

London Assembly (Plenary) Meeting – 21 December 2017

Transcript of Agenda Item 3 Question and Answer Session – Policing in London

2017/5304 - Challenges and opportunities for policing in 2018

Unmesh Desai AM

What do you see as the major challenges and opportunities for policing in 2018?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): Thank you, Assembly Member Desai. As I set out in my opening statement, the main challenge we face over the next year and the years ahead is the lack of funding from the Government. We really are at a tipping point. We need more funding for counterterrorism policing. The core grant that the Home Office provides to pay for the bulk of London's policing is not enough. We need more compensation to take into account the additional cost of policing our nation's capital. At a time when the demands on our police service are increasing, the sheer scale of the underfunding is making our city and Londoners less safe.

Clearly, responding to the increased threat of terrorism will be one of the greatest challenges facing policing across the entire country in 2018 but particularly in London. Over the last year, we have suffered four horrific terrorist attacks on our city and we know that the police and security services have prevented many more: seven plots in total since the Westminster Bridge attack in March [2017]. This shifting threat is deeply troubling and it is vital that the police have the resources to respond to this unprecedented challenge.

There has also been a very worrying increase in violent crime in our city. Although it is growing at a slower rate than in other parts of the country, something the Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) should take credit for, the increase in knife crime, gun crime and acid attacks needs to be halted and then reversed as a matter of urgency. I know that the Commissioner takes the issue very seriously and we are completely united in our ambition to tackle violent crime as a priority.

2018 will also inevitably be a significant year for Brexit negotiations and our future relationship with the European Union (EU). As Mayor, I will be continuing to make clear that there are a number of EU crime and justice instruments that must be kept to help keep Londoners safe.

Finally, I must return to the funding pressures we face. There is no doubt that the pressure the MPS is under is compounded by the cuts that other public services are having to deal with across London, from local authorities to the National Health Service, schools and the fire service. The scale of cuts across the board, with local council funding set to be slashed by 75% by 2020, makes it more difficult for other public services to spend time working with the police in order to reduce crime. The truth is none of the challenges I have set out today can or will be tackled by the police alone.

Finally, I have focused on the challenges we face, but you also asked about opportunities. Given the current environment we face, this is a difficult question, but the greatest opportunity we have is to utilise the police officers and staff of the MPS. We are lucky to have the greatest police force in the world in the greatest city in the world, and we have the opportunity to focus this talent to help us deliver the key commitments in my Police and Crime Plan.

Despite the challenges, we have already managed to achieve some great things. Let me give you five examples: a real boost in neighbourhood policing; a Knife Crime Strategy; a new approach to dealing with victims; the biggest roll-out of body-worn videos in the world; and a new online hate crime hub, the first of its kind in the country.

Tony Arbour AM (Deputy Chairman in the Chair): Thank you very much. Have you anything to say on this one, Commissioner?

Cressida Dick CBE QPM (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): Very briefly, Chairman, the Mayor has already outlined the increased demand and I have of course talked about this publicly quite a lot. We end the year with increases in crime, less than elsewhere in the country but nevertheless some really worrying challenges in relation to violence, although we have had some considerable successes there. We are dealing with more complex types of calls and crimes, and expectations are very high in particular in relation to what might be called new and emerging crimes, but standards generally. Demand is high as the population is increasing and getting younger. That is my first big challenge.

My second big challenge is change. We are transforming as an organisation. We need to. It will make us very much more effective in the longer run. It will make us much more modern and it will make us leaner, but there is a lot of change in 2018 for the MPS and that is a challenge.

On opportunities, I agree with the Mayor, of course: our people are our greatest asset by far. They are fantastic. We have wonderful people and continue to recruit and retain great people. They give us lots of opportunities in a challenging time.

Our communities, as I said earlier, are very supportive and increasingly so in my view in many respects and there is a lot more we can and will be doing to involve communities in policing.

Thirdly, data and technology give us enormous potential in the longer term but also in the medium term and we will see that coming to life even more in 2018.

Unmesh Desai AM: Thank you, Chairman. I have two follow-up questions. Thank you, Commissioner. You outlined two challenges and you also talked about some of the opportunities, but can I ask you to be a bit more specific in terms of your first challenge, the volume and complexity of crime? Can you give London a vision of how you are adapting to these changes both in terms of the volume and complexity of crime?

Cressida Dick CBE QPM (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): In terms of the volume of, for example, violent crime, something I have discussed on many occasions, we have already changed both our disposition, if you like, and our tactics to try to bear down very extensively on knife crime and on gun crime and on moped-enabled crime and on acid attacks. We are beginning to see some really positive trends emerging there. We will continue to do that, primarily through enforcement tactics, to keep people safer and to take demand out of the system. Of course, that enforcement is only one part of it and we will be supporting the Mayor in his strategy in relation to, in particular, knife crime but more generally under the Police and Crime Plan to get more and more into prevention and early intervention and working with others to stop. It is, I am afraid, mainly young people who are most caught up in those crimes.

In terms of complexity, this is very challenging. If I take, for example, the ghastly homicides we have had, they are more complex to investigate this year, arguably, than they were even the year before. We cannot cut corners in relation to that, but we are changing.

In 2018 we will change, as you know, in all likelihood, the way we are structured, where we have our resources, a huge investment in certain types of extra skills. The police service, in my view, has always been both tactically and strategically capable at working in a changing environment. That is what we will be doing.

Unmesh Desai AM: Just one more question, Chairman, maybe two if I have time. Talking about extra skills, let me pick on the issue of cybercrime. Online fraud is now the most common crime offence in the UK. An *Evening Standard* article two weeks ago reported that Londoners are falling victim to 3,500 cyberattacks a month. In terms of skills and upskilling of regular officers, what are you doing so that they feel confident in tackling crime with a digital aspect given the sheer volume of crimes you are talking about?

Cressida Dick CBE QPM (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): There is a very high volume, as you say, and, in my view, prevention is always better than enforcement in relation to any crime but in particular in relation to, for example, online fraud. However, we do need to be able to deal with the reports we get and to deal with them effectively. We are working with others in the College of Policing and indeed with the City of London and national policing to ensure that our officers are upskilled. Of course, the younger ones - and I do not wish to be ageist but look at me - coming in tend to find this easier than some of the older ones. This is a massive push for us in the year to come to become a much more digitally literate organisation than we perhaps currently are.

However, I would say that the MPS's Falcon team, which is a large team, is more ahead on this - and I think my colleagues across the country would not mind me saying - than anywhere else in the country. They have been very successful this year. They have had some fantastic results and some really good people.

Unmesh Desai AM: Thank you, Commissioner. Thank you, Chairman.

Tony Arbour AM (Deputy Chairman in the Chair): I call on Assembly Member Bacon. When we have two people before us, please indicate who you would like to answer questions first.

Gareth Bacon AM: Thank you, Chairman. This is a question for the Commissioner. Commissioner, I believe this is your first appearance in front of the Assembly Plenary - I know you have been in front of the Police and Crime Committee (PCC) - and so welcome.

Cressida Dick CBE QPM (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): Thank you.

Gareth Bacon AM: One of the challenges for the MPS, not just in 2018 but in every year, is maintaining the reputation of the MPS. Sadly, there will be a number of people who will attack the MPS for a range of reasons, most of which are entirely spurious. However, on some occasions, there is some merit to some of the criticism the MPS faces.

In that light, Commissioner, is it ever acceptable for serving or retired police officers to leak confidential information of investigations they have been involved in, whether that investigation is closed or not and whether they are retired or serving police officers or not, to the press?

Cressida Dick CBE QPM (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): You may have heard me speak publicly on this recently. I have a very strong view that the responsibility that goes with being a police officer or a member of police staff in, for example, the MPS, is very clear in relation to people's personal information. Every day, we all come into contact with highly confidential and highly personal information in relation to investigations and indeed other interactions. It is vital that the public trust us to do our absolute

best to safeguard that information and we are required to do so by law. Police officers and police staff can and on occasion do find themselves subject to criminal investigation in relation to data leaks of one sort or another and, indeed, some people have been convicted in the last couple of years and some people have received very strong sentences. Other people have then been subject to misconduct proceedings while serving and have been sacked. I know that I speak for the MPS when I say that we do take that seriously. My colleagues take that seriously.

Like any organisation in 2017, we are covered by whistleblowing legislation, which you will be familiar with, and it is not beyond the realms of possibility that there could be an occasion when somebody might think that in order to save somebody's life or, arguably, to prevent a massive miscarriage of justice, if they found themselves in some kind of scenario where they felt the people they were talking to were not doing the right thing, they might seek out an option with the police service to get what they think is the greater good. They should absolutely, in my view, exhaust those possibilities within and comply with the law.

I know I speak for my officers when - and you may be thinking of a particular case - we are disappointed to see that it appears that former colleagues have put into the public domain via the media - I double underline 'appears' - material that they appear to have had access to as part of a confidential investigation. You will be aware that we have been reviewing that in the MPS in the last couple of weeks or three weeks perhaps, and we have had a Queen's Counsel (QC) helping us with that. I can say today that in relation to that matter, having received our advice, we have made a referral to the Information Commissioner's Office as we believe they are the appropriate people to carry on that investigation into, essentially, data protection matters. I am not going to comment any further on it. They have taken the referral and they will continue an investigation.

Gareth Bacon AM: Sure. I do not want to tempt you into being too precise about a specific case, but you are correct that that is the case that has prompted my interest in this. However, you do accept in general terms, notwithstanding what you said about protecting life, that when occasions like this do occur with either serving or retired police officers, that it shakes the public's faith in the MPS?

Cressida Dick CBE QPM (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): A hypothetical case most certainly could. It is a very important part of being a profession. The same applies to the medical profession, to the church, to other institutions. Absolutely, it could undermine people's confidence, which is why I have been so strong in my public comments.

Gareth Bacon AM: Yes. Thank you, Commissioner. Now, notwithstanding the action that you have taken in the particular case that we are not going to go into too much detail on, are you satisfied that the MPS has sufficient procedures and policies in place to prevent further such actions taking place in the future?

Cressida Dick CBE QPM (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): Broadly speaking, yes, I am.

Gareth Bacon AM: Are you anticipating making any changes to the policies and procedures you have in place going forward after the Information Commissioner reports?

Cressida Dick CBE QPM (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): It is not impossible. I imagine that there may be some things that we can tighten up. There will be things we can say more clearly. We are working with the College of Policing and the National Police Chiefs Council on this.

Gareth Bacon AM: Thank you very much, Commissioner.

Tony Arbour AM (Deputy Chairman in the Chair): Assembly Member Dismore?

Andrew Dismore AM: Thank you. Mine is to the Commissioner as well and on a reputational issue. Following the collapse of two rape trials in as many days due to failure to disclose evidence supporting the defence, you have launched a review of sex offence current cases. To misquote Oscar Wilde, to lose one case like this may be regarded as a misfortune; to lose both looks like carelessness. Commander Smith has said he does not think there is a systemic issue around disclosure failures, but is that not prejudging the outcome of the review, and is it he who is conducting the review?

Cressida Dick CBE QPM (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): To start with the last, the review into the first case is being conducted by us and in absolute parallel with and co-joined with the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) because, clearly, disclosure always is part of a system, if you like.

Yes, Commander Smith is the Commander for safeguarding and, yes, is leading in our response to these incidents, reporting to Assistant Commissioner Hewitt and of course to me. I have confidence in him doing that. We will see where the reviews take us and I will take a step-by-step approach. Quite clearly, if I did at any stage feel that it was inappropriate for it to be reviewed in that manner or for the next step to be done internally, I would say so.

Andrew Dismore AM: I would suggest that it might have been unfortunate for him to make a statement like that, which, to my mind, prejudices the outcome of the review, but can I go on and say that the Foreword to the *Attorney General's Guidelines on Disclosure* states:

"Disclosure is one of the most important issues in the criminal justice system and the application of proper and fair disclosure is a vital component of a fair criminal justice system."

Concerns have previously been raised at the most senior level in the criminal bar about disclosure failures risking miscarriages of justice. Most recently, Angela Rafferty QC, Chair of the Criminal Bar Association, has suggested

"unconscious bias stopped the police and the CPS impartially and thoroughly investigating and scrutinising complaints in sexual offence cases".

Bearing in mind the guidelines also say at paragraph 59:

"The interests of justice will also mean that where material comes to light after the conclusion of the proceedings, which might cast doubt upon the safety of the conviction, there is a duty to consider disclosure."

Therefore, if the review does throw up systemic issues, will the review be extended to other types of serious and also concluded cases, for example, fraud, which also often relies heavily on electronic evidence?

Cressida Dick CBE QPM (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): There is a lot in that question. The first thing to say is that I, again, speak for the MPS and my colleagues when I say the very idea that somebody might find themselves convicted inappropriately when they were innocent through a failing of disclosure is unconscionable and my officers take disclosure very seriously. They see themselves as genuinely following the evidence, professional, fair, and absolutely understanding in an impartial way the necessity for justice and for justice to be served, whatever the emotions there might be around a particular issue or a particular case.

I have spent a lot of time in the last few days talking to people about this. The Attorney General spoke yesterday about the complexity of disclosure and, if you spoke to anybody involved - we are a major party but if you were to speak to any other investigating body - they would say that disclosure is both very important and also, in the digital age, getting increasingly incredibly complex and demanding. Therefore, it is vital that we do it well and it is vital that we learn whatever lessons there may be.

I am not going to comment on the further steps that we may find ourselves in at the moment. We are talking, of course, to the Home Office and we are talking regularly to the CPS. We are not the only ones who are thinking about disclosure issues. The Attorney General has a review ongoing which we are part of.

I should leave it there. I am not going to comment any further about the specifics of these two cases. I will see where they take me.

Andrew Dismore AM: I understand your answer, but these two cases do represent an enormous waste of resources and costs by both prosecution and defence, as well as the courts, and of course causing awful distress to those unfairly accused over many months. If the evidence had been properly examined and disclosed earlier, presumably these prosecutions could have been avoided altogether with considerable savings and also removing that distress to those people who were affected.

Cressida Dick CBE QPM (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): I apologised publicly yesterday to Mr [Liam] Allan and to everyone else involved in that case. However, I would say that I have not completed the review yet and I do not know - nobody knows - exactly what happened. It is complicated. They always are and I am not going to prejudge the results of either of those reviews.

Andrew Dismore AM: Thank you.

Florence Eshalomi AM: This is to the Commissioner. Welcome.

Cressida Dick CBE QPM (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): Thank you.

Florence Eshalomi AM: It is nice to meet you. You mentioned the growing population across London and a younger population as well and then the potential working with data and technology in helping to solve some of those complex crimes. Is there any evidence that the MPS have that their policy of publishing weapons on social media is contributing to fighting against violent crime?

Cressida Dick CBE QPM (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): We have a number of things to balance here. The first thing, of course, is that we try to supply information to the public and my default position is that we will be transparent as far as we possibly can and we get information out there. There is a very high level of interest in, for example, the number of knives that we seize and the variety of them.

The second thing is that it is important with an issue that concerns people so very much that we do tell people how we are going about trying to bear down on this pernicious phenomenon and we need to give people confidence, appropriately, that we are really taking this seriously. We need to be able to, with others, help prevent people thinking that it is a sensible thing to do to take a knife out with you when you are very likely to get yourself very badly hurt or worse, kill somebody or get locked up.

I understand the concern that there is about, if you like, showing an array of knives from some people and other people think it is a very positive thing to do. Therefore, what I have said is that this is something for

my local leaders - who understand their context and their public and what they are doing locally - to decide whether it is going to be very helpful or not. It would be an extremely complicated and long-running study evidentially to try to prove the benefit or indeed the disbenefit of it.

Florence Eshalomi AM: To you, Mr Mayor, this is something that my colleague Assembly Member Sian Berry has raised with you at the Police and Crime Committee.

Cressida Dick CBE QPM (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): Yes.

Florence Eshalomi AM: The reality is that there are a number of people who are concerned about some of these images being shown online. There is a report by Catch-22 showing that, for some sections of young people, they see this as a way of glamorising that crime.

To you, Mr Mayor, would you look at commissioning the Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime (MOPAC) to get some detailed evidence on this in terms of what the MPS are doing? The reality is that there is no fact-based evidence on the sharing of that social media imagery.

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): The challenge that the MPS have is, they cannot win. On the one hand, they are being asked to show the enforcement action they are taking and the fruits of that enforcement action. On the other hand, they are accused of scaring or glamorising knives and knife crime. That is why the best arbiter of when it is appropriate to publish digital and social media is at the Borough Commander level, working under the direction of [Assistant Commissioner] Martin Hewitt, consulting locally in relation to what goes on social media and what does not.

There are people glamorising knife violence and it is not the police. There are others. We have spoken to social media operators about pulling some stuff off social media. We had one horrific case this year when there was almost incitement and taunting from one gang to another, which led to an unfortunate incident. That is more troubling to me than the police showing some of the fruits of their hard work.

By the way, it is important for all of us to know some of the knives that are out there, not just the zombie knives and some of the other awful knives, but some of the knives young people are carrying. What we are doing is not working separately from the police, but the Knife Crime Strategy involves the police, schools, parents, faith leaders, influencers, young people and others to try to address the issue. Prevention and education has to be part and parcel of the fight against knife crime.

Florence Eshalomi AM: Thank you.

Dr Onkar Sahota AM: Mr Mayor, first of all, I join you in thanking the emergency services for the work they do.

On Tuesday, the Home Office ducked the responsibility for police funding and the safety of Londoners by proposing real-term cuts to the police funding, offset in part by the ability of the Police and Crime Commissioners to raise some precept monies. Do you think that, as a result of this precept that you have put in today, this will eliminate the gap in the funding needs of the MPS?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): No. I am going as far as I can and as far as I am allowed, but it goes nowhere near to filling the hole there is in the police budget.

By the way, it is worth us understanding the announcement on Tuesday. The Government's press release talked about police around the country receiving £450 million of new money. That was the impression given. Of the £450 million, roughly speaking, £270 million only applies if every single Police and Crime Commissioner - the Mayor as well - increases the police precept by the maximum allowed, £12. £50 million of the £450 million is ringfenced for counterterror funding. Now that we have looked at the figures, it is only a 1.3% increase in counterterror funding, at a time when it counterterror work is up by 30% and inflation by 3.1%. £130 million of the £450 million is top-slicing the Transformation Fund that was there before. Therefore, I do not want us to fall into the trap of believing that this is anything more than smoke and mirrors.

What have I done? I have today published a draft proposal to increase the council tax police precept by the maximum allowed and also the non-police precept by the maximum allowed to help make the consequences of the police cuts not as bad and also to help the fire service for the reasons we have discussed before.

I will tell you this. What compounds my anger is that the Home Secretary [The Rt Hon Amber Rudd] approved - and I welcome this - an increase in police pay, but is not funding it. The police still have to negotiate with police staff and so any increase that we get because of my announcement today may will be spent, basically, ostensibly, paying for the well-justified pay rise rather than extra police officers or keeping what we have. I am angry. I think that it is a con and the Government should be doing much more.

Dr Onkar Sahota AM: Just talking about the Home Secretary, on 31 October this year, the Commissioner of Police said:

"I find it incredible to think that anybody would think that over the next four or five years we should lose that much extra out of our budget. There is a risk that we will have to be less proactive and less in the prevention sphere and more in the enforcement sphere."

In response to this, the Home Secretary Amber Rudd said:

"I don't just want to see [the Police and Crime Commissioners] reaching for a pen to write a press release asking for more money."

She was trying to gag the Police Commissioners of this country when what has really happened is that she has ducked the responsibility for funding the police service appropriately. Do you think that the Conservatives take the safety of London citizens seriously?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): I am worried about the consequences for public safety as a consequence of these cuts. I tell you this, though. If the criticism was the police were inefficient and were not making changes, it is fair to say that they could do with less money. They have cut lots of inefficiencies; they can still go further. We have discussed some of the savings they can make.

There is a huge amount of work to be done around information technology (IT). The Assembly has been right to be critical in the past about the - and I know Assembly Member Bacon has been critical in the past - about the transformation change not being as robust as we were promised in relation to IT. In the last few months, hopefully you have seen some of the progress we have made in relation to the work the MPS is doing. The Chief Information Officer is making huge progress there. The new Chief Digital Officer is going to work with them. The Assembly was right to hold the feet to the fire in relation to that. On police estates, police staff, command units, body-worn tech, I have been thoroughly impressed with the can-do attitude of the MPS.

However, I tell you this. Even with the best will in the world of big transformational change, even reducing every single inefficiency, it simply is not possible to police a city as complex as ours, with the number of visitors we have, with the volume of crime that we have, with the monies we are given by Central Government. One of the things I am trying to make sure people understand is that 70% of the monies we receive come from Central Government, roughly speaking, 20% come from council tax and the others are from revenue-raising streams, applying for grant money and stuff. It is not possible for me to fill the hole.

Dr Onkar Sahota AM: I agree with you, Mr Mayor, that is not sustainable to service the police service out of the precept solely. Thank you very much for keeping the pressure on the Government and making Londoners realise what the consequences of the Conservative Party policies are. Thank you.

Len Duvall AM: I have a question to the Commissioner first around Operation Dauntless. One aspect of it is a stream where you are tracking 500 repeat offenders across the MPS. Are you in a position to evaluate its success at the moment or do you have any views on how it is proceeding?

Cressida Dick CBE QPM (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): We are not at a stage where we can do a full evaluation. What I can say is that we are, as you say, trying to work most fundamentally with the highest-risk people as we have identified them. This is not a new approach, but it is something that we take very seriously.

We do see, also, domestic violence, as you know, and domestic abuse as hugely under-reported still, but we think that the gap in confidence is decreasing and hence, as you know, the recorded crime is going up and up. I imagine it will continue so to do in the future.

However, still, it appears - by the British Crime Survey, for example, that the prevalence in London is not as high as some other parts of the country, it appears. Secondly, we are having, we believe, some really positive effect both in trying to deal with the highest-risk offenders more effectively and also in trying to deal with repeat victimisation as was described in the Police and Crime Plan effectively. It is unwise for me to speculate where we might go, but I should note that domestic violence homicides are down this year.

Len Duvall AM: A part of [Operation] Dauntless, it appears - and maybe it is a question that maybe you will be aware of - is London-wide or it might well be local action. Between the dates of 27 November and 10 December [2017], the MPS - or maybe its local MPS in east London - have been running a number of action days against domestic violence. Is that London-wide and, in that sense, is it dealing with the spikes that we see in domestic violence and abuse around the festive season?

Cressida Dick CBE QPM (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): Yes.

Len Duvall AM: That is London-wide and there are a number of action days going on?

Cressida Dick CBE QPM (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): Yes, absolutely.

Len Duvall AM: In terms of overall issues, it is a very complex crime and takes time. Do you think there is an issue about consistency of approach across the MPS in terms of dealing with domestic violence and abuse? I realise you have to deal with partners as well, but I am thinking internally inside the MPS in terms of how you tackle this issue.

Cressida Dick CBE QPM (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): Yes, there is. It is not the only issue where we have an issue of consistency, as you know, some of which can be by different local demographics, dynamics and priorities, but some of which cannot. It is a very high priority for [Assistant Commissioner] Martin Hewitt and indeed [Deputy Commissioner] Craig Mackey, my deputy, to reduce the disparities and to make sure that the best is happening everywhere. I believe that if we move to the Basic Command Unit (BCU) model that the Mayor referred to where we will have larger command units, stronger safeguarding units, more resilience within that, and longer-term, better partnership working and more influence with partners, we will have another way in which we can achieve better consistency.

Len Duvall AM: Do we think the inconsistency is about experience or resources allocated at a local level in terms of approaching these crimes? What do we think the inconsistency is?

Cressida Dick CBE QPM (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): It is a mixture of factors. I really think so, but I also would want to say to you that everything that falls broadly under that rather, in my view, unwieldy title of 'vulnerability' or 'safeguarding' is a high priority for us. We are determined to try to reduce those inconsistencies, but there are lots of different reasons for it, yes.

Len Duvall AM: Mr Mayor, if we can turn to you now, you are reviewing your Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) Strategy early in the new year. Clearly, it is wider than just the policing aspect and MOPAC that he is looking at. What other themes do you think he would be looking at in particular about what is going to be different and what you are going to be asking of the MPS and potentially other partners in terms of how they look at this work?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): Firstly, there has been a huge amount of engagement with Londoners, community groups, women's groups, during the consultation phase by Sophie Linden [Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime] and by Claire Waxman [Victims Commissioner] to make sure we are speaking to people who understand what is going on rather than having a top-down approach from the police.

Secondly, the Police and Crime Plan, you will be aware now, has as one of its priorities women and girls and vulnerability is a big factor. Every BCU has that as one of its issues.

One of the things you will see, I am hoping, is greater confidence amongst Londoners to report these sorts of crimes. The Commissioner's prediction, if you like, of reported crime going up in this area is based upon the evidence we have received from Londoners that they now have more confidence reporting crimes.

The other thing is that there is a massive spectrum in relation to vulnerability. It is all domestic abuse and they are all criminal offences, but we are talking about different physical responses to the attack, whether it is domestic abuse, domestic violence or other forms of violence; and the Commissioner referred to homicide as the most extreme.

We are hoping to publish early next year [2018] and, hopefully, you will see Londoners, particularly the community groups, welcoming this rather than coming out and criticising the response, and so it bodes well.

Can I just say one other thing? A practical difference is a simple thing, but the body-worn video in relation to these sorts of offences has a massive difference. You will be aware, Len, from your expertise in this area of the number of victims who, for reasons we understand, do not go forward with giving evidence at a trial and it has been impossible now to prosecute without the victim coming forward. However, the body-worn video has a real-time recording of a police officer going to a scene as, often, the first response. I genuinely think that that will lead to more prosecutions and more success in this area.

David Kurten AM: I want to address this to the Commissioner, if I could. Following on from Assembly Member Dismore's question earlier about the couple of cases that have happened this week where we have had innocent men being put through the court system because of the withholding of evidence, it has come to my attention that the same person was in charge of both cases. Is it correct that Detective Constable Mark Azariah was the person who was in charge of both cases? This is in the press. I do not know if you can answer that or not.

Is that question allowed, Chairman? I see some dissent to the question.

Tony Arbour AM (Deputy Chairman in the Chair): I do not know who is dissenting.

David Kurten AM: I am not sure. I heard some tutting. Is that allowed or not, Chairman?

Tony Arbour AM (Deputy Chairman in the Chair): I have no reason to disallow it.

David Kurten AM: OK. Thank you.

Len Duvall AM: Chairman, if I may, the reason why I tutted was just that I thought it was inappropriate to talk about an individual in terms of this meeting and ask the Commissioner to comment on it. We do not know whether there is going to be any other action arising from it. That is why I tutted, Chairman. It is just inappropriate to name an individual in terms of the processes that we are involved in.

Tony Arbour AM (Deputy Chairman in the Chair): It may be inappropriate, but it is not out of order for you to ask a question.

David Kurten AM: OK. Thank you. It is in the press and so that is why I was asking. If you could answer, my concern is that -- are there any officers who were involved in the cases who are still on duty at the present time?

Cressida Dick CBE QPM (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): Yes, there are. In any case of serious sexual offence investigation, going as far as a court process, whatever the circumstances, there will be a number of different officers involved, there will be a number of people at the CPS and there may indeed be more than one council involved. There are a whole set of different people involved in any case from the moment of first call through to the court process. Yes, there are police officers who were involved in the two cases that you described. I would not describe them in the way that you have but let us not split hairs. I am waiting to see what the reviews say, but, yes, they are on duty, they are serving the public and they are doing their best, I am sure.

David Kurten AM: Are you keeping a much closer scrutiny on those people who have been involved in these cases to make sure there are not any further breaches of the disclosure process?

Cressida Dick CBE QPM (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): Throughout the Rape and Serious Sexual Offences Command - you have heard it referred to by others, but I will say it again - we are doing a review of current live cases, those that are likely to go to court in the next eight weeks. That is not a reinvestigation; it is a double check that they have sufficient resource and that the disclosure requirements have been met. In so doing, that of course does mean more supervision and support, indeed, for officers working in a very difficult area.

David Kurten AM: Do you think that there is any unconscious bias against men in the MPS in these kind of cases? We have two cases of innocent men being put through trial. Do you think that there is a possibility that this is something that you need to look at?

Cressida Dick CBE QPM (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): I do not think we have that. I suppose as the Commissioner I would be stupid to rule out such a broad concept and say it could never apply anywhere to anybody on any terms, just as if we were talking about unconscious bias in relation to rape, but I know my people and I know their training. In this particular area -, as you know, one person's word against another, almost always, where the people have known each other for some time and often for a very considerable amount of time, frequently vulnerability involved on a variety of sides, sometimes drink, sometimes drugs, sometimes mental health issues - these are very difficult offences to investigate. All I know is that they follow the evidence and they try to do their best in quite difficult circumstances.

David Kurten AM: It just concerns me here that if you make an assumption that always -- and I know what you are trying to do. You want to make sure that real cases of rape and sexual abuse and sexual harassment go to trial and that the perpetrators are punished and that is absolutely right, but you are moving away from the assumption that we have that a person is innocent until proven guilty and with the events we have seen of evidence being withheld. One Member of Parliament (MP) has made the statement that he thinks that there were basic errors made in a quest to drive up rape conviction rates. That was an MP who said that.

What do you think of this? Do you think there is a need to make sure that we work on the basis that someone is innocent until proven guilty so that men like these two innocent men do not go through this situation again?

Cressida Dick CBE QPM (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): It is incredibly important that all police people fully respect the law and uphold the law and the principles of our criminal justice system, which of course includes the fact that people are innocent until proven guilty. I do believe they are well trained, they are good people, and they have ethics. I do not believe that any of my officers would deliberately withhold evidence that they thought could be - you did not say this, but for clarity - material that could support the defence. They would not do that with a malicious intent. That is my sense. I do not believe that the great desire to ensure that we do our job properly has resulted in what I might call - and I have seen it in other performance management frameworks - a perverse incentive to do something which would just be wrong. They follow the evidence and they put the case to the CPS. I do not want to prejudge these ones, but they do their best in a very complex and difficult digital world.

David Kurten AM: Yes, absolutely, but there may be some cases where people make a malicious accusation in this area. Have you ever come across that and do you think that in these cases there was an aspect of a malicious accusation or not?

Cressida Dick CBE QPM (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): I do not wish to be rude, but it is completely inappropriate for me to comment on whether there was a malicious accusation or not in any case like this. It is just not for me to do. We are reviewing what we did together with the CPS.

However, yes, I have of course, as a police officer of nearly 35 years' work, come across cases of malicious allegations. I have also come across cases a multiplicity of times of confused allegations and allegations, of course, which end up not being proven in court.

If we take it away from disclosure for a second, we have our role in the system. The system is there with all its checks and balances, including disclosure, to try to ensure that the innocent are not found guilty and of course, where appropriate, that the guilty are found guilty. It is a system with a lot of different parts to it. My people are investigators and so they must of course listen and be supportive to a complainant, but they are investigators and they will investigate from that moment on.

Steve O'Connell AM: Thank you very much, Chairman. Taking that point that David raised and slightly turning it around, it is unfortunate with these two very difficult cases that certain parts of the press and others have revisited again this issue around presumption of guilt in certain cases and the whole debate around anonymity. It is unfortunate that these cases have given some comfort to that sort of argument and debate out there.

With the terms of reference for your review, this, hopefully, will give you the opportunity to reinforce some of the comments that you have made around the force. Are the terms of reference wide enough to give you those opportunities with your conclusions, once you have worked it through, to perhaps nail some of these assumptions around presumptions that we have heard outside in parts of the press?

Cressida Dick CBE QPM (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): Forgive me if I have misunderstood your question, but I would certainly say that, clearly, these cases cause concern, quite properly. That is why we are reviewing. The issue is a complex one. It is one which is confronting the whole criminal justice system and is very difficult. That is why the Attorney General, for example, and the Director of Public Prosecutions and others - and we are engaged - are carrying out these reviews. If the various reviews allow us the opportunity to, on the one hand, get to a place in the longer term where disclosure is easier - for want of a better word - for people to do well and effectively, that would be good, and secondly, of course, any bad event gives a leader an opportunity to reinforce the principles and values and processes by which we do our work.

Steve O'Connell AM: Yes, that is important. Can I just turn to a second question to the Mayor on a different subject? In a response earlier, you talked about significant levels of engagement particularly around VAWG. I am just picking up your announcement last year in your Public Access Strategy that you would be publishing an Engagement Strategy next year, which is the week after next onwards. Will you be publishing an Engagement Strategy for London in 2018, Mayor?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): We hope to do some work around public engagement, yes.

Steve O'Connell AM: The facts are that although the MPS have increased their confidence and satisfaction levels to a degree, and much of the difficulties and work that you are both encountering in London is important to take Londoners with you and with us, those levels are not where they should be. The previous Mayor had that challenge himself. He rather optimistically set himself a 20% increase, which was setting himself up to fall, and did not make that target, although he made other targets.

Will you be, therefore, Mayor, just to understand your answer, publishing a full Engagement Strategy in the course of 2018?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): Yes, that is the intention.

Steve O'Connell AM: Thank you for that.

Unmesh Desai AM: I have a further question of you, Commissioner. I did have another set of questions on the performance of 101 and 999 calls, but because of time constraints I will write to you instead.

However, can I ask you very specifically about your views of Section 92 officers who pay, in my view, an important role in helping to tackle antisocial behaviour (ASB)? I must say I am a great fan of the Section 92 scheme and, certainly in my part of London, all the boroughs are fully supportive of this scheme continuing.

In Newham, the Section 92 officers over the last year have made 1,600 arrests. I am afraid I do not have the conviction figures, but I was discussing the performance just yesterday with your ex-colleagues, ex-Chief Superintendent Simon Letchford and ex-Commander Nick Bracken [OBE], who asked me to pass their regards on to you, by the way. These officers that Newham employ have been particularly useful in terms of enforcement work. In my view, again, the private sector licensing scheme that Newham runs so well and so successfully would not be as effective as it is if it were not for the Section 92 officers.

What are your views about this scheme? Will the MetPatrol Plus scheme continue to be used in the future to allow local authorities and communities to purchase a police officer and receive another officer funded by the MPS?

Cressida Dick CBE QPM (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): I am all in favour of ASB and indeed other things, of course, being a partnership approach between the police and other bodies. That is absolutely fundamental to our service and there have been some very encouraging results, as you have described, in your borough.

I am, as you can probably see, searching the back of my head as to where we are right now on this particular issue for the future in terms of the one-for-one funding, and I am going to have to be honest with you. I cannot remember where we currently are. You are probably ahead of me on this.

However, the principle of full partnership and on occasion properly led and properly accountable enforcement being done by other organisations alongside and together with the police service is great, and the principle within the law of us being able to supplement policing in particular areas supported by payments from, for example, local authorities is something else that has been successful and I am in favour of, but there are some limits to that. I am not going to go any further.

Andrew Dismore AM: I want to come to the borough mergers and, as you know, we still have not seen any objective evaluation criteria or the actual or projected financial savings for the borough mergers, despite many requests for and promises of this information. The emergency response times in the summer were pretty appalling, but they have come back now to more or less where they were the year before, which is welcome, but we have had worrying accounts that response time improvements in the Pathfinders is due to the temporary structuring or redeployment of Dedicated Ward Officers and Schools Officers into response teams.

Is it the case that such temporary movements have taken place and, if so, is that sustainable? The concern is that this is trying somehow to game the system to show that the mergers have been effective. Looking at the evaluations, will they be conducted to look at the performance throughout the whole of the pilot period or effectively just a snapshot at the end?

Cressida Dick CBE QPM (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): We absolutely were not - to quote you - 'gaming' the system. We were trying to ensure that as we went through the Pathfinders - which are by definition finding paths like pilots where you do not know exactly what is going to happen -

when things are not going well, you have an overwhelming duty to support the public to ensure that things are fixed. For a period - you are absolutely right - we had to supplement the response teams in that way, but that is not happening now and so it is not a long-term sustainable challenge for us.

I should be clear. My overall view is very clear that there are a number of elements to the proposals for BCUs of which response is one. Response was very difficult, particularly in the east, for a short period in the summer. Not only is it as good as it was before we started the Pathfinders now; it is better. Both Pathfinders are performing extremely well in relation to response without any 'gaming', to use your phrase.

Longer term, I am utterly satisfied that this model is the right way to go. I made that fairly clear at the PCC last time. The final decision is going to be made in January [2018], but I have of course been monitoring it. I have seen the statistics. I have talked to the people. I have been out to both of the boroughs on many occasions. I know what we are trying to achieve in terms of improving our investigations, improving our safeguarding, improving our local policing in terms of Dedicated Ward Officers, and maintaining a very effective response service. I believe that this evaluation will show that this is the right way to go.

Andrew Dismore AM: You mentioned the other criteria and the recent Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary report said that the MPS requires improvements in efficiency including improving the way it measures non-financial benefits. We cannot yet assess the financial benefits, but some of the claimed advantages are in non-financial and difficult-to-measure aspects of the service such as improvements in safeguarding, which must have "detection rates at an acceptable level".

What does 'acceptable' mean in this context and against what outcomes and measurements are we judging this safeguarding improvement?

Cressida Dick CBE QPM (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): It is both quantitative and qualitative. I cannot give you - I do not think I have it in my papers - what we have said would be an acceptable sanction detection rate, but there is an enormous amount more to safeguarding than just detecting, as you know, a huge amount else. Some of it is qualitative. Some of it comes from our partners' experiences. Some of it is quite a sophisticated way of thinking about whether we have made people safer. Some of it, of course, is sanction detections. Just putting it broadly, I would be very concerned if I thought the sanction detection rate was very much lower in a Pathfinder place consistently for a long period than other places.

Andrew Dismore AM: One of the local concerns that has come up is the need for continuity and stability at the BCU Commander level. As the Camden and Islington Commander has now moved on to greater and better things, will this be addressed in the future, not just in relation to that particular BCU but more generally, to ensure that there is continuity with the people who are put in those important positions?

Cressida Dick CBE QPM (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): I am really determined that we try to create a level and that at that level in the organisation, which is essentially Chief Superintendent and Superintendent, we have the best people with the best teams for those roles for the right skills in each of the posts and that those people are maintained in a consistent way for a long period of time.

Now, things happen. This has not always been the greatest strength area of the MPS. It is particularly difficult right now because of some demographics within policing, which I will not bore you with, but I am determined to try to keep consistency and I am determined to try to make sure that we have the right people with the right skills and the right support in the right places.

Of course, you will have seen that during the process of the Pathfinders, we made many changes to the initial model to make them work better, and one of the changes is putting an extra Superintendent into the management structure. That, I am sure, will continue, assuming we go further forward in January [2018] into the BCUs.

Joanne McCartney AM: My first question is to the Commissioner. Following the appalling terrorist attacks in London this year, there have been operational improvement reviews between you and MI5. Obviously, those reviews are classified, but I wondered if you could tell us any lessons that you have learned about how counterterrorist work perhaps needs to change.

Cressida Dick CBE QPM (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): Thank you. The operational improvement review was commissioned by Andrew Parker, Director-General of the British Security Service (MI5), and me. We both put in very capable teams - in the case of the police, that was not just from London but from elsewhere - into the review work. They were very extensive reviews of all of the attacks and also the learning from that. There was a separate document which we called the Operational Improvement Review, which, as you know, is a suite of products - a terrible phrase - has been assured by David Anderson [QC], who is extremely knowledgeable, extremely capable and extremely independent. The Prime Minister asked him to do that job.

There are a whole series of themes that come out of it. It would be wrong for me to give an answer without acknowledging the sheer ghastliness of what happened and the fact that people have lost their lives and many other people have had their lives turned upside down. It is only right that we set to as quickly as possible to start making the required improvements.

What I do not think they have said and what I do not think anybody has been saying is that the fundamental model, the fundamental strategies, and the fundamental ways of working, for example, between the police and the security services are not right and, indeed, international colleagues continue to beat at our door all the time because they think we have a very good model.

However, there are absolutely improvements to be made, firstly, particularly in relation to our collective use of data and how, through data, we manage a relatively high volume of information and indeed people who cause us concern and understand the risk they pose, and then apply our collective efforts against those who pose most risk.

There is a second area of work, which is in relation to what is currently called 'domestic extremism' and in my view, a perfectly proper view that the type of service that currently what is termed international counterterrorism gets from the Joint Terrorism Analysis Centre -- something very similar should be applied to domestic extremism. That is not to say there has not been efforts by many parties on that in the past, but this will be a step up.

Then the third area, of course, is what we will do to work more effectively across all agencies locally within our communities, something that we will be working very closely with MOPAC and indeed the Mayor on.

I have some very committed people. They are driving through these recommendations as we speak. We have a shift in the threat. We have had some ghastly attacks. This does represent a significant change. Of course, we will see what CONTEST 3, which we imagine the Government will produce in the spring, suggests. I am hoping, of course, that the operational review will be entirely complementary to whatever comes out in CONTEST 3. However, rest assured: we take very seriously on our shoulders the need to learn every lesson and get on with improving.

Joanne McCartney AM: I have read David Anderson's very comprehensive unclassified review and we talked to you about policing, about the golden thread of policing and about communities being able to feed information up. David Anderson makes a really good point about the intelligence agencies as a whole needing to dare to share a little bit more and, particularly for partners and local authorities and also neighbourhood police officers, understand a little bit better the intelligence picture and having more expert knowledge.

My question really - firstly to the Commissioner and then to the Mayor - is: how do you propose to make sure that partners and officers on the front line do have that knowledge? Perhaps I can ask you and then the Mayor as well.

Cressida Dick CBE QPM (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): I have been involved in counterterrorism work on and off fairly consistently since 2001. I have always been a very firm believer that neighbourhood policing is a very important part of countering terrorism and local neighbourhood work is a very important part, whether you are talking about having a conduit for information or intelligence, whether you are talking about being able to facilitate the work of counterterrorist officers if they wish to carry out inquiries or even do armed raids. We are talking about building confidence in local communities in their public authorities. The local work is absolutely fundamental.

Of course, what we have seen in relation to the attacks and in the public domain is that many of the people in the attacks that have been devastating and the now, I believe, 10 others that have been disrupted in the last several months is that the threat -- yes, some of it is from overseas, some of it comes from online, but a lot of it is very local. I am completely committed to the notion that we need to work really closely with and even better in our communities. I am completely clear that it is important that our officers - and indeed others - are able to understand the picture better and to have a smaller gap between secret intelligence or top-secret intelligence and the local.

It is not without its challenges and we will not get there overnight. We need to be very careful about some of it, of course, because secret intelligence is generally secret because if it is broken out into the public domain somebody's life might be put at risk, and also because the whole notion of intelligence agencies working on the ground is one that can frighten people, not that that is the proposal. Therefore, it is going to be difficult and it is going to be resource-intensive. It is very important that we do narrow that gap and that we give support, training, advice and potentially resources to local areas.

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): Just to add a couple of things, firstly, I fully support and commend the fact that our Commissioner and the head of MI5 work so closely together. That is really important and it is a strength that that happens.

Secondly, it underscores why neighbourhood policing is so important: because it is about relationships. This is about Londoners having a relationship with the police that gives them the confidence to report things which may be nothing but could be really important. That is why the foundations of our policing should be neighbourhood policing. We should be proud that by the end of this year every ward in London will have a minimum two Dedicated Ward Officers and one Community Support Officer, which will put us in a better position to address the issues that David Anderson and others have alluded to.

Andrew Dismore AM: Sorry, Commissioner. It is me again. I wanted to ask you about (about moped crime.

Camden has seen the highest number of moped crimes this year up to September 2017, 4,000, and Islington 3,500, which makes nearly half of the almost all the 18,000 in London, which is hardly a good advert for the BCU merger. We have now seen the moped criminals not just snatching phones off the street but also storming coffee shops to steal laptops from innocent customers who think they are in a safe place. The thieves are becoming more inventive, more brazen, more aggressive, more violent and more frightening. As far as the public can see it, they are running rings around the MPS. Do you think you are winning or losing the war against moped crime?

Cressida Dick CBE QPM (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): We are beginning to win.

Andrew Dismore AM: I know you have introduced some new targeted intelligence-led operations and new tactics. You want to create, as you say, a 'hostile environment' for those carrying out moped-enabled crime. We now hear about the 'snatch squads'. Is it not time to try some more radical steps such as stop-and-search of male pillion passengers in high-offence areas as this crime is overwhelmingly carried out by teenage boys? Do you think you can ever get on top of this with the budgetary constraints?

Cressida Dick CBE QPM (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): Yes, we can. We are beginning to get on top of it. You have seen maybe the figures recently and we are not only seeing quite significant reductions in the theft of two-wheeled vehicles, mopeds and scooters and, secondly, in the number of crimes that are enabled by them. It was going up very dramatically last year. It went up to a peak in the first instance in April [2017] and the other one in June [2017]. It has been coming down since in both cases.

I do not for one second suggest that this is an acceptable position that we are currently in, far from it. It is frightening for people and of course, as you say, it is particularly concentrated in some areas of London. Living there and being there, people will be very aware of it and I have no doubt have some fear about it.

We have continuously borne done in terms of putting better and better intelligence-led tactics into the system. We are getting some fantastic results. You will have seen arrests yesterday. You will see some amazing sentencing, I suspect, today; certainly, a very large-scale conspiracy to rob. We are locking lots and lots of people up and we are using every order available to us to try to stop people who are prolific offenders from carrying on. We have much higher awareness in the Magistrates Courts and beyond and we are getting lots of support from others as well. We are getting on top of it.

I am open to all ideas about other tactics that we could potentially use. It has been pernicious. Thankfully, it is really relatively rare for anybody to be hurt, but I know what you are saying when you say that there are people who are behaving in an incredibly aggressive manner. There have indeed been some cases where people have been badly hurt. The vast majority of cases are cases of snatches, where the person is standing on a pavement with their mobile phone, a stolen moped, grabbed out of their hand in no time at all. We have done some great work in terms of prevention. People are more alert. People are keeping their phones in their pockets more. More to the point, the mopeds getting harder and harder to steal. We have had great support from local authorities not least in Camden and Islington.

Andrew Dismore AM: There has in fact been a 12% reduction in moped-enabled crime, which is of course welcome, but that still means we are seeing on average about 100 a week in Camden and about 1,700 a week across London.

I was going to just finish by asking about pursuit because last February [2017] Craig Mackey [Deputy Commissioner, MPS] told us that there were just 99 completed pursuits in 2016 and you have only 315

drivers who are tactical pursuit and containment drivers and therefore unable to continue this. What are you doing to try to deal with pursuit? The public has a perception about pursuit that you simply do not do it.

Cressida Dick CBE QPM (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): Yes. I can get you the exact number, of course, but I think I am right in saying that the number of pursuits has more than doubled. We are up at about 400 this year or something like that.

Any perception that we are not pursuing is wrong and it is not an infrequent occurrence. In the areas where there have been high levels of moped-enabled crime, there is greater availability of the trained drivers than there was perhaps when Craig was speaking, quite considerable greater availability. We do pursue but, as you know, we are also carrying out a whole series of other tactics. When we pursue, we seek to do it safely and we seek to do it in a way which ensures that we do safely arrest people, but we don't not pursue.

We are also working closely with the Home Office and the Independent Police Complaints Commission (IPCC) to ensure that our officers feel that they properly supported in doing their duty in trying to catch these people and not unfairly, as they would see it and I have to say I rather agree with them, put under massive pressure if somebody comes off a moped having, arguably, having committed tens and tens of very violent crimes. The officer is doing their job. If somebody comes off their moped, they feel - many of them - that they will then be subject to a long, drawn-out and not necessarily very proportionate investigation. The Home Office, the Home Secretary and the IPCC are working with us to help change that position.

Leonie Cooper AM: I just wanted to ask you about the under-reporting of disability hate crime. Between October 2016 and September 2017, there were 487 disability hate crimes recorded by the MPS. That sounds to me like there is some serious under-reporting. Would you share that concern, Commissioner?

Cressida Dick CBE QPM (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): I thought you might have one for the Mayor.

Leonie Cooper AM: I may well do, if I have any time.

Cressida Dick CBE QPM (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): All right. We have had a considerable increase, as you know, in the reporting of disability hate crime. I do not welcome the crime; I welcome the increase in reporting and the increased confidence that I believe is coming and the greater way in which people can contact us with third-party involvement. I could go on. I am sure there is still something of an iceberg there that we need to continue to melt with partners, but we are heading in the right direction.

Leonie Cooper AM: There is a concern amongst many who worked with people with, for example, learning disabilities. In a previous life I used to run a charity that housed people with learning disabilities and I would say that almost 100% of our residents travelling around on the bus or just going about their general everyday activities suffered anything from verbal abuse to spitting to actual physical attacks. Almost none of them were able to report it or felt confident to report. I just wondered what further measures can be put in place to encourage people who face barriers that some of the rest of us do not in being able to feel that they can get their message across about things that have happened to them.

Cressida Dick CBE QPM (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): I would be interested in assistance from you here and others as well. We have been working really hard on this. Long term, as I say, there is an increase in reporting of this as an issue. We have well-trained people. We are very open in a number of different ways, for example, the online reporting hub and indeed our ability to deal with online

abuse; a huge change in the last year. We are working with third-sector groups and support groups. If we ever get it wrong, then we are very open to saying, "Let us have a look at what happened there", and if we are not being good enough, we will try harder. I do not think this is a problem just for the police. I really do not.

Leonie Cooper AM: No, supporting people particularly with learning disabilities is a wider issue for us.

Can I just very briefly ask you? There have been some unconfirmed reports that in the Camden Pathfinder some of the lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans (LGBT) liaison officers have been recast into slightly different roles. Maintaining that level of support to ensure that we get reporting of crimes against people from the LGBT community is very important. Is that the case? If you cannot answer that now, perhaps you could let me know afterwards.

Cressida Dick CBE QPM (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): I certainly will. I cannot tell you what has happened to individuals. What I can tell you is that I believe that the work that we do in relation to hate crime will be stronger in the potential new model than it currently is, but I will let you know.

Tom Copley AM: My question is for the Commissioner. The number of arrests at this year's Notting Hill Carnival fell by almost one third, likely in part to good proactive policing and planning. However, that still amounts to 313 arrests, some of which were for extremely serious incidents such as assaults on police officers and sexual assaults.

What is your plan for policing the Carnival in the evening and is this different to the plan at other times of the day?

Cressida Dick CBE QPM (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): We have been working with the Carnival for many years. We have a hugely experienced command team. Recently, of course, we have been supported by MOPAC in our work with the Carnival organisers and other strategic partners involved in the Carnival.

I was pleased this year that, despite the challenges that we had in relation to terrorism, despite the that this was so soon after the terrible events at Grenfell [Tower] and despite high levels of concern around violent crime generally, this year's Carnival was kept largely safe, certainly from, for example, a terrorist attack; not that I am saying there was any specific threat there but it was very important that we did that very well and, indeed, that we were able to reduce the number of offences of the sort that you are describing. You will remember that the previous year had some very significant, ghastly crimes, not least very serious attacks on police. It was better in relation to crime this year.

I still have concerns going forward about the ability of the organisers to discharge their responsibilities in relation to safety. We will be working closely with them as we go forward, and indeed with MOPAC. You will be very welcome to come and look at the Carnival this year. I would be delighted to welcome you there. The Carnival policing plan is very carefully worked out to ensure we have the right resources in the right places, depending on how Carnival is being organised that year, and at the right times of the day. Monday evening, to put it crudely, has always been the time of the highest density of police officers in certain places.

What we did manage - and you kindly acknowledged this - was to do an enormous amount of pre-Carnival work that stopped a number of people who we know would have wanted to come to Carnival to cause violent crime from coming, either because they were locked up or there was a bail condition that prevented

them from so doing. We disrupted a huge number of networks and gang criminals who would have otherwise intended to come to Carnival.

We all want a successful Carnival. We all want a community-led Carnival. We all want a safe and secure Carnival. We will be debriefing this year. Again, the disposition of numbers of officers was very appropriate last year but if we need to up it again or change it for some particular reason, of course, we would.

2017/5309 - Anti-knife campaign for young Londoners

[Sian Berry AM](#)

How are the police supporting the Mayor's new campaign to help young Londoners decide not to carry a knife?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): Tackling the growing scourge of knife crime in our city is something I care deeply about. Knife crime ruins lives and devastates communities. That is a situation that is all the more depressing because of the way it impacts on young Londoners. I have put tackling knife crime at the heart of my Police and Crime Plan. We have also published a new Knife Crime Strategy for London. The police are working hard to bear down on violence and the MPS is doing a good job of targeting those breaking the law, ensuring justice is done, helping to keep deadly weapons off our streets and supporting victims.

However, if we are going to solve this problem for good, we all recognise that we must also focus on education and prevention. That is why an important part of our strategy is the new London Needs You Alive campaign. This campaign is sending a positive message to London's young people, as well as their parents. It is raising awareness about the dangers and consequences of knife crime. It is also providing advice to Londoners who have concerns about friends or family members getting sucked into a life of knife crime. The film we released to coincide with the launch of the campaign has been viewed almost 300,000 times on our social media channels. It has been shared by celebrities, politicians and the MPS as well as by ordinary Londoners. We estimate that the total reach of the campaign is now over 20 million people. I am grateful to the MPS and others for their support in spreading the message.

We know that working with young people and schools will be critical to our success in tackling knife crime in the long term. There are now 310 nominated Safer Schools Officers working with schools right across London, with the aim that every school will have a nominated officer. I have committed to providing knife wands to every school that wants one. We are rolling out a Knife Crime Prevention Toolkit that will be shared with all schools in 2018. We are also providing seed funding for local anti-knife crime initiatives. I am passionate about making sure that every young person in London, no matter who they are or where they live, can grow up in safety and with the opportunity to reach their potential. I know the MPS is fully on board with this.

Sian Berry AM: Thank you very much. As you know, I have a strong interest in this issue. In terms of the reach of your campaign, I met a group of young people at the Winch Youth Club in Camden and I took the opportunity to ask them if they had seen it. About half of them had, which is not bad given it launched not long ago. I am hoping they will keep pushing it out to more and more people so that awareness grows even further.

Previously other young people campaigners have been concerned that there have not been enough positive messages aimed at young people. This campaign really is positive. It is about the value of and contribution

made by young Londoners to our city. It is about increasing that confidence and not their fear. It does not show pictures of violence. It does not show big, terrifying knives. That is really good.

Can I ask the Commissioner what she thinks of the campaign?

Cressida Dick CBE QPM (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): We fully support it. We have been involved in the commissioning, in a sense, and certainly we have been very heavily involved in the development of the strategy. We are very supportive of this specific campaign. One of the things it does do is not involve police people very much. For many young people that is helpful. We all know that a 56-year-old, white, middle-aged, middle-class lady talking to someone very different and of a very different age about the awfulness of knives may have absolutely no impact whatsoever.

Sian Berry AM: I would also like to join my colleague Assembly Member Eshalomi in calling for the Mayor to commission a better evidence base for MPS communications in terms of the amount of times I see borough press officers releasing images that then appear in the local papers of knives that have been picked up during Operation Sceptre. I do worry that this is counterproductive to your campaign and the risk of that has to be taken very seriously. I certainly never see images of knives like that, except when they have been released by the MPS and that is definitely an issue. It would therefore be good if you could consider the request that was made earlier.

I want to move on to schools. I have to say I was pretty horrified to see an image that was put out by the police in Hackney of one of their police officers in a school showing a very graphic photograph of weapons to children in what seemed to be a primary school. I have a picture of the tweet here. I do not want to make the problem worse by showing pictures of knives, but you can see here that there is an officer in a school with a PowerPoint slide that has really horrible looking knives and the children are very young. This does not seem appropriate. For very young children in particular getting the tone and content of messages right is really important.

I want to ask the Commissioner, do you have any guidance for MPS officers who go into schools, especially when working with young children, about the content they show to them?

Cressida Dick CBE QPM (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): I do not know if there is anything specific about whether to not to show knives. I would be slightly surprised by that. However, yes, they are given guidance about what is likely to be effective and what is not effective. The College of Policing has done quite a lot of work on this in terms of different age groups, different types of people and what sorts of things work in prevention terms. That guidance is available to them.

Sian Berry AM: Presumably this kind of image would not be suitable. If this was a film, it would be 12A at the very least. It is quite scary.

Cressida Dick CBE QPM (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): I am not sure you are right, not least because some people would have said, and some people probably still say, police officers should not be talking to young people about issues such as knife crime, they certainly should not be going into primary schools and they certainly should not be talking to eight-year-olds or nine-year-olds. However, I fear a lot of the risks are absolutely now apparent for, with and to eight-year-olds and nine-year-olds. That is why we, and third sector groups, are doing that. Of course, it is important we do it well. Of course, it is important that we do stuff that is going to prevent and not make it worse. I get that entirely. However, I am not going to say that is wrong to do that.

Sian Berry AM: We have written to the Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime about this as well because it was genuinely shocking to me to see that. I hope she will have a look and get back to me too.

I also want to ask about the wider issue, prevention and early intervention, things you have both talked about today. In my response to the Mayor's Police and Crime Plan I mentioned that serious youth violence should be treated more like a public health issue. I know campaigners, youth workers and medical professionals all have this view, that youth violence should be treated more like a public health problem. This is going to be debated in Parliament as well soon. Are both the MPS and MOPAC engaged in these discussions about public health and knife crime?

Cressida Dick CBE QPM (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): Yes, we are. The public health approach is well evidenced in Scotland, for example. There are very different communities, very different dynamics and very different issues around violence and, indeed, youth violence but nevertheless there have been massive reductions in violent crime through a primary health lens. We are fully aware that, for example, the majority of young people who get involved themselves in very serious violence, and/or find themselves locked up for very, very serious violence, are people who have suffered some kind of adverse experience of a significant sort when they are young and/or have limited or problematic family lives and parenting, all things that can lead to other negative outcomes and not just being subject to or causing serious violence to somebody. We are all committed to the notion that prevention is better than enforcement which is, after all, the public health approach.

Sian Berry AM: I have previously also suggested that communities who have suffered a crime need more support in the aftermath. Is that something you are looking at, Mr Mayor?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): We have invested more in victim support, which is really important. When there is an individual victim of crime the trauma is felt by the entire community. You have met bereaved families and communities who are affected by this. We do lots of work on this. The MPS has now asked Dr Neville Lawrence [father of knife crime victim] to chair a committee looking into some of the work helping victims and working with young people. We are doing a lot more of that. It is an investment of £7 million in relation to this area of knife crime, targeting prevention and education for the reasons you know.

You have been very articulate in arguing the consequences of youth services being closed down and youth workers losing their jobs. I am afraid what I cannot do is fill that hole. I am afraid I cannot fund youth services and youth workers with the monies I have, as much as we would like to do so.

Sian Berry AM: The hole grows every year as well.

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): Exactly. What we can do is provide seeding money where we are, provide diversion money, provide youth workers in accident and emergency (A&E) departments where there is that teachable moment where you can turn somebody around, and provide positive role models. We are doing that piece of work. A lot of it comes from the discussions we have had with the MPS as well. What is great about the work the MPS is doing is that it is not being obsessed by arrest rates. It is arresting people carrying knives. It is stopping and searching using intelligence. It is doing those things and also helping us with the education and prevention side that is so important.

Sian Berry AM: I hope it is.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM: To the Mayor, your Police and Crime Plan states you will extend support for youth workers in A&E departments disproportionately impacted by knife crime injuries. When will youth workers be rolled out and to how many A&Es?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): We have continued to fund the major trauma centres, which you know about, such as Redthread. We are extending the programme to those other key A&E departments, not the major trauma centres, in those boroughs that have high levels of knife crime. I am happy to write and let you know where we have started and where we intend to go during the course of the year. It was originally just the major trauma centres and now we have realised there are other A&Es that are affected by this.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM: That is right. The youth work charity Redthread focuses on that teachable moment.

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): Correct.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM: They would like to see their work extended to places like the Homerton, Lewisham, Northwick Park, Croydon and Newham. Those A&Es see a young person presenting four or five times with knife crime injuries before they end up at the major trauma centres.

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): The good news, Caroline, is that they are helping us with this toolkit with information and advice on how to help, particularly in the aftermath of knife crime. I would not want you to think that its involvement is just in providing the youth workers, as important as they are. It has also provided some of the expertise that will be in the toolkit that goes out next year as well.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM: Fantastic. You have committed £620,000 in the next financial year and £800,000 in 2019/20. Are you confident that funding will enable it to roll out its programme to each of these hospitals where it is desperately needed?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): I hope so. We have given as much as we possibly can. Just to remind you, we have increased from £360,000 per year to £1 million next year. We have allocated a further £2 million to develop the new Children and Young Persons Victim Services from 2018 - 2020. You talked about the trauma work, within the policing budget we have it is the largest amount in this area. Of course, we could do more. I am hoping it can at least cover the hospitals we are talking about because we have shown it works.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM: Yes, absolutely. We were just talking about prevention being better than enforcement and this is part of that work. What representations have you made to National Health Service (NHS) Trusts or even to the Department of Health to match the money MOPAC is providing to organisations like Redthread? Young people presenting with serious injuries in A&E departments is a huge cost to the whole system, as well as the cost to the community and the loss of life. I am wondering whether you have been able to make any inroads with the NHS.

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): Yesterday I chaired the London Health Board meeting. To give you an idea of the crisis it is having with funding, there is a £4 billion shortfall in NHS funding in London. That gives you the level of the problems it is facing. We are talking about the police funding crisis, it is having one as well.

One of the things we talked about yesterday that I know you will be interested in is whether the NHS, working with us, can provide some counselling assistance in schools. You will be aware of the overlap

between young people with mental health issues and youth crime. Sian [Berry AM] used the phrase 'public health'. There is an overlap here. We are hoping we can leverage in some money from the NHS in relation to the counselling work. You are right that - I hate using this phrase - it is a 'loss leader'. If you invest now you save money down the road. Those are conversations we are having but I am not going to pretend it is not tough for the NHS family as well.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM: Given everyone is having to make such awful savings - yet this is such a cost to every silo of the public sector - it is whether you think you are going to make any inroads to get joint funding.

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): The good news is that the NHS clinicians we speak to in these trauma centres have nothing but good things to say about the Redthread workers so there is a sense of teamwork going on there. The staff get it. We just have to persuade those in charge of the coffers to try to release some money, but they are struggling with finances.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM: Scotland was just mentioned. I am wondering what action you are taking to learn from Scotland because they have seen such a reduction in violence.

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): A word to the wise, of course, we talk to colleagues all around the country and around world, and Strathclyde is a good example, but we are not comparing like for like. We should be cautious about assuming we can transpose what works in one part of the country or part of the world to London. That is why we have used a multi-faceted approach. We deliberately took time to consult before we published the Knife Crime Strategy. We were criticised for speaking to teachers, parents, bereaved families and youth workers and not publishing it on day 2. We thought that was the right thing to do. We have already received praise from Assembly Members on, for example, the London Needs You Alive Campaign. We will carry on learning. However, I do not think any of us should assume that transposing what works in another part of the country will lead to success. It is very different.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM: There may be some aspects you can pick up through your work.

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): The Commissioner spends more time speaking to other forces around the country, including outside England and Wales - I do not say this as a criticism of the former Commissioner - than former Commissioners and part of that is learning to see what we can do.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM: Lovely, thank you very much.

Steve O'Connell AM: You touched upon confidence within the communities earlier. This is a question for the Commissioner. I was with the Borough Commander in Croydon a few weeks ago. We had a public meeting in Norbury where they lost a young man through knife crime some weeks before, very well attended it was too. What are you asking your Borough Commanders to do regarding building trust with communities and perhaps disaffected youth in those boroughs.

Cressida Dick CBE QPM (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): We have our Dedicated Ward Officers and we also have our Safer Schools Officers, as you know. We are eager that through those we have more positive interactions between local police and young people, particularly their early interactions where they will meet a police officer, see a police officer, know a police officer and recognise a police officer as somebody who is there to support and protect them rather than potentially the first police officer they meet is somebody who is there to deal with a very serious crime or ends up doing stop and search, for example. That is one thing we are trying to do.

The second thing is that we are trying to reach out to our communities through a variety of different methods, particularly, but not only, through social media. You will be seeing the Neighbourhood Teams and others doing ever increasing and ever more imaginative ways of talking with local people about what we are doing, who we are, what we stand for, what they should expect from us, the results we have and so forth.

Thirdly, of course, we have an ever increasingly diverse workforce. We are trying to make the most of the skills and personal characteristics of the people who are coming into the MPS, who are very much more diverse than my generation, to ensure that they help give confidence. I would say overall that as Commissioner I have said to my people that increasing trust and confidence, particularly in those communities or parts of those communities that have lower confidence, is a very high priority. Notwithstanding the comments before about what has gone previously, it is a very high priority for us. That, of course, means we have to be out there. We have to be on the streets. We have to be competent. We have to keep people as safe as we possibly can. We have to listen to any ideas or criticisms that people may have of us.

Steve O'Connell AM: Thank you. You will find there is an enormous appetite out there from Londoners and families. At a meeting I went to the other week in Croydon, 80% were mums who were really worried about their young people. There is an appetite for that.

To me there are two constituencies we are working towards here. There is the Mayor's campaign aimed at largely prevention, hopefully, for that group of young people aging from eight upwards. I would make the point of perhaps unusually disagreeing with Sian Berry [AM]. We need to show the consequences of the use of crime and that needs to be done. The other constituency are those who are almost 'unreconstructed' users of knife crime. They might be 18, 19 or 20 and we have missed that opportunity at an early stage. They need to be largely arrested and taken off the streets, which is regrettable.

I would like you to comment on the fact that only about one in five knife crime incidents result in someone being proceeded against. I know there is an issue of non-co-operation, but I would like your response to that, Commissioner.

Cressida Dick CBE QPM (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): Of course, I wish that was higher. Increasing confidence, as you say, is an important part of that. I should say, however, that a fair amount of knife crime is also committed by people who are younger than that, as you know.

Steve O'Connell AM: Indeed.

Cressida Dick CBE QPM (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): We will work with others to try to ensure they are diverted from the criminal justice system and that there may be another positive outcome that is not locking up.

In relation to those who are usually older but definitely persistent knife carriers and dangerous people - many of whom are, of course, associated with gangs, street drug dealing or both - we have some fantastic work going on to try to ensure that they are, as you put it, locked up and locked up quickly and, if they come out, locked up regularly. This is a very high priority for all the boroughs. We are doing well in that.

Steve O'Connell AM: I sense we could do better, no doubt. A question really to the Mayor, knife crime and other serious youth violence has gone up something like a quarter over the year. That is an issue, we recognise that, and you are doing some work around that.

You have heard this from me before, but I suggest something more you could do is to set some rather robust targets for the Commissioner and officers to focus their minds even more so. How do you respond to that, Mr Mayor?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): I am not sure if a target, by itself, will lead to an improvement. The issue is what assistance we give to the police and our communities to prevent, educate and stop young people from carrying those knives and so that those who are carrying knives are properly dealt with by the police. For example, I fully support Operation Sceptre, which is the police having 80 officers on a regular basis targeting those boroughs where there is the largest use of knife crime. I fully support the police in relation to intelligence-led stop and search, which it is doing really well. I fully support the Borough Commanders. I did not realise until recently that the Commissioner now has a regular report from Borough Commanders in relation to what they are doing in this area. [Assistant Commissioner] Martin Hewitt QPM and others are monitoring performance in each borough and so we now know borough by borough - I know the figures for Croydon and other boroughs - what is happening.

We could satisfy your wish and set a target, but I am not sure how that helps the ordinary police officer do his or her job to try to stop young people carrying knives and then catch those who are.

Steve O'Connell AM: I find that it does. Under the former Mayor there was a target regime, which had controversies around it, but it was there and it was clear. Often officers, when they parade and go out into the boroughs, and the neighbourhoods like to be clear what they are tasked to do. I think that is correct. Often it focuses the mind that they have a target to meet, not just a target to respond to their leaders but a target to respond to when they are scrutinised by communities with Ward Panels and Safer Neighbourhood Boards.

Commissioner, would you not agree it would be better to have more of a target-based operation that your officers worked to?

Cressida Dick CBE QPM (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): No, I would not in the current context. They are very clear that violent crime is incredibly important. They are very clear that knife crime is incredibly important. They have an ever-increasing understanding of the best way to tackle it. I would not support in this instance, for example, a target of a number of people arrested for knife crime per officer or for each officer to be in competition with each other on that number. As you say, there are some consequences of a really strong target-driven culture. I want a strong performance culture. I want people to be clear about what the business is that they are in. However, I do not want to have the adverse impact that you can have by getting over-focused on specific targets.

Steve O'Connell AM: I will take that. That is fine.

Shaun Bailey AM: Welcome and hello, Mayor. Your Knife Crime Strategy is a good start. One of the things it is missing is more support for parents. Do you think there is anything else you could do around that? I will ask that of you and then of the Commissioner.

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): Firstly, I am in the ideas business. If there are ideas you have - I know you have worked with young people - please let me know. You are right, parents need support. As a father of teenage children, I know how difficult it can be being a parent. Often parents are not the person young people listen to. Therefore, any helpful advice you have, of course, I am happy to hear.

I will just make one point. Let us realise that not every young person in London has a family that is like most families. Sometimes they come from families where mum is working all the hours God sends, two or three jobs, so the child does not see mum. There may not be a male role model in the house. There may be issues with who that young person ends up hanging about with during the time when they are not being supervised. I would not want to pretend there is only one type of family in London. However, you are right in relation to the role of the family. I use the phrase it takes a village to raise a child, which you know and have heard me use it before. Any ideas you have, I am in the ideas business.

Shaun Bailey AM: To pick up on that, that is why I make the comment, because many children come from a background that is complicated. We all know life in London is complicated, particularly for parents. We talk so much about communities. My colleague, Sian Berry [AM] talked about a public health response. I would probably use the word a cultural response. When you educate a community, it is best done through the parents because they are there all the time and have a vested interest in doing it. That is why, I suggest, that anything we do around knife crime should have a large component, possibly the largest component, focused on those parents because they make up the community.

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): I should say, Shaun, it is probably my fault for not explaining but the toolkit that is going to come out next year is from the work we have done talking to parents - if I am honest, bereaved parents in particular but other parents as well - in relation to the things we can do in the governance space we know young people are going to be at. We know most young people for six, seven or eight hours a day will be in a school. Therefore, we can provide the teachers with a bespoke toolkit they can use to teach young people the sort of things you are talking about. We are hoping to launch that early next year. I am really happy to give you an early viewing of some of the stuff that is going to be in the toolkit. Hopefully you will welcome that.

Shaun Bailey AM: I would like to ask the same question to the Commissioner. Is there anything your officers or Victim Support Teams can do to provide parents with support, particularly before these incidents happen?

Cressida Dick CBE QPM (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): Again, I am interested in your ideas. I know what the Mayor has said. I spend a lot of time with my frontline officers. I am not exaggerating when I say it pretty much breaks their hearts to see some of the young people they are repeatedly dealing with who are repeat offenders. That is not, by any means, a large proportion of London's young people. It is a very specific group with very significant issues who are arrested sometimes 20, 30 or 40 times for serious stuff before they seem to get a really meaningful intervention, which is a terrible modern phrase. That hurts my officers. They do not like it. They find that offensive. This is not based on data, but they will say to me they feel in that cohort - who are nearly all excluded, rushing around the streets, causing lots of trouble for people and putting themselves at massive risk - the vast majority of them have a very troubled family background, home is not a safe place for them and their parents are not coping, if they are there at all. This is well beyond the work of a police officer to deal with. Others are so much better qualified to deal with these issues. Where we can add value in co-operation and collaboration with other agencies in support of education of or information for parents we would absolutely want to do that. I will take your message away. I have made a note that when we are messaging people we need to think about how we message and engage with parents as much as how we engage with young people.

Shaun Bailey AM: Thank you for that answer. I accept that the police have a role in that and maybe can instruct within your role.

Just my last question to the Commissioner. I have to agree with my colleague Sian [Berry AM] that the showing of harsh images, particularly to young children, is not particularly appropriate, because if you think about a knife, every knife that has been used in a stabbing incident has probably been used in 50 or 60 incidences before that to terrorise people. I wonder if you and your officers have spent enough time considering what those scary images do. In your opinion, do they not increase the chances of a child feeling like they need to defend themselves against that scary image, ie carry a knife?

Cressida Dick CBE QPM (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): It depends entirely on the context in which they are shown and how it is explained why it is being shown. I do not want, of course, to increase the chances; equally, I do want people to understand, and including very young people, the nature of the risks thereof and what goes on with knife crime. I am afraid that is a necessity. We have far too many young people who end up hurting somebody very badly - or even worse, sometimes killing people - who have no understanding whatsoever of the terrible impact of a knife.

It is great to see, one of the things in Sceptre is these community sweeps. I am not suggesting we put seven and eight-year-olds on community sweeps, but we are getting knives brought in, brought in, brought in all the time by people in the communities and we are getting young people telling us about "my older brother" or "my this" or "my that". I have to say that is a good thing. I am sorry to say that we need to raise awareness, even in very young children, of some of the dangers around at the moment, just like we talk about road safety, just like we talk about online grooming and other things at much earlier ages than I would have dreamt of when I was young and even perhaps when you were young as well, Shaun. That is the nature of the world we are in.

Shaun Bailey AM: I agree with awareness, but I refer you to the drug campaigns in the 1980s when they showed pictures of heroin addicts. It did absolutely nothing for young people, because they divorced themselves from the image on the screen. I just would like you to consider that because I deal with young people and always have done, and terrifying images to young people normally mean they will think, "I need to defend myself against that", and in this context, that could be a knife. I do really think that you need to look at that and really consider if it is necessary to do it, but I will leave it there, Chairman.

Cressida Dick CBE QPM (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): I know this is an ongoing issue. I know we have got several Assembly Members who are animated about it. Of course, I am hearing what you are saying. I know we have been listening. We will continue to listen, we will continue to think, and we will continue to look at the evidence. I do not believe this is the most important strategic issue facing young people in London who are at risk of knife crime.

Andrew Boff AM: Commissioner, I am aware that the Mayor has just said we are not exactly like every other city or every other country. I accept that, but is it not time that we did learn the international lessons, such as the way of youth engagement in Iceland, where they have effectively turned it around? For example, 45% of young people regularly got drunk 15 years ago and that figure is now 5%. One of the things they have done is to combine love with a bit of enforcement. They have a curfew for young people. It is beyond me why a child should be out after 10.00pm or 11.00pm at night on the streets and nobody challenges it. Do you think a curfew would work here?

Cressida Dick CBE QPM (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): Absolutely, we should learn internationally. The Mayor has been kind enough to say that I spend a great deal of my time getting my officers to be outward-looking, to recognise that London is not unique, that it is not the only place that anything happens and that other people have other learning which may, on occasion, be relevant. We mentioned Scotland earlier on. It is very different. Not everything they do there is appropriate for us, but

at least ten years ago, as an example, we had the person who was leading on knife crime in Scotland - with great success - down here for a year to help us. At least 12 years ago we had the people from Boston, who were doing gang call-ins down into London to get us to think that way and a lot of our work has been influenced by that. We should be outward-looking, we should learn. I am interested in the Iceland idea. It is not for a police officer to say a curfew is the answer.

Andrew Boff AM: No, it is a package.

Cressida Dick CBE QPM (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): Of course, it is interesting that it has worked in that context.

Andrew Boff AM: Yes. It is not the only thing, it is a package of things. As somebody who helped run a youth club in Hackney for a number of years, I am rather sceptical about just because an adult says, "Do not carry a knife with you", for a young person who is discovering their world, who is pushing against and challenging authority - as teenagers do, it is a part of the growing process - that is not sufficient incentive for them not to carry a knife. I am willing to be persuaded, but the last Mayor tried it and I know this Mayor is trying it. I do not think it is going to work. Prove me wrong.

Cressida Dick CBE QPM (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): Nobody has suggested that that is the only thing that is happening. There are a whole suite of things happening under the Knife Crime Strategy. There is a whole --

Andrew Boff AM: It makes it worse.

Cressida Dick CBE QPM (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): -- welter of things happening across local authorities and the police in relation to knife crime.

Andrew Boff AM: Thank you. I am going to move on to another subject, if I can. Since 1985, there have been two prosecutions for female genital mutilation (FGM). Neither of these have been successful. It is reliably estimated that last year there were 5,700 new cases of FGM, many of those in London. Why is the MPS failing these girls?

Cressida Dick CBE QPM (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): I know you know a lot about this subject. We are all committed to reducing the prevalence of FGM as it affects London's young people and we have had some considerable successes through a variety of different efforts over the last several years, many of which you are familiar with, Andrew. We do always seek both to get information and, where appropriate, to convert information and intelligence into evidence. I know you are aware of some of the challenges around this. I am confident that in the next year or so we are very likely to have further charges in relation to this but, given the nature of the problem, we are not likely to have in the short to medium term very large numbers of charges in relation to this, because it is so difficult. I know you know the detail; I know you know the background to this.

Andrew Boff AM: Perhaps not here, Commissioner, but you have to explain to me somehow how you can fail to establish in 5,700 cases that there was not a lack of duty of care by some parents along the way and that that would not attract some kind of criminal prosecution. There were 5,700 cases: we are not talking about a small number. In each of those cases, somebody has failed that young person, either their guardian or their parents. I fail to understand how it is we cannot then use that as the basis for a prosecution.

Cressida Dick CBE QPM (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): What I would say to you is that it is not for the want of trying. I have very committed people; we have lots of skills; we have lots of effort around this. Indeed, we have had, as you may know, some charges. However, it is incredibly complicated. I would be delighted to meet with you outside --

Andrew Boff AM: Please.

Cressida Dick CBE QPM (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): -- together with the senior Crown Prosecutor and we can explain how challenging this is to get evidence sufficient to go through a criminal court in this country.

Andrew Boff AM: Mr Mayor?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): Part of the conversation you have with the Commissioner, I have got in my briefing, just so you know - you may not know - last year 24 cases were referred by the police to the CPS and for a variety of reasons which you can discuss offline, none were proceeded with. I know previously you have raised the issue of whether there are 'cultural reasons' why the police and others are not proceeding. That is not the case, but there is something going on in relation to either the evidence base or on reporting or confidence. A national working group has been set up, Andrew, which has met once already and will carry on meeting, because it is a multiagency approach.

Andrew Boff AM: Thank you for that. I look forward to talking to you about this in some detail at a later time.

If I can move on to one other question. I am looking at my colleagues, making sure I am not getting on anybody's -- you want to come in? Please. Sorry, Chairman. I am not doing your job.

Tony Arbour AM (Deputy Chairman in the Chair): It is OK. Have you finished?

Andrew Boff AM: I will ask another question, but it depends whether or not --

Tony Arbour AM (Deputy Chairman in the Chair): Assembly Member Hall.

Susan Hall AM: To the Commissioner, what is the MPS going to do to stop forced marriages and how are you recording forced marriages in London?

Cressida Dick CBE QPM (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): We have in many respects for a number of years led policing nationally in relation to forced marriages. We have a very active group in London, we have a very capable local lead. We have worked very closely with the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and we are both working with other groups to try to raise awareness of this, to try to get intelligence and information about potential forced marriage or actual forced marriage. We have stronger legislation than we used to have, as you know, and we have very clear guidance for our people.

Susan Hall AM: Do you believe it is on the increase? If you look at the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children website, it is saying that they are doing more and more counselling around this. Do you believe it is drastically increasing?

Cressida Dick CBE QPM (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): I genuinely do not know whether it is on the increase. There is greater awareness. We are getting involved more often and earlier and that is a good thing, but it remains a significant challenge for our communities.

Susan Hall AM: Thank you.

Tony Arbour AM (Deputy Chairman in the Chair): Assembly Member Boff?

Andrew Boff AM: Commissioner, is the possession of cannabis a high-priority crime for you?

Cressida Dick CBE QPM (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): It is not the highest-priority crime, but it is a crime and it is something that we enforce the law in relation to.

Andrew Boff AM: Do you still maintain that position with - I am sure you have the knowledge - the amount of high-potency cannabis that is now available to young people?

Cressida Dick CBE QPM (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): Sorry, I do not understand the question.

Andrew Boff AM: Do you still consider it not a high priority for crime, bearing in mind the amount of high-potency cannabis that is now available to young people?

Cressida Dick CBE QPM (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): I said it is not the highest-priority crime.

Andrew Boff AM: Not the highest, right.

Cressida Dick CBE QPM (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): I am concerned about high-potency cannabis, of course I am. We can see the damage that is done. We are very concerned about people who may be producing or dealing such cannabis and we are concerned, as are those in public health, about the impact of it, but possession thereof is not our highest priority.

Andrew Boff AM: The possession of course is the thing that does the most damage to somebody, to a young person who is going to take this high-potency cannabis. It is established: a think-tank called Volteface recently produced a report that indicated that this high-potency cannabis was pretty much all that young people have available to them. Do you not think that, in terms of your duty of care, you should be looking for those who are possessing the cannabis as well?

Cressida Dick CBE QPM (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): We do not turn a blind eye. We are not ignoring it, but, as with other forms of drugs, enforcement has to go alongside education. The reductions in addiction, for example, that have been achieved in this country in certain types of drugs over the last many years have been achieved much more through education and health than they have through enforcement. We do not turn a blind eye to it.

Andrew Boff AM: Can I just ask you on a more general note now, to what degree does the reduction of harm guide the MPS' work on both sex work and illegal drugs?

Cressida Dick CBE QPM (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): Reduction of harm is something we think about all the time, not just in those areas, but in others as well. If you speak to my

officers, it could be seen as management language, but they think about what is the threat, they think about what is the risk and they think about what is the harm. That is how we prioritise all the time the work that we do and how we think about what resource we are going to put in and how we are going to approach something. For example, when we are thinking about the issue of so-called county lines, we take a very strong view around the vulnerability of some of the young people who have become involved in or bullied into being involved in taking drugs money or other illicit goods up and down the country and we adopt a safeguarding approach to them wherever we can and wherever it is appropriate. We think about harm and we think about harm in relation to sex workers as well, of course we do.

Andrew Boff AM: In terms of enforcement or reduction of harm, what would be your priority?

Cressida Dick CBE QPM (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): It depends on the circumstances entirely.

Andrew Boff AM: I knew you were going to say that, but surely in both those cases you would put the victim as the vulnerable person in those cases, as the person whose interests you are looking after, is that correct?

Cressida Dick CBE QPM (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): I have to say, it does depend on the circumstances, of course it does. It depends what crime appears to be being committed by a person in what manner, but if you are thinking, for example, of a very young person who has found themselves involved in, as I say, transporting drugs up and down the country, then we should see that as an issue of vulnerability and harm in the first instance, absolutely, and we should be thinking about them and how we can get them - and we are thinking about this - away from that environment, to get them safeguarded and at the same time how we can potentially deal with the bullies, the gang leaders, as perpetrators and traffickers.

Andrew Boff AM: Can I just interrupt there because I do not have a lot of time? Does your idea of safeguarding extend to adults as well?

Cressida Dick CBE QPM (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): Potentially, yes. Absolutely, of course. Adults can absolutely be vulnerable, yes.

Andrew Boff AM: Thank you very much.

Tony Arbour AM (Deputy Chairman in the Chair): There are only seconds left for remaining groups. Do people want to make use of their time? I hope not. Thank you very much. Can I thank you, Mr Mayor, and you, Commissioner, for coming today and answering our questions? Can I wish you both the compliments of the season? Thank you very much.

Cressida Dick CBE QPM (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): Thank you very much indeed.