London Assembly Police and Crime Committee – Wednesday 12 February 2025

Transcript of Agenda Item 6 – Question and Answer Session with the Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime and the Metropolitan Police Service

Susan Hall AM (Chairman): On to our main item of business and I would like to welcome our guests, Kaya Comer-Schwartz, Madam Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime; and Sir Mark Rowley [QPM], Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis. Welcome both, it is good to see you, especially our Commissioner, we are very grateful that you are here today. You answer questions that other people cannot answer. Thank you for that. Before we start our official questioning, first of all, on behalf of all of us, congratulations for coming out of [His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services' (HMICFRS) enhanced monitoring process] Engage or what some of us call, "special measures". That was good news and a lot of work went into that. I do not know if you want to comment on that. Also, I do appreciate you will be even crosser than I am, I am sure, about the [High] Court judgement regarding [removing] vetting clearance [from a serving police officer], you might want to comment on that, if we can just let you do that now.

Sir Mark Rowley QPM (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): That is very welcome. Thank you, Chairman. Maybe I will do them in two parts. I will do the general piece first, pause if there are any questions, then move on to the vetting case, if that works for the Committee.

I am really proud of the efforts of all of my colleagues in terms of stepping out of special measures, as you term it. The Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) has gone through some difficult times, some of our making, some of other factors like budgets, but nevertheless people have really knuckled down. We were in special measures for such a range of reasons, and the whole organisation has had to pull together to tackle this. There are factors such as the recommendations coming out of the *Daniel Morgan Independent Panel Report* and some of the issues around integrity. There are factors around child exploitation and other violence against women and girls (VAWG)-related issues, some of which we will touch on later. There has been significant work about the culture of the organisation and training and equipping officers to deal with their work and to work better. Call handling had, for a long time, let down Londoners for six or seven years and we are now reliably hitting those targets and doing a far better job in that environment. There is a long, long, long list of improvements in our work on VAWG-related offences, detection rates on issues like rape and stalking, improvements across the board, which really touch almost every officer and member of staff.

It has taken an immense amount of effort on behalf of them, and I am really proud of what they have achieved. It is nice to get that independent validation. It is all well and good the Commissioner saying we are getting better, but it is nice when the regulator of our sector says, yes, they are making really good progress and we need to take them out of this special arrangement, which is fantastic.

In terms of where we are today in terms of performance and delivery for London, I would break it into five parts, three around crime, one around trust and confidence, then one around standards. The three around crime, if I talk about serious violence, VAWG, and volume crime. Serious violence, we are making good progress. Murder rates are slowly tracking down, last calendar year was the lowest since 2014. As part of that, for example, murders of teenagers is down as well in some of those factors, which is really positive. We are improving some of our detection rates for violence. Injury violence in London is down in double figures of a per cent this year, and London is far safer in those metrics than other cities in the United Kingdom. On serious violence there is a really healthy picture.

Secondly, on VAWG, an area which had a lot of attention. As part of our work to come out of Engage we have tipped resources in two directions. We have tipped resources much more towards VAWG and public protection and also towards neighbourhood policing, which I am sure we will touch on later. In terms of VAWG and public protection, that has enabled our officers to get to manageable caseloads. That was one of the things, there is a danger, people see officers, the MPS is doing badly in this area, therefore officers do not care. That is not the case. If you stack people with too much work, they cannot do the quality of work for victims they want to. Now they have got better caseloads, rape detection rates are going up, there has been success with stalking and domestic violence cases. On many of these we have gone from the lower ends of national metrics in terms of comparing to other forces to the higher ends. On top of that, in that area, we have been doing the V100 work to tackle the most dangerous predatory offenders and that has been having great success as well. We are making good progress, always more to do, good progress on VAWG and public protection areas.

While I am very positive about those two, the third area, volume crime, is much more of a mixed picture and is a focus for the next year. There are some healthy bits in that, burglary is down. We are starting to make progress on robbery coming down, including personal robberies. It has got a long way to go to where we want to get to. Other areas of crime like vehicle crime and shoplifting and bag-snatching, that sort of thing, those are rising. We have got a lot of work to do there. Our neighbourhood policing investments, the extra resources we have got there are now properly established and stable, and they are starting to make some early progress on that, but there is a long way to go.

Across crime, two healthy areas, one mixed and more to do. In terms of confidence, we have stabilised in some areas, improving trust and confidence in the policing in London. Sometimes some of the public rhetoric is overly negative. It has fallen. We do want to improve it, but then there are all sorts of reasons trust in institutions have struggled in recent years, but the vast majority of Londoners have confidence in the police. For example, 65 per cent have confidence in the policing in London, increasing by 3.2 per cent compared to the same period last year, and it compares very well nationally. A similar relatively good position compared to other forces with fair treatment as well, which is increasing. That is all good.

Then lastly, standards, we are making big progress on standards and dealing with those issues, improving culture, and we will come to the particular vetting case in a moment. That is my canter through relatively healthy performance. Always more to do, but really proud of our people in terms of coming out of Engage.

Susan Hall AM (Chairman): OK. Thank you. Of course, one of the big problems was vetting. That came out in the [Baroness Louise] Casey [of Blackstock DBE CB] report [*An independent review into the standards of behaviour and culture of the Metropolitan Police Service*], that has been there the whole time. That is why we are interested in your views on this latest case. Just one comment on something that you said earlier. High volume crime is still extremely bad and that does not help trust and confidence because, by its very nature, it is high volume, therefore it affects a lot more people. Consequently, more people are going to be affected by issues with crime, and that is where we need to do a lot more work because that is what affects people, and we must bring up trust and confidence in the police.

Sir Mark Rowley QPM (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): Chairman, I certainly agree on volume crime. We have been delivering this improvement in a shrinking organisation, budgets have been shrinking the size of the MPS by thousands of people. To make all those improvements has been a great credit to people. We have had to prioritise the progress we have made, and I do not apologise for putting VAWG and some of the other work first, but we do now have a stronger basis in neighbourhoods. We have been making some other changes locally. I am confident we can start to improve on that, but we are having to make tough choices given those pressures.

Susan Hall AM (Chairman): Yes, we are going to be talking about that shortly. Can you now comment, please, on this ridiculous ruling yesterday [11 February 2025], making it that you cannot then sack your staff. What are your thoughts on that?

Sir Mark Rowley QPM (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): I am massively frustrated. I completely respect the Court's decision, but we are going to appeal it because we think there is a potentially different interpretation. This is a long-standing issue and some Members may have seen [the letter] in *The Times* this morning from [Lord] Ian Blair [of Boughton QPM], former Commissioner [of Police of the Metropolis], and Bob Quick [QPM, former Assistant Commissioner, Specialist Operations, MPS] and David Wood [former Deputy Assistant Commissioner, MPS], former senior officers, that those who have been around a while, the likes of Assembly Member Duvall will remember them all, no doubt, who were dealing with different integrity related issues 20-odd years ago. We are asking for the same issues to be fixed by the Home Office then that officers who fail vetting need to be able to leave the service. It was not fixed then and it is not fixed now.

I have been raising it privately and publicly for two and a half years, hence my immense frustration. Due to the lack of speed, we took a view that there is an interpretation, which we think is a reasonable interpretation of existing regulations, that is completely untested that would allow us to do exactly that. That is what we have been doing with Operation Assure. I do not apologise for pressing on with something legally untested. These issues need sorting. Officers like [Sergeant Lino] Di Maria, who have had multiple rape allegations and other sexually inappropriate behaviour allegations, should not be in the police service any more than teachers or nurses or in any other profession. We have got on and dealt with that using this untested interpretation of police regulations. The High Court Judge, she disagreed with our interpretation. We will appeal that. The right solution is very clear, explicit regulations which I have had complete support from [The Rt Hon] Suella Braverman [KC MP], [The Rt Hon] James Cleverly [MP] and [The Rt Hon] Yvette Cooper [MP] as Home Secretaries over the last two and a half years, and that is why I am so frustrated that officials have not moved with the pace this requires.

Bearing in mind it is only secondary legislation, it is only regulations. It is not the hardest thing in the world to change. Some of the scale which we mentioned yesterday, but just it is worth recapping for our conversation now, 96 officers as a result of this process have left the MPS. Some have jumped early in the process, some have gone all the way through to the end and been sacked. We have got 29 more who are partway through the process who are on what you might call "gardening leave". They are on paid leave at home pending the end of the process. It is not the ideal way of dealing with it, but you want to keep them off the streets and away from colleagues. Then at the front end of the pipe, so to speak, we have got another 100 or so who are going into this. In the size of the MPS of 45,000 people, it is not enormous numbers, but it is big enough to be a threat to our integrity if we do not take it on. I am proud of the way our people have taken it on. This is not about the Commissioner; this is about everybody in the organisation who wants rid of these people. I am disappointed that the High Court feels the law does not allow the tactics we were using, we will appeal that, but regardless of that we urgently need to change the regulations.

Susan Hall AM (Chairman): Yes. Can you tell us how much is this costing?

Sir Mark Rowley QPM (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): We are spending millions of pounds on the current people who are on paid leave at home, the bill for them would run at about £7 million a year. However, if the regulations are not fixed, as we put more people into the process that number will tick up and up and up. If the regulations do not help us deal with the issue of the people who have already left and, if they are left with a right to come back and get back pay and sue us, then it gets to many tens of millions [of pounds]. There are lots of issues to be fixed here. I do not apologise for stepping into legally uncertain,

untested space. The most important thing is the integrity of the police. That is my view. That is the tens of thousands of men and women in the MPS's view. This of course was supported by the reviews of [Baroness] Louise Casey and [The Rt Hon] Lady Elish Angiolini [LT DBE KC] in their separate pieces of work, therefore it makes it all the more frustrating this critical issue is not resolved.

Susan Hall AM (Chairman): It is ridiculous, is what it is. Anybody that runs a business would know how ridiculous it is if you cannot deal with staff, especially those who are so inappropriate to be in that job. It has got to be dealt with. What is the next step? What are you doing next? Clearly this has got to go quickly. I too spoke to Suella and James about this when they were Home Secretary, they absolutely agreed, and Yvette Cooper, but it is no good them agreeing without them doing something. What has to be done next?

Sir Mark Rowley QPM (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): Officials need to listen and roll their sleeves up, and those conversations are now finally getting moving at the pace that we would want. They had published some draft regulations very recently at the last minute, but those do not answer all the questions that need answering. There is some urgent work to be done on the back of their consultation on those draft regulations to get it established. We are obviously going to be appealing, we are putting our legal appeal work together on this matter to try to sustain the work we have done so far. Regardless of that, we are in untested legal territory and we need a proper clear legal framework. That does not just need to technically allow us to do what any commonsense person would want us to do, just as you say, Chairman, it needs to be really practical and expeditious. Building some big, complex legal process that means it will take us years to undo these knots is not acceptable. Likewise, it needs to be able to look backwards so that it ensures the individuals we have started dealing with do not have any loopholes to come back from.

Susan Hall AM (Chairman): I am sure you have got cross-party support. It has got to be dealt with and it has got to be dealt with once and for all, and I hope Yvette Cooper will manage to push that through. Thank you for that. One other thing that has occurred in the last couple of days, you have been busy with these things, the comments from Sam Kerr [Captain, Australia Women's Football] calling a MPS officer "stupid and white". Do you have a thought on that?

Sir Mark Rowley QPM (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): There has been a trial, there was an arrest, there were statements, there was a file put together. We thought there was potentially a case, the Crown Prosecution Service agreed and prosecuted. The Court has acquitted after a trial, that is justice, is it not? Most people get convicted at court. Some people get acquitted. That is how it ought to be. I have not dived into the individual details of this case, but the process has been run through and we should move on.

Susan Hall AM (Chairman): Well, you can move on, but many of us are absolutely livid. You should not be calling anybody stupid and you absolutely should not be referring to the colour of their skin, whatever the colour of their skin. Some of us feel very, very strongly about that, but I accept that it is difficult for you to comment. We are going to start questioning now and it is about the Mayor [of London]'s draft budget [2025-26], which of course is going to affect you, hopefully not as badly as it looks at the moment. The first couple of questions are to Madam Deputy Mayor. If you can keep the answers as short as possible so that we can get through a lot today. Thank you. In what ways is the Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime (MOPAC) further increasing its financial oversight of the MPS, and how will this be different from oversight of the London Policing Board?

Kaya Comer-Schwartz (Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime): Thank you. Please, I am not French, you can either call me Deputy Mayor or Kaya. That is fine. We know that MOPAC's oversight of the budget of the MPS is important and significant. The budget is £3.6 billion of public money, therefore, we need to make sure that the oversight is continuous. Every year we start discussions way before the spring outlook of the budget is

published and we hold regular meetings with the Commissioner and his management team to scrutinise the budget, as well as regular performance meetings about the in-year monitoring of budget so that we can make sure that we are, in all areas, making sure that the money that we have allocated through the budget is being spent wisely. This includes a series of seminars involving myself as Deputy Mayor and my predecessor, as well as with the Commissioner, to allow MOPAC to put together the updated budget for 2025-26, which I know has been discussed in [the London Assembly] Plenary.

Susan Hall AM (Chairman): Right. OK. Through MOPAC's regular consultations that you have referred to with the MPS during the development of the Mayor's draft Police and Crime Plan [2025-2029] (PCP), in what ways are you assured that the comments in the final PCP will be affordable for the MPS?

Kaya Comer-Schwartz (Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime): Yes, the affordability of the PCP was at the forefront of our mind given the timing of the drafting of both the budget and the PCP. We have tried to work across officers in MOPAC and the MPS together to make sure that we have an ambitious plan, a plan that is right for the safety of London, but a plan that is deliverable and therefore affordable. Those meetings have been collaborative and hopefully therefore we can make sure that when we are delivering the PCP, as the Commissioner outlined, it is really important that we are looking at areas like high volume crime and having the neighbourhood plans to do that. It is an illustration of how we work together to devise a plan and its affordability.

Susan Hall AM (Chairman): OK, thank you. Assembly Member Roberts.

Gareth Roberts AM (Deputy Chair): A question for the Commissioner. We heard about the tough choices in the worst-case scenario, how were the individual units selected and what assessment, what criteria have been looked at in making those choices?

Sir Mark Rowley QPM (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): Thank you for the question. Just to frame this slightly in where we are in the process and then come to the detail on that answer. We had a draft budget a few months ago that was based on assumptions on what might come from City Hall and from Government. As a result of the scale of the gap that we were anticipating, we had to get on with some detailed planning, otherwise we would not be able to implement it for the year that starts in April [2025]. We are now in a situation where the numbers we talked about then in terms of over 2,000 officer reduction and about 400 staff reduction, for reasons I will say, the picture is more generous than that now so the cuts will not be to that scale, but they will still be very significant.

The Home Office numbers were £45 million better than we anticipated and there is a prospect there may be further benefits above that from the Home Office and we are still in conversation with City Hall about whether that is more optimistic than we anticipated. That is why I am not going to go into the exact detail of where we get to now. I am partway through a budget process where some parts of the budget are settled and some are uncertain. Some of the money that is granted is recurring and some of it is potentially one-off. Some of it comes with no strings attached, some comes with strings attached and then you need to check what does that mean about whether you cannot spend it and how you spend it. That is going to take a bit longer to get that clarity. That is why there is a bit of uncertainty and I am not going to give specific numbers, but a large part of the tough choices will need to be executed, I am confident in that.

In terms of how we came to that list, having framed that, we started off with our overarching strategy, *A New Met for London [2023-2025],* which reflects our analysis and the priorities set for policing by the Home Office and our attention to the Mayor's PCP. Areas such as neighbourhood policing, areas such as VAWG, we are protecting in that decision. Other areas that are under high demand, we are being very careful about, such as

the call handling and response teams. You end up with some areas that we are weaker in at the moment, like the volume crime that we discussed earlier. You end up with what we need to protect these areas for different either priority or vulnerability reasons. That leaves a smaller part of the organisation to focus on, therefore it was a consequence of, really, choices have consequences, I suppose would be the shorthand.

Once you make those choices about what is particularly important, which I do not think there would be too much disagreement about, the load of those cuts falls heavily elsewhere. That is how we have started the process and then we have made some leadership judgments on how to do that and manage the risks that it causes best of all. Those are then some initial judgments and we are now starting detailed planning. We may initially decide in principle we think we might be able to take 25 per cent out of that area and there will be some risk, but we would rather do it there than elsewhere. Then we will do the detailed work. We might decide to take more out or less out. We are partway through that detailed planning process.

Gareth Roberts AM (Deputy Chair): OK. Would it be fair to say that we will not know what the final outcome is going to be before the Mayor's [Final Draft] Consolidated Budget on 17 February [2025], when that is published?

Sir Mark Rowley QPM (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): I presume we will know what the Mayor is going to spend on policing. We will not have complete clarity yet in terms of the Home Office, some of the Home Office budgets and the conditions and how we can or cannot use them, and because we are only getting those numbers now, to finish off doing that maths and work out the workforce implications, what that means for tough choices, that is a small number of weeks away. Can I just add one more thing please?

Gareth Roberts AM (Deputy Chair): Yes, of course.

Sir Mark Rowley QPM (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): I come here today realising that this is the budget time of year and you want a detailed conversation and I am not in a position to do that and that is frustrating for me and for you. If it was helpful to have a personal briefing in a few weeks' time when we have got the detail, if you want to come to Scotland Yard, we can spend some time going through it and talk both about that and perhaps about our response to the [Comprehensive] Spending Review (CSR) going forward and what it will take to have properly funded policing in London for the next three years. I would like to reach out and say I am up for that conversation. I just am not quite in the position to be able to do it today.

Gareth Roberts AM (Deputy Chair): What would be particularly helpful is the cost of each of the units proposed. If the Royal Parks Police was to go, for example, what the saving would be to the overall budget, because we have asked for this in the past and we have never really had that level of detail. If it could be £20 million off armed response, £20 million off here, Parks Police, that is an extra £60 million, that would be very helpful to have just as a resource for us to understand the pressures that you are facing.

I was going to ask about how much would be saved, but obviously we are not going to go into the detail, but operationally, if the Parks Police is disbanded in its entirety, which is one of the choices, one of the strange things about the Royal Parks is that the ward boundaries extend into the Royal Parks themselves. This is necessarily going to have an additional knock-on impact on the Safer Neighbourhood Teams (SNTs) and their policing. Will additional resource be going into the SNTs in order to enable them to police the Royal Parks in absentia of the Royal Parks Police?

Sir Mark Rowley QPM (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): That is a very thoughtful question. That is absolutely part of our planning to consider whether that is necessary. If we follow through with disestablishing [the Royal] Parks as a separate policing unit, it still requires some policing, the local

neighbourhood policing teams is obviously where that should come from. What we will be doing as part of the planning that is going on at the moment is assessing the workloads and can that realistically be absorbed by the existing teams in the neighbourhoods adjacent to the parks or do they need some additional resources. We will come to a sensible conclusion on that and that is obviously the work that is going on at the moment.

Gareth Roberts AM (Deputy Chair): OK, would additional resources include capital items such as vehicles, electric bikes, because I remember once I had to ask for somebody to come over from Teddington to Hampton on a Saturday afternoon and the SNT said, "Yes, we will be there in about an hour and a half". I said, "An hour and a half from Teddington to Hampton?" They said, "Yes, we need to wait for the next bus". Will there be the additional --

Sir Mark Rowley QPM (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): We need to come up with something that works, do we not, of course we do.

Gareth Roberts AM (Deputy Chair): Is it fair to say, just on the basis of the final question, Chairman, it is just that when you mentioned the change arrangements that you said if you stack people with too much work then they will underperform. Is there a risk that giving the SNTs this additional work of policing the Royal Parks that they will necessarily underperform as a result of being given this additional responsibility?

Sir Mark Rowley QPM (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): You have to make choices on the work you are going to do. If there are fewer people in a certain area, you are going to do less work. Sometimes you can make some efficiencies with technology and you can reduce a unit by ten per cent with the technology that can cover the same amount of ground. Clearly in something like this that is not the case, therefore we are going to have to be more choosy about the work that they do. There will be some work that is currently ongoing that will not be done, we need to be completely clear about that. Linked to these cases, you change the service level. Other things you will have seen on the list, other specialist departments, if you make major cuts, we have to change, they currently do all of this, we are going to have to do that. Then, if we drop that work, does it pass to somebody else or do you say we are not going to do that now, and that does have some risks to crime and safety, but not as much as doing other cuts. Those are all the choices we have got to make. We may not be shrinking by more than 2,000 people in an organisation of 45,000, but let us say it still could well be four figures, you cannot do that without making some tough choices. That is just the painful reality.

Gareth Roberts AM (Deputy Chair): Thank you. Thank you, Chairman.

Susan Hall AM (Chairman): You cannot. You laughed at them getting the bus, but you know only too well, far too many SNTs have to get a bus to their area, which is why a meeting would not be a meeting without us mentioning the Estate Strategy, there you go. Once we know where people are going to be located, I am sure we can then start another row.

Sir Mark Rowley QPM (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): Chairman, that will be published before the summer [2025]. We have opened, recently, a couple of neighbourhood bases, Kaya and I opened one in east London. Where were we?

Kaya Comer-Schwartz (Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime): Woodford.

Sir Mark Rowley QPM (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): Woodford, thank you. We opened one in Woodford only a few weeks ago, which was through really good, generous cooperation from the local authority there, and there are roughly, across London, about 90 is my recollection, I may be slightly wrong,

90 of London's 670-odd wards where the Neighbourhood Policing team does not have a base within a 20-minute walk of its patch. That is, in my mind, not acceptable. We will not have the capital budget to buy bases for all of those, but in many of those places a local authority has a housing office or some other building where they have got some spare space and a generous collaborative arrangement can sort it, like we have managed in east London.

Susan Hall AM (Chairman): That is great. Also, possibly supermarkets, given the amount of theft from them, it might be nice to have some bases put in there. We did many, many years ago in Harrow and it helped a lot with theft from shops. That might be another idea.

Gareth Roberts AM (Deputy Chair): If I may, you said before the summer, so summer begins in June, therefore we will have it published by the end of May?

Sir Mark Rowley QPM (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): Before July [2025], before the summer break. My team is working on it.

Susan Hall AM (Chairman): Commissioner, it stretches every time we ask, but we are hanging in there, are we not, waiting.

Sir Mark Rowley QPM (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): I am sure my team have an exact date; I just do not have it in my mind.

Susan Hall AM (Chairman): Thank you. By the way, we would love to take you up on the offer for looking at the finances once we know where we are. Assembly Member Garbett.

Zoë Garbett AM: Morning, both. Yes, echo what the Chairman said and really welcome that opportunity for further scrutiny of the budget. I wanted to zoom out slightly just around the approach taken to the budget setting and I just wondered if absolutely everything was on the table when you were looking at your priorities for the year. Was it a complete review? Did you look at all options?

Sir Mark Rowley QPM (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): Everything is on the table. There is nothing that is the inviolable principle that we protect. As I said earlier on, we made some very clear judgments about neighbourhood policing, about VAWG, that, based on our judgment, we are not going near those. We very quickly narrowed the scope down, which I think people would agree with most of those judgments in the event, but that is not to say that there cannot be efficiencies anywhere, there can be, but that is the judgments we have made.

Zoë Garbett AM: Just picking up on what you said earlier, you mentioned that it was in line with your *A New Met for London* and with the PCP. The *A New Met for London* does not mention drugs at all and the PCP, the draft, talks about taking a public health approach. I just wondered if, in these conversations, you looked at taking a different approach to drug policing?

Sir Mark Rowley QPM (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): We have talked about this before. Our policing of drugs-related issues is close to entirely focused on the link between drugs and violence. We are focusing on organised crime and low level crime that is about the effect of violence and drugs is often associated with that. Just as an example, our county and city lines operations, and I will probably come into more detail under the child exploitation piece, but county and city lines operations, they are in one sense drugs operations, but in my mind, more importantly, they are reducing the level of violence among young people because you are breaking drug supply networks, you are arresting the men of violence behind the networks,

and it is giving you an opportunity to get hold of and safeguard the 14-year-old boys who are being drawn into drugs activity and trying to get them into safeguarding arrangements with partners before they get so infected and get into gangs.

Zoë Garbett AM: I guess, from a budget perspective, it is looking at whether you have got that cost-effective long-term look on whether you have got that measure of success for all of those interventions.

Sir Mark Rowley QPM (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): The measure of success is reducing violence, which we talked about earlier.

Zoë Garbett AM: But violence has gone up in relation to the to the drug trade, it is well documented that it has become more and more violent the more and more it has been policed.

Sir Mark Rowley QPM (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): I do not know where you get that statistic from. The violence in London, murder rates are down, teenage murders are down, injury violence is down, because of the work we are doing, such as this work. That is quite a broad comment. That is not what we are seeing as a result of the approaches we take.

Zoë Garbett AM: I mean over the decades, not just over the last couple of years, but yes, this is a conversation, I have written you a letter about the evidence around drug commissioning and approach to drug policing. I look forward to a response to that. Thank you, Chairman.

Susan Hall AM (Chairman): Thank you. Assembly Member Best.

Emma Best AM: Thank you. Commissioner, I am glad you got the chance to visit the Woodford policing hub. That is something that I and the local Member of Parliament (MP) and Councillors campaigned for years, thousands and thousands and thousands of signatures, and it has taken a while, but I am glad that it is there now.

Sir Mark Rowley QPM (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): The work with the local authority, and we were discussing how to use that as a pilot for doing more across London. Sorry to cut into your opening, but sometimes it is quite hard for organisations to work together because local authority Estates teams and Technology teams have policies and they work within their tram lines, and my people do the same, and saying we are going to share some space and buy some space, you have to kick down all sorts of legal, procedural, health and safety, technology barriers that organisations are putting up unnecessarily, both mine and the local authority. The work we have done with the local authority there is going to be helpful in terms of providing a framework to be able to do more of these more quickly.

Emma Best AM: Yes, indeed, it has not been an easy road at all and the local authority has made a lot of mistakes, but obviously I am glad about the campaign that we have done and the work from the MPS as well that is now finally open to replace the services and location of the police station that was there before.

I wanted to just come back to the tough choices that we have got the list of and I know you just said to Assembly Member Roberts there is no decision been made, but I just want to know, is anything off the table, because it is a scary list, scaling back the ability to tackle serious crime and the size of the Flying Squad, cutting back on the Dog [Support] Unit and the Mounted Branch, and cuts to the intelligence teams and forensic services, as well as obviously the Royal Parks that have been mentioned. Are any of those off the table?

Sir Mark Rowley QPM (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): That is the long list. We are working through the individual planning on every single one of them. We are getting, over the next few weeks, the final details on the budgets from City Hall, Home Office, etc, like I said earlier. Then over the next few weeks we will be able to make the decision. Is it that, because the budget's less bad than we thought, we are doing all of those areas, but less sharply, or is there a degree to which we have decided not to do some of them. We have got both of those choices available and I just need to work through the process of doing the detailed planning and seeing the numbers and get to that answer. I know it is frustrating that I cannot be more specific, but I am keen to do that with you when we sit down in a few weeks, when we have done the maths and the thinking and we have got a robust answer.

Emma Best AM: Of course. I just wondered if we could categorically take anything off the table even if we were not given the final answers right now. The other concerning feature of this budget submission is the drawdown on the reserves and looking ahead to future years. Is there anything further that you could say about that?

Sir Mark Rowley QPM (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): The MPS's finances have in some ways run dry over a long period, and this is definitely not said to criticise past Commissioner or past Mayoral or Deputy Mayoral decisions, you make the best of what you have got and in particularly difficult financial times over austerity and other periods, then having an estate that was bigger than the MPS needed had, far more floor than it needed, having quite large reserves, it made sense to try and make good use of those and people made those decisions and I do not criticise that. That does mean we have run out of road in terms of some of these challenges and that creates some of the financial pressures today.

For example, one of those examples now is, as you say, our reserves are at the bottom end of safe levels, there is no manoeuvrability there going forward. The second point is, because the estate sales helped maintain some of the existing estate, we do not have a budget to properly maintain our remaining estate. One of the budget pressures for us going forward, some of it is about funding levels, some of it is about other types of pressures, we are putting about £50 million more into estates going forward. The reason we need to do that - bear in mind our budget is a bit north of £4 billion - it is quite a sizeable amount; my current estates annual budget would allow for a refurbishment of every police station in London once every 120 years. If you speak to an estate expert, they would say 20 or 25 [years] makes sense. Half of our policing estate is not going to be usable within five years or so because of the condition it is in. We need to start spending on that. We have run out of runway on it and I need to do that and that creates that £50 million pressure as part of the bigger pressure in the system. I just use the reserves and that as indications of people have understandably wrung everything out of any slack they have got in the system possible over ten-15 years and we have now hit the buffers on that and that is why this is so particularly difficult now.

Emma Best AM: Yes, it is scary looking at this year [2025], but especially looking at next year [2026], the pressures you have mentioned as well, National Insurance rise, there is no settlement for next year, that is around another £40 million. Scary pressures, not only looking this year, but for next year, but with this year in mind, and I know we have already touched on this, it may be the same answer you have given Assembly Member Roberts, but what is the latest position regarding the current number and ambition for frontline officers? Maybe the word "ambition" could help you.

Sir Mark Rowley QPM (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): I might half answer that question by going to a longer term ambition. I will have as many police officers and staff doing the best thing they can do based on the budget, and we have got a bit more work to do on that. As part of our CSR submission - and we can talk about this in more detail in due course - if you bear in mind that we are going to finish this year, police officers high 32,000s, 32,800 or 32,900 or something like that, and it is about 11,000 staff. Our

judgment is that for the MPS to succeed it needs to be around 38,000 officers and 19,000 staff. That ratio of two to one is the norm in other forces in the country. It is also the norm in some other parts of the world, like New York. We have been under-balanced in that as well, which means you draw police officers into the back office rather than having the right support behind them, because there has been too much of an obsession with police numbers being the only metric of capacity. We think we should be at 38,000 [police officers] and 19,000 [staff] and we also need sizeable increases in our Estates and Technology budgets to be effective.

Our Estates budget, to show how wrung out it is, we are spending, on maintaining our properties in London, half of what the [HM] Treasury spends on maintaining the Whitehall estate in London, half per square metre. When they ask us for efficiencies, they are spending twice as much on Government estate in London as we are able to spend on policing estate, which is no wonder officers and victims and witnesses are seeing pretty parlous conditions. Likewise, technology, if we were to be investing in technology comparatively to the more technology invested into the public sector or the median point of the private sector, we would be spending twice as much on technology as well. If you want a capable force going forward, either physical assets, physical buildings, and technological assets, which were massively under-invested in, and the people assets to do the best job for London. That is the sort of thing I want to talk about in a more detailed sense when we get to meet. That is where we want to get to.

At the moment, we are going in the opposite direction in size. We are starting to balance better officers and staff in terms of the decisions we are making, we are doing some civilianisation, which is important. We are squeezing a bit of extra money into estates and technology to try to do the first small step on what is a large escalator. We have got some strong views about where that takes us and that is based on a bottom-up analysis and also strategic comparisons. For example, New York and Sydney spend close to 50 per cent more per capita on policing than we do in London.

Emma Best AM: The Mayor has put a focus on officer numbers. That was his manifesto promise. That was his big policing pledge. I guess that is why, when we are scrutinising, that is really important for us to look at. That reduction of 2,300 frontline officers, is that something that you categorically think now we are not near that number?

Sir Mark Rowley QPM (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): Which number, sorry?

Emma Best AM: 2,300, that was back in December [2024].

Sir Mark Rowley QPM (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): Talking about different pots of money and different numbers, it slightly falls. This is an obsession that the only number that matters in policing is officer numbers --

Emma Best AM: Sorry, we can also talk as well about the 400 staff.

Sir Mark Rowley QPM (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): Exactly, but --

Emma Best AM: If we can answer the first question, but I wanted to get to both of those elements. You can talk about it in the round if you like.

Sir Mark Rowley QPM (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): We do need a lot more officers, but we need more staff, we need more technology and buildings. You need a balanced organisation that has got the right skills to be able to do a great job for the public. The Mayor has put different pots of money into policing over the last few years. He has always done maximum precept and he has often put a small number of

tens of millions on top of that each year, but that is for him and Kaya to account for that. Most of that money has been repeat funding, occasionally it has been one-off funding, some of it has been repeat funding. That is in the budget and that is contributing to what we are doing. We do not tend to ringfence that money given that year to those 500 officers, that money that year to those 500 officers, or whatever. That is not how it works. You are picking a statement from some time ago about 2,300 --

Emma Best AM: I am looking at what you said in December 2024 was that the budget could represent a reduction of 2,300 officers along with 400 staff. I am asking are we at that position today?

Sir Mark Rowley QPM (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): No. That was our starting assumption. As I said earlier, the budget assumptions there were for this much cut, and we have got something a bit better than that from the Home Office, a bit better than that potentially from City Hall, the details are still being finalised. We will still be seeing a significant cut, but it will not be as deep as we first thought, but it is going to take a few weeks to get the final financial details and a few weeks to do the final planning details to get to the answer.

Emma Best AM: We will definitely be losing officers and staff next year?

Sir Mark Rowley QPM (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): Yes. I have not seen anything to suggest that that is not the case.

Emma Best AM: Thank you.

Susan Hall AM (Chairman): Thank you. Assembly Member Roberts.

Gareth Roberts AM (Deputy Chair): Thank you. Again, this is for the Commissioner. It is following on from Assembly Member Best. At the last [Police and Crime] Committee [meeting, 29 January 2025] I repeatedly encouraged the Deputy Mayor to say whether she was able to deliver on the mayoral pledge for 1,300 extra [police officers]. Let me see, I will read it out precisely, "Neighbourhood police officers and Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs) on the streets". I appreciate that is a politician's pledge, but with your operational insights, do you think that we will see an additional 1,300 extra? That would be on the top of what we had at the beginning of the mayoral term delivered by the end of the mayoral term, which is when the pledge is to be delivered by.

Sir Mark Rowley QPM (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): I do not know the baseline for that, so I cannot answer that question. What I can say is that you will have heard --

Gareth Roberts AM (Deputy Chair): If I can be of assistance, the baseline would be May 2024, the number of PCSOs and police officers, would we see an additional - keeping that as a baseline - that number plus 1,300 by May 2028?

Sir Mark Rowley QPM (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): That is clearly possible. It would require a cheque, but it is clearly possible.

Gareth Roberts AM (Deputy Chair): Possible or likely is more the question.

Sir Mark Rowley QPM (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): We are going to have a CSR. The Government may decide to invest significantly in policing or it may not. You are asking me to guess what a Government and a Mayor are going to do financially over the next three years, which I do not think I can really

do. What I would say though, you have heard me talk, in terms of my responsibility, many times about the significance of neighbourhood policing, it is the foundation of policing, it is the foundation of trust. As I was talking about the Engage point earlier on, even though we have been in a shrinking organisation, we have tilted resources in two directions. We have tilted more resources into neighbourhoods and more into public protection. The number we have tilted into neighbourhoods is an additional 500 or so people. That is all the way from [Borough] leaders, I have had lots of positive comments from all 32 [London borough] leaders, of which you are one, about the strengthening of local leadership with the local superintendents and their teams has made a big difference, all the way through to the extra officers on the ground and extra PCSOs on the ground. City Hall and myself share enthusiasm for trying to grow PCSO numbers. I would like to grow them back closer to where they were 15 years ago, before neighbourhood policing started being cut. We have tilted as much as we can within our existing resources towards it and both the Home Secretary and the Mayor share that same ambition that neighbourhood policing is an important part of the future.

Gareth Roberts AM (Deputy Chair): I agree entirely on the PCSOs, particularly as Richmond had two British Empire Medals awarded to our PCSOs by the King recently.

Susan Hall AM (Chairman): Thank you. We are going to have to pick up speed, colleagues.
Assembly Member Duvall.

Len Duvall AM: Thank you very much. You mentioned the CSR, we have talked about it in the past. Clearly no one ever gets - over all my years sitting around this table - have we ever got what we have ever asked for at the full amount and things move, numbers move in terms of officer numbers, in terms of the budget that you have been given. The real issue for the CSR, it seems to me, is how far, and the capacity to talk to the real decision makers over our finances about flexibility. The flexibility to deliver on crime outcomes but not in a way that they have dealt with it in the past. If we have more of the same, then we are going to be always in this problem of never quite getting where we need to be with the MPS. You said it, three things, people, technology, and the estate capacity to deliver around that. My view is how far do you think the narrative in talking to those decision makers can we get on to that flexibility issue if we are to achieve the better policing outcomes, and what most people want around this table, and what you want to deliver and what the Mayor wants to deliver in terms of Londoners. Is the Government mature enough to understand that we can still deliver, but maybe not in the straitjackets of budget making or the budget processes or CSRs that it has done in the past. I recognise it has given support. I have recognised that. More so in terms of the last 14 years, but it is never going to be quite enough for us to change the way the MPS does its business. What is your thinking about that?

Sir Mark Rowley QPM (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): I agree with the general tenor of the question. This is ideally what we need. The more you can remove some of the straightjackets, some of the guardrails that reduce efficiency, take extra cost, creating an effective organisation, arguably the less of that you need or the more you can achieve with it. One example of that would be the obsession with ringfencing of funding into little pots, and that creates tensions and barriers. Between policing and all the main parties, we have engaged in a pretence that the convenient thing is to talk about police officer numbers as the only thing that matters. The logical extraction of that is you end up with, "Let us just have police officers, we will not train them, we will not have any support staff, we will not have any buildings or technology". I know it is ridiculous, but that is almost what the implication is, the way we talk about it so obsessively. I would like more police officers, but I want them properly supported and properly equipped and properly trained and you get the right balance.

A phrase that I have used, and the Mayor has used as well a few times more recently, is about the MPS being out of shape. One of the reasons we ended up being Engage was being out of shape, that balance of different

types of resources was so out. That is one issue. There are other factors. The criminal justice system has got far more bureaucratic and slow, it has got clogged and it is really in a parlous situation now, it has got more bureaucratic and slower over many, many, many years. That has a massive cost on policing and reduces the number of cases we can solve. If you could free that up and there is [The Rt Hon Sir] Brian Leveson, former Court of Appeal Judge, is doing a review on that now. That could massively increase what we can achieve with the same resources.

When you look at our ability to employ, motivate and reward people, the way police regulations work, we have had a narrow conversation on police regulations earlier in terms of dealing with vetting issues, but there are wider issues about how you employ and develop people. There are many guardrails around policing that create a straightjacket, which means I am absolutely determined, as are all the men and women I am privileged to work with, we will do everything we can do to make progress. However, we are within these boundaries. The more we can move those boundaries, and you are right, not all of them are money, some of them are policy, some of them are law, the more we can move those boundaries, the more opportunity we have got to succeed for communities.

Len Duvall AM: Can you just confirm there is nothing new in terms of this conversation that we are having, some of it has been in the public domain for some time about what might need to change?

Sir Mark Rowley QPM (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): Yes.

Len Duvall AM: Equally, with removing the straitjackets, but also you still have accountability in a different way in terms of delivering and in terms of focusing on those policing outcomes. I will go back to the original question, how far do you think the debate is with the new Government that it is willing to take a risk, but the risk is minimal, where there could be a new way of working, a new way of delivering policing here in London, or for the rest of the country, I do not mind which, but I am more interested about what happens here in London in terms of delivering that service for Londoners.

Sir Mark Rowley QPM (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): We have started the conversation with the new Government. The politics of this is really difficult. If I can speak just as a police officer, this is the wrong way around really, commenting on politicians, but privately lots of politicians of all political hues say to me, "This is a slightly ridiculous thing we have got ourselves into. We are pretending policing is about one input rather than about what it delivers for communities." However, you all feel stuck that has become the political debate and you do not know how to get off that conveyor belt. It is one of the reasons I wanted to have a serious conversation with you all about, not this year's budget, but going forward, if we could have a consensus in London on let us have the best equipped, best balanced organisation that is going to do a great job for London communities, and let us hold the Commissioner and his or her team to account on what they deliver, rather than trying to micromanage the inputs. If we had a consensus here on that, then that would be quite powerful, would it not? It is going to take some reaching across operational and across political aisles if we were to get anywhere near that.

Len Duvall AM: Thank you. Chairman, can I just ask, one of the things that we do need when we come together is to understand how you have achieved your financial savings in previous years and what is the lessons that have been learned. If we could have that in that discussion. I do not want to bounce you into that now, but it might be very important as we go forward.

Susan Hall AM (Chairman): Yes. One of the important things, Commissioner, is that you do send officers to us for us to scrutinise. We cannot have a conversation with you, with the greatest respect, as in you, the police force, if we do not have officers here to answer our questions. They are important questions. They come from

all sides of the political sphere. We vehemently disagree with each other on many things, but we put the questions to police officers and we would be so grateful if you would start sending officers back to answer our questions in the future.

Sir Mark Rowley QPM (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): Can I politely disagree with you slightly, Chairman. We have sent some very senior staff who are part of my Board who are leading on big complex issues who have got detailed understanding of aspects of policing. For the sessions they are turning up for, they are more than capable of dealing with it. They should be seen as senior leaders. The diversity within our senior team that includes people with human resources (HR), finance, strategy, legal, communications expertise is as important as people like me who have got policing expertise.

Susan Hall AM (Chairman): Yes. No, we are not in disagreement at all and I am quite happy to disagree with anybody and I do frequently. What we are disagreeing about is the question and answer sessions [with MOPAC and the MPS]. When you send a specialist on a specific issue, they are brilliant and they show the worth of us having somebody from the MPS here. When we do not have any [MPS officers] in a session like this where we are asking lots of different questions, that is when the issue arises. I would again respectfully say please send somebody, you do not have to come yourself, your Deputy [Commissioner] we have only ever seen once. We would be very grateful. It is the question and answer sessions that our Deputy Mayor cannot answer the questions because they are operational. Perhaps if you could bear that in mind. The ones you do send are brilliant, which is why we would like more of them please. Very quickly, a couple of questions now. Why is the funding for the delivery of the *A New Met for London* less than anticipated when the budget was originally set?

Sir Mark Rowley QPM (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): As part of making choices, we have trimmed our ambitions on reform, that is the reality. I think Assembly Member Best and Assembly Member Garbett were both asking earlier in terms of was there anything off the table. When we looked across the board, we are protecting these areas, we decided we were not going to compromise on the idea that we need to reform and improve and we need to invest to do that improvement, and we have not compromised on the principle, but we have compromised on the quantum because we have got budget pressures and that is a difficult reality.

Susan Hall AM (Chairman): We heard yesterday [11 February 2025], some of us, just some of the excellent work going on in that. I just note that there is £32 million less, which is a great shame because of the amount of work that is going on there. Assembly Member Ahmad.

Marina Ahmad AM: Thank you, Chairman. Good morning, Commissioner. Good morning, Deputy Mayor. Commissioner, the Home Secretary recently added £65 million to the National and International Capital City (NICC) grant, which was a significant increase on the previous Government's contribution. What input will the additional £65 million have on public order policing?

Sir Mark Rowley QPM (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): Helpfully, the Home Secretary has not ringfenced that. The way to see this is most police forces get money in from two broad pots, there is the Government grant and there is the local council tax from the local Mayor or Police and Crime Commissioner. There is a third part which the MPS - and the City of London [Police] to a smaller degree - gets, which is the NICC grant, which is trying to capture those special issues. It is not a ringfenced pot. That award was one of the things that I said earlier on, the original budget assumptions were exceeded by the original Government statement by £45 million, that £65 million was one of the things that helped contribute towards that, it made us £45 million better off. It is not ringfenced separately, therefore while it is more generous than anticipated, it is still part of a budget where we are anticipating having to cut resources. There is not something ringfenced to

go to protest activity or anything like that. It will overall help us shrink by less, but it does not give us a ringfenced pot to put into something like protest policing, which having it ringfenced would be unhelpful for the reasons I have articulated previously.

Marina Ahmad AM: Thank you for clarifying that. There has been an announcement by Government for £200 million for neighbourhood policing. I am assuming that is ringfenced. How will that be prioritised by the MPS?

Sir Mark Rowley QPM (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): We were confident of £100 million for policing and it became £200 million only two weeks ago. Our share of each £100 million is about £22.8 million, is my memory, therefore that makes £45.6 million. We are still working with the Home Office to understand exactly the strings attached because it is one of those ringfenced grants that it wants spent on neighbourhood policing. Given we have ambitions on neighbourhood policing that could be really helpful, but also the ringfencing could trip us up and the exact rules make quite a big difference on how you can use it. We are working our way through that, but in principle of course more money aligned to our priorities is welcome.

Marina Ahmad AM: Do you have an estimate of when we will know a bit more about this?

Sir Mark Rowley QPM (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): I was talking to the Deputy Commissioner on the way here today. We are in advanced conversations with the Home Office, understanding the rules it is setting, and those officials are moving quickly. It is a bit confusing, but we are getting there and hopefully we will have clarity soon.

Marina Ahmad AM: OK, thank you and thank you, Chairman.

Susan Hall AM (Chairman): Thank you. As Assembly Member Ahmad has brought up public order, we think about the £53 million cost of policing the pro-Palestinian protests and the effect that must have on the front line. Last month, we saw protesters publicly stating their intention to ignore police conditions and the footage of thousands of people forcibly pushing their way past police lines and that has been particularly undermining for the MPS's deterrent. What action will you be taking to ensure that protesters are not emboldened to take on the MPS via force again?

Sir Mark Rowley QPM (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): Our policing of protests over the last two years has been highly scrutinised and massively contentious and there have been two big themes in there. There have been the environmental protest big themes with blocking roads, throwing paint at artworks and that sort of behaviour, and trying to close down motorways near Heathrow [Airport]. Then the second theme has been the protests that spin out of the [Hamas] terrorist attack [on 7 October 2023] and the conflict that has followed in the Middle East. Those are divisive issues in a society that is evermore polarised and angry with what is on social media. We stand in the middle, policing under the law without fear or favour. Parliament creates the law and if people do not think the protest laws are balanced in the right way, that is for them to sort out with Parliament, not with us.

The degree of partisan, political comment on individual protest activity concerns me. That particular Saturday, our Command Team took a judgement that the original protest plans of the Palestine Solidarity Campaign (PSC) and other bodies were too disruptive. They were going to start very close to the Central Synagogue and that was unreasonable, given that that was a day of prayer. It was not a Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday or Sunday; it was a day of prayer. We would probably make a similar decision if a hard-right group wanted to protest near a mosque on a Friday. Yet because of partisan, political reasons, all of a sudden there is outrage and lots of parliamentarians and politicians writing letters.

This is about balance and policing, operating without fear or favour. It would be helpful if politicians on the extremes of both sides of the debate did not leap in to criticise from a partisan perspective and appreciated the police are wrestling with complex issues and trying to find balance under the law.

Susan Hall AM (Chairman): They are between a rock and a hard place sometimes.

Zoë Garbett AM: I just want to correct that I do not think there were any videos of people forcing through the line; they were all very peaceful. If you can share the video you have seen of people forcing through --

Susan Hall AM (Chairman): I will. I will. I will.

Zoë Garbett AM: I have only seen people walking through and just to clarify --

Sir Mark Rowley QPM (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): Can we say on that though there are people who have been interviewed and bailed and there may or may not be prosecutions in the future, so I am not going to take part in a debate on that.

Zoë Garbett AM: Yes.

Susan Hall AM (Chairman): OK.

Zoë Garbett AM: I just wanted to clarify that the PSC back on 30 November [2024] --

Susan Hall AM (Chairman): OK.

Zoë Garbett AM: -- when it wanted to protest outside --

Susan Hall AM (Chairman): OK.

Zoë Garbett AM: I just want to clarify something.

Susan Hall AM (Chairman): OK.

Zoë Garbett AM: I just think that --

Sir Mark Rowley QPM (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): You are --

Susan Hall AM (Chairman): OK.

Zoë Garbett AM: The --

Susan Hall AM (Chairman): Right.

Zoë Garbett AM: Misinformation --

Lord Bailey of Paddington AM: This is not the point.

Zoë Garbett AM: -- has been presented.

Lord Bailey of Paddington AM: This is not a place to do that. You are wasting our time.

Susan Hall AM (Chairman): Right, stop. Committee, stop, please. We are going to move --

Zoë Garbett AM: The police did say that they could protest at the BBC at their next --

Susan Hall AM (Chairman): Assembly Member Garbett, enough.

Zoë Garbett AM: -- protest in January.

Susan Hall AM (Chairman): Enough. Right, we are going to move on to grooming gangs and child sexual exploitation and we will start with Assembly Member Lord Bailey, please.

Lord Bailey of Paddington AM: Good morning to you both. I am going to start with the Commissioner with a broad question. Are you confident that the MPS understands the scale of sexual exploitation in London, given that the HMICFRS report [*An inspection of the Metropolitan Police Service's handling of the sexual and criminal exploitation of children*] that was published in February 2024 cited some very serious problems around the MPS's capacity and understanding and capturing of statistics on all this?

Sir Mark Rowley QPM (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): Lord Bailey, thank you very much for the question. I am confident that we have as good an understanding as we can do and we are working desperately hard on it. Of course, it is a hidden crime, it is not fully reported and it is hard to see, but we have made immense progress since that report. The theme around sexual exploitation and related matters was something that had been on HMICFRS's radar since, I want to say, roughly about 2020 but certainly for several years. It was one of the themes of us being in Engage and it is one of the issues that it has seen great progress on, which is why it has taken us out of those special measures.

In terms of trying to lay down the picture - and it is worth spending a few minutes just framing this - the exploitation of children does not lend itself to simple classification. It is not like crime types where you can say, "That was a shoplifting", "That was a theft of a vehicle", "That was a street robbery of a phone". If people are being exploited, they are often exploited for multiple purposes and exploiters often have multiple motives, looking across the themes of exploitation around criminal exploitation, for example drawing kids into gangs to run drugs for you, sexual exploitation, domestic servitude - exploiting people in the household - wider labour exploitation and people trafficking are the five categories we use, but there are massive overlaps. You will often find individuals exploited across two or three of those and the exploiters, the offenders, operating across two or three of those. The rough balance between them in terms of the exploitation of children in London is around three-fifths, around 60 per cent, and the main issue is criminal exploitation. Maybe a bit less than a fifth is sexual, around a tenth is domestic servitude, around a tenth is labour exploitation and maybe about four or five per cent is trafficking. I am being deliberately cautious about giving exact percentages because it is not an exact science, but I am trying to give you a sense of the balance to understand this.

In terms of the way we deal with exploitation, we are very much trying to deal with it in the round rather than pigeonhole it into particular narrow subjects because it does not lend itself to that very readily. Then you miss the point of dealing with the individual, both from the victim's perspective, the person who has been exploited, and also the offender in terms of those exploited. Our approach has been very focused on how you spot this, your radar to spot it. You need officers, highly attuned to spot the signs of this. Is a child who goes missing angry, running away from something in a moment, or are they being drawn towards something else and being exploited? With the gangs and drugs issues, who are the lead offenders and architects and who are the

exploited? Sometimes, it is the same person. The 16-year-old who has been exploited into gangs is now exploiting younger kids.

You have all of this complexity. Some of the sexual exploitation is child-on-child, it is very complex and it is one of the growing areas of sexual offending. I am sure this conversation will touch on some of the national inquiry, some of the other work and some of the profile of that. The balance in London is very, very tipped towards the criminal exploitation and the biggest exploitation issue we are worried about is the gangs, drugs gangs, street gangs, doing the county lines, etc. Some of them are getting involved in the phone robberies and they are exploiting 12, 13, 14-year-old boys, often boys from Black communities who are drawn into this, and then they become the exploiters of tomorrow. That is the challenge that we are seeing, not to diminish that there is, of course, sexual exploitation sometimes in that context, sometimes other contexts, particularly with children who are missing on repeat occasions and are being exploited by others. For example, last year [2024] we had 8,000 reports of missing children and more than a third of those had been reported missing more than once. Up to the most extreme, one child was missing 60 times and there is something really out of control there. A child in that situation is clearly going to be massively vulnerable and at risk of exploitation.

It is that range of issues we are dealing with and we are regularly making arrests across offences for sexual offending, drugs networks, breaking up those things, putting the children who are being exploited in touch with local authorities and charities, etc, to do the safeguarding work while we do the prosecution work. We are making arrests for modern slavery offences, drugs offences and exploitation offences, so it is a broad and complex picture. The public debate on the back of some horrific cases has focused on one narrow type of dimension of it that has happened in a few towns scattered across the country. If we have a conversation about it, it is worth seeing it in the round.

Lord Bailey of Paddington AM: I partially agree with what you said. Let us be clear. It is in over 50 places over the country, so it was not a few places in the country. It is over 50 and that is the point. Many of those places did not know it was happening and would have done something if they knew. The challenge we have in London is the MPS started in quite a weak place with its child protection issues.

Sir Mark Rowley QPM (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): That is fair.

Lord Bailey of Paddington AM: It has made great progress and I will accept that, but the reason people are focused on sexual exploitation gangs is because a gang, focused on a very particular piece of work, has ways of hiding itself. Why what is happening in the rest of the country is very relevant is because it was a failing on the part of a number of agencies. That is the difference. Your drug-dealing gang is not involved and the council is not involved in that whereas it looked like these gangs were. My major worry for us here in London --

Sir Mark Rowley QPM (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): Can I just correct you on that, sorry, Lord Bailey. The council is involved in the drugs gangs because some of those children involved in those gangs are children in care, in the care of local authorities for example.

Lord Bailey of Paddington AM: Let me --

Sir Mark Rowley QPM (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): We all have a role to play in that.

Lord Bailey of Paddington AM: -- let me explain. Sorry. When I say "involved", the point I am trying to make is people who are councillors, etc, were implicated.

Sir Mark Rowley QPM (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): Oh, sorry.

Lord Bailey of Paddington AM: The challenge in London is we have an abundance of a particular type of child exploitation and certainly I would recognise county lines and those kinds of things from my community. You are correct. A drug dealer does not say, "Oh, we will just do drugs". They will do anything illegal that generates money; I accept that. Why this sexual exploitation, driven by gangs of adults, is important is because in London we just wanted to see if we have that problem. The Government's refusal to do a national inquiry is a real shame, but in London we know largely where our biggest problem lies, street gangs, exploitation, mainly down the drug route county lines. What I am worried about is: is that blinding us to other things that are happening? That is my first question. Are we very sure that we do not have a significant problem around child sexual exploitation gangs?

Sir Mark Rowley QPM (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): I cannot guarantee --

Lord Bailey of Paddington AM: I am not after a guarantee.

Sir Mark Rowley QPM (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): No, I know you are not. I cannot guarantee there is something out there that we have not seen.

Lord Bailey of Paddington AM: Right.

Sir Mark Rowley QPM (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): Are we doing everything we possibly can do? Teams are working extraordinarily hard, and we have done a lot of work with all of our frontline officers to understand the complex nuances behind this, to deal with issues of potentially victim-blaming language and being blinkered. "It is just a regular runaway", as opposed to "No" is immediately putting yourself in a mindset that the problem is with the child rather than something around the child. We have dealt with that and that is one of the things HMICFRS has commented really positively on.

Our reports of exploitation of children at risk of exploitation are going up rapidly. I see every morning an operational log which is the last 24 hours, which has a range of things like serious crimes and serious injuries to police officers and amongst that are high-risk missing persons. I see every day multiple cases where they are being followed through because there is a 15-year-old or a 13-year-old who is missing from where they ought to be, and all the signs point to that being a risk of exploitation. Those are followed through with that open-mindedly by ourselves, as I say, working with local authorities and Children's Services. Also, increasingly there are schemes we are trying to do with other businesses in areas to try to help others help us spot children at risk of exploitation because we are not a children's agency. We are not everywhere, in every place, every time and so we need as many eyes out there as possible whilst those in education and local authorities will be attuned to it. For example, I saw a report about doing some work with one of the shopping centres in London because kids who are vulnerable, looking for somewhere warm, might hang around there. We are asking them to think about what the signs might be and for them to report. We are trying to find different ways because the more we can increase our radar, the more we reduce the risk, which is behind your question, we spot some of it.

Lord Bailey of Paddington AM: I personally feel the MPS has improved greatly around this area. My other area of concern arising from the report - and, again, why this Government should have done a national inquiry - is the number of agencies, particularly police officers, who felt they could not report something because they were going to be accused of being racist or whatever. That is a real problem. If the police cannot operate without fear or favour, that is a real problem for us all. Are you confident that within the MPS an MPS officer would be able to say something if a Black person or an Indian person or any other person was involved in a way that seems to be a problem in other parts of the country?

Sir Mark Rowley QPM (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): It goes back to the protest point earlier. We have shown from the top to the bottom of the organisation that regardless of the stones and challenges thrown around us, we will do everything we can to operate without fear or favour and we will step into difficult space on all sorts of cases and that is on this. That is important and that is a top to bottom issue because frontline officers need that confidence and I see lots of examples of that every day. If I were to look at our mistakes over recent years, I can see lots of reasons behind them in terms of training or skills or attitude. I do not see evidence that any of them have been primarily caused by a fear of acting, "I cannot do it because that suspect is such-and-such an ethnicity". In child protection cases, I do not see any evidence of that. It is not impossible, but there is nothing systematic out there.

Lord Bailey of Paddington AM: You feel like you, as a senior officer team, the politicians around that -- I know you cannot answer for the politicians and I would not expect you to. With the press, you feel like your officers feel defended enough and supported enough that they could make a complaint, take something forward and not worry about how it might look?

Sir Mark Rowley QPM (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): I am confident they feel like this on these issues. When we come to the stop and search conversation, officers are confident that --

Lord Bailey of Paddington AM: I will be back for that, do not worry.

Sir Mark Rowley QPM (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): That is a slightly different tipping point.

Lord Bailey of Paddington AM: Yes, it is.

Sir Mark Rowley QPM (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): On this issue, PC Rowley is dealing with an allegation that X is exploiting or abusing child Y and there may be racial complexities and issues of sensitivity and that. I do not see evidence they are going to be afraid to deal with that.

Lord Bailey of Paddington AM: OK, thank you. I have one tiny little question. We had confirmation from the Mayor that when it comes to child sexual exploitation there has been a serious increase, a 56 per cent increase, since September 2024 in the numbers of cases that have been reported and that you are following.

Sir Mark Rowley QPM (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): Yes.

Lord Bailey of Paddington AM: Why is that? Is that because you are better at finding them, are you working better with partners or has there been a spike in activity?

Sir Mark Rowley QPM (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): It is definitely largely - and possibly entirely - [that we are] better at finding it, being more attuned to it. It is my point, for example, about how we deal with missing young people and being much more open to and deliberate about looking for the risk of exploitation, rather than assuming it is about somebody who just runs away regularly because that is a danger of inadvertent bias. It is dealing with those sorts of issues, calling out that risk.

We recognised also our risk assessment process was too geared to managing down demand and we were not classifying enough as high-risk, and that has changed as well. There have been quite a few changes in process that we have been doing as part of our own efforts to improve and that is what has given HMICFRS very great confidence in what we are doing. As a result, of those demands, I talk to them about, say, putting over

500 extra officers into the public protection area, dealing with rape and sexual abuse, etc. A big chunk of those people have gone into this area because we have to do a better job, we have more demand that we have been suppressing and we need to have the resources there to deal with it properly.

Lord Bailey of Paddington AM: Your officers should be commended on the improvements they are making in this area and I ask you to just keep going. Thank you, Chairman.

Sir Mark Rowley QPM (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): Thank you, Lord Bailey.

Susan Hall AM (Chairman): I agree but privately officers will tell you they are frightened of being called racist and that --

Lord Bailey of Paddington AM: We will come back to that when we come to stop and search.

Susan Hall AM (Chairman): I know that. I am just saying in general they are. Assembly Member Ahmad?

Marina Ahmad AM: Thank you, Chairman. Commissioner, I have been reading with great interest the MPS's Children's Strategy and I was very excited when the element of Child First and putting children first within our policies was absolutely clear and defined. What I would like to know is how is the MPS supporting officers and other relevant staff in identifying child exploitation and then what happens next?

Sir Mark Rowley QPM (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): Yes, thank you. We are the first police force in the country to have a Children's Strategy that uses the Child First approach, which is widely used in Children's Services and elsewhere. It is a trickier concept for policing and it is worth explaining why I say that. We have our enforcement duties as well as our safeguarding duties and we are uniquely in a position because we have two sets of duties. The law says children over the age of ten are criminally responsible and the law also says that all safeguarding agencies, including policing, should have a view to the safeguarding and the protection of children. That is a difficult balance. If you are in Children's Services, you are much more focused on one half of that equation; we have to do both of those.

In the opening to the Strategy, I talk there about dealing with the balance between a 13-year-old being exploited and forced to transport drugs, compared with dealing with an eight-year-old growing up maybe in a household of domestic violence or a violent 17-year-old with a knife where officers are going to be using force and coercive powers potentially. The idea of Child First in that very messy context for police officers is difficult and that is why in my foreword I call that out. In our approach, we call it out because if it comes across to officers as "Child First" means you do not do enforcement activity against children, that is not acceptable. Likewise, we do not want to overuse it and miss the dimensions of children who are vulnerable. That is why we have called it out, but we are really proud of it.

Our *A New Met for London* training is giving all frontline people a week's training, officers and staff. The first half has been focused on the values and the principles of the MPS, brought to life then by looking at particular issues such as stop and search and quality of service to victims. That is 33,000 people who are the most junior grades in the organisation, officers and staff, we are well over halfway through that and that should be finished by April [2025] time. Then the second part, which will flow on the back of the rest of the year will be for 22,000 officers and staff who have contact with the public, like police officers, PCSOs, call handlers and detention officers. That will dive further into dealing with some of the more complex issues, including dealing with children and some of the other areas around public protection.

To do a programme of this scale of investment in leadership and training is enormous. We are on our second run-through of all frontline leaders, so all Sergeants and equivalents, getting a one-week course. They had one last year [2024] and they are doing another week this year, which is picking up a lot of these issues. The reason we are making progress is supervisors have already had training and they are helping make this stick. Then we are doing a leadership development for mid to senior leaders because one of the things that got killed off in the last 15 years was investment in leadership and development. Again, it all goes to the point about if you want a successful organisation, you want the right balance of people and you want people well trained and equipped. This is part of that balance that comes from *A New Met for London*. We have a mechanism to build that skillset and we have the experts at the centre of the work on child exploitation and Child First to drive it through and to monitor the success.

Marina Ahmad AM: How are you going to evaluate that training? How are you going to know that it has worked?

Sir Mark Rowley QPM (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): It is not in documents we are going to publicise in detail, but we have evaluation sheets and we have a whole evaluation approach which shows the success of the training. I am really proud of my training team. It has done a fantastic job because these are complex issues. It is not like learning a bit of law. This is really complex, tricky stuff and the way it has approached the training is it has designed a course with lots of external expertise and input and it has constant evaluation. What we have seen with all the training we have been doing over the last couple of years is the evaluations start off fairly positive and, as they mature, they get more and more positive because we are learning what worked in the training and what did not and improving it. I am confident it has built a delivery model because of that agility, which means we can have the effect. When you are tackling issues that go to subtle judgements, culture and things that are stretching for any of us, you need a very agile, thoughtful approach to training. You are not just cramming in technical knowledge and the team is doing it really well.

Marina Ahmad AM: Thank you and thank you for outlining the difficulties and getting the balance right as well. A lot of times, people do not realise how difficult that is and I am grateful for you publicly saying that.

Sir Mark Rowley QPM (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): Thank you.

Marina Ahmad AM: Thank you, Chairman, and thank you, Commissioner.

Sir Mark Rowley QPM (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): Thank you, Assembly Member Ahmad.

Susan Hall AM (Chairman): Thank you. Assembly Member Duvall?

Len Duvall AM: Thank you, Chairman. You may have answered this earlier on but just for clarity in terms of our evidence gathering, [His Majesty's] Inspector [of Constabulary] has reported that,

> *"Senior leaders … [acknowledged they] have not recently commissioned force-wide analysis in relation to child exploitation because the results would be inaccurate or have important information missing."*

Clearly, in your earlier answer you have been thinking about this.

Sir Mark Rowley QPM (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): Yes.

Len Duvall AM: Can you tell us a little bit more? OK, if we cannot have X, will we have Y? What is your thinking? How far do you think your conversation with HMICFRS is going? Clearly, it would like you to do something, but if it would like you to do something it would be saying, "This is how you should do it". No doubt you will tell us. Do you know what I mean?

Sir Mark Rowley QPM (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): Yes. That is from the report where we were criticised not that long ago, but that is a year ago now, we have moved on a long way and we have had a much cleaner bill of health since then. If you look back at what caused that, if you do not have enough people in that world and they are overloaded with cases, you suppress demand by downgrading risk on cases, so you are misreporting it. Your data that then feeds into your analysis is weaker so the lack of investment, lack of attention and the stretch is suppressing the picture. No one is doing that maliciously; people are just wrestling with the load in the system.

Being really clear - and this is why I keep coming back to the *A New Met for London* plan - it is not simply a plan about making managerial changes. It is about priorities and strategy, being really clear in that the significance of neighbourhood policing I have mentioned and the VAWG and public protection areas. That has driven us, putting more resources into it and it has driven doing all the policy work. It has driven having the resources to cope and doing the thinking to start to get the processes and the reporting right and then doing the training, like I have just spoken about with the last question. Then you start to draw through more reporting, you have better data and you are able to do the sort of analysis which I summarised with the first question, I think, when Lord Bailey opened it. That is the progress we have made.

This is always going to be something which is partly hidden. If you have a vulnerable individual who may also be committing offences and has had some sort of enforcement encounters with police, they might not be reporting that, besides being out stealing, they are also being sexually exploited. There is all sorts of complexity for that so that might not get reported to us. There are going to be things that we miss, but we are opening our radar as widely as we can do. We are working with others like local authorities and like private sector businesses to say, "Please, we need as much information as possible to scoop this in to get the best view we can do and spot the risks". Answers I gave earlier reflect our current picture and the team has been really thoughtful on it in the mix across those different dimensions of exploitation.

Len Duvall AM: It almost sounds a modern version of the old-fashioned duty room in the police station which collected all the information that went on the previous day to see if there were connections with other issues.

Sir Mark Rowley QPM (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): Yes, it is.

Len Duvall AM: It is the modern version of that?

Sir Mark Rowley QPM (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): It is a modern, data-led version of that because once upon a time when policing was more local, people could know about everything. As communities become more transient and more complex, you need systems to help you join that together. The child who is missing from that borough is being exploited in that borough, is dossing down with friends over here and is committing crime in [the City of] Westminster, stealing phones or whatever. Unless you join it all together, you are not getting the full picture of that regular missing child who is committing crime and being exploited. It is really, really complex and then you speak to the local authority and it turns out they are having some difficult decisions to make about them in their home environment and they are out of school or they are in a pupil referral unit. You get all of that messiness, it takes a lot of joining it together and it is a difficult job for policing alone, let alone the work with partners, but that is what we are improving.

Over the last 18 months, I have been meeting with the three or four leads for the 32 boroughs in terms of youth services across London as part of us resetting our approach. They have been really encouraging and supportive with looking at this and other areas, such as how we use stop and search as an indicator of exploitation. That is in the sense of if a child is being regularly stopped and searched, say a 15-year-old who is hanging around with gang members. The stop and search is "Are you carrying some drugs or a weapon today?" but the follow-through is "If that is happening regularly, what do we do about the fact there is a warning here that this 15-year-old is making some bad life choices?" Before they end up carrying weapons or being arrested for drugs, how do we work with local authorities to give them the opportunity to try to rescue them? With all of these complex issues, I do not pretend we have a perfect solution, but we are making good progress.

Len Duvall AM: OK. Let us turn to the recommendations made by HMICFRS concerning child exploitation. Have they been fully implemented or adopted now by the MPS or are you in discussion on some of those recommendations?

Sir Mark Rowley QPM (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): I cannot remember the full list, but in terms of the work with HMICFRS, there were multiple comments and there were some recommendations, but at the top of it, it had three causes for concern. Those are the headlines for "These are the three serious reasons that you are in Engage in relation to this issue". It has discharged all three of those, so it is happy that we have made really good progress on all of those. Of course, within its comments and detail, I am saying we are not perfect and there will be things we are doing, but in terms of the big, headline concerns they are dealt with.

Len Duvall AM: Maybe we could have some written communication from you about some of those other issues of where they are so we can keep track of it?

Sir Mark Rowley QPM (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): Yes, I am quite happy to.

Len Duvall AM: Thank you, Chairman.

Susan Hall AM (Chairman): Thank you. In the interests of time, colleagues, I will not ask my questions so we will go straight to Assembly Member Baker.

Elly Baker AM: Thanks, Chairman. I want to return to the MPS's Children's Strategy briefly and I wanted to ask you, Deputy Mayor. What is your assessment of progress made and do we have an implementation plan and delivery group finalised?

Kaya Comer-Schwartz (Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime): Thank you. We have outlined in the Strategy how important this approach is and after being published and in action for six months now, we regularly look at how the implementation is going. The Commissioner has talked a lot about the Engage process and that is something that the Mayor was really concerned about, so it is tying all of these things together. MOPAC regularly evaluates the work that is happening. We have recently taken on the responsibility for Appropriate Adults so that is another way in which we can have oversight in this particular area. Also, we are working with the police regularly through our criminal justice system work to make sure that we have youth practitioners in custody suites and training for solicitors on having a child-first approach. As MOPAC, we are making sure that we are taking a kind of ecology approach to making sure that in every area that a child comes in contact with the criminal justice service we are doing our best to embed the real core and important elements of the Child Strategy.

Elly Baker AM: OK. Specifically on the second part of that, is an implementation plan coming? Is there going to be one and a delivery group? Is that on its way?

Sir Mark Rowley QPM (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): Yes, the team has a plan about implementation, it also has success measures and it is working its way through that.

Elly Baker AM: Yes. Is that something that is going to be shared with us or is that something internal?

Sir Mark Rowley QPM (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): It is an internal document.

Elly Baker AM: OK, all right. Commissioner, to come to you, what progress specifically has been made on the revision of The London Child Exploitation Operating Protocol [2021]? That is one of the things in the Strategy.

Sir Mark Rowley QPM (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): This is one of the things in the Strategy and I have the answer somewhere in here, he said, playing for time.

Kaya Comer-Schwartz (Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime): While the Commissioner is looking up -- can I just, on this topic, say overall it is really important to highlight the wider work that MOPAC is doing to support victims and survivors of child sexual exploitation. The Commissioner has laid out the context in which we are working and the work we do through the Violence Reduction Unit (VRU) to support exploited children or children at risk of exploitation and prevention is key in this. Also, there is the work that the Mayor commissioned through The Lighthouse charity, which is nationally recognised by the Children's Commissioner as excellent. That funding set that up and it supports children who have been sexually exploited. It is really also important that 1,600 survivors have been through that service so we really need to recognise the voluntary sector work that is being done in that. Also, every year there is the £650,000 that goes into the emotional support service for exploited children or children who have, sadly, been sexually abused. It is really important to recognise that the MPS is doing an amazing job in child protection, and I had the honour of going to Holborn [police station] and seeing the Child Abuse Team there, but we are working in prevention and support for victims as well.

Elly Baker AM: Thanks. That is helpful. Back to you.

Sir Mark Rowley QPM (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): I still haven't found my note.

Elly Baker AM: OK. Chairman, can we get the answer in writing?

Sir Mark Rowley QPM (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): I am annoyed with myself because I read it last night.

Elly Baker AM: It was there.

Sir Mark Rowley QPM (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): We have been working with local authorities and other partners on the protocol about how we work together. It is an MPS document, but it is around a joint piece of work. It reflects that point I was making earlier about how we work together on these different issues like children identified as vulnerable through stop and search, for example, and many other factors. It covers all of that and it is very much work in progress. It is a part of making the point, alongside the work I mentioned with the business community, which is Operation Makesafe, about how we work with others to have the right network to both spot and then help children.

Elly Baker AM: Thanks. Yes, if you could find that and come back to us.

Sir Mark Rowley QPM (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): OK, fine.

Elly Baker AM: I was going to ask about Operation Makesafe as well since you have mentioned it. It seems very important and a valuable bit of work in terms of making sure businesses are aware and have their eyes out. There does not seem to be any sort of success measures in terms of how successful it is being. There are some numbers in terms of reporting and stuff like that, but is there anything more that you would have in terms of whether it is delivering effectively or if there is more that could be done in that area?

Sir Mark Rowley QPM (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): I have not yet seen a detailed evaluation. We are reaching out and we have some shopping centres involved with it and other smaller venues that young people at risk of exploitation might hang around like vape shops, chicken shops and other sorts of venues. We are doing that briefing. I would expect it to start to deliver more reporting. These are preventative and awareness issues and they are very hard to get exact value out, but if I gave you a parallel. In terms of protecting women, particularly young women in the night-time economy, there is the Ask for Angela scheme, which has all been about raising the awareness of nightclubs, pubs and bars to the risk of women being preyed upon in pubs and the spiking issues. The Ask for Angela code and the adoption of that sort of thing across many of the night-time economies has been quite powerful. It provides extra confidence to women in those contexts, and we do have a number of cases where women have activated that sort of speak and gone to door staff or bar staff and used that. The results are partly about confidence and the ability of a community to be strong as well as they are about the tactical value of them.

Elly Baker AM: Yes, understood. It would be good to see when you do have some sort of outputs on that.

Sir Mark Rowley QPM (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): Yes.

Elly Baker AM: Finally, very specifically I was going to ask about the specific commitment to undertake training in childhood vulnerability. Is that part of the training programme that you were talking us through before or is that separate? You have already told us that is halfway through, delivering for April [2025].

Sir Mark Rowley QPM (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): It is part of that. We have done, as I say, the leaders' training and most of it for the 22,000 people who have day-to-day contact, officers and staff and it will be in this second phase after Easter. We have already seen the uptick because of some of the briefings and some of the work done. We have done some training with specialists and the victim-blaming language avoidance training was done with supervisors and briefings across the organisation, so we have done bits. We are doing a major reset in multiple ways that the *A New Met for London* strategy requires and the getting out of Engage. With so many strands of work, many of them have small training requirements. If you did them all separately, it would tie the whole organisation in knots because people would be vanishing for half a day on this and a day on that all over the place. We decided to let us just make a strategic intent. We are going to invest a week's training in everybody over the course of a year and we are going to get as much of this in there as possible because there are overlapping issues. It makes sense and we decided to break it into two halves, the first half being every junior person, PCs or staff, which is 33,000. Then the second part is the 22,000 who have public contact, call handlers, detention officers, PCs, Detectives, etc, and that will follow. It is a serious investment, but packaging it together makes it more efficient and more coherent.

Elly Baker AM: Yes, that makes sense to me. Thanks very much and back to you, Chairman.

Susan Hall AM (Chairman): Thank you very much and just to confirm. When you do get analysis on Operation Makesafe, the Committee would really be interested to read that. Thank you.

We are now moving on to the last section, which is stop and search. My first question is: how is the MPS ensuring that stop and search powers related to protest are not conflicting with the right to peaceful procession and assembly?

Sir Mark Rowley QPM (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): Thank you very much. There are very few stop and search powers that are aimed at the protest situation, which is probably right and proper. The key one is the more recent one from the Public Order Act of 2023, which is basically aimed at the issue of lock-on devices. People who are in a protest are locking on to street furniture or front doors of buildings, etc, which is massively disruptive and, once that lock-on is achieved, it can take a long time to safely remove that. Once you decide that you are not going to seriously injure the person by dragging them off it and breaking limbs, then it is a long, laborious process so preventing it is, I think, the reason behind the last Government creating this piece of legislation. Not many protests are focused on lock-on, and we have not seen any of that around the PSC protests, for example. We have tended to see some of it around environmental protests and one or two other narrow interest groups.

To give a sense of the scale of it, since this came into power, there are two parts to it. There is a "with suspicion" and there is a "without suspicion and authority". With suspicion, an individual officer is saying, "I have grounds to believe this person has devices on them that may be used in this circumstance". We have eight recorded cases of this in that 18-month period. The second power wherein a senior officer gives an authority to stop and search on a particular operation where the senior officer has the grounds, but the individual officer does not need the suspicion, that more broad-reaching authority has been given on three occasions and has led to 49 individuals being searched.

If you look at that and you think about the scale of protests we have had over the last 18 months or so, it is a pretty miniscule number, which I think is perfectly right and proper and it just reflects the small proportion of protest that is linked to lock-on devices.

Susan Hall AM (Chairman): Tell me. If you do a stop and search and somebody has spray paint on them, as an example, or glue or illegal flags, Hamas flags or whatever, would then the officer take that off those individuals?

Sir Mark Rowley QPM (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): Yes, so those are different offences. If you have spray paint, possessing spray paint is not illegal. If I have reason to believe that you are possessing it with the intent to cause criminal damage, if I have grounds to do that, then you are going to be arrested for possessing articles with intent to cause criminal damage. Likewise, if you have a flag that is illegal, if we know you have a flag that is supporting Hamas, the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) or Al Qaeda or some other proscribed group, then you will be arrested for possessing that proscribed item. Those are all possible. This stop and search power was aimed simply at filling a gap. We had had operations where we were confident from our intelligence that that group of protesters had lock-on devices but, actually, the law did not provide a stop and search power and that was why the Government filled that gap, whereas those other situations you are articulating are things we do come across, but they are not things that require new powers.

Susan Hall AM (Chairman): Yes, I was interested. Thank you very much. Assembly Member Best.

Emma Best AM: Thank you. Commissioner, I just wanted to come to the Stop and Search Charter. Do you know when that will be published?

Sir Mark Rowley QPM (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): It is planned in the next few weeks. I cannot remember the exact date, but it is not far away.

Kaya Comer-Schwartz (Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime): 27 February [2025].

Sir Mark Rowley QPM (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): 27 February, Kaya says. I am sure that is right.

Emma Best AM: 27 February, OK. Obviously, I do not need to remind you that the publication date for that was originally October 2023, but are you confident now that that is in a place where it will support both the public and officers in that work? That is for both of you.

Sir Mark Rowley QPM (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): Absolutely. Can I go first, Kaya, if that is all right? Definitely, that October [2023] date was probably put in an original plan overenthusiastically, to be candid. We could easily have created a Charter in a few days. It would have had no engagement with the community whatsoever, though, and so it was overenthusiastic in its speed. The team led by -- many of you will know Deputy Assistant Commissioner Ade Adelekan, who leads our public order work and has been leading on this for us. He is outstanding. They have really approached it from a -- let us reach out to communities, particularly those who are most questioning about stop and search and be really clear about their expectation. It is created very much bottom-up. It was quite a bold process. They ran where they started with a blank sheet of paper. As I said, it is all the better for it.

It is very powerful how strong the data is. Young people, the vast majority of them, value stop and search. They want stop and search. They recognise it has a big role in protecting them and their friends and others from knife crime. Of course, they want it done respectfully and those sorts of factors and that is what has been captured in the protocol.

The charter is very much a bottom-up document. I will be really clear when we launch it that stop and search works. It reduces violence. We want to do more of it. This is a document that licenses and legitimises how we do it. It is important that it is not intended to send a message that we are stepping back from stop and search because we have this Charter; it is quite the opposite. This is an enabling document about how communities, even those who are most critical of it, want it used. I will be very clear that it works and we need to do more of it.

Emma Best AM: Kaya?

Kaya Comer-Schwartz (Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime): Yes, I have had a really good, detailed briefing from Ade [Adelekan] and very much, as the Commissioner says, the amount of consultation work that has gone into the Charter is really important, and the fact that the consultation groups have purposely spoken to minoritised communities and to young people. I was very much struck, as the Commissioner mentioned, that Ade was clear that they were not presenting a Charter and asking people what they felt about it. They were saying to communities, "This is a blank page about how we use stop and search. What do you feel should be in the Charter?" The progress that has been made on that basis I hope will be a significant moment when that Charter is published because it is rooted, rightly, in the community transparency that I know we have talked a lot about at this Committee.

Emma Best AM: And police officers, right?

Kaya Comer-Schwartz (Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime): Yes, exactly. When I was at Holborn the other day, I was really struck by the officers talking very passionately about how body-worn cameras have improved their ability to police. I know that the way the Stop and Search Charter is also being implemented comes with additional training because they want officers to be confident in being able to deliver this tactic fairly and proportionately, but to be able to deliver it. There have been 4,000 weapons alone in the last year taken off the streets through stop and search. It is important, but it is important it is done right and effectively.

Emma Best AM: Yes. What personally I would be looking for is the confidence it gives to officers through having this Stop and Search Charter that they can go back to. Is there anything else that you would raise that you are doing to give officers confidence to use stop and search? I do not want to teach you to suck eggs, but you obviously know officers are not. From everyone I speak to, it is almost more hassle than it is worth a lot of times.

Sir Mark Rowley QPM (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): Stop and search has halved in the last three years in London. That is not good. Our operational activity, helpfully, has helped keep violence down in the way I discussed earlier on. There are too many knives out there. It is deeply troubling.

The other factor in this is about officers' accountability and how that works. Sometimes people think I am slightly schizophrenic, but it is coherent. You have heard me speak publicly about officers needing greater confidence that they will be treated fairly when they use their powers as given by Parliament against difficult and dangerous people. The system is, perversely, too tough on officers in that situation at the same time as - the conversation we started this morning with - being too restrictive when officers are clearly unacceptable and us not being able to deal with them. A badly framed set of regulations does both of those. That is why I have been so forthright on the accountability issues.

It was good that Suella Braverman [former Home Secretary] had the review. It landed on James Cleverly's [former Home Secretary] watch. It did not get followed through. Yvette Cooper as the new Home Secretary has followed through on it, and those steps are being taken. One of the early steps is the Director of Public Prosecutions issued new guidance on prosecution of police officers only about three weeks ago. Police officers who make basically split-second decisions in fast time in operational situations and about recognising some of the wider considerations in that. Getting the right framework around officers so they are -- an officer needs to feel, "If I am trying my best to work within my training, the world should not fall on top of me if someone complaints about it. Maybe I will get it perfectly right. Maybe there is some learning for me, but if I am acting with good intent, then the world should not land on top of me." That is what they worry about at the moment. We are doing work in terms of how we process and deal with issues internally to try to speed that up. The new Director General of the Independent Office for Police Conduct (IOPC) is trying to find a more balanced approach, but changing regulations and law are really important, and so the new Home Secretary has delivered some of that and there is more to do.

That is critical and so that is why earlier on, when I was talking about the launch of this, the launch of this needs to be about how stop and search works. We need to do more of it and we are going to do it in the way the community supports, like this. That is the point of this. It is not simply about saying, "Let us go." It is not a coded message for going soft on stop and search, quite the opposite. It is about this legitimises it because it is what young people are telling us about how they want it done.

Emma Best AM: We look forward to seeing that. I suppose the only question I had around that, though, is training attached to that Charter, shrinking budget. Is this achievable?

Sir Mark Rowley QPM (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): That is why we have tough choices. That does sound slightly glib, but that is genuinely the case. Someone earlier asked the question about the *A New Met for London* budget. With the budgetary pressures, you could decide we are not going to try to do anything better, we are just going to shrink, and we are not going to have any investment in improving anything. That is clearly not what is required. By keeping some money in *A New Met for London* for strengthening areas, by the resources we have strengthened in training to be able to do this good work, for example, all of that is about taking this forward because we have to keep going forward. If the overall envelope is tight, we have to make choices on things. It is more important to go forward in this area and this is so critical because it is about the safety of people on the street. It is issues like that together with more general budget pressures that create the tough choices and that is the balance, which is why the strategy, which starts from more trust, less crime, high standards, is going to deliver that, things like neighbourhood policing and rebalancing so that we are doing a decent service on VAWG. You start from those principles and you work your way through and the strategy drives the action and the budget.

Emma Best AM: Thank you. I just really hope this does get communicated to officers as something to support them as much as something to build trust in the community.

Sir Mark Rowley QPM (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): Yes. Thank you.

Susan Hall AM (Chairman): Thank you. Assembly Member Garbett.

Zoë Garbett AM: Thank you. Just to pick up on what you were just saying about it working, at an earlier Committee [meeting, 15 January 2025], one of the panellists was saying that stop and search-like practices are minimally effective and would require a huge increase in volume to see a small decrease in targeted crimes, and other studies have found that the effect of stop and search on crime is marginal at best. I just wondered if those are considered when you have looked at the tactic.

Sir Mark Rowley QPM (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): The quality of the research out there on stop and search is not that good. We have done some fresh work that we will publish soon, which shows in the London context the effect of stop and search on knife crime and violence is very significant. That looks at 15 to 18 years' data and shows a very significant correlation in terms of more stop and search and less violence. It absolutely works. Instinctively, it ought to, in the sense of if you are likely to end up being arrested if you carry a weapon, then you are less likely to carry a weapon, but there needs to be enough stop and search to bring that about.

The other thing that persuades me it works is that when the law got tougher on firearms around the turn of the century when there were a lot of shootings in London and that enabled different policing tactics and people to go to prison for a long time, criminals changed their approach. They carried guns less often. It gives us different tactical options. If you compare gun crime now to 20-odd years ago, there is no comparison. Enforcement can have an effect. I have some very powerful data to say --

Zoë Garbett AM: It would be really interesting to see that study. Does it look at other interventions such as amnesties or the great work of the VRU, which we have heard reduces people's risk to others by 77 per cent by being involved with a youth worker? Does the study take it in the round of the other things that have happened in the last few years like the VRU and other things?

Sir Mark Rowley QPM (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): There are different types of interventions. They are not comparable. Of course, if we can do education initiatives that reduce the number of kids who want to carry weapons, we stop them making bad life choices. That is great. However, if a mother

wants to clear out some knives that her teenage son who is now in prison has left in the house, then that is great as well, but people who are involved in crime and who are carrying weapons are not going to give them in. They will not all engage with youth workers. That is not saying we should not try --

Zoë Garbett AM: Yes. I guess it is looking at it in the round, yes.

Sir Mark Rowley QPM (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): Of course, we should have a balanced strategy, but I am slightly concerned that your implication is that with a balanced strategy, therefore, because you can do some other things, you do not need to do the enforcement stuff. If only that were true, but the enforcement has to be part of it.

Zoë Garbett AM: That is not what I was saying. I was saying did your study look at those other interventions? I will look out for the data, and we can maybe pick it up then.

Sir Mark Rowley QPM (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): I do not know. I have never seen a social science study that is able to rigorously look in the complexity of any city at different balances of different types of interventions and make an absolutely scientific judgement saying, "This is the right balance." We clearly need prevention, diversion and enforcement, and we have to make some judgements on the best mix of them. At the moment, the evidence is clear as we bring it forward that stop and search works. It has reduced by half and there are concerns about knife crime. We need to be doing more of it and communities support it. All of that comes together for me. I want to be doing more of it but, picking up Assembly Member Best's point, I have to do work to build officers' confidence to do it. Much as I was robust about how officers are confident on sexual exploitation cases, and I have seen evidence on this, the confidence is much more fragile and we have to build that. Some of that is me, some of that is the IOPC, some of that is the law, and that is what we are doing.

Zoë Garbett AM: I guess it is interesting that we have been focusing on knife violence, which is completely understandable, but most of the stops that take place, 56 per cent, are on the suspicion of drugs.

Sir Mark Rowley QPM (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): On your previous questions, we talked about how our enforcement in the drugs market is linked to violence. So much of London's violence is linked to gangs, which is linked to drugs. The drug searches are a part of that weapons reduction. If you have a gang that is selling drugs, some of the time they are carrying weapons. The officer's suspicion in that moment may be that this young man has drugs, but in the back of his or her mind is actually, "I have a suspicion they have drugs, but they are part of a gang and so who knows what else they might have?" Academics like to pretend that drug searches are done for one purpose and weapon searches are done for an entirely separate purpose. That is a theoretical desk-based analysis. That is not the real world. When drugs and violence are so entwined, those searches are part of the same package of keeping our streets safe.

Zoë Garbett AM: In the majority of the drug searches, 70 per cent of the stops do not result in anything.

Sir Mark Rowley QPM (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): They might result in somebody being reminded it is not a good idea to carry a weapon.

Zoë Garbett AM: I just would test that anyone carrying drugs is carrying a knife as a theory. If you are stopping someone who is using street heroin or cannabis or someone using MDMA on a night out, is it a common assumption of all drugs that there is a knife?

Sir Mark Rowley QPM (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): That was not the point I made. The point I made was about drugs and gangs. That was the point I made and that is where the link is very strong. Going back to linking this to the child exploitation point, our county lines and city lines operations, from the last data I saw, from the phone numbers that are running these lines, we identify the people and the location behind them and we arrest them. They are men of violence. The people running these lines are men of violence, full stop, no ifs, no buts, no maybes. In the last data I saw, more than 80 per cent of them have violent convictions and track records. One in ten of them is arrested for homicide. One in six of them is arrested for firearms offences. One in three of them is arrested for grievous bodily harm. They are men of violence behind the lines and they are coercing the kids who are running the drugs. Those kids are then graduating and then we see these videos after a court case where you have two 15-year-olds doing gruesome things to each other with machetes. It is all tied together and our job is to break that. Enforcement has a big role to play to break it, just as when we spot the 14-year-old before it is too late for him to change his life choices, we desperately need the help of charities and youth services to try to drag them back into better life choices and to help the families rebalance. We need the combination of prevention and enforcement, but we should not pretend that there is some theoretical separate drugs world over here and violence over here. A lot of it is entirely --

Zoë Garbett AM: That is not what I am pretending at all. Just quickly on county lines, the National Police Chiefs' Council released data in November [2024] that is national, and I just wanted to test if this is the same picture in London. It has said that external county lines have decreased by 12.2 per cent but internal county lines have increased by 232 per cent. I just wondered if that is similar for London.

Sir Mark Rowley QPM (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): We are doing a lot of operations both in terms of external, as in drugs from the centre of London to Winchester, and internal drugs from central London to Kingston, picking the same train line [as an example]. We are doing operations of both those types. I do not know the exact ratio between them. The nature of the gangs in London means, in terms of county lines and disruptions in the country, we are doing north of 30 per cent of them in the country, which is disproportionate, which shows it is a big factor here, which again goes to the significance of our work to disrupt those gangs.

Zoë Garbett AM: Then they are obviously increasing and so, obviously, it is just testing if that is working as an approach.

Sir Mark Rowley QPM (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): We have fewer teenagers being stabbed, we have a lower murder rate, and this work is contributing towards that.

Zoë Garbett AM: Thank you.

Susan Hall AM (Chairman): I must just say, Commissioner, if we ask you to keep us safe, it is our duty to make sure we give you every tool in the book. I personally think stop and search is a damn good thing and I hope it does increase. We have to get a bit of a wriggle on. Assembly Member Cooper.

Léonie Cooper AM: I was just going to ask the Commissioner about whether he felt that county lines was central both to the issues about grooming in London as well as to knife crime and that tackling county lines is integral to tackling both of those areas, but you have started to touch on that.

Sir Mark Rowley QPM (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): It is a bit like *The Two Ronnies* [comedy show] sketch, answering the next question. I have covered this.

Susan Hall AM (Chairman): You have done this before. OK. Thank you. Assembly Member Ahmad.

Marina Ahmad AM: Thank you, Commissioner. As you are aware, the pilot studies for precision stop and search took place in Barking and in Lambeth, in my constituency. I have never heard about any evaluation from this. We were talking about the Charter. Are we talking about stop and search or are we specifically talking about precision stop and search?

Sir Mark Rowley QPM (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): No, we were talking about stop and search for the Charter and so it is about all stop and search. Those were tests of hotspot policing. They delivered some results. They were reasonable. They were not spectacular. I am sure, if you wanted a more detailed conversation, your local Basic Command Unit Commander could fill you in on it.

Marina Ahmad AM: Sure. We are not going to be seeing the rolling out of precision stop and search across London?

Sir Mark Rowley QPM (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): It was one particular project. You will see stop and search done more in this place than in that place because we target hotspots. Where is the violence? Where is the risk? Where is the danger to communities? Where are the weapons offences? Where are the street robberies using knives? We will target that offence. That is why stop and search does not fall evenly across London because knife crime does not fall evenly across London. I saw some data a while ago. It is close to two thirds of London's -- if you divide London into small hexagon areas a few 100 metres across, two thirds of London has not had a knife crime in two years and so it is concentrated in certain areas. That will not be surprising to all of us who have lived in London a long time. You target your searches where those areas are.

Marina Ahmad AM: Thank you. Commissioner, with the Charter, what is going to be put in place to measure the impact and in proving whether trust has increased within communities as a result of the Charter?

Sir Mark Rowley QPM (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): For me, I see those two things as quite separate. We have the themes in the charter on things like focus, the quality of the encounter, improved supervision, training, complaints handling, use of technology, independent governance and scrutiny and quality assurance, community engagement about why it is being used and better public understanding. All of those have plans behind them and themes and that has been detailed in the report. It is going to be very difficult to show a direct causal link between that and any other changes in trust and confidence because those are affected by so many other factors on a weekly basis, but we are continually tracking trust and confidence. The most reliable survey is the National Crime Survey of England and Wales, funded by the Home Office, and we track it through that. We also keep an eye on the less robust but still useful data from the work that MOPAC does.

Marina Ahmad AM: Did you want to add to that, Deputy Mayor?

Kaya Comer-Schwartz (Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime): Yes. I know that you know, Assembly Member Ahmad, that we do regular surveys of Londoners. Trust and confidence is always on that and so we have quite granular details about the levels of trust and confidence specific to gender, communities and background and we can layer that. That is why in the new PCP we have nine areas that we have evaluated as increasing trust and confidence so that we can monitor that. MOPAC is currently doing a piece of work using independent assessors to look at stop and search and the grounds for which stop and search happens and doing dip sampling. We are pulling all of those together to support the MPS in making sure that they can use these tactics effectively.

Marina Ahmad AM: Thank you. Thank you, Chairman.

Susan Hall AM (Chairman): Thank you. Assembly Member Roberts.

Gareth Roberts AM (Deputy Chair): Thank you. This is a question for the Commissioner. It may have been answered, by the way. We have been into a lot of detail. What action is the MPS taking to ensure all officers are communicating the grounds for suspicion clearly and accurately prior to conducting a search and how is this being monitored?

Sir Mark Rowley QPM (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): We have done a lot of work to strengthen this, and I am really proud of the progress on this and, again, this is something that HMICFRS has looked at quite recently. They are fairly tough judges of this from looking at body-worn video and now more than 94 per cent that they assessed independently do a very good job of justifying the grounds. That has moved up. Historically, it was as low as 75 per cent in previous assessments and so the vast majority of them. In 98.6 per cent of cases officers are using body-worn video and the expectation is in all cases. Of course, occasionally people will forget it or that kit will have broken that day, et cetera. Obviously, if there is a pattern of an officer never using body-worn video, then we would be suspicious.

One of the things that reassures me about the integrity of officers is their enthusiasm for body-worn video, as was mentioned earlier by the Deputy Mayor. In fact, I was sitting in front of a different version of this Committee 12 years ago as Assistant Commissioner. I led the rollout of body-worn video in 2012, 2013 and 2014 in the MPS, which was at that stage the biggest pilot in the world. Officers were nervous. In the first place we put it, they were nervous about it for about the first four to eight weeks. "Is this spying on me?" Very quickly, it was like, "This is my best friend because I know I have behaved well. People make lots of nonsense allegations. Actually, this is my best friend. This provides me with cover because I behave professionally." Officers are very enthusiastic about it and would not go out without it. That is reassuring about officers' intent and so this is really about officers' skills under pressure and improving that.

We have a process by which supervisors dip-sample cases. We have community scrutiny groups and MOPAC has been instrumental in helping set those up and get the right membership of them and looking at them, focusing most generally on learning processes if they have got things wrong without any ill intent. Obviously, very occasionally it might identify misconduct-type practice, but most of it is about that improvement. The Stop and Search Charter will give us a fresh look at how we monitor it.

Monitoring to date has been very focused on two things: the technical quality of it in terms of grounds and those sorts of issues and then the efficacy of it in terms of whether anything was found. What the Charter will take us more towards is also looking at how it is done and whether it has been done with the right balance of control and respect and those issues as well, which is really good. There is a good system around it and the Charter will only force us to strengthen that, but nothing should threaten officers from using it and doing it so confidently.

Gareth Roberts AM (Deputy Chair): Thank you. Just one small supplementary, Chairman, from me. I am in contact with a resident who is a mother in Lewisham whose son over the years has undergone dozens of stops and searches. Once he was stopped and searched twice in one day. Their case has been reviewed on a number of occasions and the stop and searches continue. Obviously, the family feels utterly harassed and they have lost confidence when it comes to treating Londoners fairly. How do we defend the point -- and I use the word "we" rather than just "you".

Sir Mark Rowley QPM (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): Thank you.

Gareth Roberts AM (Deputy Chair): How do we defend the point that stop and searches are being done proportionately?

Sir Mark Rowley QPM (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): In my experience, they almost always are. I am not saying we do not make mistakes. I have had letters like that from MPs, "My constituent has told me", dot, dot, dot. You look behind the case and then, when you look at the horrific record of the young person, it is not at all surprising and, actually, the policing actually is entirely reasonable. In some cases, parents are living in cloud cuckoo land about what their children are engaged in. There will be rare occasions where we are getting it wrong. I do not pretend otherwise, but in the vast majority of circumstances officers are getting it right. If an individual or if a young person is routinely hanging around with gangs who sell drugs and perpetuate violence and is being stopped in those situations regularly, then that is what I would expect officers to do. It is not a bad thing necessarily that someone is stopped that frequently if they are a threat to the local community. That is the issue underneath. We need to be honest as politicians if you have a constituent who is being honest that, actually, sometimes this is the right answer. Sometimes it is not. Sometimes it is the right answer. Actually, of course, you might want to speak to us or make inquiries with us. That is perfectly right, but being open to the fact that it might be the right answer because of the threat that person poses is what would be helpful.

Gareth Roberts AM (Deputy Chair): I may contact you directly regarding this individual case so that I can understand it further from a different point of view.

Sir Mark Rowley QPM (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): Of course.

Gareth Roberts AM (Deputy Chair): The Deputy Mayor wishes to come in.

Kaya Comer-Schwartz (Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime): I just wanted to add that that is exactly why my predecessor commissioned this huge piece of research that MOPAC is doing currently on stop and search, so that we have a really strong evidence base on, as the Commissioner said, where the hotspots are, what that means for communities, what the grounds are so that we can have a really strong evidence base to look at and to have a really important conversation about why certain communities feel overpoliced and what the reasons are behind that. That is a piece of work that the [London] Disproportionality Board is doing with the MPS to make sure that there is this huge piece of research that we can look at together.

Gareth Roberts AM (Deputy Chair): I suppose one of the logical concerns is that if one particular community is being particularly targeted, then it is not beyond the wit of most criminal gangs to start thinking, "These people have been targeted on a regular basis. Therefore, we will start changing our recruitment patterns to the people who are not being targeted on a regular basis." I am just putting it out there as a suggestion.

Sir Mark Rowley QPM (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): We are targeting based on the criminality and so, if the criminality moves, we would move the targeting. The recruiting to gangs is so geographically based. They are recruiting from the community in that patch, which means particular communities have disproportionate numbers of young men drawn into the violence because there is that conveyer belt in that geography where that gang operates and it is really tragic.

The thing that is most powerful and the one group of people who are vehement - and a journalist wrote a very thoughtful piece in *The Times* about this bringing it out - about how stop and search works and we need more of it are the mums who have lost their sons to knife crime. That is the fact that cuts through all the politics, all

the contention, all the heat around this. If the mums who have lost sons are the ones who say we should have more stop and search, they are the ones I want to listen to most.

Gareth Roberts AM (Deputy Chair): I do not disagree with you on that at all --

Sir Mark Rowley QPM (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): I know you do not.

Gareth Roberts AM (Deputy Chair): -- but it is a reasonable question and it does help to air these questions directly with you.

Sir Mark Rowley QPM (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): Completely. Thank you.

Kaya Comer-Schwartz (Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime): Sorry, can I add,
Assembly Member Roberts that the Commissioner made a really important point linked to what you were saying about recruitment. There is legislation coming forward on exploitation and it is a serious loophole and it needs serious sentencing because we know one of the major reasons that children are being used is to hide exploitative adults. I make this point because that is the recruitment concern that I am most exercised about and that exploitation and having proper sentencing around that that is enacted is really key.

Sir Mark Rowley QPM (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): Can I come in on the back of that? I am really grateful. Kaya makes a brilliant point and I wish I had made it myself. I forgot to and so thank you.

It is a serious point here that links stop and search, violence, knife crime and the exploitation point. If I am a 20-year-old man of violence running a gang, am I incentivised to recruit kids from my communities or disincentivised to do it by the way the world works? At the moment, there are more incentives than disincentives because those kids are easily biddable and influenceable. They are less likely to go to prison and so they are a sustainable workforce because they are less likely to go to prison than adults. It all works in my favour and there is not a law in terms of criminal exploitation of children. There are laws like modern slavery and other things that sometimes fit the bill, but they were not really designed for this purpose and so one would not expect them to, generally. It is in my interest to do that. It is really good news that the Government had in its manifesto to introduce an offence of criminal exploitation of children. If it does that in the right way and with sufficient bite - because if it is a low-level offence, it will not have the bite - and if it has sufficient bite and all of a sudden becomes, frankly, for the person running the gang, "Actually, if I start to use children, I am doubling the sentence I am going to get for selling drugs", it might change their behaviour.

We have to find a way to break the conveyor belt that, tragically, is particularly awful in some of London's Black communities and that is drawing kids into this violence and then they end up being the victims and the offenders. It is just horrible. Having seen some videos of some recent incidents, it is really upsetting to see what you have 14, 15, and 16-year-olds doing. We have to break that conveyor belt. Some of that is, as we talked about earlier, better and better prevention and diversion work, but some of it is we have to break the criminal business model. At the moment, with the criminal business model for a gang leader, it makes sense to bring kids into your empire. We need to make that a high-risk strategy for them.

Gareth Roberts AM (Deputy Chair): Excellent. Thank you. Thank you, Chairman.

Susan Hall AM (Chairman): Thank you. I am sure there would be cross-party agreement on anything that can go ahead that would help with that. A last question coming in from Assembly Member Lord Bailey.

Lord Bailey of Paddington AM: I am interested in disproportionality. I am going to go to the Deputy Mayor first. Are you confident that the work you are doing on disproportionality is focusing on the right areas? This conversation in the Black community was led by the usual suspects. I believe the conversation has gone elsewhere. Are you confident you are focusing on the correct areas in disproportionality? Are you arriving with any preconceived ideas about that?

Kaya Comer-Schwartz (Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime): Let me be clear. It is not my preconceived ideas that are driving the research. It is the robust research framework that has been developed alongside the MPS about what to look at and is being done by a range of -- that is why we have independent members of the community - all communities - looking at the data and doing dip sampling and seeing thousands of cases so that we have the widest dataset. It has nothing to do with -- it does not have a value set on it. It is just looking at the police data, body-worn camera footage and --

Lord Bailey of Paddington AM: It is hard to have this conversation and there not be a value set on it when the people are analysing it. That is hard. The reason I say that is because the disproportionality I am most concerned with is the disproportionate number of Black boys in particular who are stabbed, robbed and terrorised through knives. I personally think stop and search is one of the only ways to intervene in that process. Is that disproportional negative outcome for the Black community, particularly young Black men, part of the estimates you draw from all of this data?

Kaya Comer-Schwartz (Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime): Sorry, can you clarify the question?

Lord Bailey of Paddington AM: What I am trying to suggest is this disproportionality -- I believe there is disproportionality. It is also correct that there is disproportionality in the stop and search because a particular group of people is being murdered through the lack of stop and search. I am arguing and I am asking you the question. When you look at this data, when you start to draw consequences, are you comfortable with the fact that there will be some disproportionality? I am because that is where the police should be concentrating their efforts.

Kaya Comer-Schwartz (Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime): Sure. We recognise that in the same way as there are different demographics that are more likely to be imprisoned for various reasons. That is just factual. The important point - and it really should be seen as enabling to the police - is having a dataset that says - and I have heard this first hand from people who have been regularly stopped and searched - there are good stops and searches that actually have helped get them into other services and have been a positive interaction and there are not. It is how we make those pieces of excellence consistent. That is the work that we are trying to do together.

Lord Bailey of Paddington AM: OK. Commissioner, you should be commended on some of the brave statements you have made around disproportionality and why we have had to look at particular parts of the community. The real problem now with stop and search is that it has not been supported by the Mayor. It is as simple as that. In 2018, he said he will do everything in his power to cut stop and search. He absolutely said that. Before you tell me he did not say that, Deputy Mayor, I suggest you Google it. You will see a big article where he said that. Now that you have said that we need to have stop and search as a tactic, are you confident that your officers are able to carry this out in the way you want it carried out?

Sir Mark Rowley QPM (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): I am. I am confident in their capability. Obviously, we have talked about their confidence and that is something that is a work in progress for the reasons we have discussed. I do not need to repeat it. However, it links back to some of the conversation you have just generated. It is a dangerous mistake that the proportionality of police use of

powers is debated and presented over here, and the demographics of the way crime and victimisation falls on different communities for a whole range of reasons is talked about over here and they are not joined together. What that leads to is an assumption that because police use a tactic more often in one geography or with one community, therefore, it is biased, whereas it actually may just be tragic that that crime is falling more heavily there. Until we join those two together, it puts a very heavy blanket on policing confidence. That is part of the issue that goes to the debate that saps officers' confidence and saying, "Actually, if I do stop and search in this context with this community, I am more open to challenge." People will say police are unfairly targeting a community. Actually, we might be dealing with it more often.

You have heard me say this before, but I will repeat it again. During COVID, the body politic got really energised about the prospect that certain minority groups were twice as likely to be suffering serious health consequences as others and everyone was really energised about it and worried about it and looking at it because this does not look fair. I do not see that same energy for the disproportionate victimisation that you talk about. You have heard the statistic I have used, which is a year out of date or whatever it was, but it was ten years of data that Black boys in London are being 12 or 13 times more likely to be murdered than white boys over a decade. We ought to be horrified by that and looking at how policing tactics might need to get more assertive in that context as well as diversion tactics, education and a whole range of other interventions to help deal with this. Meanwhile, we are stuck in a - small P - politicised debate about race when you have mums of boys grieving their loss when we are not collectively as enforcement or diversionary agencies doing our best because we are tiptoeing around it.

Lord Bailey of Paddington AM: I could not agree more. To the Deputy Mayor, do you sometimes think it is hard to statistically measure some of the impacts of stop and search? I come from a background of over 30 years of youth work. I have dealt with many gang-involved young people. Their likelihood to be stopped or not is how they measure if they should carry a weapon or not. Although a stop might not result in any further action by the police, it definitely has a positive reverberation in the community. Do you think it is possible to capture some of that in stats and in some of the disproportionality work you are doing?

Kaya Comer-Schwartz (Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime): That is why the importance of mixed methodology is key to this. That goes to the work that has been done through the consultation on the Stop and Search Charter. Also, we use quantitative measures and qualitative measures and that mix of analysis gives you a picture. No research has been done ever in anything that gives everyone the whole picture of anything, but it is important that in order to have oversight, to improve accountability and to improve practice, we do test hypotheses through research.

Lord Bailey of Paddington AM: Commissioner, how better do you think the police can demonstrate the connection between people's drug use and crime on the street? For instance, there are lots of people who might use heroin or MDMA in a nice, polite, middle-class environment and not realise the impact that is having on communities that are disparate to theirs. How do you think we can as a community, politicians included, demonstrate that there is a direct link and it has an effect in a different community to your own?

Sir Mark Rowley QPM (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): That is a fantastic question. I do not have a perfect answer, but there must be a way where police, politicians and the media can work together to really bring this to life. A lot of those middle-class people will be having their drugs delivered by kids because that is the sad reality of it. They are a part of the exploitation. It is a pretty depressing picture. We might take a view that they are wealthy and their drug use is more of a habit that is best seen as a health issue, et cetera, on its own. I do not have a strong view about that, but we should take account of the fact that, actually, they are putting money into something that is driving the exploitation of kids and drawing them into gangs and into zombie knife fights. A proportion of them end up in prison for life and a proportion of them end up in coffins.

Lord Bailey of Paddington AM: Thank you. My last question. The advent of body-worn camera has been largely good for police officers, but the thing that many police officers will say offline is they wish that the MPS would put out the video that they caught to show that the --

Sir Mark Rowley QPM (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): Me, too.

Lord Bailey of Paddington AM: Yes, because the people video. Everybody is a journalist these days and they make a video and it goes straight on social media and shows the police in a bad light, but the police then have footage that shows the whole situation and many officers would like to release that. Where is the MPS on doing that?

Sir Mark Rowley QPM (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): My answer is "me, too" on that one. I have a piece of work that is in progress at the moment, having a look at this. It has been looked at multiple times nationally and in London and every time decided not to. You get into massive complexity about information rights, sub judice, personal data. There are lots of reasons not to do it, but we have to find a way through it. There are almost two separate sets of issues here. If in the routine we could release fast-time material about, "We made this arrest in your community the other day. This is how great the officers were. This is what it was about", that would be very powerful. In terms of a sense of good news and how many great things officers are doing day in and day out, it would be very powerful.

Then, on the contentious incidents that blow up in the media, we then need to be up for that because you cannot partially open the floodgates on this once you are going to do it. In all those contentious incidents, in my experience, the vast majority of the times, if we showed the body-worn video, it would kill the contention overnight. On a small number of them, it would be, "Yes, we got that drastically wrong. This needs an investigation. Bear with us", but it would be really powerful. As I say, with the information and privacy rights, there is a whole load of stuff we have to wade through, but I have a senior member of the team working on it and, if I can find a way to do it, I will do it.

Lord Bailey of Paddington AM: OK. Many officers would welcome that. Thank you, Chairman.

Susan Hall AM (Chairman): Thank you. They would. I was told by [Dame] Cressida Dick [DBE QPM, former Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis] - because I have complained about this so many times - that the IOPC put a stop to it, but I will leave that there.

Sir Mark Rowley QPM (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): They can have an opinion.

Len Duvall AM: Chairman, can I just say? Look, I welcome this conversation that we are having and the relaunch and repurposing around stop and search. I have always thought it was a very important police tool. I welcome your approach of how you have answered it. It is not just about enforcement. There is a prevention side.

However, the missing bit of our conversation is this. Once we have done the charter, once we have relaunched, once we are training staff, we need a bit of a communications plan here, a communications plan that is more realistic. Too often on social media, I see a 20-second clip that tells one version of an incident that portrays the police being over the top. Some people would say disproportionality. I do not. When the real facts emerge, it is a very legitimate intervention by the police. You are held back sometimes because there is an investigation and complaints have gone in. There must be a case for public good and confidence in policing where if there is information and it is clear cut. I am not against holding people to accountability when they get it wrong, but if

it is clear cut and the information is different, then you should be able to put that into the public domain and you should be able to defend yourself. There are some issues --

Sir Mark Rowley QPM (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): I agree.

Len Duvall AM: -- in the past that we need to learn. There can be no mixed messages on this. We do stop and search. Yes, it is very intrusive and not very nice. It can be done by consent. I grant that. Equally, it needs to happen to protect ourselves. You gave a statistic earlier on: 4,000 knives off the street. That tells me that is over 1,000 potential victims that have been saved by that, probably plus. I will not say 4,000 because we do not know, but if you are carrying a knife, you are more likely to use it in some certain circumstances. That is the reality of it.

I just want to say this. I thought Lord Bailey raised a very important point. There are no crime-free activities relating to that violence drug piece. If you are middle class, going for your weekend recreational drugs, sticking it up your nose or whatever, the misery and plight of getting those drugs to your door, onto your table so that you and your friends can share it is one of criminality, one that is violence, one that is exploitation. Actually, it is there. It is the same for any form of recreational drugs if it is illegal. We can have a debate about whether it should be illegal or not. It does not matter. That is the system and the business model that gets it to people who take it and we need to be clear about that. That is why I think about the mixed messages that go on from some of us who are united. We want to see less violence in our streets. We just have to think about some of those messages that go on. I just wanted to say that because there are no crime-free activities there.

I would like you - both of you, really - to think about what that communication plan is and making it clear about enforcement and prevention, what you are really about when we are doing this activity and how we still continue to take our communities with us. We should not just rest back on polling. We need to constantly talk about what you are doing and why we are doing it because it is to make us safer. It is to make young people safer.

Just as another aside, it is not just young children being exploited. We see the rise of young women being involved in that criminality and carrying. We saw it on gun crime in the early stages. We now see it there with young girls and young women. Give them the drugs because they will not be stopped and searched. We need it to be made clear. If there is evidence and if there is a view of activity going on in the area, you are likely to be stopped and searched. If you are hanging around with the wrong people, it will continue.

Sir Mark Rowley QPM (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): That challenge to our --

Gareth Roberts AM (Deputy Chair): There are people who do not, they will use somebody else.

Susan Hall AM (Chairman): Can we hear the answer. Then we have to stop.

Sir Mark Rowley QPM (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): Assembly Member Duvall, that challenge to our communications I completely accept. In terms of the specifics of the body-worn video, the reason I want us to move to a policy where we do release it - and I am going to find a way of doing it - is we should learn more heavily on our mission of public trust. The danger is we do not balance that against -- we have lots of duties. We have information privacy and protecting investigations. There are lots of other missions, but the public trust mission in today's society where facts move very quickly and facts and lies move very quickly on social media, unless you get in there early, you are just burning public trust. You might be right, but if it is two years before the world sees that you are actually right, it is forgotten. The volume of heat you get

for the confected criticism is never balanced by the volume of clarity that comes two years later. We have to dive into that. It is messy in our heavily regulated world, but we have to find a way of doing it.

Susan Hall AM (Chairman): Thank you. Yes, you do, because your hands are tied behind your back at the moment and that is not helping trust and confidence. You can see most of us absolutely agree with stop and search and we are absolutely behind you on all of that.

We have now come to the end of the discussion. I would like to thank our guests for attending this morning and for their answers to our questions.