London Assembly Police and Crime Committee - 23 February 2022

Transcript of Agenda Item 5 – Q&A Session with the Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime and the Metropolitan Police Service

Susan Hall AM (Chairman): We now move on to our main item of business, which is the question-and-answer session with the Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime (MOPAC) and the Metropolitan Police Service (MPS).

I would like to welcome our guests. We have Sophie Linden, Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime; Sir Stephen House QPM, Deputy Commissioner of the MPS; and, for the second section of our questioning, Commander Kevin Southworth, Head of Profession for Public Protection at the MPS.

Before I start on the listed questions we have, to start with, Assembly Member Duvall would like to ask a quick question.

Len Duvall AM: Thank you very much, Chairman. Could I just ask about where we are on the [Daniel] Morgan inquiry? I understand that MOPAC has decided not to pursue a complaint against the Commissioner [of Police of the Metropolis, Cressida Dick DBE QPM] because it does not reach the threshold. My further understanding is that the Independent Office for Police Conduct (IOPC) is still considering it or has considered it. The reason I am asking is that there was business that we were waiting on because it was delayed by that complaint. Equally, could the Deputy Commissioner explain to us when we are likely to see the MPS's response to the inquiry?

Sir Stephen House QPM (Deputy Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service): Thank you. My understanding is that the IOPC is still considering. Effectively, it is looking through what everybody knows is an extremely long report and is still reading through it to identify if there are any misconduct issues for any officers. The last I heard, which was just last week, that is still underway.

In terms of our response, we sent a preliminary or intermediate response to the Home Secretary and to the Mayor [of London, Sadiq Khan] in January [2022] and we are expecting to have our complete response at some point in March. That is a pretty firm deadline.

Len Duvall AM: The Commissioner has always been willing to face us in terms of these questions. Would she be willing to refer herself, then, to the IOPC if that is going to be the case? We are on a timescale here because the Commissioner is resigning. There is a date to be discussed when she goes. This Committee would like to hear her response to the issues and the criticisms raised by the family and the inquiry in terms of her particular role in her previous roles, not as a Commissioner but in her roles when the investigation was on. It is right that she should be able to defend herself but, equally, it is right that she faces some of the questions the family has raised, as well as members of the inquiry.

Sir Stephen House QPM (Deputy Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service): Yes, I tend to agree with you. I am sure that the Commissioner, who has never been backwards in fighting for her views on this one, would be very happy if she has the opportunity to. We are in a collapsing timeframe, I have to say, but I am sure that she will if she has the opportunity, once we think we can; she may have to talk to the IOPC about what she can say and when she can say it.

Len Duvall AM: Chairman, would you consider writing on behalf of the Committee to the IOPC and explaining the background and our concerns about the potential time it is taking for them to come to a decision on whether they think it is appropriate to investigate the Commissioner regarding these matters?

Susan Hall AM (Chairman): Yes, I would be happy to do that. I will write to Michael Lockwood, who heads it up, and see if we can get a response on that. Actually, while you have mentioned the Commissioner resigning, I will be honest, I had quite a bit of correspondence from frontline officers. All of us have heard what the Metropolitan Police Federation has had to say about the Commissioner leaving. It is appropriate that we ask our Deputy Commissioner, would you like to comment on the Commissioner going?

Sir Stephen House QPM (Deputy Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service): Thank you, Chairman. Yes, I would. I will begin by saying it has been an extremely difficult couple of weeks for the MPS and I can understand that people in this room and many Londoners will have questions, and I hope that I will be able to address some of those in what I am about to say.

First, I would like to reassure everyone listening to this that the mission of the MPS remains clear and steadfast. As I speak, thousands of officers are at the heart of the communities they serve, working to identify and to catch offenders, keeping people safe and building confidence in us as a trusted public service.

On the Commissioner's decision to step aside, I wish to start by saying that I completely and utterly sign up and believe in the fact that Chief Constables and Commissioners must be held accountable by elected politicians. Quite self-evidently, it is a cornerstone of British democracy, but this must also be accompanied by a fullhearted respect for the operational independence of chief police officers. This balance is also essential for democracy.

In terms of my position and how I feel about this today, firstly, I feel deeply disappointed. There is a clear procedure in statute laid down to allow the removal of a chief police officer. It has not been followed in this instance. It has not even been initiated in this instance. Due process has not been followed, and instead we have seen matters played out in the media. Because of this, I have written to the Home Secretary to ask her to have a review carried out of the events that have taken place and I would ask you, members of the Police and Crime Committee, whether or not you would like to look at what has happened here as well.

As well as feeling deeply disappointed, I am very surprised. Many of us are. Only a few months ago the Mayor was a strong advocate for a three-year extension for this Commissioner. Of course, I know that the indefensible messages exchanged by some police officers in Charing Cross Police Station have had an extremely powerful and toxic effect. My colleagues and I have read the content of those texts and have been disgusted, as any right-thinking person would be, by the content of them. We are all committed to rebuilding trust in the MPS and we entirely recognise that this has been affected by this and other shocking events and cases. Yet the text messages in the Charing Cross case cannot have been a surprise to this Mayor. MOPAC has been briefed on these events and they have been under investigation for four years. Only a few weeks ago, the Mayor was a vocal supporter of the Commissioner in a tripartite meeting with the Home Secretary. Hence my surprise at what has happened.

Finally, I feel extremely sad. I feel sad for my boss that her police career and lifetime of public service has ended in this way, and I know that I am not alone in feeling this. We fully accept the grave impact of recent events. All the decent people in the MPS - and that is the vast majority - recognise that we have much to do to root out those amongst us with abhorrent and unacceptable views. I am determined that we will do that.

The fact remains that everyday officers and staff serve the people of London with courage, compassion, professionalism and integrity, and I am extremely proud of how they are delivering on the Commissioner's number one priority of bearing down on violence. Violence in London is down, with thousands fewer robbery victims, knife crime victims and shooting victims, and record seizures of firearms. I am also proud of how we police extremely challenging and highly charged public order events with robust fairness, respecting the rights of people to protest when they do so in a lawful manner, while balancing the demands of Londoners to get on with their lives. I know our counterterrorism capability continues to lead the world despite ever-evolving threat and risk of attack. Our work on dismantling county lines, bringing offenders to justice and rescuing those enslaved by the line holders, is now adopted nationally as good practice.

Earlier this week I saw the results of the most recent survey carried out not by the MPS, but by MOPAC on behalf of the Mayor, which shows that three quarters of Londoners - 75% - continue to trust the MPS despite all of the current and very real challenges which we know we face. Much of that trust, I believe, is because the public look beyond the headlines at the daily actions of our men and women. I would pay tribute here today, as I do on every such occasion, to those men and women. I have absolutely no doubt that their jobs have been made more difficult by recent events.

I have heard that some people feel the Commissioner does not understand the seriousness of the situation that faces the MPS. This is simply not true, and it is not a view that is supported in any way by the facts. One simply has to look at the activities she has personally initiated since these issues came to light to see her steely determination to confront those who fall short of our high standards.

My final feeling is of sadness for London. The MPS has served this city for almost 200 years. Scotland Yard remains world-renowned for its investigative excellence. Our contribution to London goes far beyond pursuing criminals and maintaining the Queen's peace. Under this Commissioner we have increasingly been seen as an anchor institution as London has gone through some very turbulent years. But it is this city, its people and its visitors who have been deprived of the outstanding police officer of her generation. I have never worked with a finer, more ethical, more professional, more resolute, more dutiful and more caring leader. Thank you, Chairman.

Susan Hall AM (Chairman): Thank you for those words. I am actually pleased that you mentioned the things that are going right. The problem is that the media picks up on things that are wrong and, to be fair, that is the job of this Committee as well. We look for things that might not be going as they should because that is our job, but we must never lose sight of the fact that there are tens of thousands of officers out there doing their very best and doing very well every day.

Tony Devenish AM: I agree with every word you have just said, Chairman. We do not want this 'he said, she said' correspondence going on. Can I ask the Deputy Mayor, would you publish the correspondence of the days before the Commissioner announced that she was departing?

Sophie Linden (Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime): Thank you, Chairman. I was going to ask to respond to some of what the Deputy Commissioner has said.

After the publication of the Operation Hotton report by the IOPC into the goings-on and the investigation into the culture of the police station at Charing Cross, it was clear to the Mayor that something quite serious was going on in terms of the culture of the MPS. It was very clear in the IOPC investigation itself, which made it very clear that this was not a case - and I quote - of "bad apples". It was not the case that this was historic. It was not isolated. It also talked within the report about systematic cultural issues within the MPS, not just at

Charing Cross, that it had found as a result of investigations following what has been happening at Charing Cross Police Station.

I am not going to into the ins and outs of it - you are right, Assembly Member Devenish, it will not help anything to go into 'he said, she said' over the last couple of weeks. The Mayor was very clear to the Commissioner in a meeting that was held at Union Street as to the seriousness of the situation and he asked her to come forward with an urgent and comprehensive plan as to how she was going to put the house in order within the MPS and also, very importantly, would restore the trust and confidence of Londoners.

This is not just a case of a few headlines and media reports. When you look at the Public Attitude Survey that MOPAC undertakes, which is a very comprehensive survey of over 12,000 Londoners taken on a quarterly basis, 51% of Londoners said they had confidence in the MPS. That has plummeted since 2017. In 2017 it was 68%.

The other thing that you can see within the Public Attitude Survey is the gap between Black Londoners, LGBTQ+ Londoners and 'mixed' Londoners, as it is called within the Public Attitude Survey. For some of those categories, less than 50% have trust and confidence in the MPS. It was clear to the Mayor that urgent action needed to be taken. Through the discussions and the follow-up correspondence from the Commissioner, the Mayor was very clear that he was not satisfied with the scale and with the urgency of the response. Two particular things were not right, one of which was an acceptance of the scale of the problem within the MPS, and also a comprehensive plan to re-establish the trust and confidence of Londoners.

I believe the MPS has already published some of the correspondence on its website, and of course we will look to see what should become public. We will look that, in answer to your question.

Tony Devenish AM: You will come back to us with the correspondence or not?

Sir Stephen House QPM (Deputy Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service): There wasn't any.

Sophie Linden (Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime): The MPS has already published the plan that the Commissioner sent to the Mayor and we will look at if there is any other correspondence it would be appropriate to publish.

Susan Hall AM (Chairman): We need to look into this further. Clearly, there are disagreements on those figures that you are giving. It is unsatisfactory all the way around, but we will start our questioning on [Operation] Hotton now and we will look to go into this further another time.

I will start with you, Deputy Commissioner. What is your response to the Operation Hotton report, and do you accept all of the recommendations?

Sir Stephen House QPM (Deputy Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service): Thank you, Chairman. We are still within the statutory timeframe of when we respond to the IOPC; the deadline is 25 March [2022]. But I would not want anyone to have the idea that we are resistant to the recommendations. That is not true. We are simply working through them and will respond in detail fully to the IOPC. With all due respect to this Committee, the IOPC would not appreciate me going into detail at this point in time. I can assure you we are not fighting against these recommendations. Anyone who looked at Hotton and looked at the correspondence on WhatsApp between some of the officers was disgusted, as I was and all right-thinking people in the MPS were.

Susan Hall AM (Chairman): Was it between lots of officers or was it particularly just between two officers?

Sir Stephen House QPM (Deputy Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service): There were 14 officers who were investigated in total by the IOPC and they were looked at under 39 different instances of misconduct. Of the 14 officers, five are no longer in the MPS; three resigned and two were dismissed as a result of the investigation. Nine of the officers remain within the MPS.

There has been a lot of discussion and calls for all of these officers to be sacked, but the reality of the situation is that where the officers did not face a misconduct or a gross misconduct hearing, many of them were found to have no case to answer by the IOPC. This was an independent investigation run entirely by the IOPC, which decided that those officers had no case to answer. Calls to the Commissioner to sack officers whom an independent investigation has found have no case to answer in relation to these allegations would be a breach of any natural justice.

Susan Hall AM (Chairman): Yes, I am glad you have cleared that up because I have heard that a lot and it just does not seem right at all. Would you like to confirm that you cannot sack people anyway? Does that have to go through the IOPC, not like a normal employer, as it were?

Sir Stephen House QPM (Deputy Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service): The way this works is the IOPC will investigate and will then make a recommendation as to what should happen to the officer. If that is either misconduct or gross misconduct, the officer will face a hearing. For a misconduct hearing, there is no option to the panel of sacking or asking the officers to resign, but for gross misconduct there is a sanction of dismissal or requirement to resign. The IOPC will set the pace, as it were, as an independent body, by effectively telling the panel what sanctions are available. That is what happened in this case. As I say, for most of the officers, there was no case to answer or there was minor learning, which was looked at as something like sitting down with a senior officer to discuss what happened and make sure they fully understand what they did or did not do and what was wrong about what they did or did not do. These are not sanctions handed out by the MPS or by the Commissioner, but by the IOPC.

Susan Hall AM (Chairman): Yes, and yet these officers have had their names smeared quite badly. Do you have any comment to make on that, Deputy Mayor?

Sophie Linden (Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime): In terms of the findings of the IOPC and the Operation Hotton report, it has been very clear what the Mayor's and my reaction has been to that. I am sure it was the same for everybody around this table and it is the same for a lot of Londoners, and I must say it will be the same for the vast majority of police officers who are, as the Deputy Commissioner has already pointed out, serving London to the best of their ability. We thank them for that. We genuinely thank them for that because we know there are many brave and dedicated officers, many of whom I, over the years of being Deputy Mayor, have had the privilege of meeting and discussing their work with as well as going out on patrol.

However, what was found in the report from the IOPC into the WhatsApp messages and the bullying and harassment that took place in Charing Cross Police Station was shocking. The WhatsApp messages were disgusting and shocking and really will have absolutely shocked Londoners, as it did the Mayor and me. In terms of what has happened to those police officers who were part of that WhatsApp group and part of the investigation, it is a matter of fact that has been laid out by the Mayor that some of them - nine officers - are still serving in the MPS. That is a matter of fact and it is not wrong for Londoners to seek an explanation as to how that can be, because these shocking details of what happened during the course of the investigation that the IOPC has uncovered need proper explanation. We need to ensure that those officers that remain serving in

the MPS are fit and proper to do so. That is nothing that we need to apologise for and there is no wrongdoing in pointing out the fact of what has happened since the investigation and the misconduct proceedings.

Susan Hall AM (Chairman): If the IOPC says that they did not have anything to answer for, are you saying the IOPC is wrong? Is that what you are saying?

Sophie Linden (Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime): It is a matter of fact that nine of the officers who were part of the investigation are still serving in the MPS. It is right to question how that can be. If it is a matter of the regulations and the way in which the decisions are taken, that needs to be questioned. We must make sure that for those officers who serve within the MPS, because it is such an important task to protect Londoners, their ethics and standards and values are those that we expect to have within the MPS.

Susan Hall AM (Chairman): I hear what you say but, even so, if people have been shown that there is nothing wrong with what they have done and they have nothing to answer to, to be hounded in this way and to be put in this position, I think all of us would say natural justice is not taking part. We should be very careful what we say because the media pick it up and instantly everybody assumes they are all as guilty as each other, which is clearly not the issue. I will move on, but I am quite disgusted with the way this has been handled, quite frankly.

Sophie Linden (Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime): I must say that it is a statement of fact of what has happened. I am not really sure how you can be disgusted at that. This is a statement of fact of what has happened to those officers who were part of the investigation.

Susan Hall AM (Chairman): Who have been cleared.

Sir Stephen House QPM (Deputy Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service): Just because you are part of an investigation does not mean you are guilty.

Susan Hall AM (Chairman): Yes. Your comment?

Sophie Linden (Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime): I merely go back to the fact that what has happened to those police officers since they were part of the investigation is a statement of fact. Londoners deserve an explanation as to how and why those officers are still serving, two of whom have been promoted. That is a perfectly legitimate question to be asked. If it is a matter of the regulations that the IOPC or the MPS operate under, those regulations need to be properly looked at and will probably be reviewed and changed.

Susan Hall AM (Chairman): All right. I am going to move on but I would just say "natural justice" to you, Deputy Mayor, and I do feel those officers are certainly not getting it. I am sure we will come back to this at another stage, but I am really quite livid about this. It is grossly unfair to start making accusations against people who have been found by an independent board not to have any requirement for further action. It should be left at that. Why on earth should police officers suffer in a way that anybody working anywhere else would not? It is wrong. I will move on to the next questions because we are clearly never going to agree on this.

Caroline Russell AM (Deputy Chair): Londoners are really disgusted and utterly shocked to the core by what came out in that IOPC report. The descriptions of the WhatsApp messages cannot even be read out. There had to be a warning on the front of the report that said that there was very disturbing content in it. Londoners will be asking the same questions as the Deputy Mayor has just been asking about why those

officers are still in post. I just wanted to get that on the record because I have a different opinion to our Chairman. Thank you.

Susan Hall AM (Chairman): I am going to move on because we disagree on this. If people have been cleared, then that should stand.

Unmesh Desai AM: Chairman, I do not want to repeat what Assembly Member Russell has said, but I do share her observations. We need to get to the bottom of this.

Susan Hall AM (Chairman): I did say that, but, equally, we ought to be mindful of people's rights in this and we must not think that police officers do not have any rights here. I am quite disgusted by it all and the Committee will need to come back to this because justice has to be done for police officers as well as everybody else.

The next question is for the Deputy Commissioner. What progress has been made on the root-and-branch review of the Parliamentary and Diplomatic Protection (PaDP) Command and what are the emerging themes?

Sir Stephen House QPM (Deputy Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service): Members of this group will remember that the Commissioner initiated a root-and-branch review of the PaDP. If I fall into the acronym PaDP, forgive me, but that is what we are talking about.

This is a review that is being led internally but with very strong external guidance and viewpoint. It is working very sensitively alongside the Baroness Casey review, whom the Commissioner has asked to come in, and also alongside the Dame Elish Angiolini review, which was initiated by the Home Secretary. It is looking at aspects of the command structure within the unit and with the supervision levels to see if they are sufficient; it is looking at the shift patterns; it is looking at all ways of working within the unit to make sure that we can be as confident as possible that officers who are charged with often being armed and protecting important people and parts of the apparatus of government are as trusted as they can be. It is looking at aspects of vetting as well, but so are those other investigation inquiries, so it is working hand in glove with those.

We have not had full recommendations back from the review into PaDP yet, but we are expecting them in the next month so that we can quickly move to improve the situation within that unit.

It is difficult to explain in a short period of time just how unique the unit and the work it carries out is. With most police officers working in a police station in a territorial unit, they will parade together, they will be addressed on the parade by a Sergeant or their Inspector, they will work together and they will see each other several times during the day. The Sergeant and the supervisors can quickly get to know the officers and get a feel for whether there is anything wrong with the officers' attitudes or with their home lives, if he or she is under excessive stress for some reason.

That is much more challenging within the PaDP command simply because these are officers who effectively work on dedicated geographic posts guarding Parliament and other key buildings. They are therefore sometimes on their own and sometimes in pairs but are not directly supervised and are not engaging very regularly with members of the public, either. They are simply in an armed capacity to guard people and places. That has a particular challenge around supervision and that is what we are looking at in terms of the supervision, the shift systems, how they come together and how well people know the officers.

My personal view is the supervision levels within the PaDP unit are too broad, too wide. Sergeants and Inspectors are in charge and responsible for too many people and we will need to put more supervision into those units to assist everybody in the unit to make sure the standards that we expect are upheld.

Susan Hall AM (Chairman): Thank you. That is something that we might bring back to this Committee. They are certainly in a different situation. I have been out with them when they were in their final tests, having to decide to do different things. They have to change where they are going, and they have to watch all around you the whole time to make sure you are not in danger. It is quite a different sort of policing. I am sure the Committee would be interested in that.

Deputy Mayor, following the Commissioner's announcement that she will be stepping aside, what must the MPS do to assure you and the Mayor that it is doing all it can to urgently rebuild the trust and confidence of Londoners and to root out racism, sexism, homophobia, bullying, discrimination and misogyny from the force?

Sophie Linden (Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime): Thank you. It is interesting to hear what the Deputy Commissioner says around the lessons from PaDP that are emerging. This is one of the lessons that has emerged from the Operation Hotton report in fact, around supervision, supervision ratios and the different nature of shift patterns. It is interesting that they are common themes that come out with different dips into different units within the MPS. It is something that you should be interested in as a Committee as to what those things are from all the different investigations and reviews that have taken place. It is certainly something that MOPAC and I have been looking at within the MPS in terms of holding the MPS to account.

In terms of what needs to happen going forward to restore trust and confidence, it is clear, it has always been clear, and it is one of the great traditions of our police force not just in London, but across the country that we police by consent. The shattering of trust and confidence that has taken place over the last few years, but with recent events in particular, means that we really have got to a point where we need a step change in the ability of the MPS to reach out to communities and to ensure that they restore that trust and confidence. To do that, they need to be able to really show that they understand and accept the level and the links between the values, standards and ethics within the MPS and the service that their officers provide to Londoners.

That is what the Mayor wanted to see from the Commissioner and was not satisfied that that was forthcoming. What we will do when working in the weeks and months ahead is to ensure that there is that plan in place, not just to change the internal culture of the MPS, but also to ensure that that is externally facing and that communities can have trust and confidence in those officers who are out there, day in, day out, providing that vital service to Londoners.

Susan Hall AM (Chairman): I believe the Commissioner actually put proposals to the Mayor for how she was going to bring about these changes. That is correct, is it not?

Sophie Linden (Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime): The Commissioner did come back after a robust conversation with the Mayor and me at Union Street. She did come back to the Mayor having been asked for an urgent plan to show how she was going to restore trust and confidence in the MPS. That plan had a number of things within it around the internal organisation of the MPS that she was going to put in place. However, what it did not have, as I said before, was a sufficient acceptance of the nature and the severity of the problem, and also a robust plan of externally engaging with Londoners to improve their trust and confidence. It was at that point that the Mayor made it clear that he was not satisfied with the plan and the Commissioner resigned.

I would like to put on record – and it was remiss of me not to do it at the beginning – our thanks for the years of public service of the Commissioner, nearly 40 years of dedicated public service to Londoners, but unfortunately it got to the point where the Mayor was clear that there needed to be a change in the most senior leadership of the MPS in order to be able to make the progress that was needed.

Susan Hall AM (Chairman): Will we get sight of this plan? I would not like another Commissioner to come in to produce exactly the same plan and for it to suddenly be OK. Do we get a view of that plan?

Sophie Linden (Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime): The letter that the Commissioner wrote to the Mayor has already been published on the website of the MPS.

Susan Hall AM (Chairman): OK. You are expecting another Commissioner to come up with a different set of ideas?

Sophie Linden (Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime): I would expect an incoming Commissioner to work with the Mayor and MOPAC, as well as the MPS, to put in place a robust plan to improve the trust and confidence in the police. It will be for them to look at whether those points that are within the plan need to be continued, enhanced, increased or deepened. Also, it will be for them, working with us, to ensure that there is a sufficient plan to engage with Londoners and to improve the trust and confidence of Londoners, which we have seen shattered over the last few years. As I said, we have a proud tradition of policing by consent. Public trust and confidence has been shattered.

Susan Hall AM (Chairman): Is there a risk to this work progressing at pace now that the Commissioner has announced she is going? We are going to be having to spend a lot of time trying to get another Commissioner in. Is there a danger that this work will be put back a while?

Sophie Linden (Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime): We are in an interim period when the Commissioner will stay for a while to ensure that there is some solidity within the MPS. The work will continue. Our work as the Mayor and the Deputy Mayor – my work – will continue in holding the MPS to account and ensuring that it will continue.

Susan Hall AM (Chairman): OK. In your opinion, then, what does the MPS need to do immediately to start restoring public confidence and trust?

Sophie Linden (Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime): As I have said, the MPS needs to make it much clearer to Londoners that they accept the severity and the depth of the problem within the MPS and put in place a robust plan to engage with Londoners and to show them how they accept and understand the views, the sensitivities and the feelings of Londoners, and then how they can engage and ensure that they can restore the trust and confidence of Londoners.

Susan Hall AM (Chairman): The Commissioner is not here but I feel sure she would have said that she did understand the issues and she was working on it. Do you want to comment on that, Deputy Commissioner?

Sir Stephen House QPM (Deputy Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service): There are a number of things I would say and I will not extend the meeting by speaking too much, but it would be good if the incoming Commissioner gets some feedback from the Mayor or the Deputy Mayor on the plan that was put in because the existing Commissioner got none, despite asking. She submitted the plan, asked how it was being received and what was going on, and was given a stonewall of silence in terms of anything that she could do to

improve the plan. It is difficult to improve it if you do not know what the critics think needs improving. This is the first time I have heard any of that from anyone in MOPAC and the same is true for the Commissioner.

You keep using the word 'shattered'. I understand that. I am not sitting here being complacent. I am not saying that everything is fine; it is clearly not. We have major problems within the organisation to deal with the culture. I have never said it is a few bad apples - it clearly is not - but I still believe the vast majority of people inside the organisation are right-thinking, decent people.

I do have to go back to this survey. There is no point in doing a survey if you do not listen to what the figures say. Otherwise you are just wasting public money. The figures say, when asked, 75% of the people whom you survey trust the MPS; 14% are not sure whether they trust it or not but they do not have an opinion either way; and 10% say that they do not trust the MPS. One in ten say they do not trust it, but 75% say they do. If you do not use those figures, then stop doing the survey.

For the 50% that you quote, you did not use the full definition of the question, which was, "Have you confidence in the MPS doing a good job locally?". We fully acknowledge that we need to do more about local policing in this city. With the resources provided partly by the Mayor and partly by the Home Office, we are doing more to do that. We have put in town centre units.

In terms of confidence, you also mentioned this confidence gap, which is quite correct. There is no doubt that Black and other ethnic minority Londoners have less trust in the MPS than white populations, although, interestingly, a generalisation of the Asian community tends to trust the MPS more than the white population does. We are seeing more Black and Asian officers joining the MPS than ever. We are seeing the confidence gap reduce - not as much as we want, we do not want a gap at all - but it is still reducing. Those, again, come from your figures, not ours.

We are seeing more women join the MPS than at any time in its history. Every time I hear people say that the horrific circumstances of the murder of Sarah Everard by one of my colleagues have destroyed the confidence of women in the MPS, of course it gives huge concern. As the father of two daughters it gave me huge concern, but we have more women joining this organisation than ever before although, sadly, we have the first woman Commissioner leaving early.

Susan Hall AM (Chairman): Thank you. I have a list of people who want to come in on this.

Sophie Linden (Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime): Chairman, can I just come back on these figures that the Deputy Commissioner mentioned?

Susan Hall AM (Chairman): If you are brief.

Sophie Linden (Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime): I will try to be brief. I just wanted to come back on the Public Attitude Survey. Clearly, there are different figures within the Public Attitude Survey. The figures I am quoting are the figures that make up confidence. We were very clear at the outset of the job that I am doing. We have broken that down so that you can very clearly see where the confidence is coming from. Yes, a good job locally is at 51%, but if you look at fair treatment in the last Public Attitude Survey, if you ask Londoners if they think the MPS will treat them fairly, the largest gap is for Black Londoners, which is a gap of 29% from white Londoners. Some 50% of Black Londoners do not believe they will be treated fairly. If you ask mixed ethnicity Londoners, 47% do not believe they will be treated fairly by the MPS. Overall, these figures are the figures that make up confidence. There is no doubt about the facts and about the Public Attitude Survey being a very robust survey and we do take it very seriously.

Sir Stephen House QPM (Deputy Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service): You never quote the same figures.

Susan Hall AM (Chairman): Equally, problems with crime within the Black community is something that I have brought up constantly because we need to assist those communities. The problem is, the minute we do, we are accused of being racist or as near as damn it being racist. This is where half the problem is. We need to be speaking out where there are issues. It is because of this, it is because we are frightened, especially as politicians, especially as white politicians, we are frightened of even saying that. There is an issue with crime in the Black community in London. We need to help those communities, but God forbid somebody like me should be saying that. To be fair, our Deputy Commissioner has said it, as well as the Commissioner.

Now we are running very late. I have a list of people who want to speak after my questions. I will start off with Assembly Member Ahmad.

Marina Ahmad AM: Good morning, panel. Deputy Commissioner, as we know, Wayne Couzens was, sadly, also a serving officer at PaDP during the time of Sarah Everard's murder. The review announced into PaDP is said to have been examining vetting as a result of his awful crimes. Was the vetting issue localised and particularly bad within PaDP or has it been equally bad across the MPS as a whole? If it was just this unit, can you say whether the issue has now been resolved? Bearing in mind that we did ask these questions some time ago. I personally asked a number of them. I am hoping that there has been some progress.

Sir Stephen House QPM (Deputy Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service): Thank you. Firstly, let me say that vetting is an extremely important part of dealing with the problems that we have inside the organisation. The idea that we can stop people with the wrong attitude or unacceptable views getting in is a great idea if we can do that, and vetting can be strong enough to do that. It is quite clear that the PaDP review is looking at that. Baroness Casey will look at it. Certainly Dame Elish Angiolini will look specifically at the Wayne Couzens situation.

Again, I am sorry to have to say this. It would be wrong of me to try to pre-empt what the Elish Angiolini review is going to say and find about vetting. I do not mean to be confrontational, but there are a number of assumptions in what you say that there was obviously a problem with vetting - or at least I think that was what you were suggesting - with Wayne Couzens. We are not clear that that is the case. It is obvious now when you look at his background that there were potential problems, but I would remind people that this was a man who had worked in a previous police force, he had come to join the MPS, he came into the organisation through an unarmed command, he came in and worked in a borough for a little while and then went into an armed command. He did go through vetting. We carried out the vetting and we believe we carried it out to the appropriate standard.

We have raised the standard since and we are now looking far more at social media usage than we did in the past, but of course you will appreciate there is only a certain amount we can do with social media. WhatsApp, for example, which is a popular user group, is a closed group and we cannot access that unless we are doing so under a criminal investigation.

Marina Ahmad AM: If I can stop you just for a moment, Deputy Commissioner?

Sir Stephen House QPM (Deputy Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service): Sure.

Marina Ahmad AM: You talked about the fact that he came through from a different service as well. What people do find really quite shocking is the fact that the issues in that police service had not been picked up and he was able to come to the MPS and nothing had happened to stop him. Clearly, the process at the time was not as robust, but you have said that you have upped that and there are changes. That is good to hear, and I hope that the review will highlight changes that need to happen as well. Thank you.

Moving on, officers from this particular unit are responsible for guarding entry to Downing Street and are also based within Number 10 itself, as we found out from a previous incident involving a special adviser being marched off the Downing Street estate. *The Telegraph* reports that part of the 'partygate' inquiry shows that officers from the unit who were based at Number 10 gave extremely damning statements. Why did these officers not act to prevent the rule-breaking that was happening at the time, and will they be reprimanded for not doing so?

Sir Stephen House QPM (Deputy Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service): I confess that I am not an expert in the security arrangements in Number 10. If I was, I would not tell you what they were anyway because this is being livestreamed and so, for obvious reasons, I would not. But, yes, PaDP officers are involved in the protection of Downing Street. You will appreciate - and Members will know this - as you walk down or drive down Whitehall, you will see the big gates and you will see four or five officers standing inside the gates with firearms. Those are PaDP officers. They are not there to check people with Number 10 passes or parliamentary passes. They do not check the contents of what they are carrying. That is not their job. They are there to protect against terrorist attacks on Number 10 or people going in and out of Number 10. They are not there to check what is in people's bags.

I cannot say too much because this is a live investigation into events that took place at Number 10 and in the Cabinet Office, but I can go as far as to say that the vast majority of people to whom we have sent questionnaires are people who work in those buildings and who are already in the buildings. Maybe sometimes people have an idea that there were tipsy revellers walking down Whitehall with Christmas hats on, blowing poppers, carrying clanking bottles of wine and so on and going in. The point I am making is that - and I have to be careful not to go too far here - many of the circumstances that we are investigating were events that took place at the end of the working day or as an adjunct to the working day with people who were already in the building and had been there since 7 or 8am.

When you talk about officers stationed inside Downing Street, those are not the circumstances. Officers guard the gate and there is an officer on the door. Armed officers do not routinely - I will come back to this, so please let me finish - walk through the Cabinet Office or Number 10 Downing Street. One officer was involved - and again, I am hoping I am not going too far here - in responding with a civilian custodian who works for Number 10, not one of our employees, to a silent alarm that we believe had been pressed in error. That officer has been spoken to by the Sue Gray investigation and will be spoken to by us.

Marina Ahmad AM: Deputy Commissioner, are you saying that these serving police officers were therefore not going to stop rule-breaking and clear breaches of the rules at the time?

Sir Stephen House QPM (Deputy Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service): How did they know there was rule-breaking? They were standing on the gate at Number 10.

Marina Ahmad AM: They were listening to the parties in the garden.

Sir Stephen House QPM (Deputy Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service): Who says that?

Marina Ahmad AM: The information that we have at the moment, and I am sure that that will come out. The damning statements made by your officers there at the time say that there was an issue. If we can just move on from that slightly, would those officers have made the decision at the time to intervene or would they have had to refer it to a more senior officer? If that is the case, is that where the decision would have been made not to intervene?

Sir Stephen House QPM (Deputy Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service): You have my assurance that if we find that officers knew what was going on and should have intervened, then we will follow up on that, but I am not going to operate on the back of what the *Daily Telegraph* says.

Marina Ahmad AM: OK. Thank you very much. Now that you have received questionnaires back from those who are suspected of attending the parties, can you give an update of when you expect the investigation to conclude?

Sir Stephen House QPM (Deputy Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service): The Commissioner did say when she spoke at the last one of these Committee meetings that we will not give a running commentary. However, in terms of being held accountable by this group, we are operating at pace. We have sent out questionnaires to more than 50 people. That does not mean that we will not send out more questionnaires. It may be that when we get the first tranche back and we start looking at them, we see more people that we need to send questionnaires to. We are starting to receive questionnaires back and they are now being reviewed as to whether or not there is a reasonable excuse within that response that means that the person did not breach COVID regulations. If there is not what we believe to be a reasonable excuse in there, then we will go ahead to move towards issuing fixed penalty notices.

Marina Ahmad AM: We were told that this investigation would take weeks, not months. Do you still stand by that?

Sir Stephen House QPM (Deputy Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service): Yes, I believe it will do.

Marina Ahmad AM: Thank you very much.

Tony Devenish AM: Going back to the trust and confidence point, London is actually facing a very good thing at the moment – a jobs boom – but in terms of the trust and confidence in the MPS and almost an argument between very senior people on this panel this morning, I am hearing from frontline police officers that they are looking for other jobs. Are you, Deputy Commissioner, worried that if you do not rebuild trust and confidence and morale in the MPS, you are going to lose a heck of a lot of officers very quickly?

Sir Stephen House QPM (Deputy Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service): I completely acknowledge that the sort of events that we have seen – and also the much wider issue around the things that have knocked public confidence in the MPS and in policing – may give people pause in terms of whether they will join. But we are seeing, as I say, record numbers of women joining the organisation and we are still in the middle of one of the biggest recruitment uplifts that we have ever seen – in fact probably the biggest we have ever seen – in the MPS. Again, with support from the Mayor and from the Home Office, the organisation is now officially bigger than it has ever been in terms of officer numbers.

There is no doubt, however, that what you talked about first off, Assembly Member, the vibrant jobs market and the salaries that are being offered in London will be an attraction to police officers. I am seeing figures quoted that if you train to be a lorry driver or a heavy goods vehicle (HGV) driver, you will be on £50,000 straight away. The starting salary of a police officer in the MPS, with all the allowances involved, is about

£28,000 or £29,000 a year. We are in the middle of recommending to the pay review body what the pay rise should be for police officers, but we are looking probably at inflation of 5%. I doubt that the pay award will be at 5%, which means officers will fall back again. I have regular correspondence from my officers telling me that they are worse off now than they were six or 12 years ago in terms of take-home money because of the cost of living. There is a huge issue there around the remuneration package for police officers, which, in all candour, is more important as a driver for recruiting and retaining officers than the confidence issue.

Of course, morale has been knocked. Morale has been knocked for a number of reasons. We do not like the fact that one of our members is a murderer. We do not like the fact that we have a number of people facing rape allegations. It is horrific for us. Most people join to stop that, not to be part of an organisation where people are doing it. It is absolutely gut-wrenching for us. Nonetheless, most officers in this organisation are right-minded, right-thinking people who want to do the right thing. Of course their morale has been knocked, but they are still out there doing the job. Violent crime is still coming down. They are still dealing with terrorism on a regular basis. They are confronting armed criminals.

I would love you to have a look at the number of officers that we have injured. We had one officer injured over the weekend who suffered a bite to his scalp. He was in a domestic situation and he was attacked by somebody and he was bitten on the head to the extent that grievous bodily harm has been charged against the individual who did it. He is still coming to work.

Tony Devenish AM: Thank you very much. To the Deputy Mayor, while I agree with much of what you have said in terms of language and culture and how the MPS needs to change, do you think the way your language and culture with the Mayor and the way you are interfacing with the MPS is wholly proper at all times?

Sophie Linden (Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime): On your fundamental question about recruitment into the MPS, it is challenging at the moment coming out of COVID with a very buoyant jobs market. It is very challenging.

What is also very challenging - and you are right to raise it - is the issue of making sure that we recruit diversity into the MPS. There have been improvements in that, absolutely. The Deputy Commissioner is right to point out that we have real improvements in the number of women joining the MPS and we have also had improvements in the number of Black and minority ethnic people joining the MPS.

However, we have a long way to go, and morale in the MPS is one of the things that has concerned me for a long time, not just in the recent weeks with what has happened with the Commissioner. Morale has been a problem for a number of reasons, pay being a significant issue not just in the MPS, but nationally. Police officers have not been paid, have not had the increases and have had frozen pay. That really does affect morale.

I would also say - and I do not mean this in a combative way at all - we must also think about the morale of those officers who do witness the bullying and harassment that we have seen within Charing Cross Police Station and the morale of police officers who do not feel able to come forward to whistle-blow and are not supported in the way that they should be. Many do, and we have seen an increase in officers coming forward, but we need to make it much easier and support those officers who are wanting to do the right thing and to make sure that those officers within the MPS who are not doing the right thing are dealt with robustly.

Yes, recruitment into the MPS is a challenge at the moment. It is a challenge nationally for the whole of policing to ensure that they can get the officers in with the uplift that we are undertaking.

Tony Devenish AM: You did not answer my second question, Deputy Mayor.

Sophie Linden (Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime): Your second question in terms of my stance towards the MPS and the Mayor's stance towards the MPS? There are 1,300 additional officers in the MPS because of the commitment and the support that the Mayor has undertaken since day one in office. He has invested over £1 billion into the MPS. As I said, there are 1,300 additional officers in the MPS serving Londoners because of the support that the Mayor has put in. It is not just in terms of additional officers, but support with body-worn video, the rolling out of protective measures, improving the police stations and the buildings that they are working in, and improving the information technology (IT) that they are working with. If you want to talk about morale, when you go out with frontline officers and they are trying to use technology that does not work or are having to interrogate seven or eight different databases in order to be able to understand where they are arriving at in terms of response --

Tony Devenish AM: Deputy Mayor, I will leave it there. I know we are short of time. All I would say is with the language going both ways, we have to improve the relationship between you, the Mayor and senior officers, but I will leave it there.

Caroline Russell AM (Deputy Chair): I just want to pick up a bit more on the trust and confidence issue. For years, we have seen that Black communities have been complaining about disproportionality in policing and that has been a regular drumbeat of criticism. Over the last few years, we have had the murders of Gabriel Kovari, Anthony Walgate, Daniel Whitworth and Jack Taylor, and institutional homophobia may have been an issue there. We have had the shocking treatment of Bibaa Henry and Nicole Smallman after their deaths with the shared WhatsApp photographs. We have had the murder of Sarah Everard. Apart from the fundamental shock of a serving police officer having deceived, kidnapped, raped and murdered a Londoner on her way home, we then had the shocking way that the vigil was policed and the lack of understanding about what Londoners were coming out to express when they went to attend that vigil.

Then, with the IOPC report, we hear that, "We are grateful to those officers who were brave enough to speak to us about the cultural issues that existed within these teams, realising that in doing so they risked further bullying". There is a culture that seems to be very deep-rooted. I absolutely understand the Commissioner's support for officers. I understand the Deputy Commissioner's support for officers today. I cannot imagine what it is like to be a serving police officer with all of this going on, particularly if you are there for the good reason of policing London by consent.

My question for the Deputy Commissioner is: do you think that the MPS's response has been too defensive with all of this? I absolutely understand why you want to stand up for the good officers, but the IOPC report into what was going on at Charing Cross makes it clear that it is not just a few people who are doing bad things. It is an institutional issue. Do you think you need to be less defensive in order to help Londoners to really believe that you understand the shock that people feel at what has been revealed recently?

Sir Stephen House QPM (Deputy Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service): It is a very wide-ranging question and, frankly, I was with you up until you started talking about the vigil for Sarah Everard. Nobody in this room can be more shocked than I was or more upset than I was about the actions of Wayne Couzens, and that is true across the MPS as a whole. I have to remind people that when it comes to the vigil, that was investigated by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS), which came out with a report that basically said, if I may say so, that the MPS handled a very difficult situation in the way that it had to handle it because of the COVID regulations at that time. We saw it as a report that gave us some learning lessons, certainly, but did not criticise us in terms of our approach to that vigil and the way it was policed. I would, again, draw a distinction between what happened at that vigil

before 6pm and what happened afterwards when it turned from a vigil into a political rally, and a very violent and aggressive one, too.

I pick up your point about the quote from the IOPC and the reflection of the bravery of officers who spoke. I am being candid here. Of course there is a police culture, and of course it is based on teamwork and sticking together and helping each other, because it is a team job. Sometimes it is a dangerous job and a physical job and people get hurt, as I expressed a few moments ago. I, too, would pay tribute to officers who come forward.

We are rooting out more and more people who do wrong in the MPS, and the unfortunate downside of that is there will be more publicity about people being exited from the organisation, which will make it sound as though it is getting worse, when in fact we would earnestly hope and do all we can to make sure it is actually getting better by exiting these people from the organisation. We have a number of ways in which members of the organisation can talk to us and tell us about wrongdoing, and the numbers are increasing. In fact, over the last five years the numbers have doubled. We need to see them increase even more.

Let me tell you about one initiative that has been launched recently called [Operation] Signa. Signa is an initiative which came from the Network of Women, which is, as it sounds within the organisation, led by one of our Detective Chief Superintendents. She has helped design this system which is, in effect, an anonymous way for people - men and women, but it is mainly used by women - to tell the organisation about things that are happening to them that they are uncomfortable with. It does not name people, but it identifies locations and tells us where there are hotspots that we need to deal with. So far, it is proving to be extremely successful and popular. We are seeing more people coming forward to use the Rightline, which is a way of reporting it, and more people coming forward to supervisors to call out problems.

Let me just quote something to you. This is a personal message sent by the Commissioner to every member of the organisation on 4 February [2022], so not that long ago,

> *"For only the third time since I became Commissioner in 2017 I am writing to every member of the Met because I feel so angry that public confidence is being damaged by too many unacceptable instances of poor conduct, nasty and inappropriate behaviour and a lack of respect. Put simply, there is no room in the Met for discrimination or prejudice: racism, homophobia, sexism, or any type of hate or disrespect will not be tolerated. If this is you, I have a message: the Met does not want you. Leave now."*

It finishes by saying, "Enough is enough". This has gone out to every member of the organisation. Every member of the management board has been speaking since that date to as many officers as we can get together to read this to them and then to have a discussion with them about what has been happening. The vast response is, "We are angry as well. We do not want these people inside the organisation". The Commissioner has led this effort personally and is actually still doing it. She is still going out and talking to officers about this now to say, "Look, we do not want you in the MPS. If you are like this, if you think like this, if you behave like this, get out. If you know somebody who does think like this or behaves like this, tell us who they are and we will get them out". We are serious about this.

Maybe we have not publicised it. We are not perfect. I am not perfect. Cressida is not perfect. Maybe we have not publicised enough what we are doing. Maybe the passion does not come across enough for this, but it exists. It is real inside the organisation, and it will work.

Caroline Russell AM (Deputy Chair): You are absolutely right about that communication piece because what perhaps Londoners have heard is a defensiveness. That passion for rooting out that completely

disgusting and awful behaviour that has been shown by some officers – and I really do realise it is not every MPS officer – but people need to hear that communication piece to avoid the MPS appearing to Londoners to be defensive.

Sir Stephen House QPM (Deputy Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service): I fully accept that. If I may say, Chairman, the Commissioner goes on Eddie Nestor [BBC Radio London] on a regular basis. She goes on [the Nick] Ferrari [radio show] on a regular basis. This is the language she uses. She does speak about her disgust and her anger at this. She was on Eddie Nestor only a couple of weeks ago saying exactly that. I heard her say it. She had a tough time and he asked her some difficult questions, but her response is genuine to these things. I hear what you are saying.

Susan Hall AM (Chairman): Thank you. Yes, I have heard her say that. Many of us have. Unfortunately, the media does not pick up on that. They pick up on comments – very often, colleagues, by politicians – and use those against officers.

Emma Best AM: I just wanted to briefly ask a question of you, Deputy Mayor. Earlier when you thanked a serving police officer, it was almost like an afterthought. From many of the police officers I spoke to in the last few weeks, that is the feeling that they get from the Mayor and you supporting them as Deputy Mayor. You have talked about the trust being shattered and the Deputy Commissioner has been quite open and honest, especially in that answer just then, in saying that he and Cressida Dick are not perfect and mistakes have been made.

What comes out of this for me, and the trust and confidence issue, is that there seems to be no culpability from either you or the Mayor. Have you made any mistakes in the last few years? Can you admit that perhaps both you and the Mayor have not been perfect?

Sophie Linden (Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime): Just on your question around support for officers, it is not an afterthought. Since I took this post up and since the Mayor took his post up, we have done nothing but support the MPS in every way, from being alongside them on patrol when we can with police officers, listening to them, talking to them, understanding their position and also, as I have already pointed out to Assembly Member Devenish, the really important issue of investing in the MPS. The Mayor has invested record amounts.

Emma Best AM: It is not a question of investing. It is a question of whether any mistakes have been made. You can invest in something and it can still be a mistake. We are not talking about money. We are talking about whether you or the Mayor have made any mistakes.

Sophie Linden (Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime): Your question was in two parts. One was about not supporting frontline police officers and I am answering that part of the question. I will come on to the other part. I strongly refute the fact that you suggest that we have not supported frontline police officers. We have done so. One very concrete way that that can be shown is by the record amounts that the Mayor has invested in the MPS, switching business rates for the first time ever into the MPS. That has been a matter of public record, the amount, and the fact that there are 1,300 additional officers on the streets of London because of the support that the Mayor has had.

Of course, in anybody's job and having done this job for a number of years, there are things that I should have done better. Of course there are lessons that can be learned and of course I will always look to see what lessons can be learned. Whether that be lessons around holding the MPS to account, whether that be lessons in the way that we have invested our money, I have always looked back and thought, "OK, then, what lessons

can be learned, what should we be doing about this and how should we be doing things differently in the future?"

Emma Best AM: I have not suggested that you have not supported officers. I do not have to. It is the police officers on the ground who have said it and continue to say it. It is that relationship that you need to work on, not the one with me, not proving anything to me, but with officers. I do appreciate you saying that you have made mistakes because it has felt, over the last few weeks especially, as though, from the Mayor and you, the Commissioner is now the scapegoat and all fault is being laid at the MPS's door. I appreciate that you today take some of the burden of those mistakes on your shoulders, too.

Unmesh Desai AM: Continuing the theme of trust and confidence in policing, my question is to you, Deputy Commissioner. Were you aware of a speech that Sir Michael Barber made yesterday, as reported in *The Guardian*? He spoke at a webinar organised by the Centre for Policy Studies. I am not going to put you on the spot. His report is coming out. It is a national report. It is a Strategic Review of Policing in England and Wales with 54 recommendations. It is going to be published in two weeks' time.

This is what he had to say in advance, "There is a clear crisis of confidence in policing in England and Wales". I am not going to go into the stats, whether it is 51% or whatever. This is the person who is leading a strategic review of the future of policing in our country. He himself says,

> *"There is a clear crisis of confidence in policing in England and Wales. This is not just the result of recent high-profile issues, but is far more fundamental. Huge societal, technological and environmental changes are happening at warp speed yet too often policing seems stuck in the past, hardly fit for the present — let alone the future."*

What he says is, talking about Charing Cross Station,

> *"Taken together with some deep-rooted issues around professional development, training and leadership, the challenges for our police are great and growing (…) I hope [our report] will mark a fundamental turning point in the modernisation of a public service that matters deeply to us all."*

Should we not be looking at this debate in a much wider context, that the police service, not just the MPS, needs to come to grips with the fact that it needs to modernise very quickly? He also had this to say. He says that we have a "Betamax police force" unsuccessfully pursuing "blockchain-enabled criminals", which I thought might be a bit harsh, but that is what he had to say.

Sir Stephen House QPM (Deputy Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service): Yes, it is a lovely soundbite but I do not agree with it. Unfortunately, I have factual reasons not to that I cannot tell you about. There are ongoing investigations that the MPS is leading that are cutting-edge, global-leading investigations into issues that I am already saying too much about. I do not agree with his analysis.

It is a very interesting and valuable question. Where is policing in general? We are responding to constant and growing public expectations and ethically hugely difficult decisions will be explained and justified all the time. We hear, "Tell us why you are doing this. Why are you not doing this? Why are you doing this?" while we are carrying out an investigation and we cannot comment. Everything is a priority and resources are finite.

I fully agree with the Deputy Mayor. The Mayor has given us extra money and funding has been good in the last few years. But we are moving into a technological age that we have never been in before. We are going through two technological introductions of a new command and control system. Our current command and

control system is something like 35 years old. I do not think anyone in this room would have technology in their house that is 35 years old.

Unmesh Desai AM: According to Sir Michael Barber, it is actually 50 years old.

Sir Stephen House QPM (Deputy Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service): There you go.

Unmesh Desai AM: He does help to argue the case for you to be given more support in terms of technology and so on.

Sir Stephen House QPM (Deputy Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service): Yes. We are still rebuilding a police service that is emerging from a decade of austerity and one of the signs of that is, yes, we are bringing in record numbers of officers, but these are inexperienced officers who need extra supervision, not less supervision. That is a problem for us.

Unmesh Desai AM: He also talks of the impact of cuts to the police service and the need for more support from the Government.

Sir Stephen House QPM (Deputy Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service): Maybe I am making an assumption here, but I see society as becoming a less deferential society towards authority on a daily basis. I am not saying that is a bad thing, particularly. Unstinting deference to authority is not a good path to be on. We are being required to be accountable more and more. Cressida will regularly have said - not in this building, but in this forum - that the MPS and policing in the United Kingdom is held to account more than any other public body, and I firmly believe that to be the case.

I am sure if I read his report - and I am afraid I have not yet - I may agree with much of it. Society is going through changes; the police service is having to go through those changes as well. We cannot do so at the same pace as the private sector because we do not have the money it has and we, therefore, have to rush to keep up.

In terms of the leadership and so on, I am happy to go on record that the previous Government's decision to close the Police Staff College at Bramshill was a disastrous mistake to make and has damaged police leadership across the UK, but that ship has sailed, I am afraid.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM: I just want to say as I move into my questions that it has been painted this morning very black and white that one side must be right or the other. Actually, it is somewhere in between. Londoners have felt, as a colleague has said, really concerned about what has come out. You may well internally have been very concerned as the MPS, but that has not always come across. That is a real challenge. Also, the Mayor and co. may not have followed the process that one would expect in this sort of situation.

How do we rebuild trust and confidence in the MPS? First of all, to the Deputy Commissioner, what is the MPS doing to proactively engage with different communities in London? We have talked a bit about, for example, the Black community this morning, but also the LGBTQ+ community really feels you have damaged that relationship given the Stephen Port inquests. What are you doing and what more are you going to be doing to rebuild trust?

Sir Stephen House QPM (Deputy Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service): It is slightly invidious - and I know you do not mean this - to divide people up into communities and badges like that, but to go with

it, in terms of our desire and urgent need to recruit more Black candidates into the organisation, we have done a huge number of things. Let me just pick a couple.

We knew very early on through our analysis that when Black candidates came forward to join the MPS they were being disadvantaged. There was something in the system that was making them not succeed at the rate that they should have, given their academic qualifications and their life experience. We went through a review with the Home Office and the College of Policing to fix the system, and that has resulted in changes to the national recruiting process. Now, we had to do that twice. The first time, it helped a bit but did not solve the problem. We are now in a situation where Black candidates coming forward to join the MPS are equally as likely to get in as white candidates are. It was at our insistence that we have that review; we worked with the Home Office and the College of Policing to do that and we think we have sorted some areas out there.

Continuing on recruitment, all Black candidates who join the MPS are given a buddy for their first couple of years in the organisation because we need to do something about our retention rates. We lose more Black officers in the first couple of years than we should. We know that, and we know that is a warning signal we have to chase down. We have appointed a Chief Inspector on each of our 12 Basic Command Units (BCUs) with a specific role to look at retention levels for Black officers and women officers in the organisation so that we do not lose people that we are fighting to bring into the organisation.

We have an outreach team of over 50 officers, who are very diverse ethnically - a lot of Black officers and a lot of Asian officers - who are working all the time in the community to try to encourage more Black and Asian candidates to join the organisation. We work very closely with the Metropolitan Black Police Association and with the Association of Muslim Police as well and I meet with them both very regularly to talk about what more we can do. I have led the Deputy Commissioners Delivery Group, which has responded to the Mayor's Action Plan around diversity issues following Black Lives Matter and other events and that work has gone well, in general. There is still more to do, but we have moved things along very well, I believe.

In terms of LGBTQ+ - I hope you know this - we have a very longstanding and very active independent advisory group (IAG) with that community, who have been, quite rightly, very challenging towards us in and around the horribly disappointing results coming from the Stephen Port inquest. They have been challenging, but they have not severed their links with us. They have continued to work with us and are still working with us to try to improve our officers' understanding.

We are bringing in a whole raft of new training for officers, all the way from new recruits through to detectives, in terms of effectively spotting issues. There should be that natural curiosity and nosiness that we expect, frankly, from police officers to go, "Oh, that's a bit strange, isn't it?" which seems to have been lost, possibly through overwork, possibly through lack of supervision or too wide a supervision.

We are working with the communities to try to learn from them and also let them see what we are doing to give them extra confidence. This is not me being defensive and I am not trying to grasp at straws here, but certainly the senior officer, [Deputy Assistant Commissioner] Stuart Cundy [QPM], who gave evidence at the inquest was highly praised at the inquest for the depth of the work that was being done, the work that he was leading following the review of what went wrong and how to fix it. I have not got the detail here, but we can certainly bring forward detail if you want to see it of what has been done and what is being done to make sure the possibility of these sorts of things happening again are absolutely minimised.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM: That is reassuring in terms of making sure the force looks like London and those sorts of processes. You have mentioned the IAG, but what about other community groups and what

about other LGBTQ+ fora that exist in London? What are you doing to reach out to them to work with them to try to boost the confidence in the MPS?

Sir Stephen House QPM (Deputy Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service): Again, I go to the systematic answer, but there is much more behind it, which is that every BCU has a performance target that they will engage in at least 12 meaningful initiatives with community groups per year. That is in our performance framework and that is being measured on a weekly basis by myself at the Performance Group on a six-weekly basis. We are putting into the performance framework that they are expected to do that, but we also have a significant presence, as you will know, on each BCU of community officers who will reach out into the communities. That is not just the local officers on the local units but also specialists who work within Community Support Units on the BCUs whose job it is to make sure that those contacts exist and are improved. Of course, that has taken a knock following Stephen Port. We know that, we do understand that, and it is completely understandable that it has because if you look at what happened, the organisation failed people quite clearly in that situation. We are working hard to make sure the public understand that we acknowledge that and that we are changing the way we work so that we minimise the chances of it happening again.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM: Lovely, thank you. I would be interested to see the BCUs' 12 per year to get a flavour of that, please, if that is possible.

Sir Stephen House QPM (Deputy Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service): OK.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM: I am sure other Members would be interested in that as well. I would like to move on to Baroness Casey's independent review. We were told that work was due to start in January 2022, reviewing the MPS's culture and standards. Has that actually started?

Sir Stephen House QPM (Deputy Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service): Yes, it has. I cannot give you the exact date in January but, yes, it did start. She and one of her colleagues met with the Management Board in January and work has started. She is in and around Scotland Yard on a regular basis now and I know she has met the Deputy Mayor. She has certainly met the Mayor, last week I think, and, yes, she is up and running.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM: Good, lovely, and it is still expected to take nine to 12 months?

Sir Stephen House QPM (Deputy Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service): It is, but the Commissioner has been very clear, and Baroness Casey has been equally clear, that we will not wait until that time to get recommendations. It will be a rolling programme.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM: Good. How are both the Baroness Casey review and then the MPS's Rebuilding Trust Action Plan being linked to make sure that there is no duplication?

Sir Stephen House QPM (Deputy Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service): That is a really good question. There are a lot of moving parts here. As I said in response to an earlier question, you have the PaDP review, you have the [Dame Elish] Angiolini review, you have the Baroness Casey review and you have our own Rebuilding Trust work, which has got its programme of 20 deliverables that we are working on in the short, medium and long term. There is a lot going on, but we do have a small team of people whose job it is to coordinate. We have people working alongside - not embedded with but working alongside - the Casey review and the Angiolini review to make sure that they are getting access where they want it and to deconflict where necessary. It is a small team and it is a very specialist but high-powered team that is doing that work. The Commissioner chairs our Rebuilding Trust Board every two weeks and part of that is to make sure that

everything is working in parallel and is not getting in each other's way. [Dame Elish] Angiolini has complete independence and Baroness Casey, knowing her as an individual, would not have taken the job on if she did not have independence to do it. If they want to duplicate, I guess they will, but it is to try to make sure that it is all coordinated.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM: Will Baroness Casey's review be looking at the growing evidence of cultural issues, including Operation Hotton?

Sir Stephen House QPM (Deputy Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service): Absolutely. She and Cressida met recently, and the agreement was they will focus in on that as one of the first issues that they will look at, with no stone unturned. I met yesterday with one of our officers who is doing this coordination and with the Secretary and the Chair of the [Metropolitan Police] Federation for the MPS to talk to them about how they would talk to their members about full cooperation with both of the inquiries and they are very keen to do that.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM: Good, thank you. Deputy Mayor, given the volume of issues and increasing breadth of concerns, can you assure me that Baroness Casey will have the resources needed to be able to carry out this robust and detailed review?

Sophie Linden (Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime): Baroness Casey's review was commissioned by the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis, but if there is any issue around resources that should never be a barrier because this is such an important review for the MPS. It is a moment in time and an incredibly important historic review that is going to be undertaken. I have met with her twice recently, and one of my concerns about the review is its breadth and the ability to do it as quickly as possible, given the position we are in. Those interim findings and learnings as she goes along are going to be incredibly important because the complexity and size of the MPS mean that she has got a real challenge on her hands. However, I would say that I have complete confidence in the MPS, and the Commissioner and the Deputy Commissioner have been very clear that she can go where she wants to go. She can ask for what she wants to, for the data and whoever she wants to speak to, and I have confidence that that will happen.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM: But her terms of reference do not specify homophobia, racism and sexism. Given the Mayor's recent comments, is that something that you would support being included in those terms of reference so it is very clear that all these areas will be looked at?

Sophie Linden (Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime): We do not need to reopen the terms of reference. The terms of reference are wide enough and they are to look at the culture of the MPS. I have spoken to her about this, and it is very clear that where she needs to go, she will go. Yes, of course, she will look at all those areas and those aspects of culture, but because the terms of reference are wide enough to do that, you do not need a list within that to enable her to do it.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM: OK. Finally from me, I read in the press that HMICFRS carried out a review the Home Secretary had asked for into anticorruption procedures following the [Daniel] Morgan report. It states that this was handed in and you were briefed on it the week that the Commissioner then resigned, and it is extremely damning. Are you able to comment on that and are you able to advise us when that report will be published?

Sophie Linden (Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime): I am not able to comment on that because I was given a confidential briefing on that. The report is now with the MPS for factual accuracy and we will have to wait for it to be published in its final form.

Sir Stephen House QPM (Deputy Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service): The Deputy Mayor is correct. It was with the MPS for factual accuracy. We had done that - our deadline was Monday [21 February 2022] - and it has gone back to the HMICFRS for them to consider our comments and then to produce the final report, which I believe will be towards the end of March [2022].

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM: Thank you very much.

Marina Ahmad AM: This is a question for you both. The terms of reference for the Government's own inquiry into the specific failings associated with Sarah Everard's murder, which will cover vetting and the missing of red flags, which we have covered, were released this month and the report is due to be published later this year. The Government has said that the inquiry has been established on a non-statutory footing, but if necessary the Home Secretary may agree to convert it into a statutory inquiry following advice from the chair. Do you feel that this should have been a statutory inquiry from the start, as many charities and legal groups have called for, or are there benefits to bringing it in on a non-statutory footing? Deputy Mayor, if you would like to start.

Sophie Linden (Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime): I understand the reasons why people want it to be a public inquiry. I absolutely understand that, because there are powers that come with that and the ability to call witnesses and everything like that. However, I also understand why it has been set up as a non-statutory inquiry and it links back to the questions around the speed at which Baroness Casey is going to do her review. I think and I hope that the fact that it is not a statutory inquiry means that that inquiry will proceed much more quickly than it would have done if it were a public inquiry. If it does not, it should be reviewed as to whether it should move to a public inquiry, but at the moment we should allow Baroness Angiolini to do her job to get going as quickly as possible, which she is doing, and to make sure that it is as fast as possible. A public inquiry often gets mired and takes years and years to come to a conclusion.

Marina Ahmad AM: Thank you. Deputy Commissioner, did you have anything to add?

Sir Stephen House QPM (Deputy Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service): I tend to agree. I am quite sure Dame Elish Angiolini is capable of deciding if she wants it to become a public inquiry and she will not be backwards in saying so if she thinks that is the right way to go. I do think there are advantages in the way it is being done at the moment. If it needs to convert, then we will be supportive of that.

Len Duvall AM: On Operation Signa, we might want some written commentary back with some further evidence about how you think it is proceeding and the success. My question relates to the urgent review that you have commissioned into current investigations into allegations of sexual misconduct and domestic violence against officers and staff within the MPS. In addition to the dip sampling from the last ten years, what are the findings and when will the insight report to capture or identify organisational learning be published?

Sir Stephen House QPM (Deputy Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service): I cannot answer you directly, I am sorry. I have not seen it yet. We are waiting for it in terms of what can we learn from it, what did we not get right in the past, was it a resourcing issue, was it a focus issue and were we blind to something. We are very keen to get it. It has not reached my desk yet, nor the Commissioner's.

Len Duvall AM: Do you think it is nearing completion?

Sir Stephen House QPM (Deputy Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service): It is very close, yes. It is very close. It is probably in here somewhere, but I cannot find right now when the date is but, yes, I would say it is a matter of weeks away.

Len Duvall AM: Can you relay a letter to this Committee as and when it is done?

Sir Stephen House QPM (Deputy Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service): Sure.

Len Duvall AM: It might well be a forerunner to any other report with some commentary around it in terms of maybe trying to answer that question when it is appropriate. Thank you.

Sir Stephen House QPM (Deputy Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service): Absolutely, yes.

Susan Hall AM (Chairman): We will make a note of that, thank you. We are now moving on to our second section, which is still Operation Hotton, but the recommendations, and Assembly Member Russell is starting that.

Caroline Russell AM (Deputy Chair): Thank you, Chairman. This is for the Deputy Commissioner. The IOPC recommended, "that the MPS should review and ensure the adequacy of its current training and guidance on the appropriate use of social media". How is the MPS progressing this and how is the impact of that training being measured?

Sir Stephen House QPM (Deputy Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service): Yes, it is a recommendation I would have made as well if I had been on the IOPC, and it is an easy thing to say. I am not sure it is as easy to deliver as all that, but I can tell you what we are doing. I speak to every new recruit now that joins the organisation. I am just focusing on new recruits for the moment. I speak to every new recruit for about an hour, which is about as much as they can stand, really, and probably 20 minutes of it is based on conversations about social media. I usually talk to them on day two of them joining the organisation so they are literally brand new and they are often quite shocked by the things I say to them about social media. We talk about what transgressions officers have had in relation to using social media and the horrific things that have gone on on social media in terms of images and in terms of language and expressions, and we talk about what is and what is not acceptable in very clear and stark terms. I have to say to you, the audience is quite taken aback at times in terms of what I say to them, such as, "You will already be in WhatsApp groups with friends who have not joined the Metropolitan Police Service. They don't have our standards, they don't have our values and they may well send you things on a WhatsApp group that you're already in that would not meet our standards. You need to think what you're going to do about that, because if that becomes known to us, we will seize your phone, and while we may do nothing to the people outside the organisation, you may well be put in front of the IOPC. You may go in front of a gross misconduct panel and you may lose your job as a result of this". That is quite a lot to give somebody on their second day in a brand-new organisation, but nonetheless we think it is the only thing that we can do. They then get formal sessions throughout their training in terms of what our values are, the Code of Ethics, what they should regard as acceptable or unacceptable, what we regard as unacceptable in the organisation, and more advice about their use of social media. They also get it from the [Metropolitan Police] Federation who come to talk to them about these things, they get it from our Professional Standards officers, who also come and talk to them about it. This all happens very early on in their training so that they get the message as early as possible.

On top of that, several months ago now, I wrote to every officer - and we put it on the intranet as well - that we expected more. This was sort of a precursor to the message I read out from the Commissioner, and one of the three things that we were saying to officers and staff then was about use of social media. There have been

too many unacceptable examples of use of social media inside the organisation and people had to start with themselves, "Am I blameless in this?". Then they had to think if they were in a group and people in the organisation were posting, they had to tell us about it because standing by and doing nothing was not acceptable. Deleting is not enough. They had to come and tell a supervisor about it so that we could root this out. That has been repeated by the Commissioner and it has been repeated by every member of the Management Board who speaks to officers.

We are looking at what we can do with technology, but you will realise there are legal issues here. We cannot intrude in people's private social media without just cause to do so. The idea that we can dip sample does not currently exist in police regulations and it would be a breach of people's freedoms and privacy, which many Members of this group would be unhappy about.

There is a question I have posed to Baroness Casey myself. If you join the MPS or you join any police service in the UK where we police by consent where we expect our officers to behave to a higher standard than members of the public and we give them powers, coercive powers, they can use on members of the public in the right circumstances, then do we need to set higher standards? Does there need to be a different set of legislation for police officers? In other words, they do not have the protection of some of the legislation which members of the public have. That is something I hope Baroness Casey will look at and may well make some recommendations about. If that gives the public and people such as yourselves greater confidence in the values of the organisation, then it may be worth doing. It would be a reduction in officers' rights of privacy and freedom of speech in some respects, but I do think it is something that needs to be at least considered before it is dismissed.

Caroline Russell AM (Deputy Chair): Certainly, before you go to that level of extreme intervention in officers' freedoms and privacy, it goes back to the second part of my question, which was how the impact of this training is being measured. Are you seeing people reporting stuff? What is important is that people feel confident to call anything out that they notice is racist, misogynistic or homophobic.

Sir Stephen House QPM (Deputy Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service): I said earlier that we are seeing an increase in people coming forward, and sometimes that is to report things that have happened to them, but sometimes it is to report things that they have seen or heard of. Clearly, Hotton was a horrific incident, but it came to light because - and the IOPC recognises this - one officer came forward and spoke about the bullying that she was going through. She trusted the organisation to come forward and do that. We are seeing more examples of that. Signa is designed to give people the confidence to do that. We are currently rolling out a very powerful video and audio which talks about some of the things that officers and staff in the organisation have suffered, and the reaction to it is very powerful from officers and staff who see it. The catchphrase that is being used, the logo, is "Not in my Met" and a lot of people are now using that and adopting it because they want to root this out. There is a lot of activity going on in this area, led in the main by Network of Women. We have got a very vibrant HeForShe movement inside the organisation as well, and our Director of Media and Communications is pushing this powerfully inside the organisation as well.

Caroline Russell AM (Deputy Chair): You have already talked about Signa, which is brought forward by the Network of Women, which sounds like a really positive thing. Are there other steps that the MPS is taking to assure itself that that bullying and harassment that has been identified through Operation Hotton is not more widely prevalent across the MPS? Are you, for instance, seeing differences in different BCUs? Are you seeing areas where there is more reporting than others?

Sir Stephen House QPM (Deputy Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service): It is a very interesting question. The Commissioner has recently initiated effectively a BCU and Operational Command Unit (OCU) -

so all units of the organisation - health check where the leader of that part of the organisation, usually a Chief Superintendent or a civilian equivalent, has to produce a report. That will then come to me to outline how they think the ethical health of their part of the organisation is standing up, so looking at things like sickness, but also levels of stress, levels of retention, levels of misconduct, levels of overtime where people are working too many hours because they are trying to make up for the salary gap by working overtime. There are a lot of different measures to see if we can identify where there are particular problems. We can also add into that where we are seeing a higher proportion of Signa report coming in in particular parts of the organisation. It is too early for that. I do not want to promise something that has not happened yet, but that report will be required of all parts of the organisation, which will allow us to do a health check, and we will then be bringing in the leaders to get them to talk through what they are doing about it.

We encourage all leaders of OCUs and BCUs to run anonymous surveys through HeForShe and Network of Women to bring out feelings from their officers and their staff. That is done more powerfully in some parts of the organisation than others and we are determined that it gets done everywhere so that people have the freedom to say how they are feeling so that we can then have local leaders act upon that. We are reinforcing the training to Sergeants and Inspectors in terms of their responsibilities. We are redoing our annual fitness assessment, not physical fitness, but their performance and development review is being re-established for officers and staff to give supervisors more face time with their officers so that they can actually find out how they are feeling, how they are doing, are they suffering any bullying or harassment. This is the number one hot issue inside the organisation at this moment in time.

Caroline Russell AM (Deputy Chair): You said it was a bit too early to report back on the metrics, the different levels. Do you have a sense of when you will get to a point where you are able to report on this transparently, and also what actually will you be measuring and what will you be able to show through that?

Sir Stephen House QPM (Deputy Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service): Again, I do not want to over-promise and it is early days for this. We are looking to see if any other forces in the UK do this. I am not sure we have found any yet, but the intent is that the BCU Commander, just to take a BCU, will come forward with their pack. There will be a format of the things they have got to cover. They have got to look at the stats in certain areas - and I have listed those; I will not repeat them - come forward and then talk through how they think the health of their BCU is and what they are doing. It is an opportunity for us to see are they being active enough in this area, is their senior management team being active enough in this area.

I should say we are also looking at the use of IT to see whether or not we can find a system that will help us identify potential threats, in other words, the list I talked about. Are people working excessive overtime? Are they coming into police stations at strange times when they are off duty and why are they doing that? Are they coming in and using equipment and technology that they should not be using when they are off duty? Are they looking at crime files - and we already have some of this - that they should not be looking at or are not authorised to look at? We are looking at whether we find some sort of guardian technology that will overarch the organisation to spot that sort of aberrant behaviour, link it with sickness, absence, etc, and see if we cannot find a culprit, but at least have a look at a group of people who we just want to understand why they are behaving like that. I do not know if that exists anywhere else yet, but we are looking if we can find something that will help us do that.

Caroline Russell AM (Deputy Chair): Certainly, all of that sounds like the kind of work that can give Londoners trust and confidence in the police. The challenge for you is to find a way to communicate about it and to find a way to find the right things to be able to report on that really are demonstrably making that difference.

I have one more question about the action that the MPS has taken to ensure that officers who report offensive behaviour have the confidence to do so and are not fearful of repercussions from their colleagues. You described the team culture.

Sir Stephen House QPM (Deputy Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service): OK, what we need to get to is a culture which celebrates when officers will come forward and say, "I'm not happy with that behaviour" and we are getting there. I keep talking about them, but it is a very impressive outfit. The Network of Women is pushing that very, very strongly, and so is HeForShe. With many of these issues where it is sexism, misogynist issues, the solution lies with the men to challenge the behaviour of each other to make it clear that it is not acceptable, sometimes at a relatively low level and with just a word or take somebody to one side and say, "That's not right"; "Not in my Met" is what we want to see and hear more of, but, if necessary, at a more serious level so they can report to their supervisor, they can report to the [Metropolitan Police] Federation, they can report on the Rightline, they can use Signa if they want to but that, as I said, is anonymous and will not get us to an exact case. It will alert us to a problem in an area, but it will not zero in on an exact case. The point is that we need to get to a culture where officers are less concerned about how everybody will think of them because they then start to realise that people will congratulate them for rooting out behaviour that we do not want, and that has to be celebrated.

I have to say: one of the breaks on that, of course, is that when we do root people out and we get negative publicity as a result of it, officers look at that and go, "Well, look what's just happened there. Why would I want to initiate that?". We need to do more work and it is not for anyone else to do; it is for us to do. We need to do more work with the media, with people such as yourselves, with opinion formers to say, "Actually, yes, it's terrible that this behaviour has gone on, but at least they're not doing it anymore and every one of these out makes a better organisation".

Caroline Russell AM (Deputy Chair): Absolutely, and that goes back to the defensiveness point that I raised earlier that it is a question of finding a way to be able to communicate the success in rooting out the unacceptable behaviour so that the organisation does not look defensive about it.

Sir Stephen House QPM (Deputy Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service): I think we are agreeing, but I would have to say if you feel you are under attack you get defensive.

Caroline Russell AM (Deputy Chair): Of course.

Sir Stephen House QPM (Deputy Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service): So we need less of the binary and more the sense of this being a problem for us all to fix.

Caroline Russell AM (Deputy Chair): If we can have that big conversation with Londoners to really get to the bottom of the trust and confidence issues and Londoners and the MPS can work together on that, that would be absolutely wonderful.

My final question is for the Deputy Mayor. Are you confident that the MPS has the right people in place to support the people who are challenging inappropriate behaviour and reporting wrongdoing?

Sophie Linden (Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime): If I may, can I just come back to a couple of your questions, one of which is around social media?

Caroline Russell AM (Deputy Chair): Yes.

Sophie Linden (Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime): The MPS has put in place a policy. I have said in terms of policy around social media that of course it is incredibly important how social media is used and WhatsApp groups are used. However, it is a symptom. It is solving what goes on WhatsApp; it will not solve the culture of the MPS and some of the really difficult issues that there are within the MPS. Actually, some of these recommendations in and of themselves will not be panacea that is needed. The Deputy Commissioner has talked about this. You really are in a position where it is about raising standards, improving standards, ensuring people can come forward, but also being very clear what the values are that you want to recruit and the values are that you will enhance and support within the MPS. That is a national policing issue as well.

In terms of do I have confidence, my answer to that is that I have yet to see that that is the case in terms of really understanding what the impact is of those coming forward being supported. We have got recommendations within the IOPC Operation Hotton report to ensure there is that support there, and they have definitely got the structures in place. Are they the right people, doing the right things? Of course, there will be some very, very good people within the MPS supporting officers to come forward. The question for me is how consistent and widespread that is, and the only way that we will be able to know that is by the metrics that we are talking about, which show the impact of that and that we can see the culture of the MPS changing.

Can I just also pick up on this issue about communication with Londoners? This of course is about communication with Londoners and engagement with Londoners, but the question for me is, how does that communication happen and how does that engagement happen? Is it, "Let us tell you what we are doing" or is it "Let us have this conversation and discussion. Let us understand your lived experience as Londoners and the MPS. Let us listen and learn and change"? That is the type of communication and engagement that we want to support and we want to see going forward, and of course many officers are doing a fantastic job. But I hear from too many victims and too many Londoners and people from different communities that they do not feel confident to come forward, and when they do come forward, they are not taken seriously enough and they do not feel that they are being listened to.

One of the things in the second part - if we are going to come on to it - from the independent inquiry into child sexual abuse shows is that the voice of the victim is often not heard and people are not being believed, and that is another important part of the change that we need to see. I am not suggesting that the leadership of the MPS does not accept this as a change that needs to be seen in terms of supporting victims, understanding victims and making sure that their perpetrators are brought to justice, but that is going to be an important part of this journey in improving trust and confidence.

Caroline Russell AM (Deputy Chair): Thank you.

Unmesh Desai AM: Deputy Commissioner, you talked about Rightline, which is the MPS's internal whistleblowing system. But as I understand it, usage of this system has dropped by 22% over the last four years, whereas in contrast, reports to the Crimestoppers national whistleblowing system by MPS officers has marginally increased. Is the declining use of the system a concern when you are seeking to encourage more people to come forward to report bad behaviour?

Sir Stephen House QPM (Deputy Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service): It is of concern. I have to say, I do not recognise the figures you have got and I would like to see them because I have an increase in the use of Rightline. There is also a not very imaginatively called Online Rightline. In other words, they can use the phone or they can do it online. But I am told of an increase in the usage of it.

Unmesh Desai AM: What I will suggest, bearing in mind time constraints, is that you write to us about that.

Sir Stephen House QPM (Deputy Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service): Yes.

Unmesh Desai AM: I will put this question to the Mayor and to the Commissioner as well. Basically, some sort of written data on usage of the internal systems and if officers are reporting through other systems would be very helpful to this Committee.

Sir Stephen House QPM (Deputy Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service): I am happy to do that.

Unmesh Desai AM: Thank you.

Len Duvall AM: This is a question to Sir Stephen House. Can you explain what risk management measures the MPS has in place to support officers in the front line? In particular, those in roles that are assessed as carrying a greater degree of risk of stress and trauma, if the job does not already carry stress and trauma for everybody.

Sir Stephen House QPM (Deputy Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service): Yes. We have made a lot of progress on this in the last five years, and with help from the Mayor's budget we have put a lot more money into these services. As you will probably be aware, one of the pillars within the MPS direction is caring for each other, in other words, looking after officers and staff in the organisation when they have problems. We have got a number of self-referral or manager supports. There is a 24/7 helpline in relation to officers suffering from trauma, and counselling services, support therapies and psychological monitoring. Managers have got access to dedicated specialist occupational health advice line. We have got an employee assistance programme helpline, which can be accessed 24 hours a day, which is obviously important as far as 24/7 service is concerned. On that, a brief assessment is undertaken by clinical staff online and, if required, the individual making the call can be referred for further support such as specialist counselling or, where necessary, can be supported by a facilitated referral into existing services such as a general practitioner (GP) or into specialist organisations who will offer help for people suffering trauma, and we have a lot of connections with those people.

Officers have got access to specialist counselling models in managing trauma such as trauma-focused cognitive behavioural therapy and eye movement desensitisation reprocessing therapy, which are two fairly well-known processes or treatments within trauma. There is a psychological monitoring programme, which allows for clinically approved psychological screening and assessment to be undertaken to identify if an officer or member of staff - bearing in mind we have members of staff who work in our explosives area and deal with suspect devices - just to identify if they are experiencing trauma. They get in front of a psychologist to do that. That can lead to a minimum of six counselling sessions and can be increased if necessary.

Officers can access support from a range of internal peer support programmes, including Blue Light Champions, which are everywhere in the organisation. A trauma peer support programme presently being piloted on five BCUs provides structured, trained peer-led support. Often, people would rather go to people that they know than talk to strangers on a phone. They would rather talk to somebody, but we need these people to be trained and not just sort of giving out bad advice. There is a management advice line as well, which can be accessed by line managers to contact occupational health, our own occupational health department, to gain specialist advice on behalf of staff. There is a lot. We have got a very good musculoskeletal referral service now as well, which has reduced our sickness because officers and staff are getting early treatment. It is an area we recognise. In most IPOC reports - and I have no doubt the Casey report will talk about the corrosive nature of policing, particularly for operational officers - you just need to look at the number of assaults. People will probably know. I sign a statement for every officer who is assaulted, in support of a prosecution case. I am signing hundreds a week and the numbers are still going up.

Officers are being assaulted more and more, probably something to do with the deference of authority that I talked about earlier.

Len Duvall AM: OK. Let us look at some of that support that is offered by line managers. As one of the senior managers of the organisation, how do you assure yourselves that the MPS has effective supervision and quality assurance in place for those officers in line management? I suspect we could go through the comprehensive arrangements, and it is quite interesting, but for that front line of line managers?

Sir Stephen House QPM (Deputy Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service): I chair a People and Learning Board every six weeks, which looks at some of the occupational health issues, but we also have a Risk and Management Board that Robin Wilkinson [OBE] chairs and that also assesses where we are in terms of near misses for health and safety issues and there is a report regularly to that. It also looks at what access is happening to the counselling services, because if officers are not using them then we will not keep paying for them because obviously they come out of the budget. We assess that and we look at whether there are hotspots of where reports are coming in, again from different BCUs or OCUs, to assess whether there is any particular issue there. Is it, for example, happening a lot in an armed response unit and have we got a particular problem there? Or is it that effectively just a response team has had a difficult set of nights and the same officers have been to five suicides, or the marine unit has picked up an excessive number of bodies from the Thames? They pick up hundreds of bodies in the Thames a year, sadly, and that is traumatic for them. There is counselling there. We also, as you probably are well aware, have a senior force chaplain who spends 95% of his time, as far as I can see, going around the organisation just talking to people to find out if there are any issues. We have strong links with the [Metropolitan Police] Federation, which has its own systems of referral, but we talk to the Federation also about any particular issues that it is concerned about.

Len Duvall AM: Thank you.

Susan Hall AM (Chairman): Right, that brings us to the end of that particular section. Deputy Commissioner, do you want all the questions on this next section, which is child sexual exploitation (CSE), to go to the Commander?

Sir Stephen House QPM (Deputy Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service): With your permission, yes.

Susan Hall AM (Chairman): That is fine.

Sir Stephen House QPM (Deputy Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service): Before we do, can I just mention that I have said on a number of occasions here that we will write to the Committee. I am conscious at the last two sessions that I have come to there was a, "Yes, but you're not writing back quickly enough". I am assured by our elite team which does these that we have responded to 104 requests for information from this group since the last time I was here. We are making inroads into the requests, but I acknowledge we need to keep up the efforts on it.

Susan Hall AM (Chairman): We are horribly inquisitive; that is the point. What we will do at the end of the meeting is send a list of the things that we would like and it can be done together, if you like. OK, we are now going on to this section if you can keep your questions and answers as brief as possible, please, starting off with Assembly Member Garratt.

Neil Garratt AM: Thank you, Chairman. Thank you for including this item on the agenda today after I raised it at the last meeting and thank you to Commander Southworth for coming along. There was a national report

into CSE by organised networks, which, I should clarify, is following on a different set of work by Dame Louise Casey. The report only looked at one of the London boroughs at Tower Hamlets and a number of other places outside London. It identifies two cases of victim blaming. This is where, as I raised at the last Committee, these children, young girls, who are victims of abuse and exploitation end up being charged by the system as perpetrators of some form of violence or retaliation or something like that against their abuser. I am hoping you can tell us this morning that that is now a thing of the past, that it is not happening.

Commander Kevin Southworth (Head of Profession for Public Protection, Metropolitan Police Service): Yes, thank you. There has been an extensive amount of work over the last couple of years. As you will know, the report referred to instances between 2016 and 2019. As the new Commander for Public Protection, I can say that my predecessors have done some amazing work in this space over the last couple of years to maximise the training of our officers and staff across the organisation in order to move on from that culture, perhaps sometimes looking at things at face value and not considering what the underlying causes may be. Under our Safeguarding Strategy, which is extensive and varied in its approach to these things, we have rolled out many, many initiatives. I can outline some of them here today, mindful of time, if the Chairman will indulge me.

We have a specialist Modern Slavery and Child Exploitation Team, which delivers training through its Vulnerability Assessment Partnership Team and has done to over 6,000 members of our officers and staff, and over 300 external partners, including social workers and other key partners in order to help identify areas of child exploitation, including CSE. There is a whole exhaustive toolkit which has been put online for all of our wider officers and staff to actually realise, the SAFEGUARD acronym, which breaks down what we are trying to do, all nine letters of that. It essentially talks about looking for the signs of what may be underlying causes or symptoms of child exploitation when dealing with young people who may come to police notice. The tracking of this through our performance metrics is already showing good dividends. Child criminal exploitation has absolutely surged in terms of its referrals now to over 1,000 rolling year to date. CSE runs at about 500 rolling year to date. We have a good identification of perhaps previously hidden harms, which we are now in a position to address jointly with partners, of course, because many of these, as you rightly identify, will not necessarily always lead to a judicial prosecution of some description, a far better approach through diversionary tactics, safeguarding measures, protective security and so on and so forth.

There has been a whole host of initiatives with partners in the community, Operation Makesafe, Operation Signa. If these mean nothing to you, we can certainly write to you separately and I am conscious of time, but these are initiatives where our officers and staff are going out to hotels, businesses, businesses such as Sex Work in the Streets where we are trying to identify where the vulnerable may be that are not necessarily immediately evident and how to help partners in the community and business owners to identify where those people at risk may be and then flag that to us. This is all helping to drive up that awareness.

We have a new initiative called Operation Aegis. I say "new"; it has been 12 months now. It is rolled across five BCUs already and it is going to do all the BCUs within the next 18 months, a 20-strong surge team capability going in to look at six areas, all of which relate in some way to vulnerability but particularly to vulnerability around children, exploitation and CSE where, again, we are skilling up officers and staff to conduct these investigations in the most ethical way, looking at the full rounded panoply of measures that we might be able to utilise to ensure the right outcome for children brought to our attention, rather than just prosecution. I am happy to explore any of those in further detail if required.

Neil Garratt AM: Yes, it is very positive and in particular I suppose you have spoken at a high level about how you are making sure that the approach that officers have is seeing those children as victims. Sometimes, they do not necessarily present as a stereotypical victim, I appreciate that.

Commander Kevin Southworth (Head of Profession for Public Protection, Metropolitan Police Service): Yes.

Neil Garratt AM: One of the case studies in the report is of a girl who fought off her attacker with a knife and then was convicted of a knife charge and the claim in the report was that the man who was assaulted by her - who had attempted to assault her - was not prosecuted. In terms of a very tangible example, in that kind of situation, how do officers make sure that that does not happen; that a girl fighting off a man with a knife, that we are seeing that she is probably not the perpetrator?

Commander Kevin Southworth (Head of Profession for Public Protection, Metropolitan Police Service): Indeed. It is very hard to comment on those individual circumstances without me having full access to the evidence in that particular case, but certainly we are aware - and our officers are trained - in recognising the symptoms of things like gaslighting, where a suspect will try to blame the victim and reinterpret the events to make it look like there is culpability there when, in fact, they are the one responsible. That is all part of the training package that we drive out. In fact, only yesterday I was addressing a 200-strong team of public protection experts up at Hendon where we were talking about exactly this and ranging across these issues.

Talking of a very recent example which might provide, I hope, a helpful contrast, on Monday [21 February 2022] you might have heard there was a fantastic conviction at Snaresbrook Crown Court where two older gentlemen who had been routinely targeting young ladies about the age of the same victims and vulnerable individual in the Tower Hamlets reporting, were convicted of multiple offences, including rape, in exactly the situation where they had identified vulnerable youngsters, manipulated them, coerced them and cajoled them into believing something that was not true, and then ultimately have received a 25-year sentence and the officers involved have got Judge's Commendations for that. It is an isolated example, but as a polarised opposite to what you are referring there, I just thought it might be a helpful contrast to show just how much thought is being put into what sounds like a fairly similar situation but resulted in a very different outcome for the suspects.

Neil Garratt AM: No, that is good to see. You mentioned gaslighting. The other issue is sometimes those girls do not see themselves as victims. They see themselves as a girlfriend, let us say, which as an outside observer you would see is not the case.

One of the other issues in the report was about child abduction warning notices (CAWNs) being used effectively as a kind of dispersal measure. That might be the diplomatic way of putting it. Is that something that is still happening, and what is the view of using that tool against the girls themselves effectively to disperse them from each other?

Sir Stephen House QPM (Deputy Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service): Yes, there are two different types of CAWNs, as you probably know, under different section of the Act. One of which, which will probably be the most applicable here, is when we seek to use it as a way of stopping things like county lines trafficking. We see an adult who has got a youngster seemingly in their charge or under their influence who may need warning off in that way, to use that expression, to have a CAWN notice served against them and therein they can have great utility. There is another one, a separate section, as you probably know, about children who have a care order against them, but speaking specifically to this, that is one part of a toolkit which is available to our officers, which is not confined solely to CAWNs, as you know. There are also other things, as you know, sexual health prevention orders, criminal behaviour orders. There is a range of judicial restrictions, as we refer to them, which are hugely, hugely important to our officers and staff.

Skilling up and training and investing in our officers to understand all of this is really important because there is complex legislation behind each of these different orders and they are extremely varied. I know myself from previous experience of charging brothel closure orders, for instance, the law around them can be very vexed indeed, but they are all useful in their own way and CAWNs have their place. I would not be able to tell you right here right now exactly how many we have had in place recently, but I can get that material for you if it would help.

Neil Garratt AM: That would be useful. What the report highlights is that it potentially ends up criminalising the victims. I hear what you are saying, that you want to stop them associating with the person who is controlling or abusing them, but what the report flagged up was that they are potentially being used against the children themselves as a way of kind of dispersing them from each other and you can see how that would be an attractive option, but it appears to then involve criminalising those young people.

Commander Kevin Southworth (Head of Profession for Public Protection, Metropolitan Police Service): I can see that.

Neil Garratt AM: So if you could write to us about what is going on with that and whether there has been a change since the report, that would be very useful. Thank you.

The HMICFRS inspection found significant weaknesses then with online investigations, because obviously not all of this type of crime is happening in person. Sometimes there is an online aspect. What action is the MPS taking to address that side of the problem?

Commander Kevin Southworth (Head of Profession for Public Protection, Metropolitan Police Service): There was an exhaustive investment recently in online child sex abuse and exploitation. This evidence might have appeared before this Committee before and I hope I am not repeating something that Members are already aware of, but certainly there has been an investment in Online Child Sexual Abuse and Exploitation (OCSAE) teams on each BCU. Those are strong teams of one and six, dedicated to looking at how we investigate those referrals at a local level. In terms of detecting it, which is the thrust of your question, is very much a reliance on colleagues at the National Crime Agency and also some international partners and big tech companies themselves.

Much like how I have done in my previous life in counterterrorism, we engage with this array of partners to look at big datasets, engage with the big tech providers - much as Assembly Member Desai was saying about before with big tech - and actually we utilise these fantastic partnerships to identify referrals to us. Those referrals come in some number. They run currently at about 280 to 300 a month for indecent imagery of children and child sexual abuse online referrals and they are tackled by these OCSAE teams at a local level. The more serious and significant where we believe there may be contact offending or a higher risk are dealt with by a dedicated specialist team on a central specialist crime and again that team is adept at rooting out the paedophiles within our midst and the networks that might serially exploit and bring youngsters into real world contact with offenders in this space.

Neil Garratt AM: OK. Another concern - it was recommendation 5, jumping back to the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse (IICSA) report - was about the data that is being recorded. In particular it found that the overwhelming majority of cases ethnicity, for example, of the victim is not recorded by the police and that creates two problems. One is that it identified a lack of cultural sensitivity sometimes where the victim may not be white. They may have particular cultural issues around the crime that they have suffered. And obviously there is a longstanding issue, which the report again repeats, where there is a sort of ethnic element to the offending or to some aspect of the offending that sometimes generates a lot of sensitivity, not to

rehash the Chairman's comments earlier. I cannot understand why. We seem to be decades into this, looking at this problem. Why is it that 86% of victims do not have their ethnicity recorded? I wondered whether that is normal if you compare it to other crime types, let us say, children arrested for shoplifting or people arrested for burglary. Is that a normal level of not recording that and, if not, what is going on?

Commander Kevin Southworth (Head of Profession for Public Protection, Metropolitan Police Service): I do not believe so. If we consider other areas of recording, whether it is crime recording or stop and search, that data is usually routinely tracked. Forgive me, I have not seen that statistic so I will have to take your word for it on the basis of what you have before you there, and I would have to have a look at the forms, because we obviously have the national referral mechanism form; we have Form 87A, which is a child coming to police notice. We have different mechanisms for recording these instances where children are brought to our notice in this way, and ultimately we would have to look and say, "Well, is that tick box somehow being missed? Is it not significantly prominent enough within a report, that people are noticing it?" I certainly would not subscribe to or encourage anyone else to draw a connection between the fact that there is a low level of recording in that space and it somehow reflects a hidden agenda around diversity. I do not think that is the case. It is probably more, sadly, a fact of poor recordkeeping or data management, but certainly with the Op Aegis initiative, which I mentioned before, and the training going out to our officers and staff in such volume via the VAT, I am confident that will be addressed because if we are training 6,000 people and we have 350 specialist Modern Slavery investigators, and we have any number of other initiatives on the way, I am confident that recordkeeping will improve with those sort of investments of people.

Neil Garratt AM: Yes. It says - I am happy that you would look at it - it says that for the 2019 profile, 86% of offenders involved in 147 reports of child sexual abuse and 14% of 166 victims in the central area BCU. As I say, there is no explanation for it. I suppose what I would say is some of the problems we have spoken about this morning are quite complex and difficult. Organisation or cultural change is difficult. Recording a piece of information is really easy, so I am hoping you can write to me us explaining how that is being tackled. It does seem an extraordinary oversight, given that this has been a big issue with this particular type of crime for a very long time.

Finally, if I can ask the Deputy Mayor, in relation to this type of crime both the online CSE and the grooming gang sexual exploitation, are you confident that the Mayor's new Police and Crime Plan is sufficiently robust to tackle the problems?

Sophie Linden (Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime): Thank you. Having read the report, and also looking back over the years that I have been doing oversight on our child protection, it is one of the things I will be looking at in terms of finalising the Police and Crime Plan, because obviously we finished the consultation and we are now finalising it. It is also one of the areas that I have been concerned about for a number of years in terms of networks of groups of people - not necessarily gangs in the way that we understand gangs of London in relation to violence and drugs, although they may be connected - really understanding those networks. When I read this report, it really did make me feel concerned again around how much do we know, what are the intelligence systems showing us. I am chairing a meeting of the Child Protection Oversight Group next week, and this report is on the agenda to have a discussion around what lessons can we learn from this, what more needs to be done, and then, of course, we will make sure that we pick any lessons up into the Police and Crime Plan.

Neil Garratt AM: Thanks. I look forward to hearing the result of that. I will just close by observing that, as I said last time, it feels like we are a very long time into exposing this type of crime and it is a bit frustrating that the conversation around it feels like very early days. But I take your point and I look forward to hearing the positive outcome.

Susan Hall AM (Chairman): Thank you. If it is of any assistance, it is on page 101 because I had picked up on it as well and it was really looking into Tower Hamlets. As you know, it is a worrying report that we have read.

Len Duvall AM: Look, I recognise that both politically and professionally we have put a lot of effort in here. But from 2016, increasingly so in the last report of 2021 on the 2020 inspection, just under 70% of our cases were inadequate. What are the words you used? You have put "requiring improvement" and "inadequate". I know we have made progress, but it does seem to me that progress is not significant if we think about it. I do not want to be emotional about it because I do know the efforts you are putting in to get this right, but it does seem too high in 2021, which goes back to the previous Assembly Member's comment that this is not new. We have had a task force. You, Deputy Mayor, have spent a lot of time on this. What is it we need to do to reduce this? I call it 70%, you call it 68%. Let us not quibble about 2%. We need to get that down because it is actual real cases and victims that we are letting down. What else do we need to do? What is new, or is it more of the same that is going to do that? Am I, in a year's time, or are future administrations going to be coming back and 70% is roughly always where we are going to be with not very good casework?

Commander Kevin Southworth (Head of Profession for Public Protection, Metropolitan Police Service): Thank you, Assembly Member Duvall. I was slightly confused for a moment about which crime type you were referring to. Do you mean CSE specifically or, more broadly, public protection matters?

Len Duvall AM: I am talking about the report of the Inspectorate of 2021 which was conducted in 2020 where you audited 170 child protection cases where you found 32% were graded good, which is good, that is where we want to be, to 37% requiring improvement, that is where we do not want to be, and 31% were inadequate.

Commander Kevin Southworth (Head of Profession for Public Protection, Metropolitan Police Service): Thank you. It is a slight variance on the theme we have been discussing which is about CSE.

Len Duvall AM: I am going back here. It is important, child exploitation, but I am talking about the overall performance of the MPS in this area. This is not good enough, despite our efforts. I say that collectively. I do not want to beat you over the head. I know what you have been doing. You have talked to us and given us regular reports back, but it is just not where we want to be.

Commander Kevin Southworth (Head of Profession for Public Protection, Metropolitan Police Service): No, I do agree. I am sure my colleagues, officers and staff alike would agree that child safety is absolutely paramount. The youngest and most vulnerable members of our community demand the most protection, of course, and everyone here agrees with that.

The reason I differentiated, apologies, is in terms of CSE. I am informed that the last review did say there were no recommendations. The good news story I was relaying a moment ago to Assembly Member Garratt about that has resulted in a significant improvement in the most recent review of HMICFRS which shows that in CSE terms, there are no further recommendations to make, which is good news following the findings of Tower Hamlets some years ago.

More broadly, on child protection as a whole, there are very significant challenges. We recognise that volume has continued to rise. We have had some challenges along the way in terms of my predecessors in role to address this, in terms of the transition in the organisational structure. At the same time, there is a Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hubs (MASHs) review ongoing at the moment nationally, as you may be aware,

run by Assistant Chief Constable Rachel Jones. This is looking at our MASH. We are watching that with keen interest. MASH is central to how we manage risk to children. They are the filter in the first instance between the multiagency, including police processing of child referral notices to us. Ultimately, that starts the chain towards child protection orders etc.

In terms of the resourcing of our units, we have more people in post now than we had in 2016, pre the BCU merges, looking at child abuse. That evidence has been given here before, apologies for repeating it. We are very aware of the need to skill-up and that is what Operation Aegis is doing differently. We started in March 2021. We have done five BCUs so far. We are seeing the green shoots of improvements across child abuse there in terms of lifting the quality of our child protection capabilities. We also have enhanced training now in terms of the serious child abuse investigation development programme. It has been raised here previously that there was a low number of people trained in that. It is a very specialised course and requires continued accreditation. That has been lifted. By March this year, we will have 179 people trained and wending their way through to what will be a very impressive level of accredited officer by later this year which will help to, not only investigate the most serious offences against children, but support the overall effort of public protection and child abuse investigation.

For my part, I am new in post. As you know, this is day three for me. At the same time, I do not use that as an excuse. I have been reading into this exhaustively. My lead responsible officer, Iain Keating, is a Detective Superintendent with nearly two decades of child abuse investigative experience. We are working together on this with all of our partners to see if we can drive through Aegis and through the improvements I mentioned today, the improvement in child safety across the city, recognising the recent findings of Star Hobson, Arthur Labinjo-Hughes and the other terrible cases we have seen nationally. We do not want to see these repeated ever again.

Sophie Linden (Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime): I share your frustration, Assembly Member Duvall, in terms of the pace of change and the progress. HMIC, as it was then, published the first report in November 2016 and a long time has passed since then. It still is not good enough, but it has progressed. I do not think we should overlook the improvements that have been made. It does not mean there is a lot more that need to be made. For me, it is about not just increasing but sustaining the focus on this. That was one of the key things from the original HMIC report. It was about leadership and focus. There is leadership and focus on this. Assistant Commissioner Nick Ephgrave [QPM] chairs the Public Protection Board. He has an absolute focus on this.

Commander Southworth is quite right to point to Operation Aegis. That started in Croydon and Sutton and has been very successful. However, it is a moment in time. It moves on and we have to make sure there is an investment to sustain it and go back because people change. You know, if you sit on this Committee, you see a lot of different faces. We need to make sure there is continual improvement, and, for me, that is going to be key, that we continue to invest in Operation Aegis. Not just for the one-off, go round all the BCUs, but go round again and keep that focus.

When I read the IICSA report, I did feel very concerned because it is one of the questions I have consistently asked. What do we not know? Where are these networks? I cannot believe this is not happening in London if it is happening outside London. We have all the characteristics which means it will be somewhere.

The other thing that needs to happen is making the connections between the different parts of the MPS and the different units, from the gangs' unit to the serious organised crime unit, making those connections so that Child First is always there to look at the child protection issues, to look at the issues around violence against

women and girls, for example. Often, not always, this is girls. Making those connections is certainly something we have been discussing.

Susan Hall AM (Chairman): Thank you.

Emma Best AM: Thank you, Commander, for your earlier answers. You talked about the training, which is being rolled out for 6,000 staff. Obviously, we are short on time, but I would love to see more details of that, if that could be provided, and what that training entails.

Talking about progress, I have certainly seen this from the other side, being in a local authority. The question I was going to ask for both the Deputy Mayor and you, Commander, was what steps are you taking to work with other agencies such as local authorities to improve the way data and information about families is being shared?

Sophie Linden (Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime): I chair the Child Protection Oversight Group. It is not an MPS only group. We have a representative from London Councils. The Director of Children Services at Tower Hamlets sits on the group. That is a partnership group. You are right and your experience is right that this is not just an issue for the MPS. The IICSA makes that very clear that this is a borough issue where there are responsibilities around safeguarding. We all have to be working together to improve this.

The other thing we do in terms of the role of MOPAC, is support and form part of the Child Safeguarding Board at Pan-London looking at safeguarding and child protection across London. That will continue to be an important role that we play.

Going back to Assembly Member Garratt's question, one of the priorities of the Police and Crime Plan is protecting vulnerable people from harm. This is a key aspect of it. The vulnerable, very much children and young people, and how we must make sure that part of the Police and Crime Plan picks up the lessons from IICSA, picks up the lessons from the work that has happened already and focuses down on what needs to happen but also, really importantly, what the metrics are. It is a difficult one to be able to assess impact. A lot of it is qualitative rather than quantitative.

Emma Best AM: Thanks. Just to come back specifically on data, a lot of the issues can sometimes be faced around not knowing the right person to speak to or some people are overly concerned about General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and IT systems not talking to each other, something as simple as that. To what level can you impact helping to improve that?

Sophie Linden (Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime): That is more for Commander Southworth.

Commander Kevin Southworth (Head of Profession for Public Protection, Metropolitan Police Service): I am happy to try to help with that. I will certainly do my best. The multiagency panels that we have, and there is a range of these that look at different aspects of child safety, it could be a Gangs Multi-Agency Panel (GMAP), which I used to chair at Westminster; it could be a Multi-Agency Protection process; it could be a Multi-Agency Child Exploitation (MACE) meeting. We have an array of these. Whenever you see those magic letters, MA, it is always a good thing because it means all the different agencies are going to get around the table and compare specific, tactical datasets on individual people who have come to notice and are at risk. That is absolutely necessary and enshrined in our statutory partnerships, to be able to say, "We can legitimately do that".

To your point around GDPR and people being overly concerned, I share your sentiment because it frustrates me as well and has in the past. We will have information-sharing agreements which will be checked legally by all agencies to make sure we are not oversharing information that might be private, especially if it is medical or has restrictions around it. There has to be balance between how much we share and how much is straying into the privacy of people and their private lives. Those multiagency panels enable us to take those shackles off a little bit and work because we have a specific tactical reason to say, "We need to compare notes on this individual because of a, b and c". We all pool our information more broadly. We try to do that as best we can, but we have to be mindful of those legal barriers. "Overly concerned" is perhaps not the right expression because people are genuinely concerned about privacy, and we need to be mindful of that. It is part of the confidence and consent piece. We do have very effective multiagency panels that are able to do that critical information sharing where it needs to be around individual cases.

In a utopia, from a police officer's point of view, I am sure from some people in the room as well, we pool all datasets, from all different agencies and then employ some spider-like algorithm to climb over the top of it and pick up the risks and we can all probably sit back and wait for the results to come to us. As you know, and as I do too, that is not the utopia we might reach anytime soon because of legal restrictions around data-sharing. I hope that answers the question.

Emma Best AM: Thanks, it is helpful. Especially on multiagency panels, how much are you making sure there is a whole family approach when you come across these cases and look at the data?

Commander Kevin Southworth (Head of Profession for Public Protection, Metropolitan Police Service): When an individual comes to notice, we then review the whole family situation around them. I have yet to get under the bonnet of this because I am only three days in post. We did used to have the Troubled Families Programmes - Sophie, I do not know if we still have that - and the Family Recovery Programme after that. This looked at that very issue in terms of a rounded approach to families. I would have to see where we are with that nowadays.

In terms of the individual panels themselves, tactically, we do try and take lateral circumstances into account around individuals.

Sir Stephen House QPM (Deputy Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police Service): I do not know if this helps, but I am just reading through the brief I have here. We will need to give you more detail because it is a generalist comment. The MPS has recently developed and released a regular and comprehensive dataset in relation to intrafamilial child abuse for use by partners. It provides borough level information about crime types, trends, and how it comes in performance. It will provide partnerships with the opportunity to overlay agency data to jointly tackle local and London-wide issues concerning child sexual abuse. It is a start on it, at least. We can let you know more about that. I do not have any more detail on it here.

Emma Best AM: It certainly sounds like a start, but I would be lying if I said I completely comprehend it from that readout. It does sound on the right track.

Sir Stephen House QPM (Deputy Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police Service): What it is basically saying is we are pulling our information together and we are making it available to partners at borough level. One of the issues that we have is some BCUs that are multi-borough. A lot of it is disaggregating it for us down to borough level now, providing borough level information about what crime types are taking place and what families trends and outcomes and performance. They can then add to that. It may be a start. We can look at that and write about it if you wish.

Emma Best AM: Thanks. Deputy Mayor, you did cover this in your previous answer but if you wanted to add anything on the steps MOPAC are taking to improve, specifically monitoring of child safeguarding.

Sophie Linden (Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime): Yes. It is our role on the London Child Safeguarding Board. Going back to your question about data and sharing of data, it is one of those wicked issues and it has become more difficult and there has been a chill because of GDPR and all those regulations. However, one of the roles of MOPAC and one of the things I do is I have been lobbying the Minister for Policing around data because it should always be there to share. If there are any cases, it is always about data and it is always about the sharing of information. Any chill that has gone into the system, there is a job of work, not just for the MPS to be able to share data and to empower and to be confident about the sharing of data, but it is also a job of work for Government, a job of work for the Information Commissioner's Office to be much more proactive in supporting and empowering the showing of data when it is appropriate, therefore, that chill does go.

Some boroughs are very good at it. MOPAC funded Hillingdon a programme, which it still uses, around the sharing of data of vulnerable children. This is a very good programme of sharing of data. It is not just around child protection; it is around violence as well. They are doing that in order to be able to protect people.

Emma Best AM: Thanks. Was there anything on monitoring? It was covered earlier.

Sophie Linden (Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime): In terms of the Police and Crime Plan and the monitoring we do, we publish quarterly performance reports around the data we have on offences, on child sexual abuse and sexual exploitation. We will continue to monitor that. We will look through the Police and Crime Plan at what metrics we need to put in place.

Emma Best AM: Thank you. Finally, to both of you, what is your response to the failings in Tower Hamlets identified in the recent findings of the IICSA about child exploitation in organised networks? Do you believe these reflect child safeguarding across the MPS?

Sophie Linden (Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime): I am not sure I have much more to add in terms of what I have said on the lessons we need to learn from IICSA. Tower Hamlets have improved, this is from 2016 to 2019. That makes it sound like everything has moved on. Everything has not moved on and there still needs to be progress, but there have been improvements from Tower Hamlets, the borough as well as from the MPS. Again, what I am doing, and it is on the agenda for next week's Child Protection Oversight Group, is to look at what else we need to be doing. I could give you a more detailed answer at the next Police and Crime Committee, or I am very happy to get back to you on that.

Emma Best AM: Thanks. That would be helpful. Commander, is there anything you wanted to say on that?

Commander Kevin Southworth (Head of Profession for Public Protection, Metropolitan Police Service): To be fair, we have covered some of this already, so I will not repeat that. The one recommendation for the police in that report was about police forces and local authorities collecting data, which cleaves to your previous point around data. I will not revisit that other than to say that in addition to what I said earlier about Aegis, about crime recording, comments explored with Assembly Member Garratt about recording standards, there is also our Spot It to Stop It campaign which has been rolling since 2017. This incorporates all elements of encouraging front line officers and staff to identify and bring these things to the fore.

For me, putting it in a nutshell, until we ever get to that utopia where we have the big datasets, the data-share approach and we are able to use modern technologies in the non-Betamax way that we would like to in order

to properly identify risk in all its forms, and we can get some way with that with our work with big tech partners because I have done it in previous roles I have been in. We are going to continue to be reliant on individual practitioners, officers, staff, and partners alike, to identify risks, bring them to multiagency meetings and manage through that. The encouraging thing, as per my earlier, is the number of referrals is on the rise across the board there. That is a good sign because we are identifying previously hidden harms.

Susan Hall AM (Chairman): OK. I am sure we are all pleased to hear about Tower Hamlets improving because it features in this report and not always in a good way.

Very quickly, whenever I have done multiagency work, the one partner that will not come to the table is Health. Is that still the same situation or has it improved? Just has it or not is fine. Deafening silence.

Sir Stephen House QPM (Deputy Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police Service): I would not want to comment on that without checking the recent statistics about attendance at all the various meetings. It would be wrong of me to do that.

Susan Hall AM (Chairman): OK, all right. It was dire when I was involved. Everybody else came to the table but Health.

Sophie Linden (Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime): That has improved quite substantially. In London, it has certainly improved in terms of violence reduction. I know it is a different issue to child protection, although it is linked, but they have a clinical director for reduction of violence. It has improved. It does not mean there are more improvements to be made but, yes, things have moved on.

Susan Hall AM (Chairman): Good, yes. I am pleased about that.

Unmesh Desai AM: I am conscious of the time, but I do have four questions to put to you, Commander. You and the Deputy Mayor have talked about Operation Aegis. I understand this started in April 2021. It is a two-year pilot project, therefore, we are coming up to the end of year one. The information I have is that the inspectorate of that report said that the cases and incidents it reviewed in the pilot area did not show any better investigative results than in other areas. What do you say about this and how do you intend on monitoring the performance of Operation Aegis as it is rolled out across London?

Commander Kevin Southworth (Head of Profession for Public Protection, Metropolitan Police Service): I should say it is not an operational inject of capability. It is about training and uplifting standards. The Aegis construct is basically a team of about 20 people which goes into a BCU for about 14 weeks at a time, so about three months. They work alongside the officers and staff and dedicated public protection departments across six themes, which are rape and sexual offences, domestic abuse, child abuse investigation, child exploitation, CSE and missing persons. You can see they have quite a lot to do in a short space of time to get alongside the teams and uplift those standards and capability.

The first borough was only done in April 2021, and they had a three-month run. We will need to look at this in the long run about how it improves standards across the organisation, but it will be qualitatively reviewed as time goes on. It is a little early to say definitively that it is going to be the gamechanger that we would like it to be, but we still have seven BCUs to go and we are rolling out steadily one by one.

Unmesh Desai AM: Keep us informed as progress takes place.

Commander Kevin Southworth (Head of Profession for Public Protection, Metropolitan Police Service): Of course.

Unmesh Desai AM: Then I come back to Tower Hamlets again. The report states that the MPS told us that there were no cases or issues with CSE by networks in Tower Hamlets, using the inquiry's definition. Can you confirm if there are networks in Tower Hamlets you are aware of and whether it is just the case that you are recording this matter in a different way, using organised criminal gang terminology?

Commander Kevin Southworth (Head of Profession for Public Protection, Metropolitan Police Service): I am afraid I have to come back to you on that because it is tactical. Do you mean right now here today? That sounds like an operational question about networks that might be live and active in a BCU as we sit here and so I should really check and come back to you separately.

Unmesh Desai AM: I can wait for that. Can I also just confirm what the Deputy Mayor said about Tower Hamlets and progress being made?

I have two more questions. The report also criticised how Tower Hamlets police dealt with reports of missing children. Can you assure this Committee that such reports will be prioritised and followed up across the MPS, yes or no?

Commander Kevin Southworth (Head of Profession for Public Protection, Metropolitan Police Service): Yes.

Unmesh Desai AM: Fine. Great. My final question is about intervention opportunities to both of you, very briefly. What work is being done to raise awareness, identify and implement intervention opportunities to prevent CSE?

Commander Kevin Southworth (Head of Profession for Public Protection, Metropolitan Police Service): Forgive me. I will not repeat many of the things I said earlier about Aegis and about recognising the signs because I believe I have covered that probably reasonably comprehensively in other questions here today. There are just some elements of things that would definitely help in this instance.

We talked about missing persons a moment ago. If you take our Philomena and Affinity protocols, what we are trying to do there - and have largely succeeded in doing - is to filter out the sometimes demand-exhaustive inquiries around missing persons who are not necessarily missing persons who demand police actions. They are people who have gone repeatedly missing and usually return to their care institutions quite quickly. The reason I reference that - and that has been reduced from about 28,000 a year to about 25,000 a year now, which is really helpful - is because it takes pressure off our teams and enables us to focus on the risk. This is a continued theme, Assembly Member, across the different areas of public protection - domestic abuse, online child sex abuse and others - which is to ethically reduce demand while enabling us to focus our resources on those higher-risk instances where we believe young people are going missing from care or missing from home and are actually at risk. Combined with the Spot It To Stop It campaign, the Operation Aegis work and the partner work, that will hopefully bring those who are most at risk to the fore so that we can identify them.

The SAFEGUARD acronym I referred to before is not a meaningless mnemonic. It is about encouraging all officers to look for all those signs, everything from sexual behaviours to distrust of authority and truancy from school to make sure that our officers know when they come across young people that these signs may indicate that this young missing person or this young person who has come to our notice for antisocial behaviour is

actually potentially at risk of child abuse or exploitation. It is that sort of cultural shift at the front line that we are driving through.

Unmesh Desai AM: Deputy Mayor, do you have anything to add to that?

Sophie Linden (Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime): The only thing I would add is this issue about voice of the child and putting the children first and really listening to the victim. That is something that is in train. It needs to improve; you can see that from IICSA and you can see from the HMIC reports as well. Actually, the ability to hear the child and to see the victim and going back to some of the questions that Assembly Member Garratt posed around not mistaking the victim for the perpetrator is work in progress and that is going to make a big difference.

Unmesh Desai AM: Thank you. Chairman, I was going to ask a question about ethnicity and the lack of recording of the ethnicity of perpetrators, but Assembly Member Garratt has already asked that. I just want to say I share his concerns because, if we do not talk about such issues openly and transparently, then the wrong people will set the narrative, as we know too well from cases in the north of England in particular.

Susan Hall AM (Chairman): Yes, I intend to just mention that at the end.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM: Commander, you are new in your role. What plans do you have for carrying out dip sampling of cases given that we had the HMICFRS coming in every quarter and carrying out samples of well over 100 and looking at what was working and what was not working? Are you planning to do something similar to inform your work?

Commander Kevin Southworth (Head of Profession for Public Protection, Metropolitan Police Service): Yes, thanks to my predecessor Commander Dales, we have a rolling programme of dedicated inspections. There is a Dedicated Inspections Team (DIT) that works to my leadership as the Chair of the Public Protection Delivery Group, which looks at different themes every month. For instance, CSE comes around every six months. We go into the dataset and look at dip sampling and data quality, including recording standards, across the piece to ensure and satisfy and reassure us that we are getting our practices correct in all these different areas. There is like a clockface of different public protection themes and the DIT will go in under the auspices of the Public Protection Delivery Group, reporting for, for instance, child matters to the London Child Protection Improvement and Oversight Group, which the Deputy Mayor chairs. That way we give the reassurance to partners as well that we have a really rigorous regime in place so that we are ready and, regardless of HMICFRS inspections, making sure that we are doing the right thing fundamentally by the community first and foremost.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM: Are you able to share with us your latest dip sampling so we can see whether there has been improvement?

Commander Kevin Southworth (Head of Profession for Public Protection, Metropolitan Police Service): I believe we probably can. If I may, I will go and check what the most recent one was.

Susan Hall AM (Chairman): Thank you. That just leaves me to say - and I am concerned about this, obviously - that the report stated,

> *"The fear of being seen as racist, may have hindered the detection and intervention in some cases of child sexual exploitation throughout the country for a number of years."*

Has this been an issue with the MPS and local partners and, if so, what are you doing to support officers to investigate potential crimes without fear or favour? We all know it is a real thing. Who would like to answer that one?

Commander Kevin Southworth (Head of Profession for Public Protection, Metropolitan Police Service): I am happy to. We recognise and acknowledge the findings of the report and that seems to be incontrovertible in relation to what Professor [Alexis] Jay [OBE] and others have found. Some of this comes down to moral courage in terms of senior investigating officers and senior police leaders. I have never knowingly backed away from an investigation on the grounds of race or any other protected characteristic. I do not know any other senior officers in my company over my years of service who would do so, either. That said, I am not refuting what the IICSA panel has found. All I would say is, going forward, it is not something I recognise in myself or others. We routinely chase down organised criminal networks of all ethnicities and demographics, and I do not necessarily see that as being true today even if it was a few years ago.

Susan Hall AM (Chairman): There is a fear, though. There is no doubt about it. As politicians we all know there is a fear because it is one of the worst things that anybody can accuse you of. Therefore, I am worried that given the latest comments that have been made about the MPS, it might put in another fear. That genuinely worries me because we need to be speaking out without worry.

Sir Stephen House QPM (Deputy Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service): I will not elongate but I agree with what you say, Chairman. I do not disagree with my colleague at all. It is easy for Detective Superintendents and Deputy Commissioners and Commanders to say that, but there is no doubt that operational officers are sensitive to and nervous about asking about ethnicity when they do various stops and checks. If we require them to do it, they prefer not to because they know that it sometimes causes problems. That is something we have to get over because it is not right. You used the phrase "moral courage". You are quite right. We need to get past that. Officers need to understand these are essential requirements because it is hard to fathom that we do not have the same sorts of problems that have existed in other parts of the country, as somebody - I cannot remember who it was - referred to. It is almost certain that we do and so we do need to push through this. I also understand the sensitivities that operationally tactical officers have. It is easy for people like me to have that moral courage. It is not so easy on the street when you are going to get a smack in the face if you do it.

Susan Hall AM (Chairman): No. We need to support those officers in that case. The recent findings will make it even more difficult for some of them, which is a shame. That brings us to the end of that section, and I am sure, Commander Southworth, we wish you well in your new position. It is a very difficult area. Those of us who have read this report are concerned, as I am sure you are. I would like to thank our guests for attending this morning and for their answers to our questions. Thank you.

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