

Written evidence from Jane Eades (PCS0081)

My concerns about the Police, Crime, Courts and Sentencing Bill.

- I perceive that the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill is a dangerous and unnecessary piece of legislation. It endangers the rights and safety of every single one of us. It is easy to predict negative consequences for the right to freedom of assembly if British policing's attitudes towards protesters, and the way their rights are protected, does not change too.
- The right to freedom of assembly will be compromised. The police would get substantially wider powers to impose restrictions on protests seen as “disruptive, noisy or likely to “impact” (in ways not yet defined) on businesses.
- Aggressive and confrontational responses of the police towards recent protests have been viewed on screens worldwide, bringing our country into disrepute. The Home Office fails to dispel impressions of deepening fear and fascistic actions designed to stifle non-violent public demonstration, for example about *Earth's climate*.

The vigil at Clapham Common and more recent demonstrations against the Bill, show clearly this proposed new legislation is problematic.

Public concern is both about the lack of protection for human rights and the lack of accountability about the way protests are policed now.

- Senior police officers, legally responsible for ensuring citizens' rights to freedom of assembly, have **no** clear guidelines for local police forces on how these rights are protected, yet have lobbied hard for even tougher powers. This is of special concern.

I have read the new **Charter for Freedom of Assembly Rights**, put together by Netpol and supported by numerous national and local campaigners.

It restates existing international human rights obligations that Britain has signed up to, bringing them together into a single document.

A detailed case for why this approach is important is available at <https://secureservercdn.net/50.62.198.70/561.6fe.myftpupload.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Charter-for-Freedom-of-Assembly-Rights.pdf>

This is a genuinely positive attempt to provide greater transparency & will ensure anyone wanting to exercise their right to protest has more clarity about what kind of policing they can expect.

N.B. A significant number of senior officers initially welcomed it, while they were contractually free to do so.

If adopted, the Charter would reduce uncertainty for everyone on a range of issues, from the use of surveillance and police powers to the treatment of people with disabilities. Whether individuals feel they can participate in public assemblies at all is currently in question.

Recent approaches to the National Police Chiefs Council asked for its leadership on policing in Britain: the Council was asked to adopt the Charter or offer an explanation why it was

unable to support this clear guidance. Its unhelpful, generic response is a statement* (see below) failing to address the Charter or the issues millions of voters have raised.

*** Standardised response by NPCC to all enquiries about the Charter**

"Thank you for your email regarding recent protests, vigils, and the understandable outpouring of grief and anger from women because of their experiences of violence, abuse or harassment.

Policing Protests is challenging and complex – and even more so during these unprecedented times. Public safety is, and always will be police's top priority, and this hasn't changed throughout our approach to the pandemic. Police forces have always sought to find the right balance between the rights of protestors and those of local residents and businesses, while also considering the very real risks from the spread of the virus.

As we continue to navigate our way through the ever-changing landscape of COVID-19 and the different challenges it presents, policing will constantly be reviewing, planning and preparing for every eventuality. In collaboration with the College of Policing we are reviewing our guidance to officers based on feedback from stakeholders and the policing inspectorate to ensure that there continues to be a balanced approach when policing protests."

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