out and seize these assets; you set the parameters and you do it with great dedication, but your staff in the NCA are costing the taxpayer £0.5 billion. What is the point of having more laws confiscating when we cannot get the money that is owed to us now?

Karen Bradley: What I was coming on to say was that the way that we change the laws and the way also that the Criminal Finances Board that I chair works is to work across all the agencies that are involved in the recovery, so clearly we want courts to issue confiscation orders for realistic amounts of assets that can be recovered.

Q11 Chair: You are concerned about this—

Karen Bradley: Of course, very concerned.

Chair: —and you think it should be higher?

Karen Bradley: That is why we have a criminal—

Chair: Do you think it should be higher?

Karen Bradley: That is why we have a criminal finances improvement plan to make sure that we do recover the maximum amount we possibly can. That is why we—

Chair: Do you think that asset recovery should be higher than it is?

Karen Bradley: Yes.

Q12 Chair: The final fact to put to you is that 176 serious criminals owe us £695 million. They have served their jail sentence, they are out of jail, but they still owe the taxpayer £695 million. Would you be able to have access to that list of 176 people? Would Ministers know about this list?

Karen Bradley: I don't have the operational details but I do—

Chair: No, these are people who have been convicted. This is not operational.

Karen Bradley: No, but I do have the ability to access that kind of information.

Chair: You can have it.

Karen Bradley: That is why we have brought the changes into the Serious Crime Bill because, you are quite right, criminals were able to serve their time in jail and walk away and it has meant for many that jail is an occupational hazard; losing their assets is a much bigger deterrent.

Q13 Chair: Indeed. So can you assure us that the 176, who owe the taxpayer £695 million, once they come out of jail are not able to come in and out of the country? Are there any restrictions placed on them?

Karen Bradley: I would have to look at the individuals in question. I cannot give you that answer as a blanket. I would have to look at who they are.

Chair: If you could do that and if you could let us have your answers by Monday of next week—

Karen Bradley: Of course.

Chair: —it would help us because we are not going to be around that long, so it would be very helpful.

Karen Bradley: Chair, you will be around for ever; I know you will.

Chair: Flattery will get you everywhere. Dr Huppert has a quick supplementary and then, Mr Ellis, you have the floor.

Q14 Dr Huppert: The Chair's question has touched on what I was going to refer to, which is restrained assets where for a number of these people we have been paying their legal aid costs because we do not allow them to use money. Have you considered looking at changing those rules, because it certainly seems to me that some of these people might be more able to find the assets they wish to use if they were allowed to use at least some of them in their own defence?

Karen Bradley: We have changed the rules about the availability to criminals of the “Rolls Royce solicitors”, as it was described during the progress of the Serious Crime Bill. We did have to make the point—as one of our members of the committee represented Rolls Royce and another represented Bentley—that they were both equally good vehicles. But we have made it so that criminals cannot employ extremely expensive barristers, getting full recovery of the costs of those barristers against the assets that have been restrained. So we have done that. We have also made other steps to make sure that we have the ability to access those assets as quickly as possible, that we cannot have third-party claims on those assets, and that it is not an unfair system where criminals are able to access enhanced legal support over and above their victims, because the important thing here is not just confiscating assets but giving compensation to the victims. That is incredibly important.

Q15 Michael Ellis: I think it is right, is it not, Minister, that sometimes just giving the bare figure of a number of prosecutions can be somewhat deceptive because the Crown Prosecution Service is responsible for prosecutions in this country, wholly independently of Ministers of the Crown—and rightly so—and they sometimes end up charging individuals, or should I say prosecuting individuals, for different offences that are subsumed within the overall offence of human trafficking. As I think you alluded to yourself, it might be a sexual offence; it might be false imprisonment; it might be assault of some sort. So an overall figure can be somewhat deceptive, but do you accept that there is more that can be done in this area in terms of the number of prosecutions that are commenced in this area?

Karen Bradley: Absolutely, yes. One of the many things that I want to see come from this and part of the work that I have been doing, through the strategy, through the operational leads meeting that I hold monthly, is to make sure the CPS are taking action where it is possible. The big problem we have with so many of these cases is getting the evidence. As you said, Mr Ellis—and I well understand why a prosecutor would prosecute for rape when it is going to give them life imprisonment, whereas human trafficking would be only 14 years until the Bill becomes an Act of Parliament. But the very clear message that I have given to the Crown Prosecution

Service—as have others, including the Solicitor General and the Attorney General—is that we do want to see prosecutions for human trafficking and modern slavery offences going through the courts more and more.

We also want to make sure that they are properly marked and flagged, and that is one of the roles that the Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner designate is working on to make sure that we do have information about that.

Q16 Michael Ellis: The records, because that would help statistics. It would help a proper overview of the situation. If you have a record that, for example, a rape prosecution stemmed from a human trafficking prosecution and it is part of that allegation, then that would help record-keeping.

Karen Bradley: Let's be blunt, we want to get prosecutions and if it is more likely to get the prosecution for a charge of rape I want that prosecution.

Q17 Michael Ellis: As far as confiscation orders are concerned, it is ultimately up to the judge, is it not, to make such an order? Have you perceived a reluctance on the part of the judiciary generally to make confiscation orders? For example, if they are persuaded that there are no assets or insufficient assets of the defendant in front of them, they do not make a confiscation order at all. That clearly is not desirable.

Karen Bradley: Again, Mr Ellis, you are right and I bow to your greater knowledge of the court system than mine, but there has been a reluctance—no doubt about it—in courts to put confiscation orders on where the courts did not have sufficient certainty about the level of assets and that there would be recovery. Again, we do want to make sure that courts do not take that approach—that they do put the confiscation orders on. The Crown Prosecution Service are part of the Criminal Finances Board and they do understand the process that—

Q18 Michael Ellis: You are liaising with the Law Officers of the Crown about that, are you, in terms of trying to impact on the judges the importance of these confiscation orders?

Karen Bradley: Yes.

Q19 Michael Ellis: May I ask you two more quick points? One of them is this: what action is Government taking to disrupt human trafficking further afield from these shores? For example, the known migrant routes into the EU from places like Libya and Turkey—are we able to take any action there?

Karen Bradley: We are. We are working with the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and the Department for International Development where the source countries are also developing countries. We are working with our embassies, we are working with high commissions, to make sure that all information that is known about the smuggling of people comes to light, and with the National Crime Agency. One of the things that I have been most impressed about with the National Crime Agency is that—as you can imagine, as the Minister for Serious and Organised Crime, my road trips do not tend to be to the glamour spots; they tend to be places where there is serious and organised crime—there is always a very competent embedded National Crime Agency officer working with the local police there and—

Michael Ellis: I think this Committee has had good experience with the National Crime Agency as well.

Karen Bradley: They are, as I say, completely embedded with local police and working with them to find those criminals that are facilitating the immigration crime.

Q20 Michael Ellis: Thank you. Finally from me, I am concerned, and have been concerned for a time, about the issue of modern overseas domestic service—those that come into this country for domestic service from overseas. They are legitimately brought into the country, possibly, but there ends up being an element of modern slavery within how they are treated while in this country. How can we deal with that? What are you doing as Minister in that area?

Karen Bradley: Thank you for that question because it is very pertinent. The Modern Slavery Bill covers all victims of slavery, all victims of domestic servitude, forced or compulsory labour and slavery. I want there to be no doubt that any victim of slavery is covered by the Bill. There have been a number of concerns raised about the overseas domestic workers visa, and it is probably worth saying that this is a route that enables people coming to visit the UK for a short period of time—a period of up to six months—to bring with them their domestic staff. For example, it might be the children's nanny. It may be a cook. It may be somebody that they feel they need to have in their entourage. We have had reports for many years of there being abuse within that system. Now let's put this in context. Before 2012, the charity Kalayaan—which I know has been very vocal in this area—had about 300 people a year coming to them saying they were victims of abuse within an overseas domestic workers' context.

In 2012 we changed the visa arrangements, so we tied the visa to one employer, partly to try and stop the abuse of people being brought in by organised criminals and then being taken on by other employers. Kalayaan are still reporting there is abuse; they say that about 60 people a year are coming forward. Now—

Q21 Michael Ellis: How many are coming into the country?

Karen Bradley: The total number coming into the country: 15,000 visas a year are issued and the best evidence we have is that the average length of stay is 15 days. The difficulty we have is, how do we best find those people, make sure they are not suffering abuse, make sure that they know what support is available to them and make sure we are not importing abuse? Some have said that the tied visa is the reason. I cannot see the logical argument for that. There was definitely abuse before the tied visa; there is still abuse, and if it was just the right to change employer we would have no UK nationals—

Q22 Michael Ellis: Are there target countries where we are seeing this as a particular problem, who are applying for these domestic service visas?

Karen Bradley: Not in terms of the numbers coming forward that go through the National Referral Mechanism. There is no one country coming through. But what we have done—because I am very concerned about this and I do want to make sure we do the right thing and we find these people and we stop them being abused—is we have asked James Ewins, who was an adviser to the Pre-legislative Scrutiny Committee, a barrister and very well respected in this field I hope you will agree, to conduct a review of the whole visa arrangements so that we can make sure we can deal with this because the problem of finding those 15,000 people and making sure they are not abused is not easy.

Michael Ellis: Thank you.

Q23 Nicola Blackwood: Ms Bradley, you mentioned earlier that one of the challenges with prosecuting trafficking is getting the evidence and the investigative process, but we have taken a number of steps in recent legislation to try and assist with that; with reforming the civil prevention orders, and we have brought in the sexual harm and prevention orders, the sexual risk orders, the slavery and trafficking prevention orders and we have changed the thresholds for the gang injunctions. These are all new orders. I am wondering what steps you are going to be taking to make sure that there is very good guidance in place, and very good training in place, and what discussions you have had with the College of Policing to make sure that these are well used and that there is a proper process in place to move from administrative orders, like the CORMS, so that they are used not just as steps in themselves but also as an appropriate pathway to investigation and prosecution.

Karen Bradley: Thank you for that. I want to pay tribute to the work you have done, and certainly my experiences of visiting the team that worked on Operation Bulfinch with you were incredibly helpful in terms of shaping the Modern Slavery Bill. There is so much that we can learn from the experiences of abuse and other organised crime gangs abusing young people in this way.

The civil orders that have been introduced are part of the protect side of the work that we are doing. I will focus on the slavery ones for now and we can talk about the other work with all of the College of Policing. One of the big challenges is: how do we get a custody sergeant to identify that the person that they have come into contact with is a victim, not a criminal? How do we get the teacher to recognise that there is a victim there, and that this person going home every night is not going home—they are going to an organised crime group who are trafficking them for sexual purposes, for labour purposes and so on? That is an enormous challenge because it means it becoming second nature to local police forces up and down the country to know what to look for.

The College of Policing are part of our operational lead team. I have regular meetings with the College of Policing to make sure that we are developing the right training courses and that that training is being rolled out appropriately. As you rightly say, the guidance is so incredibly important because it needs to be clear. One example of guidance I would give is that when I visited the Human Trafficking Centre, which the National Crime Agency runs, they have an investigative advice team that local officers can go to. I was slightly concerned as to what sort of advice was being given to local officers. If they come to the Human Trafficking Centre do they have enough knowledge? It is good that they have said, “This might be trafficking,” but then what do they get in return? I was very pleased to see an incredibly comprehensive and layman’s terms description sent back to those police officers to explain the kind of things they may be seeing, the kind of things they should look for, and the tools that were available to them, including protection orders, to make sure that those local police on the front line did know what was available.

Q24 Nicola Blackwood: One of the risks that was raised when the first of these orders was put through the House, and subsequent ones, is that these orders were to become almost an easy substitute for moving forward to prosecution, and police who I have spoken to subsequently tell me that one of the biggest challenges with grooming victims and others is that they need almost a breathing space between the abuse and between going through the investigative and prosecution period, so that they can reflect back and say, “Hang on a second, that wasn’t right. What happened to me was wrong and I want to go through the justice process”. These orders can allow that

breathing space but they are not going to do that if they become the end of the story. So I want to know what steps are being put in place to make sure that they do not become the end of the story and they do become part of a much longer process moving towards a full justice outcome.

Karen Bradley: That is a very good point. If you would not mind, because I do not want to detain the Committee too long, perhaps I could write to you on that specific point as well.

Chair: That would be very helpful. Thank you.

Q25 Mr Clappison: I was going to ask about the Regional Organised Crime Unit aspect of the National Crime Agency, but I think you have told us that you are broadly satisfied with that and there is good co-operation going on between the two. Is that right?

Karen Bradley: Yes, I am. I have visited three of the Regional Organised Crime Units over the last six months, because I want to see for myself how we are getting that connection between the National Crime Agency and their international connections down to local force level. Of course, as you will know, the ROCUs are actually local force led. They are accountable to police and crime commissioners and chief constables, but they take the National Crime Agency into their regional organised crime unit and they therefore give that link between the two.

Of the three I visited, all have slightly different models. They all have a slightly different approach, which is right for them given their situation. For example, the south east regional organised crime unit, which is the forces that go around London, does not have one big major urban centre. But the West Midlands one, which covers my own force at Staffordshire, of course, has West Midlands with that big urban centre in the middle—Birmingham—and therefore it is quite right that those units should be set up in a way that works for those local police forces.

Certainly, from the visits and the discussions I have had with National Crime Agency officers, as well as multi-agency workers, people who work in the Border Force, Trading Standards people in the regional organised crime units—I have met very many different types of people all working together from different agencies—it does seem to work. The experience I have had is that it is working coherently and that there is an understanding of how those specialist capabilities that the NCA have can be transferred down to local level in an effective way through the ROCU that does not dilute anything local police forces are doing.

Q26 Mr Clappison: On a different subject, I wonder do your responsibilities encompass taking a lead internationally against modern slavery and do you liaise with the Foreign Office on that. I am asking that question against a background where, sadly, slavery seems to be far too prevalent in the world today and in some parts of the world even making a comeback. This country and this Government have a good record on it but are we taking enough of an international stand on it?

Karen Bradley: We are. The Foreign and Commonwealth Office are part of the inter-departmental ministerial group that we have that leads in the UK in terms of responsibility for delivering on slavery, and Baroness Anelay has been absolutely instrumental in her work to make sure that embassies, high commissions and so on have the knowledge and information. But we have also worked with the Churches. It is not just about embassies. We are working with the Santa Marta Group, which is a group set up by the Pope and which has representatives from the Catholic Church and the Anglican Church and law enforcement from across the world. London hosted the first Santa Marta conference in December to look at how we can all work together.

We are working with very many organisations. One of them is Rotary. Rotary is an incredibly powerful organisation because Rotary have chapters—I think that is the right word—worldwide. Everywhere in the world there is a Rotary, so Rotary can be working on the ground to identify what the problems are of slavery, to see what slavery looks like in those countries, and working with us and with the Churches and with the Foreign and Commonwealth Office to tackle it.

Chair: Thank you. That is very helpful.

Q27 Dr Huppert: May I turn to issues about the Government's cyber crime strategy? I think you are responsible for that among a huge range of other things. There was a survey last year for Get Safe Online Week, which said that roughly half of the people surveyed had been a victim of online crime—huge sums for online fraud. I don't know if you have a current estimate. What is the strategy doing to tackle this so far?

Karen Bradley: With cyber I think it is important to distinguish between the two types: the cyber-enabled and the cyber-dependent. The cyber-enabled crime is the online fraud. That would be somebody going online and buying something off a fake seller on the internet or receiving an e-mail from somebody and sending them money or possibly even online trolling and abuse online. It is the same crime, as we know, that would happen in the street. If someone goes to Leek market and gives a vendor £2,000—

Dr Huppert: We have done an inquiry into this.

Karen Bradley: Yes, so you understand. If we look at the online fraud side of things, then that comes very much to the work that the City of London Police are leading on with Action Fraud, the National Fraud Intelligence Bureau, and making sure also that local policing understands—and again this is a College of Policing piece of work—the need to ensure that there is sufficient training locally for people to be able to say, “What are the fingerprints you would look for? You would look for a fingerprint on a physical fraud. What is the online fingerprint? What is the digital fingerprint you are looking for?”

If we turn then to the cyber-dependent side of crime, the malware, that needs much more technical capability and that is where the ROCUs come in. ROCUs have, within each of them, a cyber crime unit of highly skilled technical specialists that local policing can access for that sort of very high-level crime.

Q28 Dr Huppert: Do you think we are doing better than we were five years ago? How would you measure that?

Karen Bradley: I was just coming on to say the National Crime Agency has made a big difference. With the National Cyber Crime Unit having been involved in the two big international operations last year, the Tovar operation, which was Gameover Zeus and CryptoLocker, and then the Project DISPUTED, which was actually NCA-led, the first time that any of these operations have been led from outside the US and it was the NCA that led it, which was the Shylock malware. I think that in the National Crime Agency and in the National Cyber Crime Unit we do have world leaders in that field and I am very pleased with the work that has gone on so far, but that is not to say that we should not always be doing more.

Q29 Dr Huppert: It seems to me like we are just scratching the surface. Do you have estimates of the value, for example, of the number of incidents that are happening each year, whether that has been going up or down over the last five years?

Karen Bradley: We have what is reported into Action Fraud and obviously we have what—are you talking about cybercrime or the online fraud?

Q30 Dr Huppert: I think I have the same problem with both of them, which is that there are a few very interesting cases—and I absolutely accept the ones that you have given—but overall all the evidence that I have seen suggests there is a vast amount that is never reported, which is never tackled, which is just not dealt with at all. Do you have any confidence that we are actually making inroads on any of these categories?

Karen Bradley: I do have confidence we are making inroads and I absolutely agree with you, we need to do more. I am not saying that we have reached the end of the story and that there is not more that we can do, but I do feel confident about the work we have done so far and the work that Action Fraud and the National Fraud Intelligence Bureau are doing. We have done a lot of work with them, through the Cyber Crime Board, to make sure that we understand the victim experience, that reports are made and that there is ownership of those reports. There is a long way to go but I am confident we are on the right track.

Q31 Dr Huppert: The other side is of course cyber security and making sure that people are defended. The Government's Cyber Security Strategy states that the use of privacy-enhancing technology and systems can be very helpful in this—encrypting messages and so on. Is it still Government policy to encourage that?

Karen Bradley: In the Cyber Security Strategy we have done a lot of work on raising awareness about how people can protect themselves online. You will know that 80% of all online crime can be stopped by simple disinfectant, as GCHQ would tell you. So Cyber Streetwise, for example, is there to increase that. We have also introduced Cyber Essentials, which is a programme that business can go through to say that they are as safe to do business with online as it is possible to be. We have the CiSP, which is a place where businesses can share information in a safe space about cyber attacks. We also have the CERT, which is—I am going to get the initials wrong if I don't check exactly what CERT stands for—the Emergency Response Team. That is there so that when there is a cyber attack, that team can go out and make sure that they are giving business the safety that they need, because the evidence is that most businesses do not know that they have had a cyber attack until at least 48 hours after the attack has taken place. So we have a number of places where we are working with business and making sure that people and businesses are safe.

Q32 Dr Huppert: This is very much business-focused rather than consumer-focused. Is it still your aim to encourage individuals to encrypt communications so that they are more resilient—is that still the strategy?

Karen Bradley: The aim is to make sure that everybody has the awareness of cyber security and that people are updating their malware and that they are doing simple things, like changing passwords. That is the work we are doing on Cyber Streetwise and the Cyber Essentials programme.

Q33 Mr Winnick: Child sexual exploitation, Minister—obviously it is a problem, to say the least. We are all united in trying to combat this notorious evil. How far, as a Minister, as an MP, indeed as a private individual before you became active in public life, were you aware of the extent of sexual exploitation among children?

Karen Bradley: I think we are all only just getting to grips with the extent of it, aren't we? If you ask me what I knew about it in 2010 before I was a Member of Parliament, the answer would be "very little". I knew that I would want my children to be safe online. I knew about certain protections but I did not know the extent of it. It is only now, as a Minister, that I am starting to see—

Q34 Mr Winnick: That is a frank answer because it would be more or less the answer that I would give, and I have been in public life age-wise obviously far longer than you. So you would agree that despite the sheer extent of what has been revealed all around the country to some extent, but in certain particular spots that have been much publicised—and rightly so—and the Jimmy Savile horrors and the rest of it, you were not aware, or anywhere near, the extent to which it took place?

Karen Bradley: No, and I don't think any of us were. I think it has been a dreadful, horrible shock to everybody and one only has to just scratch the surface of some of the reports we have seen of what has happened—the Rotherham report recently, for example—to be absolutely and totally horrified by the failings by so many for so long to protect children.

Q35 Mr Winnick: As I say, we are all agreed that such exploitation has to be combated, including, presumably, what is taking place at this very moment. It hasn't ended because of the inquiries into what occurred years previously. How far will the work of the specialist unit that has been set up jointly by NCA and GCHQ differ from the ways in which the police and other agencies are dealing with child sexual exploitation?

Karen Bradley: From the National Crime Agency point of view, there are a number of different sides to the investigative work that they carry out. There is the Child Exploitation and Online Protection—CEOP—team, which used to be a standalone team, and has been brought into the National Crime Agency and was responsible for the work of Operation Notarise that we have seen so many arrests through recently.

In terms of the work with GCHQ: having spoken to the director at the National Crime Agency with responsibility for this area, what GCHQ is able to give the National Crime Agency is an increased capability to find and identify the possible perpetrators of this crime. Because we have a difficulty with the online side of things, and I suppose it made me very nervous when it was put to me by one of the National Crime Agency officers. When I was a child and there would be strange people hanging around outside the school, you almost laughed at them; you thought they were a bit weird; they were strange; society did not allow them to behave in the way they may have wanted to; it was not acceptable—but the internet allows a safe place for people to go. It normalises the behaviour. It socialises the behaviour and it anonymises the behaviour, and therefore it gives people who would never behave in that way in tangible life, shall we call it, the place they can go and view images that are completely and totally unacceptable. So what GCHQ offers is the capabilities to find those people in a way that standalone policing could not do.

Q36 Mr Winnick: So the dark web, as it is called, is obviously meant to disguise the identity of a culprit and the rest of it. This unit that I have mentioned is dealing with it or going to deal with it. I am not quite sure. Is this unit up and running?

Karen Bradley: They have been working together. I am not sure that there is an official unit as such but the CEOP unit, the CEOP command, which is part of the National Crime Agency, is working with GCHQ among others to tackle this crime.

Mr Winnick: Thank you.

Q37 Tim Loughton: Minister, can we talk about the National Crime Agency and its record on trials and fraud in particular? There was rather a notorious case just before Christmas where the judge, Wendy Joseph, criticised the NCA, saying they had failed the public interest in this case. There was “no excuse or justification for the combination of multiple failures that have occurred” and she said that evidence was missing, “it was misleading or had not been investigated properly in the complex fraud inquiry” that she was presiding over and those being prosecuted had laughed their way out of court. That was quite a damning indictment of the NCA, so what have you made of their performance so far with such high profile cases revealing some quite severe cases of incompetence?

Karen Bradley: I am not sure which case you are referring to. Do you know the name of the case?

Chair: Mr Loughton?

Tim Loughton: That is a very good point. It was in London. I have the article here that appeared in the *Guardian*, which is probably why you and I did not see it the first time round. It happened in December. There were seven defendants.

Karen Bradley: That is right. I thought it was the one I was thinking of.

Tim Loughton: It was a £5 million fraud charge.

Karen Bradley: Yes. First of all, nobody wanted to see the trial fail. It was a very large and complex case. I know that the NCA and the CPS have been reviewing the case to identify the lessons that can be learned, and we certainly do need to learn from the case because we do not want to see those kinds of trials fail when clearly the CPS have felt that they had the evidence that made it worthwhile to take the case to court. The judge was critical but we have worked with the NCA to make sure we are dealing with the failings that were identified and investing in capabilities and skills. Of course one of the criticisms was about the IT systems. The Novo Project, which is a transformation project to bring all of those precursor agencies that came into the NCA to make them into one work force, into one law enforcement agency, is under way to make sure that the IT systems all do work together and in fact we end up with one overarching IT system in the end.

Q38 Tim Loughton: I think the point in this case is that it was obviously a complex fraud case, but it was a big case that involved fraud of over £40 million, involving some quite big institutions, involving people like Chester Zoo and Care UK, I see, and more than 200 bank accounts. But the criticism from the judge that led to the case collapsing was that some fairly fundamental investigative work had not been carried out at the outset. So that is not just a question of some oversight. It was some fundamental incompetence that she criticised. Now what has happened since that case? Has the

Government taken it as a test case to investigate whether the NCA is up to doing the job that it is tasked to do?

Karen Bradley: We are working with the NCA to go through those failings and to see what needs to be done to address those issues. We are also looking at the whole of the Government's approach to economic crime and corruption and we are reviewing, overall, all the agencies that are involved in dealing with and tackling economic crime, fraud and corruption, because it is a slightly fragmented picture at the moment and I think we all agree that we need to have a more coherent picture and we need to have agencies working together so we do not end up with criticisms like that in the future.

Q39 Tim Loughton: But economic crime is one of the four main commands of the NCA, so it is one of the main pillars on which the NCA was put together and tasked to pursue those sorts of cases. There was criticism at the time about whether absorbing CEOP into the NCA was the best way of being able to specialise in some of these really difficult online child exploitation cases. Are you confident that there is the expertise within the NCA properly to pursue some of these cases of economic crime, which inevitably are going to be quite complex but do at the very basic level require that initial investigative work to be done properly, and in this case it clearly wasn't?

Karen Bradley: I am confident. Donald Toon, who has taken over the economic crime command in the National Crime Agency, is a real expert in this area. He has been working with all the agencies, but also with the financial institutions, to make sure that we are getting the right information from them and that we are able to find those criminals in the most efficient and effective way.

But you talk about CEOP coming in and was it right that CEOP should be in the National Crime Agency. I am absolutely confident, having spent time talking to all of the leadership within the National Crime Agency, but in particular to the leadership within the CEOP command and the economic crime command, that the investigative skills they share more than set them apart. So there does need to be technical expertise but the fact that when there is a big case each of the commands can pull in capabilities, can use those capabilities, and can use the capacity of the bigger National Crime Agency to fight those crimes and to pursue those criminals, I think is absolutely the right thing to do.

Q40 Chair: Two quick questions. May I have some quick answers from you on this? In response to what was being said by Michael Ellis, the Egyptian ambassador has said that Egypt needs more support from our Government. He says he thinks that the boat people who are coming over for immigration purposes, trying to cross the Mediterranean, in the next few weeks will consist of boatloads of terrorists who will be put in the boats and sent over primarily to Italy. Clearly you have identified the problem. This is a North African issue, and in answer to Mr Ellis you talked to us about the co-operation that is being done, but this is a pretty critical issue for countries like Italy and Greece because we are talking about thousands of migrants leaving countries like Egypt. What are we doing in Egypt? What are we doing with Egypt? Because it is those kinds of countries that really need help, isn't it? You are right: it is the source countries. But is there any practical help we can give Egypt?

Karen Bradley: Yes. There is practical help we can give at all levels and it has to be an upstream approach.

Chair: Well, what is it?

Karen Bradley: We need to have on the ground National Crime Agency, Border Force—

Chair: In Egypt?

Karen Bradley: —and others working with the national agencies, not necessarily located in Egypt—I could not tell you off the top of my head whether we have somebody based in Egypt full time—but certainly working in the area, working in the region to make sure—

Chair: In the North African peninsula?

Karen Bradley: —that we do have the right intelligence so that we can find those criminals.

Chair: That is very helpful.

Karen Bradley: But we have to do this across the whole EU of course.

Q41 Chair: Of course, and it is an EU problem primarily, not just a British problem, and Frontex needs to be right at the forefront of this. We understand that. But you are telling us that by putting people in the North African area this is the best way of getting at these people traffickers.

Karen Bradley: We are part of the Khartoum process of course, so—

Q42 Chair: Yes. We are all part of some process or another but, rather like the EUROMED process, it is a conference, the Khartoum process.

Karen Bradley: But it is also about how we actively work together, so it has to be tackled in the source country.

Q43 Chair: Sure. We agree with you on that. Finally, in terms of the NCA and child abuse, Ministers have been very clear that if there is a case that has to be investigated, the NCA must investigate. The NCA is saying something different. It says there are too many cases—50,000 names originally came over from Toronto—and they cannot look at every single case and investigate every single case. How are we going to bridge that gap with Ministers saying—quite rightly, in our view—“You have to go after everybody” and the NCA saying, “Sorry, we don’t have the resources. We are going to have to leave some of the low-lying crime”? For example, the erotic images of children they do not think are enough to merit an investigation. It has to be more serious than that. What is your message on this? Is it still the case that the Ministers want them all investigated?

Karen Bradley: I think the first thing is that the 50,000 number is a red herring. It is like the 13,000 number of the victims of slavery. It is the best estimate but we do not have 50,000 names, just as we do not have the names of 13,000 victims of slavery.

Q44 Chair: So what are the numbers of names?

Karen Bradley: What we do need to do is make sure that the National Crime Agency is investigating and prioritising. What I do want to make sure is that anybody who may be a contact—

Q45 Chair: So investigating and prioritising and not going after everyone?

Karen Bradley: Anybody who might be a contact offender, who is in a privileged position, anybody who poses the greatest risk needs to be the priority and I want to make sure that the National Crime Agency, all local policing where it is appropriate, is investigating everybody who poses a risk to children.

Q46 Chair: Minister, the Home Office have specifically said they want all the crimes investigated. You are now saying you want it to be a priority for some of them.

Karen Bradley: I am saying I want all the crimes investigated but I want the National Crime Agency to prioritise those that pose the most risk.

Q47 Chair: If the 50,000 figure is wrong, what is the figure you are giving the Committee today?

Karen Bradley: There is no figure of the number of names. The 50,000 is the best estimate of the number of people within the United Kingdom who may be accessing this information, but it is not—

Chair: So it is still 50,000?

Karen Bradley: —a number of names.

Chair: Sure. Most of your portfolio is dealing with estimates, estimating the number of people on human trafficking and so on, so that is very helpful indeed. Thank you so much for coming. I am glad we were able to see you.

Karen Bradley: Thank you.

Chair: I would be very grateful to have those answers by midday on Monday.

Karen Bradley: Of course. Thank you very much and thank you to the Committee.

Chair: Thank you.

Examination of Witness

Witness: **Keith Bristow QPM**, Director General, National Crime Agency, gave evidence.

Q48 Chair: Mr Bristow, we are most grateful to you for coming in. Can I start with an article that is in this evening's *Evening Standard*, in which you are reported as saying that you think that only £124 million of the £1.46 billion of confiscation order debts will ever be seized? Do you want to clarify that, because it is a little depressing? It must be very gleefully received by some who have had confiscation orders but a bit depressing for this Committee because we are a great fan of the National Crime Agency and the work that you are doing, and if you are saying that only £124 million will be seized we get a bit worried.

Keith Bristow: Chairman, it is accurately reported but there is a bit of context I would like to share with you, if I may. The valuation that has been put on unenforced confiscation orders is done by the courts service who are responsible, with the CPS, for enforcing those orders, and they value it, as you say, at just under £1.5 billion. The value of the orders, of course, is that the

amount of criminal profit that a criminal derived from their activities at the point where the order was made is different from how much asset is actually available to be recovered. So if there was a judgment that a criminal had benefited by £10 million the order that we could seek under the current regime would be for £10 million, even if they only had £1 million-worth of assets to pursue.

The point that I was making in the interview is that when one looks at the cumulative effect of that, plus 8% interest a year on unenforced orders, some of which are frankly not enforceable because the asset does not exist, there is a big gap between the outstanding orders and what is likely to be recovered. The point I was making to the reporter is that working with our partners we have identified 161 priority cases, which are active criminals who we think have assets that we can take off them and with outstanding orders, and we think there is £124 million-worth of recoverable asset that they still have. So far together—not just the NCA, together with the CPS, the courts, regional asset recovery teams and the SFO—we have taken £40 million back.

Q49 Chair: But you understand how the public's expectations are raised when they hear that £1.3 billion is owed to the taxpayer and the courts have issued these confiscation orders, and then you say that only £124 million is recoverable. I understand the point that you are making, but you understand the expectations are raised and then dashed as to the amount that is to be recovered.

Keith Bristow: Of course, if one looks back at the history of asset confiscation—and many of the orders that are outstanding go back many, many years, including before the current legislation—the focus in the early days was on getting as many orders as possible for the greatest value possible. Hence we have a legacy, and I am being straightforward when I say that I do not believe that sort of amount is enforceable because I don't think the asset exists to recover. What we are doing is focusing on recovering the assets that are in criminal hands now and disrupting their activities.

Q50 Chair: In respect of the 176 serious criminals who owe £695 million, do we know who these people are? You, as the head of the National Crime Agency, would know who these people are?

Keith Bristow: Yes, if there is an order outstanding against a convicted criminal we would know who those individuals are. We have prioritised 161 of those where we think they have assets and we think they are dangerous people who ought to be targeted.

Q51 Chair: You say they have £695 million that you would like to get your hands on?

Keith Bristow: No, I am saying those 161 cases that we have prioritised have £124 million and we have taken £40 million off them already.

Q52 Chair: Sure. Now, are these people allowed to enter and leave the country freely? They have finished their sentence. They have gone to court, finished their sentence. They still owe millions of pounds to the British taxpayer in confiscation fines. There are no restrictions on them, presumably, opening a new business or conducting themselves in any way they like because obviously they are not subject to any court orders, are they?

Keith Bristow: Unless they have been banned from being directors perhaps but, for the most part, if they have served their sentence and they are back out at liberty then they are at liberty.

Q53 Chair: They are at liberty to enter and leave the country freely?

Keith Bristow: Yes.

Q54 Chair: What can we do to help you, Mr Bristow, to squeeze them more? Having gone through the judicial process, what changes of law would you like to see that this Committee can recommend, in this very short report that we are doing, in order to help you do your job better to squeeze the last pound out of these people? Because of course, as you know, the National Audit Office and the Public Accounts Committee have said that only 26 pence of every £100-worth of orders is currently being recovered. You have put that into context and I am grateful for that. But the Public Accounts Committee—this is not what I am saying, it is what they say—described the “Rubbish performance of the agencies involved”. Of course, the Home Affairs Committee does not use such emotive language as that. Having said all that, what can we do to help you? What changes in the law will allow you, as head of the NCA, to go after these serious criminals and get more money back?

Keith Bristow: Okay. Can I point out some of the problems that we have?

Chair: Yes.

Keith Bristow: You may have seen some of the coverage—again, in the *Evening Standard* last week—on a civil recovery case where we took £4.5 million off a money launderer. That case was started in 2009. That has taken five and a half years. So these cases are not quick. They are complex. I will cite some ongoing investigations, but I will name them because they are in the public arena. These people will do everything they can to frustrate us. SOCA started pursuing a man called Arran Coghlan through a civil recovery order. We are continuing to pursue him. He will use every loophole available through the civil court—

Chair: Is he a British citizen?

Keith Bristow: Yes.

Chair: Residing in the UK?

Keith Bristow: Yes. So there is a real challenge about how long the process takes, particularly using a wide range of tools, including civil recovery and taxation, which we use to disrupt these people. It takes a long time. It is complex. It is also very risky.

A case that I know you are aware of, Chairman, is the Israel Perry case, which is again a case where SOCA started to take assets off a convicted criminal. There was then some case law that meant that we have had to spend significant resources defending the position that we inherited, and we have lost on some of that. The Abacha case is another example: £100 million of assets under control.

Therefore, the first thing I would say is that it is important to understand the complexity, the length of time, the legal challenges we face.

Q55 Chair: Would it help if you were able to publish—these are people all convicted, they have gone through the system, it is in the public domain—the list of those people who are still subjects of confiscation orders? You have talked about three of them today. We now understand the difficulties

that you have had in trying to get at them. Would it be possible to publish that list? Is this one way of naming and shaming those who have still not paid up?

Keith Bristow: It is. Can I again—

Chair: It is possible to publish it?

Keith Bristow: We could publish some of this where there are outstanding orders and much of it is in the public domain because some of the cases I have just mentioned, the Coghlan case as an example, is being conducted in open court. It is a court battle to take this man's assets off him, which we believe—and the courts believe—have been derived through criminality.

I know an area, Chairman, where you and I and the Committee have not necessarily disagreed but had a slightly different view, but if you can bear with me, one of the most helpful things would be to recognise the disruptive effect that taking assets off criminals can have.

Q56 Chair: Sure. We will come to that in one second. I want to just push you on changes in the law. Is there nothing we can do in Parliament to help you? We are talking about criminals that have gone through the system; the court has imposed an order. They are out of jail. They still owe a huge amount of money. You are spending a huge amount of your time chasing people who have been through the court system. Before we come up to disruption, are there any changes in the law that you would like to see that we can recommend to the Home Secretary or the next Home Secretary?

Keith Bristow: Chairman, we have very tough legislation. I think the interpretation and implementation of what is required of us is where the improvements are necessary.

Q57 Chair: By the judges?

Keith Bristow: By people like me, people like you, Chairman, and the Committee, so if we go back to where we started, exposing some uncomfortable truths about how much asset can be actually recovered is really important so that we are focused on delivering what we can rather than constantly harking back to a number, which I do not like. I do not want criminals having any assets but I don't want to chase assets that are not there.

Q58 Chair: You mean at the time of conviction and sentence this inflated figure is put out, "We will take this much of assets from you," but you are telling us there is no way they even have those assets that are recoverable.

Keith Bristow: No, and I think if we can focus as much as possible on what is available and what we are doing about it, and the effect we are having, that would be really helpful to us because we have very strong legislation. It is about the implementation and the operational response. To be clear, I am dissatisfied with where we are because, as long as criminals are benefiting from their crime, I remain dissatisfied.

Q59 Chair: Yes. I will allow you to go on to the point on disruption that you want to make.

Keith Bristow: I think really positioning the regime in what we are trying to achieve and trying to get a consensus around that is important, rather than chasing assets that either do not exist or chasing assets for the sake of assets. I mean part of the problem we have in the gap now, between outstanding orders and what is enforceable, is born of chasing the number of orders

that are as big as possible. What we have to do is focus on the disruptive effect that we can possibly have against criminals. That is our top priority, and any support you can give us in amplifying the importance of that would help us enormously.

Chair: Thank you.

Q60 Mr Winnick: Before I ask you about what is happening in Calais, may I ask you, Mr Bristow, arising from what you have just told the Chair, are the banks co-operating fully with your organisation?

Keith Bristow: One of the points in the Government's serious and organised crime strategy is the importance of helping the banks and other financial institutions understand some of the risks that they face, and because they face those risks, citizens and the reputation of our country face them. So we are open with the financial services industry, including banks, about the nature of the threat.

At the moment, we are working with the banks to agree information-sharing protocols that will give us opportunities to target criminals in a way that we haven't before, that goes well beyond the SARs regime, which is a statutory regime where we need to be informed if there is a suspicious transaction, and the banks are being co-operative. We are still working through the detail of that but I am very optimistic that it is a good step in the right direction.

Q61 Mr Winnick: You see, arising from what has been occurring at least very much now in the public arena, over Switzerland, HSBC, tax havens, offshore islands and the rest, do you explore all this? Because clearly the criminals cannot all keep the money under the mattress; they must find various outlets, and banks would be one of the obvious examples where such money may be located.

Keith Bristow: I want to choose my words carefully because I don't want what I am going to say to be over-interpreted, not by the Committee but by those that will be listening. Because of the nature of our banking industry, the trillions of pounds that go through it every single year, the political stability that we have and the established nature of the industry, the sort of people that we are interested in will of course be laundering money through the UK banking system. The banks for the most part, of course, do not know anything about that. It is merely transactions—high-volume transactions. But that is a reality. That is why the banks want to work with us to ensure that we have access to the intelligence that we need about criminals—not law-abiding citizens, criminals, and they use the banking system to launder their money or move money around the planet because for the majority of people we are interested in, apart from those who are pursuing a sexual interest in children, it is all about the money.

Q62 Mr Winnick: As far as you are concerned, all the banks in the United Kingdom are co-operating fully with the National Crime Agency?

Keith Bristow: No, I am not saying that. What I am saying is there is a statutory regime that requires co-operation. We are working—

Mr Winnick: It requires it?

Keith Bristow: Yes.

Q63 Mr Winnick: But let's get to the point: are there any that are not giving you the co-operation that you require?

Keith Bristow: There are a number of banks that, on the back of a meeting that the Home Secretary, the Governor of the Bank of England and the FCA hosted, a breakfast meeting last year, are agreeing now a regime with us that goes beyond the SARs regime, to help us develop the actionable intelligence we need of people who are using the banking system inappropriately.

Q64 Mr Winnick: I just want to get you on to this particular point because I consider it—and I am sure other colleagues do—of much importance. I asked if all the banks are co-operating fully and you have qualified that in a perfectly frank and honest answer to me, so I can only conclude there are some banks that are not giving the co-operation that they should be.

Keith Bristow: Not all banks are the same, of course. They go from the big high-street retail banks, the investment banks, to small, what I think are called boutique, banks. We are working with a number of the big ones to ensure that they are discharging not only their lawful but also their ethical responsibilities.

Mr Winnick: Are they doing so? Are they doing so?

Keith Bristow: We are on the cusp of a really big step forward.

Q65 Mr Winnick: You have qualified it but you have given a very frank answer and we will draw our own conclusions, Mr Bristow, but I am sure you are doing all that you possibly can.

Keith Bristow: Mr Winnick, the only reason I am qualifying it is because it is a qualified answer. I am being open with you.

Q66 Mr Winnick: As far as Calais is concerned—the criminal network that exists in human trafficking and the rest—is there much progress in trying to undermine such criminal activity?

Keith Bristow: We have a responsibility, of course, to ensure in particular the intelligence flows work to present opportunities to law enforcement to target groups that are involved in trafficking people, where that is clandestine entry for modern slavery. One of the things that we have done is embedded an officer within French law enforcement to get the benefit of our intelligence picture and their intelligence picture, to provide actionable intelligence, tactical opportunities to target those involved in trafficking, and that is starting to show some good early results. Much of the work is being led by the Joint Border Intelligence Unit in Kent, led by Kent Police. We are part of that. It is about bringing the intelligence picture together and intervening robustly against trafficking groups.

Q67 Mr Winnick: This is the last question from me on this particular aspect. I went with two colleagues from the Committee to Calais and certainly got the impression from the French that there is no easy answer, to say the least. What has happened in the last few weeks, where people have been coming in to Europe, to Italy and so on, seems such an open-ended problem that it would be very difficult, wouldn't it, Mr Bristow, for the law authorities to deal with the human traffickers because people are willing to risk their lives, and do so? Hundreds have died in the last year in trying to get to Europe, so it is a very difficult one and complex and seems to be getting worse rather than otherwise.

Keith Bristow: Of course it is a range of problems. It ranges from people who legitimately want to come to the UK—they believe they want to be here—to people who are conned into coming to the UK, through to people who are forced to come to the UK. It is a range of difficult, complex problems driven by instability elsewhere in the world and the real or perceived benefits of being here in the UK. I know you know this: if it was a simple problem we would solve it. It is about persistence. We are not responsible for controlling border entry. We are responsible for providing the intelligence opportunities to tackle the groups that are benefiting criminally from this awful trade.

Q68 Tim Loughton: Mr Bristow, on the back of the Calais situation—and I was one of the members of the Select Committee who went to Calais—we spoke to migrants there who were quite open about having been trafficked, having paid large sums of money. Going round the town they actually pointed out where some of the traffickers were living, often alongside some of the temporary camps of these migrants. There seemed to be very few cases of the French prosecuting them. If that was happening in the UK, and we knew who and where those traffickers were, surely we would be taking action against them. Why is it not happening in the case of France?

Keith Bristow: Yes, it is right to say that if we knew where the traffickers were in the UK we would be charging them—that is, the police or other agencies. Part of what we need to do, I think, is add to the intelligence picture in France to help French authorities who, from our perspective—from an NCA perspective—have been very committed to working with us to position the interventions, in the way that you said, to target the traffickers and if you have examples of where that has not been happening, it is very useful to know about those examples because it helps me challenge ourselves and our partners to do more.

Q69 Tim Loughton: But it was freely acknowledged where and who these people were. There seems to be no lack of intelligence, with or without the good services of yourself and your staff placed over there. There appears to be a reluctance to prosecute them by the French, and all the time few of them are prosecuted more people are brought over, added to which, of course, there is the problem that the migrants themselves are not detained. If they are caught they are picked up and deposited two miles out of town without any identification procedures having been followed at all. So the whole process goes on and on and traffickers continue to profit from it. What should the French be doing and what pressure can we—and your outfit in particular—bring upon the French to make sure these people are dealt with?

Keith Bristow: One of the challenges that we have generally with the trafficking, whether it is people, drugs, any sort of contraband, firearms, is that quite often source countries and transit countries do not necessarily understand the impact of the criminality when it arrives in the UK, and the same is true for other countries. So the primary concern for us is to point out exactly what is happening, the impact of the criminality on the UK and why it is important, and that is something the NCA can do. But I think, in terms of accounting for what the French authorities do or don't do, that is not for me to justify and I would say for a parliamentarian that is an entirely legitimate challenge. My job is to provide the intelligence and explain the threat.

Q70 Tim Loughton: No, I understand. You are being very kind to the French but you would agree that if that situation prevailed in the United Kingdom, it is much more likely that you and the police forces in this country would take action against these traffickers?

Keith Bristow: If we knew where members of an organised crime group were, who are involved in trafficking people, we or the police or immigration enforcement or others would be targeting them.

Q71 Tim Loughton: To go back to the source of the problem, I think many of us would agree that by the time they reach Calais it is too late and we need to be doing much more, working with other EU countries and other enforcement agencies in Italy, in Greece perhaps, to stop these people coming into the EU in the first place. What action is the NCA taking or what further action could the NCA take to work with partner agencies in those countries?

Keith Bristow: Part of our overall strategy in the formation of the Border Policing Command was that, from point of entry, through transit, through to source country, we try to push the challenge away from the shores of the UK. We did inherit a very able and mature international liaison officer network from SOCA. I believe we have built on that legacy. We have grown it. We have developed it. We are challenging more areas of criminality now than we were, and quite often where it is appropriate the work that we are doing in regions, alongside other law enforcement partners, is having a big impact. So on modern slavery and people trafficking, for instance, we will often have a regional plan that involves not only host countries but other law enforcement agencies working alongside us, and that is starting to have a real effect.

Q72 Tim Loughton: Okay, can we come on to a completely different subject in which I questioned the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Home Office, earlier? That was a recent fraud case that came about in December. Judge Wendy Joseph, who instructed the jury to collapse the case, was exceedingly critical of the NCA in the way they pursued that fraud case—quite a big fraud case involving £40 million, 200 bank accounts and several institutions. It was not just criticism of a few procedural errors; it was fundamental incompetence which she was targeting the NCA for. How did that come about and can you assure us that that was a one-off, or what lessons have been learnt from that case?

Keith Bristow: Okay. Since the NCA went live we have made about 4,000 arrests and secured over 400 convictions—that is about the pipeline. It takes a while for people that we are prosecuting to come through the system. I read the criticism. We, with the CPS, have initiated a review. We are proud of our 92% conviction rate, many of which are guilty pleas. It is very clear that that trial did not go well and there are very real lessons for us to learn. Some of that is on an individual level. There are often issues about systems and how evidence is presented that manifested in this particular case and those improvements will be made. There were some very real lessons from that case.

Q73 Tim Loughton: What do you think the real lessons were? What actually went so badly wrong in that case?

Keith Bristow: My sense is that some of the officers may not have had the support and guidance that they perhaps should have done for such a complex investigation. What I would say is, for the organised crime group involved this is not the end. We are continuing to investigate them and will continue to seek out opportunities to disrupt them.

Q74 Tim Loughton: That raises the whole point of the competence of the economic crime section within the NCA, and that is one of the four command pillars of the NCA, and obviously dealing very

often with very complex, specialist forms of crime. Are you happy that you have the expertise within that command to be able to deal with similar complex cases in the future?

Keith Bristow: What is absolutely legitimate is to raise this particular case. I think it would be wrong to assume that that is the standard of investigation and prosecution that we are pursuing across the piece, because we are not. We have competent, able investigators. It is fair to say that we did not inherit an enormous amount of economic crime capability from any of the organisations that we brought together to create the NCA, so we are learning and we need to learn quickly because some of the crime that we are targeting has not been targeted in this way before. Some of the work on corruption and bribery presents very real challenges for us. Economic crime is a complex landscape—lots of agencies, lots of niche types of criminality—but we have able investigators. There are lessons to learn from that investigation. They will be learnt and they will be implemented.

Q75 Tim Loughton: Finally, are you implying that you are playing catch-up in economic crime command, compared to, say, something like CEOP that came in, obviously with a great deal of expertise? Already they are a finished product in many respects, and you have had to go out and recruit more people who are still finding their feet. Could that explain some of the problems that we have seen in that trial, and perhaps the others as well?

Keith Bristow: We have had some fantastic success around economic crime and I know of more that will come and that you will see. But I do not think I can be more candid than I have been, so from SOCA, for instance, we inherited great capabilities overseas from CEOP—very able people—around child exploitation. But whether it is on the National Cyber Crime Units or it is on economic crime or in border policing, the very reason the NCA was created was to stiffen up the response to this type of criminality, and that means we are having to build capability. That is different, though, from saying that we are not capable of doing our job. We are absolutely capable, but we are going to get better and build greater capability.

Q76 Nicola Blackwood: My quick supplementary question was purely to ask, what are you doing to build up that capability? Are you partnering with economic specialists in the same way that you do with cybercrime and in other areas, in the private sector for example? Economic crime is a very technical field. I am just wondering what the nature of your economic crime unit is because I am not aware of that.

Keith Bristow: The first thing we have done is to recruit a director who knows exactly what he is doing, Donald Toon, who was director of criminal investigations in HMRC for some years, is now director of economic crime. This is a person who has the right background for what we need. He is focusing the command in on its co-ordination responsibilities with the police, SFO, HMRC, others, and being very clear about the niche capabilities that we bring to support the overall effort. Some of the high-end capabilities we have as an agency are lawful interception of communications, as an example, our overseas reach. We bring that to bear on economic crime, the same as we do on other types of criminality. Where we are investing heavily at the moment is on our money laundering capabilities, our ability to follow the financial trail, not just for us at recovery but to disrupt criminality as well. We are also in the process in line with the anti-corruption plan, bringing together a national unit that will focus on corruption and bribery, by bringing together specialists from the Met, the City of London Police and our own existing capabilities. We are going through a process of building those specialisms.

Q77 Nicola Blackwood: How many individuals would you say you have under your command in the economic crime unit and then how many can you bring to bear on a case from all those other locations we have just mentioned—the SFO, HMRC or wherever? If you were talking about a big trial, a complicated trial such as this, who can you leverage in but also who do you have under area command when you have a number of complex trials going?

Keith Bristow: The operating model for the NCA is we keep the commands as lean as we can and they only hold the specialist capabilities they need for that particular threat. The vast majority of our work force and capabilities sit in the intelligence and operations directorate. We are now targeting broader crime types with the resources we inherited in this way. Those officers and those capabilities we then decide through tasking with our partners where we need to target them and on which type of criminality. If we are pursuing a complex corruption case, for instance, we would then task our offices in the intelligence and operations directorate to support their specialist colleagues in economic crime command to assist them with that particular operation; that is how we build a flexible agency.

Q78 Michael Ellis: Mr Bristow, your organisation is too bureaucratic, is it not? The taxpayer is putting a great deal of money into the very important work the National Crime Agency does, but how many tiers of management and commands do you have? How many of your resources are deployed on pushing paper around? What can you say to this Committee to reassure us that the work of your very important organisation is directed where it should be—at finding these evil people who are engaging in these criminal activities?

Keith Bristow: Our priorities, as set by the Home Secretary, are very clear. This is an operational crime-fighting agency; that is why 85% of our officers are in operational roles. We did inherit, in my view, a top-heavy management structure—not too many layers but too many people in the upper layers.

Q79 Michael Ellis: What have you done about that?

Keith Bristow: We have had about 250 people, mostly senior managers, leave through early voluntary exits since we started and we have got another 167 leaving before the end of March. What we are doing with the funds that we are releasing—and we have savings to make—is recruiting people lower down the organisation as operational crime fighters to reshape and rebalance the organisation.

Q80 Michael Ellis: Just by those numbers alone, 250 managers and another 167 leaving, how many people were those managers managing? How many, on average, people were there under one particular manager—5, 10?

Keith Bristow: There is a challenge we have in terms of how we shape our work force. If you can bear with me, let me give you an example. Let us go back to a conversation we had earlier about civil recovery. We need more lawyers who are expert in civil recovery than a police force would need because that is not what a police force does. If one wants to recruit lawyers, you cannot recruit them where you have one set of management grades at the lowest grade because you do not pay enough. What has happened historically is that people have been recruited further up the management grade, so it looks like one has an awful lot of lawyers who are managers when it is about paying the going rate to attract lawyers. One of the things that we are having to do is differentiate more clearly between professional and technical pay and managerial pay. In some

cases, we have had people on quite a senior management grade who are not managing many people at all; that is the way that we attract and retain those specialists because we do not have separate pay structures.

Q81 Michael Ellis: You accept that you have had people on presumably very high salaries in management grades who are there because you feel you need people who will only accept salaries of those sort of numbers.

Keith Bristow: If I pursue the same example, we are not going to recruit a lawyer who is expert in what we need at £20,000 a year. We have had people who have, in effect, been on a management grade because, because of their technical expertise, we need to attract and retain them.

Q82 Michael Ellis: As far as the taxpayer is concerned, they would want us to seek reassurances from you. With respect, we cannot just take your word for it. Why is it that you are satisfied that you are able to lose hundreds of managers and still do the job that you can do and not in fact lose more managers? Convince us that you should not be losing another 30 or 40 managers, as opposed to the 167 you are losing now.

Keith Bristow: I am sorry; I agree with you. I will convince you that I am going to reshape this organisation to deliver as much operational effect as possible. We have lost two directors. We have downsized the board. What one needs at the beginning of an organisation is quite different from what one needs as the organisation starts to mature. In my judgment, we will have a clearer set of arrangements for technical grades. We will have a clearer set of arrangements for management grades and the structure around management grades will be sensible ratios and spans of control for those managers. I am not in the business of wasting public money.

Q83 Michael Ellis: Good, thank you. It is judges who make the confiscation orders, is it not? Do you have any problem, or do we have any problem, persuading judges? I put this to the Minister—is it an issue where the judges are not making these confiscation orders or is it some other type of problem? Have you experienced cases where, despite the prosecution asking the judge to make a confiscation order, he or she has said, “There are no assets that I can see here, so I am not making a confiscation order because it would be a waste of time”? Are you getting that type of problem?

Keith Bristow: That is very much Mr Loughton’s point earlier. There may be cases where there have been isolated incidents but, for the most part, if we set out the evidence—and most confiscation orders are secured by the police, not the NCA; we are targeting a small cohort of criminals—if we make out the case we find the courts are sympathetic and supportive of giving us the opportunity to take assets.

Michael Ellis: If you make out the case, which is how it should be.

Keith Bristow: Yes, which is our responsibility.

Q84 Michael Ellis: It is up to you, the NCA, to recover assets, perhaps through third parties like the CPS if necessary, where there is an order. You mentioned to the Chairman, I believe, a couple of examples of cases where an order has been made for the confiscation of criminal assets. Presumably the criminal in question has not had assets to recover and then at a later date he or she will have

assets to recover and there are a certain number of orders totalling tens of millions of pounds that you said fall into the category, old cases, whereas nowadays the person has assets to recover. It is up to you to go back and recover those assets, is it not?

Keith Bristow: The responsibility to enforce the order falls to the court and CPS, not to the NCA. We are part of the dedicated asset recovery team that we have set up with our partners because our focus is on disruption of criminality and enforcing the order delivers disruption, so we think we have a stake in this but it is not our responsibility to enforce the order.

Q85 Michael Ellis: Do you make any effort to tell the courts service that it is our understanding that this person now has assets that they did not have five years ago and it is time that you go and recover them?

Keith Bristow: Yes. The people that we are most interested in, we expose to what we call lifetime management. Once they are on our radar, whether they are in prison or they are at liberty, and where we have an order such as a confiscation order in place that provides us with opportunities, we manage them non-stop.

Q86 Michael Ellis: Right. I notice something else you said about the layers of appeals that certain individuals are going through, but is it not up to you to make representations to Government to say there are too many avenues of appeal here? This is something we were experiencing within the immigration arena. At one point before this Government there were 17 tiers of appeal and they have now been cut down significantly. No doubt if you—with the respect that you bring and the office that you hold—make representations to Government and say, “There ought not to be this many appeal processes,” because it is no good complaining about someone who is using the law, you would be heard. It is up to you to persuade Government to change the law if you do not think there ought to be that many appeal processes, is that not right?

Keith Bristow: On civil recovery we should remember that, in effect, we are going through a civil process, not necessarily legislation and courts that are specifically around asset confiscation. We consistently set out to Ministers and Ministers are supportive of some of the challenges that we face but also some of the risks that we carry. We will have actions taken against us for tens of millions, if not hundreds of millions of pounds where individuals will claim they have lost opportunities to invest or we have disrupted their business. But the reality is, if they are criminals we need to be brave and relentless in going after them, but this is often quite a risky process.

Q87 Michael Ellis: My final question is this. Just at the end of last year—I think in December of last year—the Prime Minister announced that there is going to be a joint unit between the National Crime Agency and GCHQ to tackle the worst forms of child abuse online. Have you set this up? When is it going to be set up, if it is not already? How is it going to address the challenges of analysing imagery hidden on the dark web? One of the reasons why it has sometimes been considered historically difficult for agencies to work with security services is because of the requirements of the courts for full disclosure. Do you anticipate problems working with GCHQ in the requirement of those seeking to defend themselves that they have full disclosure about GCHQ tactics, which would not be in the public interest to disclose?

Keith Bristow: In the spirit of what you have just said, Mr Ellis, I am going to sound a bit of a caveat before I answer your question. This is being broadcast. I have absolutely no doubt that

people that we are interested in who would exploit children are listening to this broadcast and if I say too much, if they are not listening now, it will be out through their networks.

Michael Ellis: We certainly do not want you to do that.

Keith Bristow: I know you don't want that. I am happy, if I can, to give more detail privately but I will seek to answer your question as much as I can. We have very good relationships with the agencies, all of them. GCHQ are being particularly helpful in our joint efforts to target those with a sexual interest in children. Without wanting to go too far, part of where the unit will start is, how do we get the full intelligence dividend out of seized media? Let me give you an example: during Operation Notarise we seized nearly 10,000 digital devices. You can imagine the amount of analysis that is required, not only to secure the evidence but also so that we act appropriately around disclosure of any information that is relevant to the defence.

Michael Ellis: It is huge.

Keith Bristow: It is huge. GCHQ are absolutely expert in their ability at getting the value out of bulk data. One of the places that we are going to start is, how do we get the intelligence dividend out of the media that we have already seized? That is an example.

Michael Ellis: So they can help you with analysis, how best to manage it.

Keith Bristow: Yes. I have discussed this with the Committee on a number of occasions. One of the challenges that we, as a society, face—and the NCA and law enforcement are right in the centre of this—is the real risk to children in terms of image offending, the risk is hidden in volume. Getting through the volume to the risk and targeting the risk quickly, there is no zero-risk option. We have to continue developing a methodology to get that risk quickly and manage it.

Michael Ellis: Thank you. I appreciate that and I appreciate that it is sometimes a needle in a haystack with the vast volumes that you are dealing with. I wanted to thank you for the work that you and your personnel are doing.

Keith Bristow: Thank you.

Q88 Chair: Thank you, Mr Ellis. Just in respect of one of the points raised by Mr Ellis, when you took over in the Serious Organised Crime Agency, they had staffing of 3,990, according to our last report. You have started 2014-15 with 4,041 members of staff. In answer to Mr Ellis you seem to imply that 417 have gone, so you have lost 10% of your staff.

Keith Bristow: No, Chair, what you have said is reasonable but what we then do is recruit officers lower down the organisation that give us the capabilities we need.

Chair: Right; so you have not lost 440.

Keith Bristow: No, we currently have 4,569 officers, so even though our budget has reduced—

Chair: You have more.

Keith Bristow: We are managing to grow the work force by reshaping it with less senior people and more people go and put hands on criminals.

Chair: It has gone up from 4,041 to 4,500.

Keith Bristow: That includes part-time workers, the full-time equivalent is 4,267, so we are managing to grow the organisation by reshaping.

Q89 Chair: How many in your organisation formally work for SOCA?

Keith Bristow: I would need to come back to you on that.

Chair: Would you? Thank you.

Keith Bristow: May I make a more general point about work force size?

Chair: Yes, of course.

Keith Bristow: It is a challenge for the police but it is particularly for the NCA. I know you know this but it is worth saying again, in the kind of criminality that we are tackling and the capabilities we need we have to stop trying to judge the value of an organisation by how many people work for it. It is an entirely legitimate question, but part of the rebalancing we are going to need to do is to invest in our digital and technical capabilities—going back to Mr Ellis’s questions earlier—and that is not necessarily about more and more people. It is often about better qualified and able people who are able to operate in a digital environment and get the benefit from the technology. There is a reshaping, Chairman, that we are going through and I very much want us to be judged by what we deliver for the public.

Chair: That is very helpful; thank you.

Q90 Nicola Blackwood: I just wanted to come back on a comment that you made to Mr Ellis, that you are in the business of disrupting serious organised crime. Obviously I am an Oxford MP. We had a very serious child sexual exploitation case, Bullfinch, and one of the most useful tools that they have had are abduction notices. Also, the Government have recently passed a number of new prevention orders, the sexual risk orders, the trafficking orders, they have changed the thresholds for gang injunctions. Talking to some police officers, they have been trying to understand how this new architecture will all work together to make sure that this leads into prosecutions, rather than deal with it as just being ends in themselves. I am just wondering what your comment is on that, and how you think the Government can most effectively put forward guidelines to help officers on the ground to effectively disrupt child sexual exploitation but also bring forward more prosecutions in what is a very difficult field to investigate and prosecute.

Keith Bristow: Child sexual exploitation, the way that you describe, is often a local problem requiring a local intervention. Quite often that means that we have specialists within police forces and other agencies working alongside generalists. One of the challenges that we always have with generalists, whether constables or police staff delivering these important interventions, is helping them understand and know what they need to know to do the job on the ground at that time, across a whole broad range of issues. I know that Ministers know that and I know officials are working hard at making sure that sort of guidance is available to help officers make those particular judgments. But much of that is a policy issue, rather than an operational issue, but they are minded to make sure that guidance is available.

Q91 Dr Huppert: First, I want to pick up on something we have discussed a number of times before, Project Spade and then the failures with Myles Bradbury in my constituency and elsewhere. I do not want to go through the whole history of it. I spoke to the Home Secretary afterwards, when she said that one of the changes that was being made was that rather than just looking at the level of how many images, the individuals who had been accessing them and their risk—in this case a paediatric oncologist and in another case a deputy headmaster—would also be looked at in all cases. Is that now right? Is that now happening in every single instance where there is child abuse imagery?

Keith Bristow: Again, if I can put a caveat on what I am going to say, you know, Dr Huppert, that we and others are subject to an IPCC investigation.

Dr Huppert: Yes.

Keith Bristow: I do not want to say anything that will make their job impossible but I will answer as best as I can. The first thing that happens when we receive a referral, which is often data accompanied by an image, is we assess that immediately to see whether, based on what is in front of us, there is an immediate risk to a child or young person of harm. If there is, we then prioritise the process of trying to turn that data into a location and a person, actionable intelligence. If that is not the case—there is not an immediacy—we then need to work very hard to identify who the individual is for exactly the purpose that you have just said, because we are prioritising and looking at the individual and their access to children, rather than the harm demonstrated in the images.

They are both relevant but the hard lessons that we have all learnt, even more so for victims, is that where we have to start is, who is the person accessing the images because there is a link between images, which is an abuse in itself, and contact abuse? I know you know that from constituents and elsewhere. That has happened but I would not want to oversimplify it or give you a level of reassurance that was unrealistic. This is difficult work and quite often turning partial data into a location or an individual for us to assess is impossible.

Q92 Dr Huppert: I do appreciate the challenges and I am glad that the lessons have been learnt but it was not even attempted, as I understand it, on the previous Project Spade data. May I move on to broader issues about cyber criminality? I put this to the Minister earlier. How well do you think we are doing in tackling cyber criminality in its broader senses? Are we just nibbling at the edges? Are we making a profound difference?

Keith Bristow: We have a way to go. If Mr Loughton's question about economic crime had been about cyber and I think he said something like, "So we're trying to catch up," that is true of cyber. We are narrowing the gap between the ability of the criminal and the ability of law enforcement. I can point to some fantastic examples where we have disrupted the most serious type of cyber criminality, which is virtually always overseas and highly complex and not just targeting the UK. But it is fair to say that we are not going to make the progress that we need to make until we shake off the misplaced belief that cybercrime is niche. The reality is, if you look at the bulk of criminality that the police and others deal with and we have a role in, much of it now is cyber-enabled—so fraud, child sexual exploitation, blackmail. Many of those now are cyber-enabled and even if in cyber-enabled people have a digital footprint in the way that they lead their lives. Trying to prove that someone was in a particular location, booked a hotel, communicated with someone is all about digital capabilities. It goes back to the point I made to the Chairman earlier, that certainly for the NCA we need to judge the agency by our capabilities and the effect that we

have on criminality for the public, rather than the number of people that work for us because that will hold us back if we do that.

We need different partnerships with industry. We need better capabilities. We need to focus on how we find the risk in the volume. Some of the uncomfortable contemporary law enforcement responses, which are often criticised like action fraud, are a reality of a changing type of crime. There was a time, during my career, where crime in a particular town was usually perpetrated by somebody from that town and fraud was a face-to-face type of criminality. That simply is not the case now and whether it is Brisbane or it is Bournemouth the reality is the thing that we share is language, which means there are new criminal markets, prosperity, access to the internet, which means we are right for targeting by criminals often from abroad who seek to exploit citizens in those countries. It means a different way of thinking and working.

Q93 Dr Huppert: That is very helpful. How do you think you are doing getting it taken out of that niche? Do you think police forces in general around the country appreciate that yet?

Keith Bristow: Yes, I think so, in general. Giving effect to that belief is more challenging. My assessment would be at the national level—not just the NCA but our partners as well—we are making very good progress. The director of the FBI, who I have a good personal relationship with—and our agencies work well together on cyber—his and their view is there is no better operational partner in cyberspace than the NCA. We work very, very well together. The regional capabilities are developing quickly and are starting to have an effect but there are real challenges at the local level to balance all that we were talking about. Ms Blackwood was talking earlier about child sexual exploitation within communities, contact abuse. Right the way through to fraud and cyber-enabled, I think there are real challenges about rebalancing.

Q94 Dr Huppert: You were talking about hiring more staff at a more junior level who are actually engaged. I suspect that there is a shortage of police staff—people in this space who are very familiar with the cyber world. Are you able to recruit all the people that you need there?

Keith Bristow: Let me share with you a little bit of learning for me. Since I first came to this job in 2011, I have underestimated how much we need traditional investigators working alongside cyber experts, because cyber experts understand the technical route through which we do things but until we can train them as high-level investigators, they need an investigator sat alongside them who knows the rules of evidence, how to arrest offenders, how to bring people to justice. There is a balance in how we develop our work force and go forward. We are taking an innovative approach to this.

We have apprentices now joining us through a joint apprenticeship scheme with GCHQ. We have cyber specials that we are growing very, very quickly. The sort of people that we are recruiting now, those that are replacing managers that have left, might not be people who would want to pursue a career in policing; they might have thought about all sorts of other options elsewhere, but we offer a niche career for them working in that digital space. It is challenging often around what we pay. It is challenging to retain people but we have to focus on what it is that we are doing for the public and the importance of that. May I make a more general point, Chairman?

Chair: Only if it is very brief.

Keith Bristow: I will be very quick. In terms of the future of policing, coming back to your original point, I do think, particularly if driven by austerity, we need to think more clearly about what

local police forces do, what regions do, what national agencies do. The capabilities should then follow those responsibilities, as should the funding. It needs a more rational model than we have at the moment because at the moment everyone is trying to do lots of things and I am not sure that it is wholly rational nor affordable in the future. Some of our digital capability, as an example, there is no point in the NCA doing things that every local police force can do, that does not seem rational to me. Distributing the capabilities more sensibly around the responsibilities so the whole system can have a greater effect, even though it seems to me money is going to come out of the system, is a real challenge for policing and the NCA.

Chair: Thank you. Mr Bristow, this is probably the last time you are going to appear before the Committee before dissolution. We want to thank you for all the work that you and your team have done. It has been a difficult start for you because you are starting a new organisation. As you have said in our last report, you have been very open and transparent with the Committee but Parliament will continue to ask these questions to get value for money and we need those answers, such as the answers you have given today. I hope very much that you will continue to work with our successive Committee and give us the answers that you have done in the past in a very clear and open way, which is quite different from your predecessor and your predecessor's committee. Thank you very much.

Keith Bristow: Thank you for your support, Chairman, and for the Committee. We have made a very good start. There have been some challenges but we are doing things now for the public that were not possible before and the public are safer as a result. Thank you for your support.

Chair: Excellent. Thank you very much.