

Home Affairs Committee

Oral evidence: [Policing for the future](#), HC 515

Tuesday 1 May 2018

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[Watch the meeting](#)

Members present: Yvette Cooper (Chair); Rehman Chishti; Stephen Doughty; Kirstene Hair; Sarah Jones; Tim Loughton; Stuart C. McDonald; Douglas Ross; Naz Shah.

Questions 384–443

Witnesses

I: Dame Vera Baird DBE QC, Lead for Victims, Association of Police and Crime Commissioners; Chief Inspector Michael Brown OBE, Mental Health Co-ordinator, National Police Chiefs' Council; Sophie Corlett, Director of External Relationships, Mind; and Chief Constable Mike Veale, Chief Constable, Cleveland Police, and NPCC Lead for Missing Persons.

II: Chief Superintendent Jeff Boothe, Commander, South Area Basic Command, Metropolitan Police; Alison Hernandez, Police and Crime Commissioner, Devon and Cornwall, and Deputy APCC Lead for Local Partnerships and Policing; Andy Higgins, Research Director, Police Foundation; and Garry Shewan, Former Assistant Chief Constable, Greater Manchester Police.

Written evidence from witnesses:

- [Association of Police and Crime Commissioners](#)
- [Metropolitan Police](#)
- [Greater Manchester Police](#)

Examination of witnesses

Witnesses: Dame Vera Baird, Michael Brown, Sophie Corlett and Mike Veale.

Q384 **Chair:** I welcome today's panel to our inquiry session on the future of policing and the future challenges that police face. The subject for the first panel is vulnerability. We are very grateful to our panel and apologise for the delay in starting the evidence session.

Could you each introduce yourselves, and respond to this first question? We heard from the Chief Constable of West Yorkshire Police that 83% of that force's time delivering services was now spent on services that were not about crime and were predominantly about vulnerability instead. Could you say whether that is your sense of the challenges facing policing, and how and why you think that has increased over the last few years?

Dame Vera Baird: I am Vera Baird. I am the police and crime commissioner for Northumbria. At the Association of Police and Crime Commissioners, I have portfolio responsibility for supporting victims and reducing harm.

I think the nearest statistic I have to that is that about 22% of calls to my own force, Northumbria Police, are about crime and all the rest are mainly about individuals who are causing concern, who look as if they need looking after or need some kind of intervention, but aren't engaged in crime. There must be a number of reasons why that has increased.

There is the whole issue around mental health and the increased visibility of mental health, which is excellent. Awareness of mental health has developed as there have been great campaigns, by people like Mind, who are here with us today, but also various personalities being ready to speak out about their own mental health difficulties, which has perhaps taken a lid off. In a slightly analogous way to the way that the celebrity cases helped to take the lid off people complaining about sexual abuse, people now feel a little bit freer and people have a broader understanding that it is more endemic than we thought.

The difficulty is that there isn't an obvious place to go if you, as a member of the public, see somebody behaving in an odd way, which might trigger your concerns that they have mental health issues, and they tend to go to the police. The crisis counselling that could be available is obviously not an emergency service that everybody is aware of or has access to, so they go to the police and that takes a good deal of police time.

There are developments that I am sure folk will talk about when we have all answered this question—hopefully slightly more briefly than I am doing—about what we have done about it, such as street triage and a number of good things. Certainly, the awareness and the increased understanding that more people are mentally ill has brought more of that to the attention of the police.



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There is an increase in missing persons and probably repeat missing persons, often young people, who repeatedly leave where they should be and don't go back at the right time and are in interesting places. That presents a problem for the police about how to deal with it—they have a fairly reasonable suspicion about where the person is likely to be and that they are not in a great level of concern, but it is a very hard decision to take to treat that in any other way than to trigger all of the bells and whistles that go with a missing person inquiry. I was talking to Mr Veale about this outside. Although "Vera" might be at Hippy Green 50 times—that is where the kids go in Newcastle if they run away—what about the 51st time? Is she definitely going to be there and dare you stop doing the whole thing and risk assessing properly? Again, there is an increase in that, which is taking time.

There are then all the developments in the care that needs to be given to vulnerability. The emergence of better reporting of sexual exploitation, slavery, trafficking, domestic abuse, rape, have all brought a rod to the police's own back, in the sense that they have gone out of their way to try to make themselves more sympathetic and to engage in particular with third-sector organisations, which are an easier route for a person to talk to, and can then bring people on to the police. There is a lot to be said about how that has generated an enormous amount of demand.

I think you had a statistic a while ago—it was probably from the Chief Constable of Norfolk—that showed that child sexual exploitation complaints tripled in the two years before 2016-17. Of course, there is always this tension between real crime and recorded crime. Actually, it is recorded crime that matters for this purpose, in the sense that that is what the police have to deal with. If you look at the CSEW and what it says is happening in terms of sex offences and vulnerability, and if you draw some connotations between that and reporting, we think we now have a report-to-crime ratio of about 40%. It was about 5% six years ago. The CSEW shows how many people are suffering the crime. If you narrow that down to how many of those people are likely to be in Northumbria and then look at the same figures over the preceding years and see how many of them reported it, that number has gone up exponentially.

It may be that there is more sexual exploitation, more trafficking and more slavery, but there certainly is significantly more being done about what comes to the attention of the police and a much higher charging rate. All those things are very beneficial to the public, but they are hard work for a police service that has had draconian funding cuts, as have the partners that it works with to try to prevent this and to deal with it when it occurs.

Michael Brown: Good afternoon. I am the mental health co-ordinator for the National Police Chiefs' Council and the College of Policing. I would certainly agree that the majority of police work is not connected to what we would traditionally regard as recorded crime. Most of my 20 years in the police service has been spent in operational frontline roles—24/7 roles—and the vast majority of what we spent our time managing was

vulnerability, mental health, missing children, CSE and other concerns for welfare from accident and emergency departments, social services and so on.

My particular field is mental health in policing, and we have seen in the last roughly 10 years that all the indices on mental health seem to be indicating that the demand on the police service is rising. For example, in the past 10 years, the use of section 136 of the Mental Health Act, which is the primary police power to safeguard people at immediate risk, has gone up by approximately 10,000 detentions per year to roughly 30,000. Some of that is a good news story, in the sense that there was a point where two thirds of all people detained under this power would go into police custody but now less than 3% of them do, but I never waste a chance to point out that it is often more resource intensive for the police for someone not to go into custody.

It actually costs more in officer hours to work with the NHS by taking people to healthcare settings than it does to put someone in custody. If you have a health-based place of safety process in an area where the NHS do not staff the safe room in the healthcare setting where the police take people, two officers frequently remain there for six or seven hours or more—for the whole period of time that it takes to arrange an assessment. If the person needs an in-patient bed, which may not be available for hours or indeed days, the officers may have to remain there for that period, too.

There are lots of other indices that suggest the demand on policing connected to mental health is going up, but I certainly agree with the principle that most of what we do is not connected to traditional ideas of crime. We are spending a lot of hours—an increasing number of hours—managing vulnerability.

Sophie Corlett: I am Sophie Corlett, director of external relations at Mind, so I can speak just to the mental health areas. Our understanding is that the amount of time that the police spend on work related to mental health has increased. Because that—mental health generally, as opposed to 136s—has not always been recorded, there are reporting difficulties. Recent FOIs have asked people to judge how many of the cases they have dealt with have had a mental health element. Does that mean cases where someone has dealt with a crime where there was a mental health element, or purely mental health cases? The numbers are not necessarily comparable either across time or across forces, but it does seem that there has been an increase.

If we are talking about the number of 136s, which is where the police are involved in initially detaining somebody, we have also seen an increase in the number of compulsory admissions to hospital. We are seeing more people going into the mental health system in crisis, and police are often part of the initial process of that through 136, so we would expect to see some increase. There is a bigger issue, from the point of view of mental health, about the number of people who are reaching crisis and needing to be forcibly detained in some way. For us, that is a bigger issue, in terms of



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people reaching a crisis that maybe they didn't need to reach, being detained to receive treatment that potentially at an earlier stage they might have received in a voluntary capacity. Additionally, they may be coming into contact with police during that process. We know that people from BME communities, in particular African Caribbean people, are more likely to take that route into detained services through a police route of some sort.

There are a number of issues around the police involvement in working with mental health. That is outside other issues around vulnerability. We know that people with mental health problems are much more likely to be victims of crime and might therefore need more support as a victim. So there are other issues that vulnerability brings with it, even when you are talking about the crime element of policing responsibilities.

Mike Veale: I am Mike Veale, chief constable, national policing lead for missing children and adults. In July, I am moving towards my 35th year in policing, over half of that at an operational level. I feel as though I can say with some authenticity that the demands on policing are more challenging now than I have ever experienced in that time. The increase in demands around social media, cyber-crime, the inspection regime is now more intrusive than ever before. The media are more intrusive than ever before. The public expectation is higher now than ever before. Legislation, policy, process, procedure is more complex and challenging than I have ever experienced. Terrorism and the threat of terrorism is more real now than I have known in 35 years.

As trust and confidence grows within policing and the public services, that increases the demand, as has already been described. Mental health, missing people, cyber-crime, as already discussed, forced marriages, gangs, serious and organised crime and people engaged in that form of criminality are more sophisticated and sinister than they ever have been before.

The demands of policing are growing at a time when obviously, as you would expect me to signpost, the resources and budgets are decreasing. The gap between the demand and resources is a challenge for all chiefs across the country and from a wider public service perspective.

In my portfolio, obviously, I have seen significant increases in the demands around missing people. We have over a quarter of a million incidents a year of missing children and adults. Every single time that someone goes missing, whether a child or adult, that creates a huge burden on policing. Our response is more sophisticated and more professional, more coherent and consistent than it ever has been, but it is a huge burden, and with mental health overlaying on top of missing people, I feel those responsibilities are starting to suffocate policing and our ability to respond to the wider demands that I have just described.

Q385 Chair: In terms of the reasons why demands on the police in those areas are increasing, how much of that is because there are changing expectations for tackling modern slavery, which wasn't really taken



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seriously enough may be 10 or 20 years ago, and how much of that is about the problems having increased—so perhaps mental health increasing as a problem to deal with?

Mike Veale: We are more aware of criminality because people are now more confident to come forward. I would say that there is almost a subliminal increase in demands placed on police officers across the country, because as social care declines, as some of the healthcare provision declines, as some of the mental health provision declines, the police service that was the last resort is now becoming the first resort.

Our officers and staff who work tirelessly are now spending many, many hours filling the gaps that other public services are leaving. That is not suggesting that they are not hugely professional in other services or agencies. From my experience, they have the same DNA as police officers—vocational people, talented professionals who want to do a good job—but the capacity and capability around mental health, social care and health services has reduced. We are therefore spending many hours looking after missing children and dealing with mental health and people who are the most vulnerable in society. Those are the demands over and above the ones that I have previously spoken about.

Q386 **Kirstene Hair:** What reforms do you believe would do most to improve the ability of police and other agencies to provide the most timely and appropriate support to individuals with mental health problems?

Michael Brown: It depends whether you think the problem is improving the police response or preventing the need for a police response in the first place. If you look at the major inquiries that have taken place in the last decade, including an inquiry by this Committee in the last Parliament, many of the recommendations that are made in these national reports are not just about the police service. In fact, some of them are not at all about the police service. They are about healthcare provision, prevention and upstream intervention. Where the police are named in the recommendations, you frequently find that that is about improving partnerships with the police service. A lot of the issues that appear to be relevant, according to the chairs of the inquiries, are issues that are slightly outside the control of the police.

The typical responses that we have seen to the inquiries tend to be that we improve training for police officers, which clearly the College of Policing have done—and it could be improved further, should there be an appetite for that. We also see an encouragement for initiatives such as Dame Vera has mentioned—street triage, as well as liaison and diversion services in police custody. They tend to be the two brands, if you like, of solution to the problem around the policing of mental health. What you probably notice is that neither of them, at the core, really addresses the issue of why the police service became involved with the vulnerable person in the first place.

What we know about people who go through police custody and people who contact street triage and people detained under 136 is that a good



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proportion of them, if not a clear majority of them, are patients who are currently known to their local mental health trust as having existing mental health problems. At some times, for the courts and the police service, or the ambulance service for that matter, to become involved is something that has been requested by the health service because of the lack of capability and capacity that they have in crisis teams or community teams to provide someone with a response.

For example, I would say, having shadowed street triage around the country in various forces probably about a dozen times, the majority of the things that I have seen didn't require the police service. They required access to a timely, relevant healthcare service that simply wasn't available. The police were called as a stop-in, and we have now put the nurse into the police car, to help the police improve that response. Ideally we would prefer to prevent the police response in the first place, and let people have access to healthcare.

Sophie Corlett: I would absolutely echo that.

Dame Vera Baird: It seems to me inevitable that from time to time there will be a need for a police response to people on the street who have not taken their tablets and have gone into a florid episode, or something of that kind. It is very important that the police know a little bit about mental health—know where to resort to. I do wonder if it isn't a significant point that people ring the police because they don't know where else to call. Isn't there another way of thinking about how you should deal with somebody who is plainly—it may be obvious—suffering from a mental health crisis and doing things that might be harmful to themselves?

The police are an odd choice in a number of ways for that, but they are currently the choice, and I don't have a suggestion about how else it could be done, unless some urgent crisis counselling became part of what was supplied when you call for ambulance assistance. I really don't know whether that has got any practicality at all.

What is really good is the ambition of the police to deal with that in a way that minimally involves them and their warranted powers and criminal justice powers, and their anxiety to get the people back into a healthcare setting. With street triage, you can call up the community psychiatric nurse, who is in the police station, or in the car—different forces do it differently—and that individual can speak to the officer, speak to the individual on the street themselves, get their medical notes if necessary, and make the difference between the kind of thing that Mr Brown just talked about, where officers would have to take them to the psychiatric hospital to get them assessed by a consultant, who would have to be found to come out, and all of that. Now, you may be able to get an outcome that is, "Okay, I've talked to him. I've talked to his mum. He hasn't taken his pills today. What he needs is to go home quickly. Can you take him home?" That is the end of something that might otherwise have turned into a 20-hour piece of work for a police officer.



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Although it is good if all contact between mental health sufferers and the police can be ended, if it can't—and I think sometimes it probably can't—the police are doing extremely well to get it back on track to where it belongs in the health system.

Q387 Kirstene Hair: You said you have been out over a dozen times with street triage teams. Do you think that the level of training is sufficient? What has been done to improve the consistency and quality throughout the force?

Michael Brown: Do you mean training for the officers or for the nurses?

Kirstene Hair: For the officers.

Michael Brown: Forces vary in how they have taken College of Policing training standards forward. In 2016, the College of Policing suggested all officers should have a two-day training package. There was an option for a third day if chief constables had officers working permanently in the mental health arena who needed a bit of extra training. In its recent round of PEEL inspections, HMIC is looking at whether forces are going for the full two-day thing or whether they have abbreviated it, because it is not a mandatory package—unfortunately in my opinion—and chiefs have got their own histories in terms of how much work they have already done. There is a mixed picture across the country as to how much training is given.

That said, there are some forces—Dame Vera's is one of them—doing excellent work in addition to the basic college requirement. In the north-east of England, they have an initiative called Respond training, which is a collaboration between the mental health system and the police primarily, but it is attended by local authority AMHPs, ambulance crews, doctors and local psychiatrists. Crucially, service users and patients attend the training, believe it or not. It puts people into simulated exercises as to how they would deal with a crisis incident by imagining themselves in each of those roles. It's wonderful stuff and that is above and beyond, so forces are in a very different place.

The reason for asking the checking question about training for nurses—psychiatric nurses typically are the people who staff up these initiatives in police custody or triage—is because nurses have told me repeatedly that they get remarkably little law training, even on mental health law, in the course of their careers. Some of them are real legal eagles because they have studied it for themselves, but others have got a very limited number of days of training, and we put them into environments with police officers where we juggle with things such as whether to arrest someone for a crime or whether to detain under the Mental Health Act. Does the Mental Capacity Act apply in this situation? Which one should I choose if all of them apply? That can be quite complex stuff, so with street triage, where you have people hand in glove with each other, there needs to be multi-entity training, and the nurses need that as much as the officers do. I have heard nurses say that.



Q388 Kirstene Hair: On the point about officers, you would suggest that the basic mandatory training does not go far enough and in fact there should be more involvement in that. Some forces, as you say, have decided to go further.

Michael Brown: I would say that the two-day minimum recommended by the college is the absolute minimum. I know some forces have chosen to say they cannot afford two days of training time and they have truncated that into one day.

Sophie Corlett: I think it is important to make sure that people do the full training. I think the joint training is really powerful.

One of the other things that is recommended, which some forces are doing, but not all, is bringing people who have mental health problems in to present and deliver the training. Training has helped people understand mental health in a much broader and much more real way, and it removes some of the myths. It helps people to think a little more clearly about what sort of symptoms somebody might have and whether that is to do with drugs or alcohol or a mental health problem or a combination of those. Having people there who can talk about it from their own experience of how it feels to be treated in that way is very powerful. The forces that have done that have made a real difference to how they are able to work with people with mental health problems.

If I can go back to your initial question, I think a lot has to be done within health services. People have mentioned that there is not necessarily a number to call. In some areas of the country we have 24/7 lines for people to call if they are in a mental health crisis. In some areas those are not 24/7. In some areas you only have that number if you have been in touch with services before. I heard of one young man who tried to call the number—he had been given the number when he left services—and they said, “No, you aren’t on our books,” because they had not yet had the information that he had been discharged.

We need an open number that everybody could call, preferably 111, because everybody knows that number, and then to be able to get a mental health appropriate response. That is something that many areas are working towards and have as an aspiration, but the funding and arrangements for that have not yet been put in place fully.

The Five Year Forward View, which is the plan for health that we are just about halfway through, does look to introduce 24/7 helplines; liaison services in A&E, which would provide psychiatric services into A&E; and, for many areas, crisis services that are non-medical services where you could be referred by the police or you could self-refer. Providing much more for people in crisis, rather than requiring them to fall back on the police because there is nothing else, is really crucial. The health service has that as an aspiration to move towards, and is moving towards it, but funding it and putting it in place is slow work.



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That takes me to the third thing, after training and the mental health response, which is police and services working together. Everything that Michael has been talking about is about police and services working together. In areas where they have made those developments together, they have moved forwards much faster and further, and have been able to make greater changes.

Taking somebody not to a police cell, but to a health-based place of safety is great, but one of the things, for instance, in London, is that the police are doing a lot of phoning around to find out where the empty space is—the police are doing that labour, not the health services. Making sure that the protocols are really clear, that everybody knows what their responsibilities are, and that everybody is stepping into the roles that they need to play and not leaving a space that the police have to fill are key.

Q389 Kirstene Hair: I want to make one final point. In England and Wales, the Angiolini review has led to some useful reforms and has allowed us to create a better picture of how vulnerable people in police custody are treated. The Scottish Government have so far resisted calls to launch their own review. Do you think it would be useful for them to do so?

Sophie Corlett: We do not work in Scotland, so I could not say.

Michael Brown: Neither does the College of Policing, but I have been there at the request of Police Scotland a couple of times to talk about policing and mental health. Having spoken to frontline officers on things such as social media, the issues in Scotland are no different to the ones in England in the sense of police officers feeling that they are over-relied on and over-exposed to issues around mental health, and sometimes unable to call on services to get access to them. We know that there have been deaths in police custody in Scotland that are not dissimilar to some of the ones in England that have made really high profile news. I would not suggest that there are things in the Angiolini review that Police Scotland could not learn from as well, along with their partner agencies.

Mike Veale: If I could respond in a different way, the biggest question for me is, how do we improve the services to the most vulnerable in society? When I took over as national police lead for missing children and adults, it was a Home Office strategy to deal with missing people. The first conversation I had with Government was about the fact that the Home Office should not be responsible for reducing the episodes of missing people. It should be a cross-Government strategy.

At an operational level, police services, other agencies and local authorities have a pretty good track record of working together, but at the very top of Government, we still have a silo mentality without a cross-Government strategy—and it is being developed. Actually, if we had pooled budgets and pooled resources from the top of an organisation down to operational delivery, that would drive organisations better together. There should be a seamless service, particularly when you are dealing with the most vulnerable in society. Although we have made huge and



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significant steps to improve those relationships and that collaborative approach, there is absolutely more work to do.

Q390 Douglas Ross: Dame Vera, you were speaking about people calling the police because they do not know who else to call, but people also call the police when they have lost their remote control for the television or when their favourite character gets scripted out of their favourite sitcom or something. I know they are a small number, but there is a general misunderstanding of what is an emergency and what is not. I listened to the points that Sophie Corlett was making about some of those helplines, but whose job is it to say that we should not be calling the police for that? Should the police be doing that? Is it a wider societal issue? If there is not a 24/7 111 number somewhere to direct them to at the moment, who should be leading that message? Is it the police or does that then look like the police do not want anything to do with mental health?

Dame Vera Baird: As I recall, when 101 started, it was intended to be a public service call line. It was not intended to be a police-only call line at all. It was intended that all the public authorities that you could think an individual might need would be available through 101, presumably through a "Press button 1", "Press button 2" system. It seemed to me that that was the right model, but somehow along the way, it ceased to be that and became a police one. Now, the police take a responsibility, or at least are starting to, for having exactly that kind of introductory conversation when it is answered. I do not think they are always answered terribly quickly, I have to say, but when it is answered they will now say, "Is it about this? Is it about this? Is it about this? If so, you should be calling this number, this number or this number." I do not think that can be done in a mental health crisis, because you have to be satisfied about who is going to be at the other end, and that their services are available.

The right approach must be, if it is at all possible, for the good partnership work that police, health authorities, local authorities, and the voluntary sector do in reality to also be done in crisis provision of that kind. It is long overdue that we started sharing budgets for all these things. The Labour Government had a policy called "Total Place", which started and did not go far. The Conservative Government took it on; I think it was then called "Whole Place". It has not gone very far.

It is long overdue that the public sector started to work together because, as we are all saying, there is hardly anything that the police do now—except hot pursuit of criminals—that they can do without a partner. They use their partners all the time, and partners use the police all the time. We really need to rethink the way stuff is funded and how it is directed.

Mike Veale: I just want to be clear that if you are feeling vulnerable, if you need protecting, or if you are suffering from harm, then you should contact the police. However, very often when someone makes contact, particularly in connection to mental health, it is an indication that there has already been a system failure. There have already been occasions when other public services should have intervened. There are many opportunities where intervention could have resulted in a different



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conclusion other than ringing 101 or ringing for help from the police service. That is why we need to absolutely work in partnership and collaboration to stop the calls coming in in the first place.

That is a huge challenge. We have gone on a journey over the last 20 or 30 years, when the police service was almost working in isolation. Now we have moved forward and evolved to co-location, so now we are working really collaboratively in partnership with other agencies. For me, the ultimate is to move from isolation, to co-location, to integration, where services—social services, health services and all agencies—are working in a more integrated way to deal with the demand, so that it is a whole-system response to stop the demand coming in in the first place.

Q391 Douglas Ross: Can I follow up on Kirstene Hair's questions about training? How well received is the training by the officers?

Michael Brown: I spent all of yesterday at Essex Police delivering training that had been arranged as a one-off initiative by a patrol inspector. He and his team just wanted a bit more training. The fact that it was happening at all meant that other officers asked if they could attend, then partners asked if they could attend. We had a great day and the feedback was very positive indeed.

In my experience, police officers want practical training around mental health. They want to hear the messages about how they can better respond to people who are vulnerable, how they can better communicate, and how they can better recognise signs and symptoms of vulnerability and mental illness. Crucially, police officers want legal knowledge about what their legal responsibilities are and what their legal options are, because English and Welsh law, and to a degree Scottish law, puts some barriers on the police helping people when we know they need help, through limits that we have in law. That is obviously being reviewed by Sir Simon Wessely for England and Wales at the moment.

Q392 Douglas Ross: The training is welcome, and I can understand that people want more information, but you, Chief Constable Veale, were saying that the police almost feel suffocated by the volume of mental health casework. The Chair quoted that 83% of the time it is not about crime. In Police Scotland, our former chief constable estimated that by 2026 15% to 20% of all people who come into contact with the police will have a mental health background.

People do not join the police to deal with all these other issues; they join to fight crime and criminals. Is there any resentment that a lot of their vision of becoming a police officer is now moving to the healthcare side—just as the mental health nurses who work with the police did not join that job to fight crime, but to give a mental health or medical element to what they were doing in their career?

I wonder whether there is any resentment at all from police officers that their ideal of joining the police was to fight crime, and that is now a very small point. A chief constable in Wales said that mental health calls are stopping police from preventing crime.



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Sophie Corlett: I would like to push back on that. Dealing with vulnerability is called police business. There is no doubt, in our view, that the health service is not supporting people sufficiently and they are becoming more acutely unwell than is right. There are other issues in society. We know that people are more likely to be in debt and have housing problems if they have mental health problems. People are living much more on the edge than they were. It is not just the absence of health services, but other societal issues that are pushing people more into crisis now than they ought to be or need to be. That is definitely an issue, which as a society we need to sort out.

Q393 **Douglas Ross:** But that is not necessarily an issue why you would join the police force.

Sophie Corlett: No, I am getting there. That is an issue that we need to sort out and those people should not be a call on the police, because we should sort those out in other ways. However, there are times when, if someone is having a mental health crisis, it is not inappropriate for the police to be first on the scene. That leaves quite a big group of people who are vulnerable. In the police's broader role, which isn't just about fighting crime, but protection and all sorts of other things, it is not inappropriate that the police should have a role for that group as they would have for missing people, lost children or all sorts of other areas, which are not strictly crime.

Mike Veale: I will push back a little bit as well.

Douglas Ross: It was one of your chief constable colleagues in Wales who said that.

Mike Veale: I am going to push back slightly in as much as police officers and police staff now are more sophisticated than they ever have been in the three decades that I have been in policing. When we say that police officers come in to fight crime, I think that police officers come into the service, as I did 30 years ago, to protect our communities, to protect people from harm, look after the most vulnerable in society, and lock up bad people who are acting criminally and are engaged in criminal activities. We recognise as a service, as do individuals who come into the service, that policing has huge and significant demands, which are more complex than ever before.

Q394 **Douglas Ross:** Yet you yourself used very emotional language to say that the mental health cases were suffocating policing. If you, as a chief constable with over 30 years' experience, are using words such as "suffocation", because of the volume of these calls, surely other officers, who have had a similar length of service and who joined up for similar reasons, will also feel that suffocation. That was your word.

Mike Veale: Yes, absolutely. I don't fall out at all with the fact that the demands very often outstrip the resources we have available to us. Our understanding of demand is greater and better than it ever has been before. Our alignment of our resources to those demands is greater and better than ever before. The way we have modernised the service and



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transformed the service, and worked with our partner agencies and other statutory authorities, is better than ever before.

Notwithstanding that, if other public sector organisations, other organisations involved in protecting people and other health services, have a gap that is getting wider and wider, then the responsibility for filling that gap at the moment feels as though it is to do with the police service. On occasions that becomes suffocating and difficult to manage.

I spend a lot of time operationally working with frontline officers and staff. I have done that for many hours over the last six or seven weeks and I simply take my hat off to the officers and staff who work tirelessly and brilliantly, along with other healthcare professionals and other colleagues in social services, to protect people. Sometimes the demand is just greater than the resources we have available to us.

Dame Vera Baird: I don't sense any resentment. I appreciate the reason for the request, so I have been trying to think why I don't see it. I think it is because police officers want to keep people safe and there has been an advent of a better understanding of how vulnerable some people are and how they are deliberately targeted because of their vulnerability. Linked to that, there has been a better understanding of things such as domestic violence, sexual exploitation and rape, and the state that that can put people in—i.e. render them quite vulnerable. That has been a very telling development, which has made police understand that you cannot deal only with people who are criminals and victims who haven't suffered because of the crime that has been committed against them.

You are going to have to safeguard people who have been rendered vulnerable in this way, and it is part of your job to help get them out of it and also to sustain them for court purposes, if it is at all possible. I think the police are now quite ambitious. My brand-new chief constable sets out his stall, saying that if he can have a force that fundamentally puts first addressing vulnerability and safeguarding people, that is his ambition.

Q395 **Douglas Ross:** This has been useful. However, I assume you would agree, Chief Inspector Brown, that those two officers you gave as an example, who, because there is nowhere to take people with mental health issues, are stuck in a facility potentially for their eight-hour shift, chaperoning and monitoring this person because there is nowhere else to go, must be frustrated that they are just sat there watching someone rather than being out there helping other people with mental health issues or actually responding to low-grade calls.

We as MPs always get the phone calls, emails and letters about antisocial behaviour and those low-priority calls are not the ones being dealt with. I would have thought, as a police officer—my wife is a police officer, so I understand the professionalism of all our police officers up and down the country—there must be a frustration sometimes if you are sat for your whole shift looking after someone because alternative facilities are not available.



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Michael Brown: I have been that officer and I've been the duty inspector who has officers sat in a health-based place of safety at a point when I have needed them in other places. I really have to make a judgment on whether I order them out of there and ask the health service to step up for one occasion, because we have other things we cannot resource—or do I leave it unresourced and worry about how I handled that later?

It would be false to say that there are some police officers who do not join the police because they are really focused on wanting to address crime, lock up the bad guys and send people to prison and so on, but yes, if you are an operational leader, there are frustrations about how you juggle resources from minute to minute. That is just the reality of policing. As the boss said, we are struggling sometimes to match the resources to the demand.

Q396 **Rehman Chishti:** I have a question for Ms Corlett to start. I am from Kent, and Kent Police have been rated outstanding for three years by HMIC. They have taken a number of different measures to address the point on mental health—a third of police time in Kent is spent on mental health. One thing is having Mind counsellors in police control rooms to help identify and address issues early on. From your experience, are enough police forces around the country doing enough of such initiatives to address the challenge?

Sophie Corlett: That is a version of street triage, even though it is not on the street. Street triage is a bit of a misnomer. I suppose it is providing advice to police on the street.

There are about 17 of those operating across the country. We would like to see them everywhere. We had an evaluation of street triage, although it was when it was first set up, but the model has changed quite significantly and even that evaluation was of a number of different models. We have heard people say variously, "Oh, it has not really been researched; it has not been properly evaluated and therefore we don't want to take it up." But I think I'm right in saying that all the areas that have taken it up have found it incredibly useful.

Michael Brown: *indicated dissent.*

Sophie Corlett: No? They haven't found it incredibly useful? Many have found it useful.

Michael Brown: Many have found it useful. It is fair to say that the evaluations are—not just in my opinion but in the opinion of the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence—poor. That was its word, not my word.

In Kent they did have street triage with a double-crewed car, in the model that we have seen in the north-east of England. After a trial period, they disbanded that. The difference between Kent and, for example, Newcastle, is that it is a large rural county with towns in it, as opposed to an urban city with a condensed geography, and they couldn't physically get to everything that they were trying to respond to. The solution of having



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Mind counsellors in the control room was one that meant you didn't have to get the nurse to the job—they could advise from the control room.

Sophie Corlett: What we need is proper evaluation of those different sorts of models, so we can work out what works and what works for what sort of area. One of the key things that people need is access to mental health knowledge. The other key thing is access to people's records. In that sense, a link into the mental health service is really key. What is it that people need, how can you really make sure that people get it, and then, is it having an impact on the numbers of people you are detaining?

Q397 **Rehman Chishti:** On that, just for clarification, the point about Kent—although vast parts of Kent are rural, areas like mine in Medway or areas like Thanet are very urban. So you have a mixture in Kent of urban and rural areas, and I think the police force there uses street triage and the counsellors in the control room; I think it is a combination of the two.

However, the point that I want to ask about again is this: in relation to mental health provision across the different police areas, where would you say there is best practice that you have seen on helping to address this?

Sophie Corlett: Best practice is quite difficult. I don't know whether colleagues—

Q398 **Rehman Chishti:** I don't want to ask police officers; I am asking you, from Mind. At least that way, you can't then say, "One police force is saying that..." But from Mind's perspective, looking at it across the board—you will have seen it across the board—are there some police forces that you say, "D'you know what? Across the board, overall, they've got it right—best practice"?

Sophie Corlett: I think it is quite difficult to pin it down to the police force, because where you've got it right is where the police force and the health services are working really, really well together, and that means that the health services have to have been stocking up as well.

There is some really great work being done in London, for example, which is a very complicated area, because of the different boroughs and the different local health trusts, and because there are three police forces effectively operating, if you take into account the British Transport police as well. But they have started to plan how that works if somebody is picked up by the police, if they're taken to A&E, if they need to be in a health-based place of safety.

That is not fully rolled out yet, but the fact that they have been planning that together and that they are thinking about where they build new health-based places of safety, and how they would organise that and how they would understand when somewhere is free, so that the police aren't wasting time phoning around—that, to me, is absolutely a model of good practice.

At the moment in London, though, they are still having to take people to police cells at some points, because that is a complicated area and they



haven't got there. But as a model for how to work, that would be a good one.

Q399 Rehman Chishti: I have a point for Chief Constable Veale. Earlier, you talked about the number of different challenges: the issue of collaboration; dealing with missing people; dealing with terrorism; and dealing with mental health issues. One of the issues that comes up, and I am just looking at counter-terrorism and the issue of mental health, is that it is not always the case—I am looking at comments here from the Royal College of Psychiatrists, about individuals identified in group-based terrorist acts. There is not necessarily an issue of mental health, but when there are lone wolf individuals there are, at times, issues of mental health.

The point I come back to is made by the former Assistant Police Commissioner Rowley, dealing with counterterrorism, when he said that since the 2011 Prevent review all NHS bodies must train staff to spot the signs of radicalisation and report people they fear are at risk of becoming terrorists to the security services. He then goes on to claim that there is a lack of trust between the NHS and the police, which is stopping crucial information from being shared. From your experience in relation to frontline policing over 33 years, do you think there is that lack of trust in sharing crucial information?

Mike Veale: I think that there are inevitable barriers that are put in place to impair and inhibit public services from working more coherently and closely together. The Data Protection Act—protecting personal data—is one of those areas that impairs and inhibits conversations between agencies. So I don't think it is individuals within the health service who are being difficult or creating that lack of trust, or that distrust.

On occasions, there can be a misinterpretation of some of the legislation and on occasions we are risk-averse and we are not lawfully audacious, and we should be. And I think that as we push our organisations closer together and we move towards greater integration, that will enhance the service that we're able to provide—

Q400 Rehman Chishti: I said that because that came across from research done by the *British Medical Journal*, which found that between 2015 and 2016 there were just 75 referrals to the police by 79 acute trusts across England, and that is what then led to the former assistant police commissioner making that point about the lack of trust and collaboration between the NHS and policing. So you would say there needs to be better guidance on how that's done?

Mike Veale: I think there needs to be greater confidence between leaders within public sector organisations and greater courage, but, in the same way that police officers and police staff have a requirement to be trained, I have got no doubt that that is the same in the healthcare setting.

The training that we give our officers and staff about missing people, mental health and our other responsibilities does not replace mental

health services, health services and social services. What it does is to increase the professional curiosity within our organisations.

If we raise awareness across the health service and among healthcare professionals so they have that professional curiosity, that may increase the number of referrals taking place. All organisations in the public sector are up against it, in terms of enhancing knowledge and understanding so that professional curiosity is raised. I do not think people go out with the specific intent of not sharing information. I think there are many other inhibitors.

Q401 Rehman Chishti: The point I made is that it is not about not wanting to do it, but that the guidance and how it applies needs to be clarified.

In 2015-16—the last recorded year—there was an increase of 20% in calls relating to missing people, compared with the previous year. What was the main reason for that, in your experience?

Mike Veale: When I took over as the national lead, it was clear that there was an inconsistency across the whole of the police service and among local authorities about what you record and how you record it. There were inconsistencies relating to how we describe missing people. The “absent” category was not always recorded as missing people. I think the increase has been because there has been an increase in episodes, and there has also been a significant administrative increase because we are no longer suppressing the numbers. The “absent” category is no longer a demand-management tool; it is used to understand risk, so we have got the policing response that is commensurate with the risk.

As we improve our systems and data collection, inevitably there will be an increase in the number of episodes. Notwithstanding that, the minimum of just under a quarter of a million incidents of missing children and adults is a huge and significant resource demand on policing. Of course, 122,000 of those are missing children.

The complexities of dealing with adults and children are significant and huge. All we need is for one of them to end tragically, and then the issue of missing people will go up the agenda. I don’t want it to go up the agenda because of a tragedy; I want it to go up the agenda because it is the right thing to do. The policing response, along with the public sector response, must be coherent, sophisticated and seamless.

Q402 Rehman Chishti: Just for clarification on that final point, linked to the issue of missing people is the real distress, pain and anxiety it causes the loved ones who have to deal with the onset of a number of issues. As Members of Parliament, we all have our own experiences of that—a constituent coming to see me saying, “My cousin has been listed as missing high risk with a police force on the other side of the country.” As a result, my constituent had financial issues because they did not have a guardianship order. The person was missing, and the third party—my constituent—did not have the authority to deal with their bills and mortgage. They went to the police, who said, “That’s a legal matter. You need legal advice. We can’t advise you on that.”



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I know the Government were looking at having a missing persons Bill in 2017 to address some of those issues. Hopefully, that loved one can be found, and when they come back at least they will have a house, and their bills will have been paid by a loved one.

In relation to having a joined-up, collaborative approach, when someone goes to the police, raises their concern and has the individual listed as missing, can there be any collaboration between the police and charities such as Missing People so the police can say, "Look, we will do everything we can to find your loved one," and give the person a document that may help them address some of the other challenges, like the ones my constituent experienced?

The police wrote to my constituent saying, "I am well aware that legally you are in limbo." The Minister of Justice said to me that the gap in the law has proved problematic. It is about having a combined approach. Those people are dealing with the fact that their loved ones are missing, but can there be great collaboration between all the agencies to ensure they get advice about how to deal with the onset of issues?

Mike Veale: The first thing is that Missing People, along with the other incredible charities that help and support those people who have people in their families who have gone missing, does a great job. If we require enabling legislation to help those people who are suffering in the way you have just described, it needs to happen. I cannot think of an incident where police officers or police staff would not go to the nth degree to help and support people who are having to deal with the trauma of someone going missing from their family but, ultimately, the legislation inhibits people moving on in their lives. The legislation, however difficult it is for legislators, needs to change to grease those wheels.

Q403 **Rehman Chishti:** You are of the view that the legislation on this—the enabling legislation—needs to change. How would you say it needs to change?

Mike Veale: If families are not able to move on in their lives, and if it is the legislation that stops them from doing that, we should all work together to define how that legislation changes and enables people to move on. Until we have that specific detail—

Rehman Chishti: No, of course. I thank the police for doing the brilliant job that they do—I have seen that from the experiences of constituents and from charities like Missing People. The reason I asked is that it is often good to ask those on the frontline how we change that legislation. There is not only one way to deal with that, but I appreciate the point you make.

Q404 **Stephen Doughty:** I just want to follow up on a couple of things that have come up so far. I wanted to praise South Wales Police in my area, who I know have incorporated mental health professionals in their control and command centres. I know that that is a priority for our police and crime commissioner, who is my predecessor.

We have heard of the example of the phone line in the Camden and north-west trust for police officers to use. A number of other examples



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were provided in the briefing. To what extent, would you say that there is systematic incorporation of mental health resources and training across constabularies across the UK?

Dame Vera Baird: I imagine it is a bit patchy. Mr Chishti is very fortunate that the PCC in Kent, Matthew Scott, has set out his stall to be a leader in mental health matters. He has done a great job taking matters forward. We have some early resource in the response so that we can get advice at an earlier stage if people ring in about mental health. It is in the foothills, and we regard ourselves as reasonably advanced in tackling these kinds of issues. I would doubt that it is very widespread, but I truly do not know.

Q405 **Stephen Doughty:** Is that down to the fact that not all forces or senior personnel get it, or is it down to the resourcing challenges, or both?

Michael Brown: One issue is about understanding the mental health-related demand. Forces experience it differently. Section 136 usage varies across forces; the number of suspects in custody who need Mental Health Act assessments varies; and the number of missing people varies. The Policing Minister has recently written to all PCCs and chief constables asking them to provide whatever data they have so that we can better understand demand nationally. My understanding is that those responses have been mixed—the Home Office is still wading through them—but that demonstrates that not every police force fully understands its demand. In fairness to chief constables, the data does not lead easily from police systems that were built for purposes such as crime recording into management purposes. One problem is: how can you design the solutions to your problem if you do not fully understand the precise nature of your problem? All chiefs are no doubt addressing that ongoing piece of work.

Mike Veale: I should like to offer you a little bit of reassurance. There will not be a chief constable in the land who does not understand the importance of seamless and sophisticated responses to vulnerability and to the most vulnerable people in society. Very often, we are faced with demands on policing services that outstrip our resources. In the forces that I have led, the ability to remove officers and staff from the frontline to do the mandatory training, let alone the other forms of training that will enhance our service provision, is incredibly difficult. We are critical in terms of the frontline and how we deliver that service. There is no longer any latitude. There is no longer any waste within our frontline resources. There is no longer the ability to just take officers and staff from the frontline and spend two days training them in some of those incredibly important areas of our business.

We are constantly juggling our resources just to maintain services, so it is about a combination of our professional will to enhance the professionalised policing response against, as I have described, the increasing complexities and demands, versus the level of resources, but it will not be because chief constables and senior colleagues are not determined to improve our response.

Q406 **Stephen Doughty:** Can I just follow up and touch on what Chief



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Inspector Brown said? What consideration is given to additional resourcing or additional capacity in areas where there are specific mental health facilities? My community in Llandough has a large hospital. In May, a mental health facility was moved from Whitchurch in north Cardiff to Llandough. It is a fantastic facility doing excellent work, and there are good relationships with the local police, but the reality is that the local police in the Vale of Glamorgan have not received additional resources due to those pressures to deal with the additional uptake in both missing persons and vulnerable individuals leaving the facility and wandering off into the community. What is the thinking when there are major concentrations? I assume mental health conditions are broadly distributed evenly across the country, but when you have particular sites like that, how is it thought through?

Michael Brown: Some forces have put a decision forward to have dedicated liaison officers for psychiatric units, and sometimes those officers are working at a force level across their geographies covering just the psychiatric units. Merseyside Police have an arrangement with their partner trust that is about co-funding as much as collaboration. The last I heard, four police officers take care of all the in-patient reports of allegations of crime that come from psychiatric units—a large number of assaults on NHS staff happen within such units, which leads to reports to the police. Other areas have a very reactive approach, with the local response team guys or perhaps the neighbourhood team guys.

From the work I do, I would say that, where a chief feels that they can invest just a little bit in having an officer upskill themselves to understand this particular kind of crime inquiry, they get an awful lot back in terms of reductions in crime and reductions in demand. We did that when I was working as a mental health lead for West Midlands Police, and that was certainly the case. Maybe it is not about resources per se but about whether or not chiefs are able to allow an officer here or there to be dedicated towards a liaison role that means they come to understand mental health in a very sophisticated way so that they can very efficiently manage demand.

Q407 **Stephen Doughty:** Given what you were saying about the lack of data on where demand sits, do you think the Home Office has done enough to fully understand on an England and Wales perspective where there are peaks of demand and how they are dealt with?

Michael Brown: The service as a whole, not just the Home Office, still has not worked out what questions we need to ask ourselves entirely. What are the right questions to ask about demand? One of the obvious ones I think we should be asking but we don't know the answer to is: how many criminal suspects going through police custody under arrest are assessed under the Mental Health Act? The reason that that is important is that we tend in practice to use the decision about whether somebody would be admitted to hospital under the Act as the de facto variable that influences whether somebody is prosecuted or diverted from justice because of their mental illness. If we do not understand how many of those things we are doing, and if we do not understand what the crime



outcomes therefore are, how can we begin to evaluate the effectiveness of our approach?

Q408 Stephen Doughty: Lastly, how do you all evaluate the sharing of data and information between agencies? I am thinking particularly of information on health, local authority, other public service and police encounters with people with mental health issues, and perhaps who have also gone missing? I have certainly seen examples where information has not properly been shared on individuals that have been a significant risk to themselves and to others around them. Somebody was still operating a taxi and had a local taxi licence even though their circumstances suggested that that was not appropriate for them or because of the risk to the public. What is your oversight of that?

Sophie Corlett: There is a difficulty with sharing information, and that is why triage set-ups are good—less than half of the police forces in the country have triage set-ups of the sort that you were mentioning. They enable the police to get access, where appropriate, to information about people they are coming across on the street. That is a slightly different sharing of information from what you have just been talking about, which I would want to know a bit more about before I felt it was appropriate to share any information. A lot of assumptions are made about what jobs people with mental health problems can and cannot do. I think that we are only just at the beginning of this. The crisis care concordat, which started in 2013 I think, began more formally to encourage services to work together, across ambulance, police, mental health services and A&E, for all the people who are in mental health crisis.

When people started to get around the table to talk about what they were going to do in their local area, in many areas that was the first time those people had sat down together. It has been quite slow work in many areas, but it has been transformative also in those areas that have kept at it. Keeping it at a local level, working out what the needs are locally, does not let people off the hook nationally—we do need more focus nationally on what a good triage approach is for a particular type of area with a particular type of demographic or geography. We need that, definitely, but at a local level people will need to work out themselves who the people are, where things fit together and how we make things work at a local level.

Some of the national things that have happened are very powerful. The ambulance services nationally said that they should send an ambulance within 30 minutes if there is a mental health crisis. They have not been able to do that, as it happens, in every area, but it is an aspiration and something that should be committed to nationally. Other things need to be worked out at a local level.

Q409 Tim Loughton: Can I come back to the subject of missing children? Obviously that is your lead, chief constable. Why has there been a continued increase in reports of missing children over the last 10 years do you think?



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Mike Veale: The pressure on children is greater now than ever before. Cyber-bullying, social-media bullying, the loss of self-esteem, the exploitation agenda, grooming by serious and organised crime groups, gangs that are coercive, and sexual exploitation are all factors that are now more prevalent than ever before. In relation to adults, the hidden illnesses, the mental health issues, Alzheimer's—

Q410 **Tim Loughton:** Can we just focus on children? Who is doing more of the reporting of missing children?

Mike Veale: Who is doing more reporting?

Tim Loughton: Yes. What sort of children are going missing? You came up with a whole stream of things and I do not disagree with you. Some of those are reasons why children should not go missing and should stay within the safety of their own home. But I am particularly interested in children in the care system, from residential homes in particular, in which I ought to declare an interest as I chair a safeguarding committee for a fostering agency. Are you convinced that you are getting accurate reporting of children missing from care, particularly from residential homes, and do you think that those figures are genuinely an increase or is it down to different types of reporting?

Mike Veale: There are a number of issues and I will try to pick them off one at a time. Residential care homes come in two categories. There is the private sector and then there are the local authority residential care homes, and I think there are two different standards. We have a regulatory framework around the local authority residential care homes, and there is a lack of regulation around the private residential care homes.

Every hour, every day of the week, there are countless examples of children who are challenging and who may be damaged or have special needs going to residential care homes, particularly private ones that say they have the skills to deal with a child who may be challenging, and it being very obvious that those care homes do not have those capabilities and that those children will go missing. Then they go missing, they are reported and the police engage in a huge, complicated and time-consuming investigation to find the missing child. Then we will go back, we will find the child and we will return them to that residential care home. Within minutes on occasions—certainly within hours on many other occasions—that child will go missing again.

The biggest issue for me is not just about residential care homes, but about the repeat incidents as a result of children going missing. We find that many of those children go missing from residential care homes. That is why I think we need to be more seamless, collaborative and problem-solving in our approach to incidents of missing children, particularly those in residential care homes.

Q411 **Tim Loughton:** May I take that up? Basically, why hasn't that happened? Residential care homes are more tightly regulated now than they ever have been. Regulation of private homes, as opposed to the minority of



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council-run ones, is absolutely identical—there is no evidence to suggest that there is a bigger problem with private, independent or charity homes.

In 2012, the DFE published new guidance in collaboration with the police, local authorities and runaway charities, because there was a serious problem with the police, care homes and local authorities using different criteria on which to report. For example, in one year, I remember when I was at the DFE, the number of children missing from residential homes recorded by the Department for Education and the number recorded by the police differed by a factor of 10, because they weren't recording the same things.

In order to solve that, a new system was brought in to deal with just the sort of repeat incidents that you mention, where little Johnny doesn't turn up at 5 o'clock on a Friday as he is supposed to, and that happens every week, because every Friday little Johnny goes and plays football with his mate, even though he is supposed to be back at the home by 5 pm. In order to cover themselves, because of risk aversion, the home may report little Johnny as missing at two minutes past five. Yet you know, and the home knows, that Johnny is not in any danger—but the same thing happens again.

That should not be recorded under the new approach as a missing figure, and yet it would appear from what you say that it still is. That is a complete waste of your time, and it completely inflates and distorts the figures. Agencies working together should come up with a game plan to make sure that if little Johnny is going to play football at 5 o'clock on a Friday, measures are in place to record him as playing football, rather than as gone missing. Why hasn't that happened?

Mike Veale: I don't know—that is a matter for local authorities and residential care homes—

Q412 **Tim Loughton:** But it's not; it's a matter for the police because it's your time that is being wasted more than anyone else's. It is in your interest to make sure that you and local authorities are working together. To say, I'm afraid, that it is data protection—which comes up time and time again—is not true. There is nothing in the Data Protection Act to prevent you, children's homes and local authorities sharing maximum information about those vulnerable children—nothing.

Mike Veale: Yes. I don't fall out on that—I was referring to mental health cases actually—and that is one of the inhibitors and one of the default positions of many organisations and agencies. There is a misinterpretation of data protection legislation.

Let me build on what you have just said in describing the problem of residential care homes. Of course it is worse than that, because what we are finding is that some residential care homes know that our response to a low-risk child will be different from that to a child who may have caused criminal damage or may be exposed to vulnerability, harm or exploitation, so sometimes the accounts that we are given when we are receiving a report of a child missing from a residential care home are somewhat



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different. There needs to be even more emphasis on this seamless partnership approach between residential care homes and local authorities, whether in the private or the public sector. We have made great strides in improving those relationships, but we're not anywhere near where we should be. I cannot fall out with anything you have just said, other than—

Q413 Tim Loughton: What is going to change it? Again you mentioned change in legislation. There is no need for any change to legislation or the Data Protection Act. You have the authority and the guidance to work closely with those other agencies—I don't blame the police any more than the others—and six years ago that change should have taken place.

One reason for children absconding from residential children's homes, where there is a serious problem, is because they are placed too far away from home. The number of kids placed in residential care more than 20 miles away from home, which was the recommended limit, is still just over 50%. That figure should have come down. It hasn't, but it has been consistent, so I don't believe there is a bigger problem with children in care absconding than there was 10 years ago, yet the figures seem to show that it is of an altogether different magnitude. I believe the problem is in the approach. That should have changed and it hasn't, and I want to understand.

Mike Veale: We do not know whether the problem is any worse or any less than it was 10 years ago, because the inaccuracies around recording the data have been woeful from a police perspective as well as from a local authority perspective, and we are better now than we ever have been before. That is why, when I began as the national police lead for missing people—missing children and adults—the second thing, beyond a cross-Government strategy, was that we needed a national register of missing people. There was absolute inconsistency across local authorities and, more importantly from my perspective, the police services, because we were using differing terms and definitions and we did not have the systems, structures or databases to understand the problem in the first place.

In relation to my role as the national police chiefs' lead, obviously I will do all that I can to influence the thinking of colleagues in the local authority. It is clear that local authorities have a responsibility to do return-home interviews, for instance, but unfortunately return-home interviews, despite my desire and the guidance for local authorities, are administered in different ways across the country, with different standards, different questions being asked and different professionals involved. That is just one example of the complexities that we are facing. That is not undermining my desire to create a more seamless approach to missing people; it is just one example that highlights the difficulties and challenges. Hence the first conversation that I had with the National Police Chiefs' Council was about the need for a cross-Government strategy to make sure that it is not just the police service that complies with its guidance and legislative responsibilities.



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With children it is easier—for adults, the problem is equally compelling, because there is less of a legal framework around adults who go missing, of course—so we need this cross-Government strategy to act as a strong lever, so that there is greater compliance, greater consistency, greater co-operation and greater co-ordination across the whole of the public sector and all the public organisations that have responsibility for looking after our children.

Q414 Tim Loughton: I do not want to take this any further, but there is a cross-Government strategy. I just want to know why it is not being followed.

Mike Veale: Well, it won't be for want of the national police chiefs' lead asking for it.

Q415 Sarah Jones: I want to talk briefly about victims of abuse and exploitation, and modern slavery and human trafficking in particular. I met a woman last week who had become involved in county lines. She was under 18. She had been going up and down from south London down to the coast with her boyfriend and a load of others. She was discovered in a hotel in Brighton with a load of blokes, a load of drugs and a load of weapons. All the blokes were arrested and she was told by the police to run on home. She was clearly a very vulnerable person; they were clearly doing what they presumably thought was a helpful and letting her go away, but she was very vulnerable and was also being sexually exploited at that time.

That raised lots of questions, which I would like you to think about. The first is about whether we should be using modern slavery legislation more, particularly in things like county lines. The second issue is how sensitive the police are to identifying victims of abuse, which she was in that situation. Thirdly, what should we do to structure a response around that girl and that situation? Obviously, you have a big criminal network of drugs, very vulnerable people and different police forces being involved. London is a bit better developed, potentially, than some of the towns that this girl was heading out towards, so who should be doing what in those situations and have we got it right now? What do we need to shift if we haven't? There are quite a lot of questions.

Sophie Corlett: While everyone else does their thinking, I can throw in a few comments around mental health. We know that people with mental health problems are much more likely to be victims of crime, and if they are women they are more likely again, and less likely to be able to find support and less likely to report satisfaction with the way they have been treated if they have ended up going to the police or their case going to court. So we know there are difficulties.

There are a number of different things that add to that. The services surrounding supporting victims beyond what the police can do are also not there, so victims services report that they have seen an increase in the number of victims with mental health problems, and they do not have places where they can refer people on to for support either, including mental health services.



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There are other services as well, which it would be useful to have, such as third-party reporting schemes where—this would not apply to the person you were talking about—somebody who has been a victim of crime but maybe has had a bad experience with the police before, perhaps having come into contact with the police because of their mental health problem or because of a crime they have committed, could report being a victim of a crime by going not directly to the police but to an appropriate adult scheme. Somebody could have an appropriate adult with them, which is very difficult if you are an adult yourself.

If you are a young person, there is a requirement for services—local authorities—to provide appropriate adults to support young people, but that is not the case for adults, so although the police force might recognise that somebody needs somebody with them, they cannot necessarily find anybody, because appropriate adult services have not been provided anywhere so the police cannot bring them in.

We need to make sure that the support services supporting the police are there, particularly for vulnerable people, because they are more likely to be the victims of crime and more likely to need support. Actually, they are not always likely to get that support.

Mike Veale: The example you cited made the hair on the back of my neck a little bit antagonised inasmuch as you gave the impression that this vulnerable female was just sent on her way. I do not know the exact details—

Q416 **Sarah Jones:** I do not either. This is how she told it—that she was basically sent on her way, which they thought, presumably, was being helpful, but she was a very vulnerable person and there was no intervention with her, whereas with the boys there was. They were all arrested and whatever happened to them happened, but she was sent on her way and there wasn't actually a sense that she was extremely vulnerable, and it turned out that she had been sexually abused and all those kinds of thing. There wasn't the recognition of that. She was presumably missing and was under 18, so there were lots of different things going on in that situation and the response wasn't quite what it should have been. That is not a criticism; it is just that those situations are more difficult—who should be intervening and when, what should happen and do the police know enough about that kind of vulnerability to know it when they see it?

Mike Veale: In the circumstances that you have just described, I would say that that is an absolute outlier in terms of the benchmark we use to provide that service to witnesses, victims and those types of vulnerable people.

We would absolutely have safeguarding at the top of our agenda. The younger those people are, the more you would expect me to say that it would become even more critical and obvious for us to make those safeguarding arrangements. I would say that how you have just described that is totally unacceptable from a policing perspective. That is an absolute



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outlier, if the circumstances are as you describe. I would say that policing and our colleagues on the frontline are now more aware of safeguarding responsibilities and of the factors around vulnerability than ever before. I would like to think that if anything like that happened in my force or any force I have led previously, we would be really responsive to the needs of that vulnerable person and do all we could to listen, understand and take seriously any claims or allegations they would make. We would certainly do all we could to assess the circumstances to enable us to ask those questions in the first place.

Dame Vera Baird: It is shocking that she was sent happily on her way home. First, she is a victim of crime, isn't she? She has certain rights under the victims' code from the point of being recognised as a victim of crime, as she obviously is. She should, as Mike just said, have been safeguarded. There are now arrangements in most areas where people in that kind of position can go directly to a victims' hub and be sent out to someone who is a specialist. We would probably invite Barnardo's to help with that person, depending on their age and so on, so that that person is supported through their own difficulties. Hopefully that would be sustained, in case they needed to be a witness. That is the other trick that seems to have been missed here.

If she has been trafficked, for instance, the way forward would be to look to charging that, I would have thought. In particular, if she is over 16 and has been exploited for sex, it is difficult to show that she has not been consenting, whatever the circumstances are. If someone is trafficked around in that way, consent becomes irrelevant, so long as the purpose is clear. We would look to use the best kind of prosecution that you could bring to optimise the chances of getting these people down.

Hopefully what the police were thinking of—I do not know whether this was the case—is section 45 of the Modern Slavery Act 2015, which says that if someone has carried out criminal acts in the course of being enslaved, they have a defence that they could raise. It may be that they thought no further than that. That is a very benign thing, as you say, and it was obviously meant well, but it is a shame that they missed the trick that she plainly needed safeguarding after that experience. Again, I can only echo the point that I hope it would not happen in Northumbria. I do not think it would happen in very many forces like that.

Q417 **Chair:** May I ask you some quick follow-up questions? On the training issues and how you ensure that police can deal with these new and changing challenges, what is the average amount of mental health training that police officers would get?

Michael Brown: Most forces would probably say one day's worth of training, and that would either be for new officers during their initial probationary training period or it would be what has been delivered locally to officers who are out and about and have been serving for a number of years. The College of Policing recommendation is two days. In practice, the feedback we tend to get back from forces is that they have had to condense that to one day. In fairness, sometimes that has been because

the chief has already invested a reasonable amount of time in mental health training. Other times it is because of pressures on training timetables.

Q418 **Chair:** One day a year, or one day ever?

Michael Brown: One day, full stop. Refreshing is a conversation we have not quite got to yet, because we are still trying to get the basics right.

Dame Vera Baird: There has been a report, has there not? Elish Angiolini did a report about this kind of training recently. I specifically asked my force about that, and they said that the College of Policing guidelines are worked to. All custody sergeants and all control room supervisors have had awareness sessions. They said that the entire firearms support unit—I am glad about that—all silver cadre managers and all new student officers have had a full day, with a further two-day attachment for students. They have also trained the local magistrates, which sounds like an important thing to do.

Chair: That was more than one day.

Dame Vera Baird: Yes. The new officers—the brand new recruits and the students—have received that day and two further days of attachment. That clearly is the type of people who are helping our response officers and the type of people who are doing CPN work in the control rooms. It seems too that I think there is an exceptional relationship with the Northumbria Tyne and Wear mental health trust here, because our officers have trained their staff about police powers so that they can most quickly go where they need for that.

Q419 **Chair:** Chief Constable, I know this wasn't the issue that we invited you in on, but do you know what your force does in terms of mental health training?

Mike Veale: I think—because I asked the question on the way across out of professional curiosity, just in case you asked me the question—that our training around mental health and vulnerability is embedded into one day of wider training.

I have a view on training, which is that it is there to enhance our professional curiosity. What I have seen work brilliantly first hand from an operational perspective is mental healthcare professionals working in the control room. That has transformed Wiltshire's—where I have just come from—approach to dealing with mental health and people in crisis. The way that the support is provided, that the advice is given, has undoubtedly improved the service to the most vulnerable in Wiltshire.

So I am absolutely a firm advocate of mental healthcare professionals, who have access to the right information and data, who can provide that help, support and guidance working 24 hours a day across all control rooms across the whole country, because at first hand I have seen the huge, significant help and support they have provided.

Q420 Chair: I am sure that is right. I am just a little bit worried because it seems to me that your police officers will be dealing with mental health cases all the time. Given the scale of all the things we have just been talking about—the scale of mental health cases that you are dealing with, and the number—it is a bit like all police officers surely needing online training now, because pretty much every case you deal with has online aspects.

I feel quite worried about this, if training on mental health is only ever one day in a police officer's training. I accept that there is a debate about the kind of training and the quality and the nature of it and so on. We would like to have information from every police force in the country on what the level of mental health training is for officers, because obviously if, as Vera says, there is a lot more local stuff going on, I don't want to cut across that or misrepresent, but I would like to know—

Michael Brown: I can arrange that.

Q421 Chair: Thank you; that would be really helpful.

Michael Brown: May I add one quick point? I think you have alluded to something very important. What we don't know is the extent to which the effort the police put into these collaborative events, be it control room-based triage or street triage—what we don't know is the extent to which the existence of those schemes is driving even more demand to the police.

We know that in some areas, the existence of street triage means other professionals now see the police as an easy-to-access nurse-led service, even when the interaction itself does not require the police, but in other areas, they manage the system in a way that means that is not a problem. What we don't know is, the extent to which, across the 40 forces who have street triage of one kind or another, we are driving more demand to the police because of the existence of capacity outside of GPs, outside of crisis teams.

Chair: Thank you for your time. We really appreciate it. We realise that this session has run on, and we very much appreciate your time.

Examination of witnesses

Witnesses: Jeff Boothe, Alison Hernandez, Andy Higgins and Garry Shewan.

Q422 Chair: Welcome to our second panel. Our focus for this panel will be to look particularly around neighbourhood policing and the changing challenges around it. May I ask each of you to introduce yourselves, and also to comment? There has been a 30% reduction in PCSOs over the last few years. That looks like a massive drop in the level of neighbourhood policing in practice. Is that a fair assessment? Superintendent Boothe.

Jeff Boothe: Good afternoon. My name is Jeff Boothe. I am the BCU Commander for the South Area within the Met Police. I am sorry; what was your question again?



Q423 Chair: Actually, why don't we just do a quick round of introductions? Then I will come back to the question, which was basically around the reduction in PCSOs and whether this reflects a substantial reduction in the neighbourhood policing that is taking place or whether there are just different patterns of policing happening—sometimes the figures do not reflect the whole picture.

Alison Hernandez: Hello. I am Alison Hernandez. I am police and crime commissioner for Devon, Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly. I am also vice-chairman of the local policing and partnerships portfolio under the Association of Police and Crime Commissioners.

Andy Higgins: Hello. I am Andy Higgins. I am research director of the Police Foundation, which is an independent research-led think-tank. I have just finished a research project on the future of neighbourhood policing, which will be published later this month.

Garry Shewan: Hello. I am a recently retired assistant chief constable with Greater Manchester Police. I was a neighbourhood policing champion for all my career. I recently introduced a new operating policing model in Greater Manchester.

Q424 Chair: Mr Shewan, shall we start with you? Have you seen a very substantial reduction in neighbourhood policing, as suggested by the PCSO figures, or is something else going on?

Garry Shewan: No, I think what you are seeing is a significant decision by forces around the country about where they put their resources. Sadly, what we have seen in some forces is a degradation in the commitment to a neighbourhood policing model. We all want our police officers, and our police staff as well, to be courageous when there is a critical incident, to be brave in responding to people when they are in need, and to arrest the bad people. But, sadly, they will not reduce crime, and crime is changing very significantly; to reduce crime, you have to have a close working relationship—not just with the community, but with all the partners in a place, to understand why crime happens and to come up with long-term solutions. That is the domain of policing, and that is the changing nature of policing.

While I do not want to get away from the fact that we need our police officers to be there when people need us, making a decision about where you put your resources is the wrong question; the question should be, what do we want our police to do? I think we want our police to be closer to our communities, and to involve themselves far more in problem-solving activity. I think a degradation, as recognised in that figure that you have introduced, is something that needs to be addressed and changed significantly.

Andy Higgins: Yes, 30% or 35% represents a significant reduction in neighbourhood policing. The figures seem to suggest that the number of police officers allocated to neighbourhood policing has stayed the same; that is the product of an expansion of the definition and understanding of what neighbourhood policing is.



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If we go back to 2008, there were roughly 30,000 neighbourhood police officers and PCSOs combined across England and Wales, in a pattern I am sure we are all familiar with—working on small patches, and doing visible reassurance, engagement and problem solving. Today, we have a much more varied picture. Some forces, for example, are putting 40% of their entire workforce into what they call neighbourhood policing; however, that covers a lot of the response and investigation work as well.

So across the board, whether they have adopted that model or not, those who carry the neighbourhood policing title are doing a lot more responsive work in response to demand. Therefore, the traditional outputs that we would associate with neighbourhood policing—community engagement, problem solving and intelligence-led proactivity—are in retreat across the country.

Alison Hernandez: Every one of us in this room today, and every member of the community that I speak with down our way in Devon, Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly, will tell you of the importance of neighbourhood policing. We all have, I think, a British respect for the role of neighbourhood policing, and I come from a police force that was very much at the forefront of it. John Alderson, who was the chief constable at the time, really pushed for the role of prevention and the way that neighbourhood policing could help communities. My office is on Alderson Drive. We have just named the office I work in Andy Hocking House—he was a local PC in Falmouth, and 6,000 people out of the 20,000 in the community came out for his funeral, following his early death, sadly, a few years ago.

It is absolutely at the heart of our communities. I had a petition about a sergeant being moved on in Hayle and St Ives, because he was so passionate about neighbourhood policing, knew everybody and made a difference. I had 6,000 people sign that petition to tell me they wanted to keep him. It is very much at the heart of our communities, and we all care about it.

The shift that has happened in terms of resourcing is quite interesting, in the sense that I think there has been a deflection that PCSOs are neighbourhood policing, but neighbourhood policing is far more than PCSOs. We have had a challenge to try to explain that to some of our communities. There has been a real drive and protectionism, I would say, from every police and crime commissioner that I speak to. Neighbourhood policing is their priority and something that they are trying to protect through all the years of austerity that we have had.

On their PEEL effectiveness in preventing crime and tackling antisocial behaviour, which is very much what neighbourhood policing is about, Her Majesty's Inspectors of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services said that 36 forces were good or outstanding in its recently published report. The year before, 32 were good or outstanding. That reflects that since 2016, nearly half of all forces have increased or maintained the number of staff assigned to neighbourhood policing. That is a bit of reassurance for



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you that there is a definite drive that that is still a priority within every police service.

Jeff Boothe: In terms of the basic command unit that I have responsibility for, we are going through a transformation. There will be a change in the way we go about delivering that neighbourhood policing model. In fact, we are actually putting more officers back into the neighbourhood policing approach—*[Interruption.]*

Chair: Apologies. We have a Division—an occupational hazard for us. We will suspend the meeting until we are quorate again, which should be in about 10 minutes' time.

Sitting suspended.

On resuming—

Q425 **Tim Loughton:** Can we come back to PCSOs, which is where I think we were originally? What has been the effect of PCSOs? I remember when they came in, back in 2002 or 2003, there was a deal of resentment, certainly initially, not least by full police officers, who described them as “plastic police officers”.

We had some very good PCSOs in my area of Sussex, but that still did not stop people saying, “We have not seen a police officer in 15 years”, which is usually the timeframe they used. Now we have had a big reduction in PCSOs and everybody is up in arms—it is the end of policing as we know it. Are they better than ordinary police officers? Are they entirely complementary? Is the fact that forces are now recruiting for police officers in preference to PCSOs good, better, worse or what?

Garry Shewan: If we go back to why PCSOs became such an important part of the police service, it was at a time when perhaps the number of police officers who were visible and able to spend time conversing and engaging with the community was getting smaller and smaller. It reassured communities that there was a voice and a channel of information through which information could be passed. I do not think they are better than police officers at doing that role. At the time, they were a critical part of ensuring our commitment to local communities.

I believe that what we need to do is to start looking at how best we get all our police officers, in some regard, to have the skills, the ability and the time to be able to commit to local communities and to have responsibility that the PCSOs do not in many ways. The reduction in the number of PCSOs is okay, as long as they are replaced by a commitment from forces to ensure that their frontline police officers spend time, have responsibility and ownership over a local area, engage with them, and are committed to problem-solving activity and working with partners.

That is the problem when you see a reduction in PCSOs. If it has not been replaced by a commitment from police services to be able to police in a very different way, there is going to be a significant gap. If we carry on policing the way we have always done, we won't see the reductions in



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crime and the misery felt among some of our communities, and most importantly, we won't get the best use of the resources available to us, whether that is police resources, partner resources or, more importantly, the community assets and the resources out there in the community, which can do so much more. PCSOs were able to garner that and bring it together. If they are not there, we need to ensure that policing skills can do that just as well.

Q426 Tim Loughton: Commissioner Hernandez, you referred to your star police officer, who got the petition for 6,000 signatures, which is fantastic, but surely that should be symptomatic of just being a good bobby. When PCSOs worked, they were seen wandering around and were seen as approachable. They are being scaled down and being spread thinly across much wider areas—in fact, completely different districts and sometimes towns 20 miles away—and we are replacing them with mainstream police officers. The trouble is that these days the tendency is for mainstream police officers to be in police cars and not wandering around. Taken with everything Mr Shewan has said, it is a different sort of policing.

Alison Hernandez: It is. One of the things that has been key since we have had police community support officers is that they became the face of the police. They are not police officers, but they became the face of the police. We now have more armed response officers than ever before and we have an increasing terrorist threat.

There is something about the consent to policing that is really important, which is why police officers need to be connected to their community, and that should not be done just through police community support officers, as it has been in the past.

One of the reasons I have made better connecting policing and communities the No. 1 priority for our chief constable in Devon and Cornwall is because during the years of austerity police officers retracted even more from their communities and wouldn't go to things such as council meetings, or to support local elected members, who were making decisions about funding and resources.

I have over 1,000 parishes and 18 MP constituencies in my patch, so you can imagine the stretch, in a force-wide geography of 4,000 square miles, for officers trying to connect with their communities. One of the things that is really important to think through is how we are ensuring that officers are well connected to their communities, not just the police community support officers. We are one of the last forces in the country to look at reducing police community support officers, mainly because of our large geographical stretch. One of the reasons for that is that we are now at a point where the public are telling us, "It's all well and good having people walking around, but when I report a crime to the police, you don't do anything about it, you are not investigating it and you are not doing it quick enough." We are not doing that area well.



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We are starting to recruit—we have recruited—police staff investigators, because we cannot recruit enough detectives to investigate crime. We need to think about what the workforce mix needs to look like going forward, rather than trying to keep it as traditional as it was. We have to be able to do that balancing act. We are all at a point now where we are on the cusp of doing the balancing act of that workforce mix.

Q427 Tim Loughton: Chief Superintendent, how do we achieve that in practice? As Commissioner Hernandez says, we will have a record number of armed police officers, who are not the ones who tend to walk around the streets, other than when a high-sensitivity event has happened. The biggest growth in crime has been fraud. Police officers wandering the streets tend not to be most relevant to that. But also some of the biggest increases in crime have been around knife crime and gangs, and concerns around terrorism, where intelligence is found on the ground with the community, perhaps from a particular minority community, which may want to say, "We are a bit worried about such and such." We are recruiting more police officers, albeit to replace some of those who were lost previously, rather than PCSOs. How are they going to be engaged with the public and out of their cars? Or is that just not going to happen?

I absolutely recognise, as the commissioner said, the absence of police officers at community events, be it council meetings or whatever, where that very localised intelligence often is available, yet they are not there to garner it, or to respond and give assurances. Is it going to be different in the future?

Jeff Booth: I will pick up my answer in two parts. In terms of the PCSOs themselves, I would say that I am a full advocate of them. They do a fantastic job. We held a commendation ceremony just last week, and commended one of our PCSOs, who is respected by all his colleagues. He gathers that community intelligence. He knows about child abuse, registered sex offenders and counter-terrorism. He is very capable and competent and can do a very good job.

In terms of the neighbourhood approach, we need to ensure that we have officers who are out of their vehicles and dedicated to doing that job on a full-time basis. Where we work, in each ward there is a minimum of two dedicated ward officers plus a PCSO who are ring-fenced. They cover that geographical area, but for them to be effective they need to work with the community, and they need the community to have that trust. They need to build that trust up over a period of time. That is how you get that community intelligence coming back. A long-term commitment needs to be put in place.

The public will not buy into the approach of neighbourhood policing if you just use a title. They need to see those officers on a regular basis. I would say that we need to have a mixed economy of PCSOs, regular police officers, special constables and street pastors. It is that combination that brings about that community spirit. If you adopt purely a police officer or PCSO approach, I think that is the wrong approach.



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Q428 Sarah Jones: I want to ask a few questions about serious violence. The Government published "Serious Violence Strategy" recently, in which they said that "most academics agree that big shifts in crime trends tend to be driven by factors outside of the police's control". It is that old chestnut of the relationship between police funding cuts and the increase in violent crime. Would any of you like to give a view on what relationship—if any—there is?

Andy Higgins: I do not think there is any specific evidence on the relationship between neighbourhood policing and violent crime specifically. However, the version of neighbourhood policing that I want to see prevail, having looked at the current state and how things have changed in the past few years, is just as applicable to violent crime as it is to counter-terrorism or to any form of local threat.

That version emphasises the importance of having embedded practitioners in the places that need them most—I do not think we are in a place to offer universal neighbourhood policing any more—for meaningful periods of time, not distracted by 999 calls, investigations, safeguarding and the like. They should have a principal remit to develop an in-depth understanding of that place, the people who live there and the risks to them, including by engagement, forming trusting relationships with the people there, using police intelligence and data, and sharing information with partners.

Q429 Sarah Jones: Do we have that now? That is the ideal. What do we have at the moment?

Andy Higgins: That is an ideal. There will be instances of it; I have come across some small places where I think something like that is happening.

Specifically in relation to the claim about the relationship between violent crime and police officers, do I think there is a relationship? Yes, I do. I think the answer is in the Home Office report. It very nearly says as much. It says things like, "The recent downward trend in arrests and charges for some crimes lessens the certainty of punishment" without exploring why there has been a reduction in arrests and charges.

I think we need to be clear about the mechanism. Are would-be offenders somehow doing some kind of high-risk calculus and weighing up their chances of being caught, and being emboldened to commit further crime? No, I don't think so, but do the police have the resources to maintain as strong an intelligence picture around what is going on in, say, local drugs economies, or around local gang rivalries, as they did in the past? I don't think they do.

Are the police doing as much proactive enforcement work to disrupt that kind of activity? No, because response policing and safeguarding have been prioritised. Are they picking up and problem-solving low-level disorder, and issues at an earlier stage, before they escalate and become serious outbreaks of violence? No, because the capacity of neighbourhood policing doesn't stretch to that at the moment. Are they picking up the young people on the edges of criminality and routing them into



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appropriate youth services? No, because they are not there and those services aren't necessarily there.

So yes, I think there is a link and I think it relates to police capacity and the broader system capacity to understand and address local risk and potential risk in a proactive way.

Garry Shewan: Your question gets to the heart of the debate. You voiced that question around violence driven by things outside of police reach, I suppose. In there lies the big challenge for policing—how do we get that back within our reach? I am not saying that the police are responsible for every ill in society, but I am suggesting that if the police service continues to operate a very silo-ed approach, as a very singular agency, and reacts to every experience of violent crime, we will never get under the skin and get an understanding of why that violent crime is happening.

Where you have a commitment to engage properly—I don't just mean telling, or consultation, but looking for a real sense of empowerment and real democracy in our communities—and where police officers spend their time understanding why things happen on our streets and in the community, you start bringing some of the solutions back under police control. Rather than reacting with a very singular crime-related response, you start to see police officers bringing together real strategies to actually understand why crime is happening, who you need to get on board and how you involve others in that solution.

As somebody who spent a lot of time in Greater Manchester during the time of the old "Gunchester" tag and the violence we saw in Manchester in terms of gun crime, it was getting Mothers Against Violence—the community—to really open up and work with the police service that made a big difference. What we need to do is have a police service that stops seeing things as beyond our control and reacting to it in a very simplistic way, and that actually spends time reinforcing the fact that we want to do this together and to do it with shared solutions. That is the whole point of talking about this today.

Q430 **Sarah Jones:** Is there currently the capacity to do that to anywhere near the degree that we need to be doing it in order for it to work?

Garry Shewan: Andy is shaking his head there. While I understand that the common expectation is that there is not the capacity, the reason that the capacity isn't there is because policing is dominated by this level of demand that is in our communities that we are not doing anything with. We have to break that cycle. We can get that capacity. We can commit more resources to specialisms if we start breaking the cycle of the problems that are in there. To do that means that we have to start doing policing in a very different way. We have to start trusting the community to do more. In Greater Manchester, we invested in Wythenshawe safe spots, which saw the community take responsibility for some of the aspects of domestic abuse that perhaps had always been seen as the role of policing. There were third-party reporting centres.



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There are huge strengths within our communities. We need to sit down and work out where the parameters of that sort of co-operation and partnership are. If we do that, we can actually start reducing demand. If we start reducing demand, we can start putting the capacity where you want professional, skilled police officers to be able to work.

Jeff Boothe: If we continue to focus on whether or not we have enough police officers, we are missing what we should be doing with what we have got already. We need to be as effective and efficient with the resources that we have. We have to look at it not just purely as a policing problem. We need partners—local authorities, voluntary sector, the community—to all be saying, “What part can we play in this?”

A lot of the violent crime that is occurring is being committed by youths under 25. What are we doing with families to get a better understanding on the root causes of that? A lot of it is through working multi-agency, so community MARACs—multi-agency risk assessment conferences—looking with partners at what the key issue is, what is causing it and how we prevent it. A lot of it is about getting in as early as possible, in primary schools, and trying to divert young people from that course of behaviour.

It has been said before that it is a whole-systems approach. If we continue to focus purely on police officer numbers while this is ongoing, we are missing a trick. I would say that yes, we still need to lobby for more resources, but while we are lobbying for those resources, people are still dying in the streets. We need to be able to tell the public what we are doing collectively with local authorities and local government to move this agenda forward.

Alison Hernandez: I would just like to build on that. On the structures you mentioned, there is infrastructure for policing to engage with. Community safety partnerships have shrunk over the years—they have fewer resources attached to them—but they used to be the platform through which all of that partnership working was run. You had every partner you needed sat at a community safety partnership table. We should raise the profile of community safety partnerships nationally, because there is not a national community safety partnership board; there is no governmental community safety partnership, as such. We have got them at every local authority level. The police lead many of those communities. They are often the chairmen of the community safety partnerships, and they often lead the partner resources.

The other infrastructure we have got is the local criminal justice boards. What are we doing with young people, in terms of teaching them? In our patch in Devon and Cornwall, we have got ex-offenders going into schools talking about the consequences of crime, and they are absolutely shocked that young people don’t understand the consequences of their actions. They actually come away really surprised that young people don’t realise that some of the things that are happening have consequences. That is a real issue for us.



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Through the courts, lots of magistrates are now committing short-term prison sentences for people because they have multiple offences coming before them, when actually community sentencing would be a better option. We need to build magistrates' confidence in community sentencing so they can deal with some of these individuals better. What we want is for them not to reoffend. If they come before us due to a violent incident or any other crime, we want to ensure they are managed well through the process and are not given short prison sentences for a few weeks, without much being done with them.

Q431 Sarah Jones: This is to Andy Higgins, or anybody else, if you have got any thoughts. Violent crime goes up and down, but the evidence about why it goes down when it goes down seems to be quite sparse. In terms of neighbourhood policing, is there any evidence you can draw on—other than, "This scheme seemed to work well"—to show that it has an impact on reducing violent crime?

Andy Higgins: Not to my knowledge. I don't really know whether the impact of neighbourhood policing on violent crime has ever been measured or tested.

Garry Shewan: With more than 30 years of service, I would say that when really effective reduction partnerships start having an impact, priorities tend to pass on to something else, and some of those partnerships then get broken up. Sadly, we see a cycle of violence, which runs adverse to the level and the quality of the reduction partnerships we have. That is why locality or place-based teams—teams that are committed, responsible and accountable to the local community—have to be there consistently to ensure we do not take our eye off the ball. Where good reduction partnerships are in place, we must continue to push them, invest in them, and perhaps sometimes pass responsibility to others. It is all very well police officers sometimes showing great leadership, but sometimes we need to pass that leadership on to others to allow police officers' skills to move on to different solutions. That is why accountability at a local level is so important.

Jeff Boothe: It takes a leap of faith to ask someone to continue to invest in something when they think the problem has gone. What will happen is that there will be some investment. If you are successful, you reduce the problem. The question is, "Why do I continue to fund that?", because there is no longer a problem. We know that the moment you take something away, within a year or so the problem reoccurs. It is the age-old thing of the cost of prevention, compared with dealing with the after-effects. Economically, it is better to continue to invest, but quite often, due to pressures, the money goes elsewhere.

Young people are crying out for those different services—the things that have been eroded over a number of years. We can expect something to be put in place and to have an effect overnight, but that is just not going to happen. We need to invest in the longer term to ensure we look not just at the current generation but the next one that is coming along, because they will follow the same path. Very few are given opportunities. We need



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to be a bit more innovative in how we look at it. Quite often we say, like the police do, "We could be working with business a lot more," because a number of young people are looking for entrepreneur mentoring and that type of thing. They could be given those skills if we could get business to get more involved. There are different ways of tackling the problem.

Andy Higgins: May I clarify? I am not aware of any evidence from the UK context. In America, particularly in Chicago, in community policing there is some good evidence of an impact of community policing, in a very different context. In terms of the broader, problem-oriented policing approach, there is evidence that can be applied to violence. That is a mode of working that I would certainly like to see neighbourhood policing teams adopting. It is slightly broader, but there is some.

Q432 **Stephen Doughty:** Senior officers, including the commissioner of the Met, have emphasised the role of neighbourhood officers in detecting extremist activity. Certainly, having had some pretty serious incidents in my community in south Cardiff of both Islamist and far-right extremism, I know the value of that. We have some fantastic relationships locally; we still have PCSOs funded, because the Welsh Government funds them. They play a crucial role. What are your views about the impact of reductions in neighbourhood policing and PCSOs, particularly on dealing with extremist activity, from the Prevent and the pursuit of intelligence side of things?

Jeff Boothe: It is part and parcel of the job. Whenever you go out on patrol, you cannot compartmentalise things; you cannot turn around and say, "All right, I am going to be looking over here for counter terrorism and over here for safeguarding". It is part and parcel of the training that they are given that when they see something, they have to look at what it could be. It could be someone who is missing; are they being exploited?

The ongoing training that we give officers is not to operate in compartments; they have to look holistically and identify. Quite often, if they are executing an arrest warrant and go into a house, one of the things they will look at is whether there are any young children or safeguarding issues, or things that might give an indication of exploitation or extremism. It is about having the viewpoint, whenever you are doing the job, that there are opportunities.

One of the reasons we look at combining teams is so that they share the knowledge. We look at combining our missing teams, our community safety unit teams and our extremism teams, so that they share that knowledge and when they go out there, they are as effective as possible.

Q433 **Stephen Doughty:** In terms of ongoing relationships of trust in communities over a longer period of time, you talked of a constable who had been involved in the community for many years and 6,000 people at the funeral. That is incredible. I am assuming that sort of gentleman would have the sorts of relationships that would enable that flow of information. Do you think there is a real knock-on when there are cuts or when there is constant staff turnover?



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Alison Hernandez: We all know that we are all responsible in our community to safeguard our community. If I go out and about, I hear elected members and professionals who have all been trained to be much more aware of some of these particular issues, especially around extremism. In the last figures that I saw from our force, around only 18% of those referrals that went to Prevent were from policing sources. The rest were mainly from health and schools settings.

It may well be that we have a big school-based referral, because we have had the Giraffe restaurant bombing—he went to one of our local colleges—so there is much greater awareness in our community. There are referrals from other sources; they are not all coming from policing. It is all about educating our community all the time about what these issues are. We all have a responsibility for reporting and helping. You can't just rely on police officers to be the ones who know everything.

Garry Shewan: When the police services seem distant from the community, that breeds worry about fairness and discriminatory ways of tackling crime. It is that distance and lack of local understanding that is a breach of how we effectively deal with terrorism and serious and organised crime—it is exactly the same.

If the information is not there because the community do not trust the police or do not see the police as being part of the solution, because they only see the police officers responding to whatever is the current most important item on people's political agenda, and if we allow that distance to grow and that commitment to neighbourhood policing to diminish, the long-term consequences for public safety will be very significant.

Q434 **Stephen Doughty:** Do you feel that there is a disconnect, particularly for younger people who are feeling that they cannot have honest, trusting relationships with police officers? When you have people more based in a community and they maybe have links with the local youth centre or a local place where young people are, does that make it better? A lot of young people are not going to walk into a station to report something or pick up the phone either.

Garry Shewan: It is not just about relationships; it is also about what young people are being asked to contribute to. Young people have some great solutions to a lot of the violence out there, if you engage and empower them to come up with the right solutions. If they feel that they are part of the long-term consequential change, the relationship between them and authority, whether that is police, health or politicians, will change immeasurably. If you look at forces such as West Midlands, Greater Manchester and others, they are using techniques such as participatory budgeting, where they use the Proceeds of Crime Act and give those proceeds to young people and communities, asking the communities to design out crime using techniques such as that. The impact of that will stay with those communities for such a long time.

That is where we have to start to see a change in policing. How do we start using great techniques in terms of engagement? How do we really



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start to ensure that they have accountability? Yes, I understand that we have to react when a crisis happens and when people are in real need, but we have to get the balance right between being able to do that and solving the problems and starting to change the pattern of crime in our communities.

Q435 Stephen Doughty: But if you don't have any identifiable community officer, PCSO or somebody, would you agree that there is a challenge there in having somebody to go to or being able to build that constructive relationship with real solutions?

Jeff Boothe: No, I think it is about looking at different ways of approaching it. To build on what has already been said, to take Croydon as an example, they just selected a youth mayor. We also have a young persons independent advisory group, but we make the point of involving them at the beginning, rather than coming up with the solution and saying to them afterwards, "What do you think?" We actually involve them at the outset, but you bridge that gap by speaking to their parents, saying to them, "Look, we want you to get involved." They bring their children along, we go to local churches—there are different ways of bringing people along, but you have to be authentic about it. If you are just doing this as a tick-box exercise, young people will see that straight away.

Alison Hernandez: One of the things that has been really interesting over the last few years is the role of police cadets. Alun Michael, the PCC, leads on Citizens in Policing. Police cadets, besides being the most exciting and enthusiastic people you will ever meet, are a really helpful engagement tool with young people. It is a very inclusive recruitment process for police cadets. We have all sorts of young people who apply. It is not a middle-class, white issue; it is for all young people to get involved. That has really started to transform the way that we are starting to engage with young people. Up and down the country, most forces now have a cohesive cadet culture. Sometimes, they do it as 999 cadets with others, so that is broader, but it has been a key change—a step change, I think.

The second one is public service courses in colleges, so we are talking more to young people about being in public service. I went to speak in our local college about the role of the police and crime commissioner: look, don't just think about being a police officer because there are other roles to think about. But the fact that we have those public service courses means that young people are engaging directly and are wanting to help and shape the future of those services, which I think is another exciting opportunity.

Finally, when you speak to young people, you will find they have often been victims of crime, but will never have thought of reporting it. The one thing that I have found in going around colleges and universities, or on the street, is that victim care, which was mentioned in the previous session and which does not feel like going direct to the police, as well as the victim care units that every force has now and that police and crime commissioners are responsible for commissioning, is the way to get their



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information from them. When I talk to them about victim care, they engage with me and say, "Oh yeah, I could do with that help." But when I mention reporting to the police, they think, "What are you talking about? I just have this issue that I need some help with. It might be criminal, but I don't know."

Q436 Stephen Doughty: You are absolutely right to mention the police cadets. We did some fantastic work to break down barriers between the local police and young people through both that and some other schemes. Unfortunately, it is very dependent on the individuals and the individual officers involved. If they move on and the next person does not take the relationship up, you have to start from scratch again.

I have one last question, which is about major events and incidents dragging resources away from day-to-day community policing. That is something I have been going on about for a long time in terms of the way Cardiff hosts major events such as the Anthony Joshua fight and the UEFA Champions League—we had the NATO summit, too. It is all great when it is happening—there is a great response from police and other police forces come in—but what is the knock-on impact on community policing resources if additional resourcing is not given? The Met obviously has a very specific set of challenges since it is in the capital city, but how does Manchester make sure that major events do not have a negative impact on community policing?

Garry Shewan: Sometimes, we have to accept that they do. For a long time, I was in a force that has a worldwide reputation for running football matches, political demonstrations and other major events, and for dealing with major gun crime and, sadly, the events of almost a year ago. Those are things that Greater Manchester Police has a worldwide reputation for. The community see that and, although at times they feel proud of what their officers do, they wonder why there is not that same excellence and commitment on the streets of their community. If you see that portrayed through the media every day—if you see the police receive accolades for running an event really safely—and you live in a community that is saddled with crime, you are perfectly entitled to start asking, "Why can't I see the same sort of professionalism and commitment?" Again, that is something that the police service has to start shifting the balance on in terms of ensuring that it becomes as excellent at local neighbourhood policing as it is at keeping people safe at the big events here in the UK.

Q437 Stephen Doughty: And resourcing it adequately.

Garry Shewan: Absolutely.

Alison Hernandez: We have a population of 1.7 million. Over the summer, we have 11 million visitor stays. We have major events down at our end. One of our challenges is summer policing—the challenge just becomes immense over the summer. People cannot take annual leave and things become quite stressful for officers in terms of trying to juggle everything, but that is just the way we do things down there. It has always been that way. There is something about the fact that it just becomes part of the norm of policing a large event versus being a local



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neighbourhood police officer. We just balance it, and we always have done. We make our event organisers do an awful lot, and I would like to thank the private companies that run some of the events. They do an awful lot—they put in an awful lot of safeguarding and security—to make their events successful.

Jeff Boothe: To build on that, I come from a public order background, and—this is not so much the case now in football—we need to ask whose event it is and whether the police should be putting as many resources as we are into it. We can then divert those resources back to covering the neighbourhood side of things.

Q438 **Chair:** I have some quick final questions. Do you think there is a good way to measure neighbourhood policing between forces? I started with the PCSO figures in part because they are at least tangible and comparable. Given that neighbourhood policing teams now operate in such different ways, is there any information that we should ask for from all forces that would give us some sense of comparison about what is happening in neighbourhood policing across the country, or is that just impossible now?

Garry Shewan: I would encourage you to start looking at and asking questions about the frequency and the level of problem-solving activity going on in our forces. Rather than look at numbers and outputs, you should ask, “How are you recording problem-solving activity? What is the level—the velocity, the extent—of problem-solving activity going on in communities?” It is problem-solving activity, particularly integrated with other partners, that is going to reduce crime and keep people safe, but we do not necessarily record that across the 43 forces in a comparable way.

Q439 **Chair:** Do some forces record that?

Garry Shewan: Some forces do record it, yes. On investment in technology, for example, when we went out to put a new IT system in place in Greater Manchester, the No. 1 thing that I insisted upon was having a problem-solving database in there, so that you could record everything that is being done on problem-solving activity and ensure that you can see step change over a period of time. I would encourage you to start working with Her Majesty’s Inspectorate and also the College of Policing to start seeing how we can measure forces’ level of problem-solving activity, because that is what is going to make the difference.

Andy Higgins: I would agree with that. One of the recommendations from our research is that police forces should adopt, and inspectors should ensure, clear and transparent labels for job roles, teams and units that convey what those in them spend their time doing. There is no point having a neighbourhood police officer, a neighbourhood patrol or a neighbourhood action team who spend their time doing response or enforcement work, or a neighbourhood action team—a nice, fluffy-sounding thing—spending their time going round putting doors in to do drugs warrants. Once you’ve got that, the categories that forces report their headcount into need to be reviewed and based on a far more realistic



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taxonomy that involves going out there, looking at how police forces actually structure their workforce and creating a typology based on that.

Assuming all that's tied down and things are what they say they are, there are some potentially interesting comparisons that could be made about the proportion of resource that forces are able to shift gradually over time from reactive, specialist back office into frontline proactive. That would be a really interesting thing to measure.

Q440 Chair: Norfolk seems to be getting rid of their PCSOs altogether, while some forces are putting all their neighbourhood policing into PCSOs. Different forces are taking different approaches. Do you think the range of different neighbourhood policing models, or non-models, is now wider than it was, say, 10 years ago?

Andy Higgins: Absolutely. It is an extremely varied set of practices across the country. There are a number of reasons for that, but it is a very nebulous concept. Part of the reason for that is rhetorical. People have liked to be able to talk about neighbourhood policing and the numbers of officers they have got in neighbourhood policing, without necessarily burrowing down into the functions of the things that those people are doing every day.

Having said that, there is some scope for localism. Things need to be adapted to place, but there is much more need for a structure. The College of Policing is producing some guidelines, and as part of that there is a definition being produced, which I would wholly support. Our research will support that with a set of principles that allow some flexibility for adaptation, but which try to tie down a little bit these kind of floaty concepts, to say, "If you're not doing this, you're not doing neighbourhood policing."

Jeff Boothe: I would probably take a slightly different look at it. You asked a question about how we measure. For the area that I am responsible for, the true measure is the feedback that I get from the community. For me, it is more about staff surveys or public surveys giving us the feedback to say whether or not they are confident and satisfied with the service that we are delivering, rather than just numerical measures about problem solving, because that is not the true measure. For me, it is the community saying to my office, or providing me the feedback to say, "I'm really enjoying being able to walk round my own community and work with you, and everything else."

Each community is different, so rather than trying to come up with a system that goes across different forces, I think we need to be more flexible and be able to give the public the opportunity to provide that feedback to us on a local level.

Alison Hernandez: I was going to reinforce that and suggest that the measures around neighbourhood policing are around public confidence in the local police force, which goes back to consent for policing. There are some measures already, through HMIC, around whether the local police



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understand the needs of the community, which is what you're saying, and whether they think the police are dealing with those issues. I think these are really good measures around neighbourhood policing. I think it is horses for courses in terms of what a model looks like. It really is about reflecting what your community needs. You might have a very active community that doesn't need as big a team. You might have a less active community that needs more help. It is horses for courses.

Q441 Chair: A final question—a hypothetical question. Let us suppose that you were suddenly given a 10% increase in your force's funding—I appreciate that that doesn't look like it is coming down the track at the moment, but just as a hypothetical. This inquiry is into future challenges facing policing. We heard of challenges in the previous panel around vulnerability and mental health, we have had sessions on online crime, online fraud and online child abuse, and obviously we have taken evidence on the terror threat and so on. There are so many different new and changing challenges for policing. One senior officer said to us: "the clarion call for more visibility may actually make communities less safe... As the patrol walks down your street, your child may be being groomed online." There are huge competing pressures here, and we have obviously taken a strong interest in the value of neighbourhood policing. If you were left with that 10% increase in budgets, hypothetically, and you had a choice of which of these new and changing challenges you would spend the money on, how much of it would you spend on neighbourhood policing?

Alison Hernandez: As a budget holder, shall I speak first? I would have to think carefully about that. The main priority is to make sure that people don't offend, and we are already investing. We have something called the Pathfinder scheme in Devon and Cornwall, which is a deferred charge scheme for first-time offenders who come into custody. They can get referred into a four-month contract to stop them getting a caution. It is victim-led, so the victim is part of the decision-making process, and we are having really good success. We are the second force in the country to do that. We stop people getting even to the first point of offence, because we find that the circumstances in which people come before us are challenging for them. These are not nasty, horrible people who are coming through our custody suites, is what I would say—

Chair: I am going to hurry you up—are you saying you would put the money into that, rather than in neighbourhood policing?

Alison Hernandez: I would say that I may well invest more in prevention. I would also look at what we are doing with prisons. I believe in the devolution of justice to police and crime commissioners, and local accountability for prisons, for probation. These are things about stopping offending, about stopping crime. I would think very carefully about how I would spend that money.

Q442 Chair: That sounds like no pounds on additional neighbourhood policing. You would put it into something else instead.

Alison Hernandez: We are really pleased that the Government have given us the flexibility for council tax this year, so all of us have been able to invest in policing.

Q443 **Chair:** I am conscious that I am sort of asking a caricatured question here. I am partly trying to get a sense of, given all the things coming at you, if you only had a certain amount of an increase, is additional neighbourhood police officers where you would put it, or would it go on something else?

Jeff Boothe: I would put it in research and analysis, because if you have done the research, you know where you can put your resources. It is about putting the right resources in the right place at the right time. The big issue that we have is that each organisation has information, but it is not analysing it. If we put the money there, we can use the existing resources more effectively.

Andy Higgins: I would put a significant amount of it into neighbourhood policing. I believe, if done well and in the right way, that it can impact on all those other things. In the quotation you mentioned, there is a real issue there in that we see neighbourhood policing as being about visibility. Neighbourhood policing is not about visibility; it is about local, embedded understanding of risk in context. To do that you need people in communities engaging with the people who live and frequent there, and who are at risk.

Garry Shewan: The level of unmet demand in policing in the UK would swallow your 10% up at a moment's notice. The only way to be able to start investing in cyber-crime, in terms of keeping young people safe, is to start taking that demand out of our system. The best way of taking demand out of our system is to ensure that you have an effective local response, to be able to start reducing the level of crime and therefore the level of demand. If you do that, you will get a 15% or 20% return to be able to put where it is really needed today—the terrorism, the cyber-crime, the keeping people safe, the vulnerable—but you have to invest to get that outcome.

Chair: Thank you very much for your evidence this afternoon. We appreciate it. Sorry that this session has gone on so long, but we do appreciate your evidence. Thank you.