

London Assembly Police and Crime Committee – Wednesday, 3 July 2019**Transcript of Item 7 – Question and Answer Session with the Mayor’s Office for Policing and Crime and the Metropolitan Police Service**

Unmesh Desai AM (Chair): Before we move to our next item, the substantial item on today’s agenda, the question and answer (Q&A) session, Deputy Mayor, I do wish to express the concerns of this Committee in respect of the way the announcement of the departure of the Chief Executive of the Mayor’s Office for Policing and Crime (MOPAC) Rebecca Lawrence has been made. We were not told about this formally. We wish her well and congratulations to her, but we are concerned. We will be writing to you formally, but on behalf of my colleagues I just wanted to put on record that it would be better to be told about these things formally. Thank you.

Sophie Linden (Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime): Apologies for that.

Unmesh Desai AM (Chair): Let us move on to the Q&A session. If I can kick off, the first set of questions is on sexual offences and rape and they are to you, Deputy Mayor. One of the Mayor’s commitments is to scrutinise the workload of officers involved in violence against women and girls (VAWG) cases. How is that commitment being fulfilled in terms of those officers working in Basic Command Unit (BCU) safeguarding teams? Can you give us an example of action you have taken as a result of your scrutiny of these workloads?

Sophie Linden (Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime): In terms of oversight and scrutiny of the work of the MPS (MPS) on VAWG, I hold regular meetings with Mark Simmons [Assistant Commissioner, MPS]. We also hold regular oversight board meetings on a quarterly basis. You will have seen the performance report. There is a VAWG section in the performance report and we have regular discussions on sanction detection rates, for example, and discussions with the Commissioner [of Police of the Metropolis] on her concerns that she voiced very publicly last week around overall sanction detection rates and in particular sanction detection rates around domestic abuse. Part of that oversight also looks not just at overall London figures but at consistency across BCUs, looks at where there are inconsistencies or good performance or not-so-good performance across BCUs.

In terms of sexual offences and safeguarding, I have also visited two BCUs to discuss with them the changes around the safeguarding and to discuss with them workload issues, digital disclosure and how the changes are landing. That is part of ensuring that the strategic oversight is married up with that understanding of what is happening on the front line as well. I am making sure that I am there, and I have discussed and engaged with frontline officers, who are experiencing and are having to deliver particularly the changes to the BCUs.

Unmesh Desai AM (Chair): OK. I may come back to you later but, Assistant Commissioner Simmons, can I ask you? Since the introduction of BCUs, officers dealing with rape and sexual offences have higher workloads and long periods of overtime. Is this something that is consistent across all the BCUs and, if so, how is it being monitored and addressed?

You may also know that we went to see the BCU at Brixton a couple of weeks ago and so we have had first-hand experience of what officers are going through on the front line.

Mark Simmons (Assistant Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service (MPS)): Sure. Firstly, it is not the case that officers investigating rape have higher workloads in terms of rape investigations than they did beforehand. The average number of investigations per officer at the moment is something like 8.5 across the whole of London. That sounds like a silly number when talking about an offence like rape, I understand, but there is a variation across different BCUs between, broadly, about 12 and about six as an average. The position in terms of the number of rape investigations per officer is favourable compared to what it was before the [establishment of the] BCUs.

It is also the case that with the pressures we were under in terms of the central setup before the BCU setup, a number of those rape investigations - not out of choice from our point of view - were led by Police Constables (PCs) under the supervision of Detectives rather than by Detectives themselves. The workload is broadly in a range that fits with what we have planned, and we are moving to the point where fully trained and qualified Detectives are leading all those investigations. That is the position we are in at the moment.

As you know I am sure, the position in terms of staffing the increase in demand for the central Sapphire part of Specialist Crime and Operations (SCO) 17, as it was known, had to be constantly bolstered by attachments from boroughs, as they were then, in order to manage the workload at that time. Of course, many of those attachments, as I commented on now, were PCs, as opposed to the position we have now where the investigators for rape and the other serious crimes in safeguarding are Detectives.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM: Can I pick up from what you were just saying? You just talked about rape. The question from the Chair was about rape and all other sexual offences and the workload has gone up.

Mark Simmons (Assistant Commissioner, MPS): Sexual offences as a whole were not dealt with by SCO17 before and so drawing a direct comparison is difficult to do. Of course, with the nature of sexual offences, there is a wide variation in terms of the amount of investigative work that goes into some sexual offences compared to others. For example, an indecent exposure has a very different level of investigation and expertise and so on required than a rape, to state the obvious. Similarly, the offences that we see on buses and so on of indecent touching and so on are also in that bracket. The workload in terms of rape offences is the easiest one to make a direct comparison about because that was what the Sapphire officers investigated, rape and serious sexual offences by that definition, as opposed to all sexual offences, recognising that, as I say, the nature of the investigations does vary from the offences that are not classified in formal terms as serious sexual offences.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM: From the Detectives we spoke to, it was quite clear that their workload had gone up because they were having to go and deal with domestic violence (DV) cases coming in that were urgent. They were having to put aside some of their work on these serious rape cases to go and deal with DV and the volume of work coming through. Their workload had gone up hugely and they were having to work considerable overtime as well. You are painting a rosier picture than what we found on the ground.

Mark Simmons (Assistant Commissioner, MPS): I am not attempting, certainly, to paint a rosy picture. There is a huge amount of pressure in this area of work. Safeguarding is highly pressurised, we know, for all the reasons that are well rehearsed here and the increase we have had in demand over recent years, again. That is victims coming forward and telling us about their experiences. We know we have had that huge pressure in terms of demand that does cut across from rape and serious sexual offences into domestic abuse as well. We know there is a significant overlap between people who suffer both sexual violence and DV. A

significant proportion of the rapes that are reported to us - and one of the benefits of bringing investigations together - also have other elements of DV as well as issues of child protection where that has occurred in the family or within a relationship.

It is true, of course, that part of the drive for bringing the dedicated rape investigators and child abuse investigators into the local environment where they are working alongside domestic abuse investigators, given the increase in demand and pressure and the importance of this work, is to give us the flexibility to respond to what we are presented with on a daily, weekly or monthly basis in the best way we can. Overall, there are more people - I was going to say more resource, but that is officers - working in in that arena of safeguarding, some 300 more, than there were under the previous system with the borough domestic abuse units and Community Safety Units (CSUs) and the central rape and child abuse investigators.

Do I paint a rosy picture? No, I would not seek to paint a rosy picture about the investigation of serious sexual offences, sexual violence and the other safeguarding issues. It is a great challenge for us.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM: Are the additional 300 posts you say have been created all filled or is that just the posts but actually you are carrying a lot of vacancies?

Mark Simmons (Assistant Commissioner, MPS): They are not all filled because, in the scale of the MPS, there is movement in and out of posts across the whole of London. It makes it very difficult to say exactly how many at any point in time, but we do prioritise the filling of safeguarding posts; albeit that there are pressures then against the street violence work as well, which requires a lot of the same skills and so on. We do prioritise the safeguarding posts as best we can.

You will be well aware, again, of some of the pressures around our Detective recruitment position and of course Detective skills are what we need for the serious offences in safeguarding as well as the investigation of the serious violence incidents. There is pressure around that, although we have a good trajectory in terms of the coming months. Yes, there is pressure in that arena.

The vacancies we keep to as small a number as possible, but there is a reality about the numbers on the BCUs as we move towards the 31,000 [police officers] and how that enables us then to manage the pipeline through into Detectives and into some of the more serious offending investigations.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM: I wonder whether we could have in writing from you after this what the current vacancies are and also to understand the number of officers in that unit who are on maternity leave and long-term sick so that we can get a real picture of the numbers you have working in this field.

Could I just pick up before I move into what I wanted to ask about from the Deputy Mayor? You said you had visited a couple of BCUs. Could you tell us which ones you visited and what you found talking to officers working in safeguarding?

Sophie Linden (Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime): I visited Central North most recently in February [2019] and then also I visited the East area a while back when it was a pathfinder in terms of safeguarding.

I also heard issues being raised about workload pressure and issues around disclosure and some of the difficulties around downloading the amount of digital evidence that there is to be downloaded. However, I did genuinely also see, particularly when I visited Central North, a real grip in terms of the safeguarding

procedures, the data that was available, the understanding of the supervisors and those managing the teams, an understanding of caseload and workload, how many cases officers are carrying and sometimes the inconsistency in terms of officers carrying different levels of caseload. There was a real grip and understanding of that.

I do not at all take away from the fact that workload and pressure is really severe in safeguarding but, as Mark Simmons has already said, extra officers have gone in. Some of this is about the increase in reporting, good that that is, but it does mean there is an increase in complexity and an increase in workload and pressure. There is also the fact that we have had massive constraints on police officer numbers and Detective numbers and that does have an effect.

The premise of your question that this is a result of the BCU changes I would not agree with. It is a result of an increase in demand and a decrease in officer numbers and a real pressure on Detective numbers. This was something that Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary [Fire & Rescue Services] (HMICFRS) said in 2016 in the first child protection report. Lack of Detectives is a real issue. The volume of Detectives is a national problem as well as a London problem. It is a real and problematic issue that the MPS is trying to address at the moment.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM: You have touched on digital. In MOPAC's latest annual report, you report on significant investment being made in digital forensic kiosks to enable recovery of data from mobile devices. Can you update us on what investment has gone into new technology to help those safeguarding teams on the front line be able to retrieve that digital forensic evidence to progress cases?

Sophie Linden (Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime): There has been an investment in 86 standalone kiosks for BCUs in London, but that does not mean that the problem is not still there. There is still an issue around backlog in disclosure and digital evidence and there has also been an investment in training 3,000 officers in the use of those kiosks and how to download digital evidence. There has been an absolute understanding of the problem and there is a rollout of the kiosks, but we are still not there in terms of the volume of digital evidence. As I said, it is not just about London. It is about the number of devices individuals have. If I think about my household --

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM: I understand. You said 86 kiosks. Are they all operational?

Sophie Linden (Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime): I am not entirely sure whether they are all operational yet, but they will be being rolled out at the moment.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM: Perhaps you can come back to us. That is a big issue --

Sophie Linden (Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime): Yes, it is.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM: -- and when we visited Brixton to talk to the officers there, we heard that there are not enough officers trained in using the digital forensics machine at the station. In fact, just one poor Detective who was able to download there and then mobile devices. He was being taken away from doing the work on the cases he had to deal with because he was the only person who could download immediately. They mentioned that there was going to be a pilot there. It sounds to me like it is far further behind in terms of rolling out the technology and training.

I am wondering when we can have this increased capacity across the BCUs to make sure we are not relying on one poor officer to deal with this when it is increasingly important that we get digital evidence.

Mark Simmons (Assistant Commissioner, MPS): If I can help on the pilot, the pilot refers to the next generation of kiosks that we start to test this month with a view to increasing both what the kiosks can do and the number of them. The pilot does not refer to the 86 kiosks that are in place. It is for the next iteration, recognising, as you have said, that the demand grows and the backlog is still there, albeit reduced over the last 12 months. It is going to be a continuing demand and a continuing pressure.

Of course, we are pushing ahead with this training. Members will be aware that there is a huge challenge around the overall pressure on training. We are trying to train all the officers in safeguarding on all the issues to do with safeguarding as well as the technical issues to do with digital downloads. We have a huge programme around all that. We are trying to absolutely recognise the challenge. I hear that all the time of course when I go around the boroughs and BCUs. We are pushing ahead as much as we can on getting people through that training and increasing both what the kiosks can do and the number of them available to officers.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM: When do you expect the next generation, the new technology you are talking about, to be fully operational across all the BCUs with enough officers trained to use them? What is your timescale?

Mark Simmons (Assistant Commissioner, MPS): I cannot off the top of my head, I am afraid, give you a timescale around the next generation. I know the test starts this month and I guess we will have to see the results of the test. With apologies, I will have to come back to you outside with the timeline you have asked for there.

We continue with the training. That is a constant programme. The demand for that is huge, as you say. That is a significant programme over time. Again, I can give you more specifics on the timeline outside.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM: Will this next generation of technology and training address the issue flagged in the HMICF&RS report on child protection in March? It said that there is incompatibility of the MPS's information technology (IT) systems and the force cannot use all the functions and capabilities of things like the child abuse image database and so on. Will this rollout address those concerns that were picked up around digital evidence in that?

Mark Simmons (Assistant Commissioner, MPS): I would need to check the detail of it. It does not specifically address that. There are issues that we are addressing through our IT programme around the systems being able to talk to each other and so on.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM: That is a separate investment in digital capability, then, is it?

Mark Simmons (Assistant Commissioner, MPS): There are various investments we are making in our digital capability around the transfer of evidence, for example, as well as around the downloading of the evidence in the first place. For more detail on exactly what all that does, I would need to come back to you outside on that.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM: Thank you. You have the immediate download of data from devices to be able to, I guess, look at what is there, to help with charging decisions and so on, but we also heard that there is a

six- to nine-month backlog for digital evidence sent off to your forensic labs. It goes off to the labs particularly when full downloads of data are needed or if you need to retrieve deleted messages and so on to get that extracted and you need your specialists to do that.

Do you have enough capacity there? Is there a way that you are looking to increase the investment to make sure you can speed that turnaround up? We heard that in Lambeth and Southward there are 180 live rape cases and 140 are stuck in the system, the bulk of which because they are waiting for information from the forensic labs.

Mark Simmons (Assistant Commissioner, MPS): I do not have those specific figures that you have been quoted from Lambeth.

In terms of rape investigations, serious sexual offence investigations and all the other investigations in which digital evidence is important, are we trying to address the issues around the backlog that exists? Yes, we are. In terms of investment, as Members will be aware, we are investing on a whole range of things that are designed to help move us forward in terms of the changing context around crime and the demands we face at the moment. Yes, we have a programme around the digital work where we prioritise in terms of the investigative activity, but the scale of the challenge around digital evidence both in rape investigations and in other cases is such that this is -- a constant challenge for us at the moment is how we keep pace with or catch up with the developments there have been in the available evidence, the expectations of what we do with that, the requirement for us to look at that and how we manage the skills and the equipment across the MPS. That is a continuing pressure for the time being, albeit we are making progress on some aspects of it. Some of the waiting times, as I say, have reduced over the last 12 months, but I am not going to pretend that this is not a major challenge for us.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM: Are you specifically looking to increase the capacity at the MPS's forensics lab for data extraction?

Mark Simmons (Assistant Commissioner, MPS): I do not know whether this answers your question directly and forgive me if I cannot, but we have a programme within the lab to make sure we are effectively prioritising what work goes in there. We are trying to make sure we get as quick a turnaround as possible on those cases we prioritise. Clearly, we want to get in a position where we have the greatest capacity possible, hence the investment in kiosks for the tier-one digital evidence-gathering. Yes, we have a programme within forensics to try to address as best as possible the huge demands we are facing currently on both the developing technology and our ability to do it in a timely fashion.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM: Thank you. Deputy Mayor, are you looking at whether you need to invest more in this area to increase the capacity? It is all right prioritising and I understand that if you get a case that is suddenly incredibly high-profile and really important, it will go to the top, but you have people who have been raped waiting six to nine months for you to decide whether you have enough evidence to take this to court. These people's lives are almost on hold. I am wondering whether you are looking at that capacity at the lab.

Sophie Linden (Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime): Yes, absolutely, and it is a discussion I have had at the investment advisory meetings that I chair every month with the MPS in terms of investment and looking at the capacity of forensics and - I completely agree with you - the fact that this is one part of the problem with victims getting justice around forensic digital evidence. There is much else that needs improving as well. It is absolutely a conversation and a discussion that we are having and have had not just about prioritisation

but about extra capacity and what is needed to speed up the forensic capability and capacity for this type of digital evidence as well as other forensics.

I would also say that there has been massive pressure on the forensic service of the MPS. Grenfell [Tower fire] still has a huge effect on investigative capacity and that is still ongoing. I know it feels like it should not be still having that effect, but it does and that is on digital capacity as well. There is massive pressure in this area, but it does not take away from the fact that, absolutely, this digital forensic evidence for rape victims is a real issue that needs sorting and addressing much more quickly.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM: We might expect a growth bid in the budget for the next year to invest in this.

Sophie Linden (Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime): The budget did have some extra money for forensic capacity within it and that is the discussion we have been having around what that should be spent on and how that should be prioritised.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM: Great. Thank you very much.

Peter Whittle AM: I have a question for you, Assistant Commissioner, carrying on from Caroline. We went to Brixton, as she said, and they were very impressive people in the team there, but one thing that emerged was this terrible problem of having to download from phones. One of the things that emerged was that keywords cannot be used, even, because there is too much information and you cannot just go to keywords.

Somebody mentioned that often the street slang that is used for sexual offences changes a lot. I just wondered, procedurally, how do you get that intelligence? How do you keep, as it were, abreast of that? There are words that are now used that I did not know, and most people would not.

Mark Simmons (Assistant Commissioner, MPS): We do a lot of work through the safeguarding teams in each of the BCUs to bring together the learning and the professional development for the staff who work in there. You used the word 'intelligence'. A lot of what drives the changes in language and changes in what investigators find that informs our approach comes from the work we do with them. I am talking this afternoon to a large group of safeguarding investigators from across London at a seminar that is bringing them together to look at how people like me can support them in the things they are finding difficult from day to day. They are going to be the first people who come across different language, different behaviours and different things that inform investigative practice. It is how we manage the professional development for those officers and then feed that informally into training and into some of the technical responses that is, clearly, important.

Peter Whittle AM: It is something that is very much at the top of your mind, as it were?

Mark Simmons (Assistant Commissioner, MPS): In this arena, yes. We could equally talk about some of the broader things that happen in gang activity where there are some of the similar issues around digital technology and what that tells us. Yes, the language people use changes and it is our frontline officers who are going to be the first to experience that, to learn that and to be able to inform how we develop the practice around it.

Peter Whittle AM: I suppose the more canny people will purposely change the language?

Mark Simmons (Assistant Commissioner, MPS): Yes, in some circumstances, that is true.

Peter Whittle AM: Thank you.

Unmesh Desai AM (Chair): Just to round off this section, Deputy Mayor, can I ask you about victim support? In particular, the Mayor has committed himself to increasing the number of victims of rape and serious sexual assault who are referred to Havens. What are the latest referrals figures?

Sophie Linden (Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime): I do not have the latest referral figures in front of me, I am afraid, but in terms of the money that has been invested, there was the £44 million, which was overall when we published the VAWG Strategy, and then the Mayor in the budget announced the extra £15 million, which was to open up the waiting lists to the Havens and to the Rape Crisis Centres. That has now been operationalised, if you like. The money is going to them and the waiting lists. That is not to say that women are not waiting for these vital services, but at least the Havens and the Rape Crisis Centres have been able to reopen their services to women. Part of the £15 million has enabled that to happen.

Unmesh Desai AM (Chair): If you could perhaps send us the figures when you get them?

Sophie Linden (Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime): Yes, I am sure we can let you have figures in terms of the numbers that are going to --

Unmesh Desai AM (Chair): Yes. You talked about the £15 million you have spent but --

Sophie Linden (Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime): The figure I have in front of me is that more than 3,000 women received support through the London Rape Crisis Centres last year. I am not sure what figures you are after in terms of referrals, but those are the women who were receiving support last year. More than 3,000 women received support through the London Rape Crisis Centres last year and the extra investment will allow more women to receive that support as well as get access to Independent Sexual Violence Advisors, who will be pan-London, to support them through the criminal justice system. We have just been discussing that in terms of digital evidence, but from the Victims' Commissioner's review of the Victims' Code of Practice, we know that women in particular are having a real issue around advocacy and support services to enable them to maintain their journey through the criminal justice system.

Steve O'Connell AM (Deputy Chairman): On the subject of the Rape Crisis Centres, you will recall that there used to be only one, which was the one in Croydon, now called the South London Rape Crisis Centre. I believe we are going to be speaking to them soon. The previous Mayor, to his credit, quadrupled the number of Rape Crisis Centres across London. We have talked about investment and we have talked about the increase in the numbers and the workload. Is there any opportunity or any inclination to look at extending even further the capacities of those Rape Crisis Centres or indeed increasing their numbers?

Sophie Linden (Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime): A section of that £15 million of additional investment has already gone out. £1 million of additional funding has been fast-tracked to rape support services. I do give credit to the previous administration. I remember the top slice from the London Crime Prevention Fund (LCPF) to allow those Rape Crisis Centres to get up and running. That was the right decision. I too have visited the South London Rape Crisis Centre and they are doing fantastic work for women.

In terms of getting this money and the decisions around the best way to spend that £15 million with the VAWG sector, they are under huge pressure because of the demand. This money will help that, but it will not deal with all the demand that is in the system at the moment and all those women who need support through Rape Crisis Centres. We are looking at additional investment through the £15 million. Nearly £7 million has been set aside to manage that increase in demand. That is a longer-term commissioning service that we are hoping to have completed by the autumn to enable there to be an increase in service. It will not result in another Rape Crisis Centre, but it should result in an increase in support services.

Steve O'Connell AM (Deputy Chairman): Thank you.

Unmesh Desai AM (Chair): Before we move on to the next set of questions, can I welcome visitors from the Richmond upon Thames Magistrates' Court?

The next set of questions is on facial recognition technology with Assembly Member Berry.

Sian Berry AM: I have quite a lot of questions about this. First of all, to Mark, we scheduled this Q&A in the anticipation that the independent evaluation of these 10 trials that have been carried out of live facial recognition might be published. We are expecting it very soon. It has not been yet. When will that be published and can you give us any rundown now of its broad conclusions?

Mark Simmons (Assistant Commissioner, MPS): In answer to the first question, my understanding is that it is due to be released imminently, possibly even later today.

Sian Berry AM: That would be amazing timing, considering we have had this on the agenda for a while, for us not to be able to interrogate its conclusions today.

Mark Simmons (Assistant Commissioner, MPS): It is an independent evaluation and so the timing of that is not in our control, but --

Sian Berry AM: As I understood it, the last time we checked in with the researchers themselves, they had sent you the results and were allowing you a right to reply and any sign-off process on them first. You were in control of the timing, as far as I can tell.

Mark Simmons (Assistant Commissioner, MPS): No. As is standard for this sort of work, we were given an opportunity to check for accuracy and so on. I do not know. I am not close enough to that particular process. I have not read the report and so, in answer to your second question, I am not in a position to say what we are expecting to hear later today. The process of our factual checking, if you like, or commentary on the report has not, in my understanding and my knowledge, been an issue in the timing.

Sian Berry AM: Sorry, I am going off-topic now, but I would be astounded if you published that hours after a meeting of the Police and Crime Committee, which is the main scrutiny body for the MPS. That would feel very wrong to me.

Mark Simmons (Assistant Commissioner, MPS): I understand the point, but my understanding is that the publication of the report is a decision by the authors of the report. It is an independent report. It is not a decision for us. That is my understanding of the position.

Sian Berry AM: Alongside that, the MPS is carrying out a technical evaluation report of its own. I believe that is being published alongside the research. Is that correct? Is that also later today?

Mark Simmons (Assistant Commissioner, MPS): No. Again, as far as I am aware, that is not happening today, no.

Sian Berry AM: Will you be publishing the technical evaluation report?

Mark Simmons (Assistant Commissioner, MPS): In due course, yes, when it is completed. There is a matter of great public interest, we know, in facial recognition. We want to be transparent and open about what we are doing. There are no secrets about what we are trying to achieve, what we are trying to do, the tests we are doing and so on. We are very open to the input we have had from our own internal evaluation and from other people like the [London Policing] Ethics Panel (LPEP) and their work on it. We will be looking at the report from Essex [University]. There is nothing secret in what we are doing on the facial recognition.

Sian Berry AM: It would make sense to publish those two documents together if they both are ready.

Mark Simmons (Assistant Commissioner, MPS): I was not aware until last night that the Essex report was going to be published today, as I say, and my understanding is that neither were colleagues, but I cannot be absolutely sure of that. As I said, we do not have control over the timing of the publication of the Essex report. With the fact that we had short notice around when the actual publication date was going to be, we are not in a position to publish our technical evaluation yet, but when we can we will.

Sian Berry AM: In terms of broad conclusions, you will have seen the report from Essex University. There was a presentation a few weeks ago of some broad conclusions. Can you tell us what the main lessons you have learned from the trials are? I noticed that some of the outstanding issues are about accuracy, bias, making sure people are informed so that there is consent for its use, and the ability to withhold consent from being scanned. Are you able to talk about any of those issues and what you have learned?

Mark Simmons (Assistant Commissioner, MPS): As I say, I was not at the presentation on the Essex report. I know there have been discussions on emerging findings as it has gone along, but I have not read the final report and so I am not in a position to comment on that, I am afraid, in detail. I know there have been things we have discovered as we have gone along and things we are working on and we will see how that comes out in terms of recommendations and findings and where we go with that. We have stopped current work on facial recognition in terms of active operational use of it so that we can take stock of where we are, recognising, as I say, that there is huge public interest in this as well as an operational interest from our point of view. We will see what the recommendations from the Essex report are, as I say, in my understanding, later today and we will be very keen to learn the lessons from that.

Sian Berry AM: Another issue that we have raised in this Committee slightly outside of the remit of the trials is what the MPS is doing in terms of managing its watchlist that it might use for facial recognition, including which data sources it might be using. We have asked, for example, whether custody images from the recent climate change protests were being added to the watchlist. There is also some concern that photographs being taken by forward intelligence officers of demonstrations including children might be scanned and put on a watchlist that way, even without people being put in custody.

What can you tell us about controls on the watchlist? Is this being updated even though you are not deploying the technology?

Mark Simmons (Assistant Commissioner, MPS): I am not aware of the concerns that you have just described --

Sian Berry AM: We have raised it with the Commissioner [of Police of the Metropolis] here and we were promised some more information.

Mark Simmons (Assistant Commissioner, MPS): I do not know the direct answer to that. I do not know what the Commissioner's answer was, but I would imagine it was that we do not use those sources and we have not used those in the watchlist. That is my understanding but, as I say, I do not have the detail of exactly what is in the watchlist.

You can put together a watchlist based on various datasets depending on the operational use you are putting a piece of technology to, whether it is automatic number plate recognition (ANPR), to use another example. We do have a watchlist for ANPR, as we do for other systems, as for this. A watchlist can be created depending on the operational purpose we are seeking to achieve, the legal framework for that in terms of proportionality and so on and the technical capability of a system to accommodate that size of watchlist.

The principal purpose of the test that we have been doing is around the technical capability of the system and so that has been the focus. It is less, I suppose, about what is on the watchlist and who is on the watchlist - and we have we know the mandate is most significant for serious violence and counterterrorism - and whether the technology supports the operational objectives that we are trying to achieve as part of the debate around proportionality and the ability to operationalise the technology.

Sian Berry AM: I have three more yes/no questions that you may or may not have the answers to. Will it be used at Notting Hill Carnival this year? Can you give us reassurance one way or the other?

Mark Simmons (Assistant Commissioner, MPS): There are no plans to use it at Notting Hill Carnival that I am aware of this year, but I probably ought to check that for certain because I am not involved in the direct planning of Carnival.

Sian Berry AM: Yes, if you can confirm that. Last year we were told, "Definitely not", at around this time of year.

Mark Simmons (Assistant Commissioner, MPS): That was my understanding.

Sian Berry AM: There have also been reports of Greater Manchester Police teaming up with Trafford Shopping Centre and using facial recognition technology off its CCTV system. We are concerned about this and wondered if there was any collaboration going on between private holders of CCTV and the police in terms of using facial recognition in London.

Peter Whittle AM: "We"? What is this "we"?

Mark Simmons (Assistant Commissioner, MPS): I am not aware of the Manchester work personally. Again, I will qualify this. I will need to check to make sure because it is a big organisation, but I am not aware

of any work other than the work that has been described in the test here that we have been doing outside of that. I would need to check that to be clear on what --

Sian Berry AM: Yes. I should clarify that “we” is me in this context. Thank you. Sorry, Chair.

More than one of us here is concerned. Finally, on the yes/no questions, there have been reports from a company called Wireless TV, which is seemingly trying to market the use of facial recognition integrated into body-worn cameras. These are different body-worn cameras to the ones the police use. Nevertheless, they are floating that idea. Have you been in any discussions with that company in the MPS?

Mark Simmons (Assistant Commissioner, MPS): I am completely unaware of that of the company and what you describe. To my --

Sian Berry AM: Will you be able to find out if there are any discussions taking place?

Mark Simmons (Assistant Commissioner, MPS): To my knowledge, no. I know there is a lot of work we are doing on body-worn video as well. I am not aware of any work that is linked to that with facial recognition directly at all. From our point of view, we want to act in accordance with the law and in accordance with the framework that determines proportionality and so on. However, as we have talked about in terms of technology in another context earlier, we also want to be alive to any opportunities there are to protect the safety of Londoners through the use of technology. There is work we are doing on body-worn video and how we can enhance that in terms of public confidence, as well as the other things body-worn video serves, and our work on facial recognition has been absolutely focused around whether this is an operational technology that will offer us opportunities to protect Londoners in an increased way than we can now. In terms --

Sian Berry AM: Those were quite specific questions relating to, like you have just said, developing ideas for future use if you get the legal go-ahead.

Mark Simmons (Assistant Commissioner, MPS): Sure.

Sian Berry AM: The question was really whether you are exploring those rather than whether you are going to use them imminently. If you could back to us, that would be --

Mark Simmons (Assistant Commissioner, MPS): My answer was that I have not heard of that particular company you mentioned, and I am not aware of any exploration of that. I was making the broader point because I do not want to mislead that we are keen to exploit any technical opportunities that are proportionate, lawful, etc, that help us protect Londoners.

Sian Berry AM: They had a story in the *Evening Standard*. It is hard to imagine that they have not tried to get a meeting with the police. If you could update us, that would be useful.

I did want to ask the Deputy Mayor some questions as well. You and the Mayor have set up the LPEP and asked them to look at this. They reported at the end of May [2019] on their conclusions and set five ethical conditions for how it could be deployed. I wanted to ask you what you thought of those conclusions and those conditions and what else needs to happen before any further use is made of the technology in operations here.

Sophie Linden (Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime): The LPEP chaired by Dr Suzanne Shale is a joint ethics panel between us and the MPS. The Mayor set it up with the Commissioner [of Police of the Metropolis] and it is important and a good thing that we do have an Ethics Panel.

Yes, one of the good pieces of work that they have undertaken this year is to look at the ethical framework and the ethics around the use of live facial recognition. They have published two reports, an interim report and the final report with the five recommendations. We have been clear that there should be no further use of any of the technology until the five recommendations have been addressed and that does also include a review of the two reports you have referred to today from Essex [University] as well as the technical evaluation. I expect, and I know that that will happen. We have had conversations about that. One of the recommendations was to have robust oversight and that is certainly something that we will be making sure does happen.

However, as I said, going back to your question about Notting Hill [Canival] and the body-worn video, there will be no further use of live facial recognition until these recommendations have been addressed. That is something that we have as an agreement between us and the MPS.

Sian Berry AM: Thank you very much. Obviously, this is the LPEP and there is more to this, ie there are legal issues as well. We have had two Government Commissioners, the Surveillance Camera Commissioner, Tony Porter, and the Biometrics Commissioner, Paul Wiles, who have both said very critical things about facial recognition and the fact that there is no current legal basis for this.

Will you also say that there will not be any further use of facial recognition until there is a legal basis in line with what those Commissioners have recommended?

Sophie Linden (Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime): One of the recommendations and one of the key things coming out of the LPEP report was the need for national regulation and a national legal framework. We are lobbying very hard on that because the police are in the position where they, rightly, want to use new technology to help keep the community safe.

One of the things coming out of the LPEP report was an interesting poll of Londoners around the appropriate use of live facial recognition and the scale. There is backing from the public around much more serious offences and the use of live facial recognition and then, going down the scale, less agreement to the use of live facial recognition for the less serious offences.

Yes, we are lobbying hard and, absolutely, the Government needs to step into this space. We had the judicial review of the South Wales Police. I understand it is likely to come to a decision over the summer, although I do not know when that is. That will also be an important moment in the use of this technology. We do need to make sure that that regulation and a framework is in place to enable the police to use technology when it is ethically right to do so to keep our community safe.

Sian Berry AM: Thank you very much. The Commissioner of Police [of the Metropolis] herself has said that it is not for the police to decide where the slider should sit on the balance between security and privacy. She is also keen to wait, but I cannot speak for her because she is not here today. It seems to me that what you have said to us is that you, with the powers you have, will prevent its use until we have a legal basis and those ethical conditions are met.

Sophie Linden (Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime): We were clear when the LPEP published its recommendations that we expect that the use of live facial recognition will not take place again until the recommendations have been addressed.

Sian Berry AM: Thank you. Are you keeping oversight of ways in which the police might be doing work in the background, ie not deploying things but compiling watchlists, using facial recognition technology on images that might already exist and things like that that are not live facial recognition but are nevertheless things that might be of concern legally and ethically towards the use of images of people and using facial recognition software on that?

Sophie Linden (Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime): In terms of some of your questions around different organisations and different businesses coming to the MPS, I do not have sight of all the different conversations that happen or the different approaches from businesses around the use of whatever technology is coming in. Rightly, because the MPS is such a huge organisation, it will come to me when an investment decision is there to be taken around purchasing or procuring the investment.

However, yes, of course there is oversight in terms of ensuring and the [MOPAC/MPS] Audit Panel will also have oversight in terms of ensuring that there are the proper frameworks, the proper risks and the proper accountabilities in place.

Sian Berry AM: Thank you.

Tony Arbour AM: First of all, Deputy Mayor, can I say how much we support the line that you are taking on this one? Our view is that so long as this is a legal process, people who have nothing to hide have nothing to fear from this technology.

Specifically, I would like to ask Mr Simmons whether it is true that in the experiments that you have had and the trials of this, leaflets were dished out saying, "We have these facial recognition techniques in place". Did such a thing happen?

Mark Simmons (Assistant Commissioner, MPS): Yes.

Tony Arbour AM: If I was a criminal and my face was known, and I had seen the notice, I would not come in and therefore I would not be recognised. Is it not a fairly self-defeating thing? Maybe that has contributed to the high failure rate that there has been in the experiments.

Mark Simmons (Assistant Commissioner, MPS): I absolutely take the point about forewarning. If there comes a point when we are using the technology in an operational context as opposed to testing it, then would make decisions around tactically how we do that in order to get the maximum impact. This was a test. We wanted to be transparent around that. We gave the information out to people about what we were doing. We thought that was important given the current position around the newness of the technology and the public interest.

Tony Arbour AM: I, naturally, understand that point. The principal thing that the LPEP said was that there has to be confidence in the system. You were contributing in your experiment to there being a lack of confidence.

Mark Simmons (Assistant Commissioner, MPS): I take your point. It is a balance. We were seeking to test the technical side. I understand the point, absolutely. That may have influenced the number of identifications that came from the equipment. That is an unknown, of course, but we have a balance between testing the operational ability of it and wanting to be transparent. We do not want the public to feel that we are trying to do things in a hidden way.

Steve O'Connell AM (Deputy Chairman): Perhaps finally on this - I am not sure - but for the sake of balance, this is another yes/no question, which we do like. Notwithstanding all the proper checks and balances and legal frameworks and independent investigations, would you agree that facial recognition technology has the capacity and potential to make Londoners considerably safer?

Mark Simmons (Assistant Commissioner, MPS): Yes.

Steve O'Connell AM (Deputy Chairman): Thank you.

Sophie Linden (Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime): Yes, but it does need to be done in an ethical and balanced way. That is important.

Steve O'Connell AM (Deputy Chairman): In fairness to me, I did preface my question with that.

Sophie Linden (Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime): You did, but it is important. These yes/no questions are interesting, but it is important. These are complicated and complex issues.

Steve O'Connell AM (Deputy Chairman): Yes. This has been exercised at length. I just wanted that simple yes/no. Thank you, Chair.

Unmesh Desai AM (Chair): Thank you. Moving on to the next set questions on crime levels, Assembly Member Arbour, will you lead off?

Tony Arbour AM: Yes. This is the question I have been tasked to give you, Mr Simmons. What is your assessment of current crime levels in London?

Mark Simmons (Assistant Commissioner, MPS): I am never happy. I am never content with crime levels in London. There are a significant number of challenges for us now in terms of a range of different crimes and so we take a number of different perspectives on this. When we look at the national comparison, particularly with other metropolitan forces, that is one of the things we look at to form an assessment of how we look against the national benchmark, but of course at heart the main thing we want to do is to reduce crime as much as we can for Londoners and in London.

At the moment, you know that there has been huge concern and still remains huge concern about levels of violence. That is still too high, albeit we are, we feel, making some progress, but then we look at the events of the last couple of weekends and we absolutely understand that we cannot be complacent around that.

We had something like a 2% rise in burglary in the last year. That is lower than certainly many other parts of the UK, but we are not complacent around that. Clearly, we have work in hand to try to stem the position on burglary and to address that.

The area that is linked with the issues around violence and clearly causes concern, but again that we are working on very intensively at the moment, is the position around robbery in certain parts of London. Again, there is lots of work going on in those locations to address that.

There is never a level of crime where we are going to say it is OK. On the violence stuff, there is a huge amount of work still to do on violence both by us and by the other parties that have a role to play in reducing violence. That is still enormous. When I talk about the progress we are making, I absolutely do not want to give the impression that that is complacency in the face of some of the horrendous tragedies, including the news from last night, that some that we have seen over recent weeks and months.

There is lots of work going on, lots of work to address both the acquisitive and the violent crime challenges for us and, within that, some significant decisions around prioritisation.

Tony Arbour AM: Yes. Nobody would say that the MPS is complacent about crime levels because there is nothing to be complacent about, but you have referred only to serious and violent crime. Is it likely that the amount of crime that does not fall into those categories not being reported is rising, ie the fact that there are no prosecutions and police are unwilling to take action over a huge range of crimes, for example, shoplifting, housebreaking where there is no physical evidence? When the public believes that the police are not going to take any action, they are not going to report an offence having taken place. Does that in fact flatter the crime levels?

Mark Simmons (Assistant Commissioner, MPS): No. We are conscious of the potential issues that you talk about. Our experience and the research is that crimes like burglary tend to be reported or rather there is not a significant variation in the level of reporting, partly because of the links to insurance claims and so forth. We track the victim surveys that are done across the UK and in London as well and so we see whether there are any variations in there that we should pick up that tell us that the situation you have described as a possibility is actually happening. We do not see any evidence of that at the moment. I am not going to say that that could not happen, but we do not see any evidence of that and the crime figures we are seeing do not support that. The other ways of assessing levels of crimes through victim surveys, again, do not support the contention that we have an increased under-reporting of crime and in some areas, we know we have had significant increases in reporting of crime.

Tony Arbour AM: It is a fact, though, is it not, that satisfaction with the police service is in fact declining?

Mark Simmons (Assistant Commissioner, MPS): Yes, satisfaction has been declining for some time. The position is a bit more uncertain at the moment. I am not going to rest too much on some signs of improvement in victims' satisfaction over the last period. We cannot put too much on that because it is not a long enough period to be able to say that anything significant has changed.

Yes, I am very aware of the challenges around victim satisfaction. We have put in place a number of measures to deal with that. We know some of that was linked with the move towards a greater degree of online and telephone reporting of crime. We have invested heavily in the training for our staff who are dealing with people on the telephone when they call in to report crime. We think that is having a beneficial effect. It is too early to say for certain but early signs are that that is having a beneficial effect.

We have changed some of our processes on some types of crimes. We reviewed the crime assessment policy some months ago and changed the criteria in there to open more discretion around the crimes that should be

allocated for further investigation. We are making changes currently, some of which we have started to put in place, around the way we deal in particular with domestic burglary and robbery.

Tony Arbour AM: I have clearly given you the opportunity to read your brief.

Mark Simmons (Assistant Commissioner, MPS): Sorry, I am not reading my brief. This is stuff I live and breathe every day and --

Tony Arbour AM: Can I move to something specific, which is borough crime priorities? When boroughs select what their crime priorities are, does that actually have any effect on crime levels for those offences in those particular boroughs?

Mark Simmons (Assistant Commissioner, MPS): If you take something like burglary, for example, something like 23 boroughs - from memory - have burglary as a local priority within the borough. We know we have very wide-ranging differences at the moment in terms of the experience around burglary in different parts of London. In some places, that is having an impact. In other places, the challenge is greater. Whether that is linked with whether it is a priority or not it is quite a difficult connection to make.

The focus we have on violence means that the capacity to put a lot of resource into the local priorities is limited by the focus on violence, notwithstanding that a significant number of boroughs - and I am afraid I cannot remember the number overall but it is the majority - have some aspects of violence as local priorities as well as they are priorities for us right across London. Separating out what is because it is a local priority and what is because it is a priority for the MPS and for London as a whole is a tricky thing to do in terms of causal links.

What we do think is that where it is a local priority, where partners sign up and where we work with groups in the community on those priorities, we know the activity that goes on and we think that is beneficial and links with what people in that particular part of London say they want us to focus on.

Tony Arbour AM: Yes. I have the priorities in front of me for my own patch, which has an inner London borough and three outer London boroughs in it. All of them have burglary as a priority. The difference between the one inner London borough and the three outer London boroughs in my patch, which is South West, is very striking. It has been suggested that maybe - and I have not mentioned the specific point - in the one inner London borough the effect of the burglary priority has been a very substantial improvement compared to what has been happening in the outer London boroughs. There is a suggestion that resources may be being pulled out of the three outer London boroughs to help the inner London borough. How would I challenge that?

Mark Simmons (Assistant Commissioner, MPS): I will treat that as a rhetorical question but --

Tony Arbour AM: No, I do want to know how I challenge it.

Mark Simmons (Assistant Commissioner, MPS): Your challenge, I mean, of course. If I take the four boroughs in the South West BCU, I know that they are not quite coterminous with yours. Wandsworth is an inner London borough with a 6% rise in burglary. Richmond is, we would say, an outer London borough with a 14% decrease in burglary. Kingston has about a 9% increase in burglary and so --

Tony Arbour AM: No, Mr Simmons. I am looking at the list of priorities and I am looking at a quarterly figure. It is true that there has been a very recent improvement, but if I look at the quarter January to March 2018/19 compared with the quarter January to March 2017/18, there was a move completely the other way, according to the figures that I had provided to me, in Wandsworth. I am of course not dissing in any way the very recent improvement and there has been very substantial shock at the very large increase in the amount of burglary there had been in the quarters that I am making a comparison for.

I do want to know how I can say, contrary to the popular belief, that the outer London boroughs are being robbed to flatter the figures for the inner London borough?

Mark Simmons (Assistant Commissioner, MPS): Firstly, the figures I was quoting were over 12 months. It is important to bear in mind that we do have spikes of particular crimes depending on groups of offenders and series that happen and, as you would expect, I look both at short-term and longer-term figures myself as well. Part of the benefit of the model we have operating across more than one borough is that when an individual borough has a spike in burglary, for example, there is more flexibility to use the resource to target that and then move to the other locations where the problem presents itself.

If I take the boroughs that I mentioned just now as examples, prior to the mergers, the crime squad that would be used to proactively target burglars in Kingston was four officers to target a team of burglars and potentially any other problem that was arising because that was a very small borough in staff numbers. What they now have is a much more substantial proactive capability - not as large as we would like - that is able to target different problems in different parts of the borough.

For example, in a borough like Kingston, we put significant effort in over months, culminating in a series of raids that were done a few weeks ago, into targeting drug lines that were driving both violent and acquisitive crime in a borough like Kingston, which in other circumstances would not have been able to attract the kind of resource to do that as an individual borough on its own. That does not mean that we are ignoring the inner boroughs and the boroughs that have that very high level of intensity of crime and demand at the expense of outer boroughs either. What it does mean is that our model allows us to be more flexible in using the right resource to tackle different types of crime wherever they emerge in London.

We know last year during the Pathfinder [project] we had a very significant spike in burglary in the two outer boroughs in east London. We were able to - and I would have liked us to have been quicker to have done it - flex the resource we needed to tackle that into place; where you see those boroughs now on the outskirts of East London have some of the highest levels of burglary reduction at the moment, some of that for obvious reasons.

When we look at the quarterly figures we do see fluctuations. There are two boroughs in London - none of the ones you have mentioned, in fact - that over the last quarter have had very significant challenges in burglaries specific to that quarter. We are tasking against that and tackling that, so the short-term figures, yes, we are flexible in terms of tackling short term crime trends. We also need to look at what the longer-term impact of the work we do is over time with those spikes that happen within that.

Tony Arbour AM: You have given me an explanation I can use about directing the resources. Of course, I have to say that the Borough Commander, Chief Superintendent Benetar, is well aware of this relief that the locals have. After all, we are all taxpayers. It does not look terribly good.

The next thing I would like to ask you about, please, is the effect of the increased level of stop and search. What affect has that had on the decrease in violent crime?

Mark Simmons (Assistant Commissioner, MPS): Our judgment is that the increased level of stop and search has been a significant factor in suppressing violent crime across London, where it has been used in that targeted way that we described, based on the intelligence, based on the patterns of crime, and by officers whom we are confident are well-trained and skilled in the use of the tactic.

Drawing an exact causal link between any tactic and the results is always difficult and there comes a point where you have to make a judgment. It is our judgment that that has been a significant part in the reduction in the number of young people who have been stabbed - people of all ages have been stabbed, actually, but particularly young people - notwithstanding the tragedies of recent weeks, on the overall homicide figures for the last 12 months.

Tony Arbour AM: We have been provided with very interesting statistics, which begin in April 2008, on stop and search going up to the current level. Am I not right in thinking that it was in 2007 that the old 'sus' laws went? I am asking you because you will remember.

Mark Simmons (Assistant Commissioner, MPS): I am probably one of the few people in the MPS at the moment who can remember the 'sus' laws, only for a very early part of my career.

Tony Arbour AM: Of course.

Mark Simmons (Assistant Commissioner, MPS): It was the Police and Criminal Evidence Act that effectively did away with the 'sus' laws. That was passed in 1984, of course, and fully implemented in 1986, if I remember rightly, a bit more recently than that. I am tempted to talk about the Metropolitan Police Act of 1839, which was the legislation I had to learn for 'sus' as it was coming out.

Tony Arbour AM: The gravamen of my question was going to be that in those days, when there were no rules and regulations and so on, as far as you are concerned and your memory of this, do you think that the fact that there were no such regulations as we have nowadays relating to stop and search, was the level of crime lower, particularly knife crime?

Mark Simmons (Assistant Commissioner, MPS): Patterns of crime now compared to 1982, which is my first experience of policing, are so significantly different that drawing comparisons is difficult. If you would indulge me just for a moment, having joined just after the 1981 Brixton disorders and having seen some of the disorders that carried on through the 1980s and the relationship between police and communities behind that, what I am really clear on - with the perspective of 38 years of policing in London - is how different our approach to the use of stop and search is now.

I would say that we are much more targeted, much more considered and much more effective in our use of the tactic now than we have ever been. Frankly, I do take considerable pride in the changes over that period of time and particularly in the work that people are doing at the moment.

Tony Arbour AM: You would not subscribe to the view that we should have a permanent section 60 in London?

Mark Simmons (Assistant Commissioner, MPS): No. There is a lot of significance attached to section 60 and it is a very important tool for us. Of course, section 60 accounts for quite a low proportion of the overall stop-and-search activity that is undertaken. Members of course will know why section 60 is important because of how it allows us to use powers over a limited period, with the right authority, where there is specific intelligence around what may occur or there has been a specific incident that we need to respond to, but no I do not adhere to that view. However, section 60 is an important tool for us and we do encourage our officers to use section 60 - to authorise section 60 at the right level - where that is the appropriate response to either anticipated incidents of violence or incidents that have happened. Clearly it is having that balance.

Susan Hall AM: This is a question for the Deputy Mayor, please. Would you say that London is less safe now than it was three years ago?

Sophie Linden (Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime): There is a significant problem with violence in the streets of London and nationally. You have heard the statistics over the last year. We are absolutely not complacent because we have had such a terrible month and had such terrible murders. We are beginning to see the early signs of violence decreasing in London. That is a result - you have already asked about - of significant police enforcement but, also, significant partnership working to try to support those young people, who are likely to pick up a knife and likely to cause violence and prevent them from doing so.

Susan Hall AM: Yes, I agree with all of that but the actual question: would you think that London is less safe now than it was three years ago?

Sophie Linden (Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime): We have seen crime and violence rising since 2014 and it has been rising in London and it is rising more significantly outside London as well.

Susan Hall AM: No, let us just concentrate --

Sophie Linden (Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime): In the last year - and it is very early stages, and we are not complacent and we do not know if it is a trend - we are beginning to see it come down.

Susan Hall AM: To go back to the question that I keep trying to ask you, would you say that London was safer now or less safe than it was three years ago?

Sophie Linden (Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime): My answer to that is that the violence began to rise in 2014. If you look at the graphs, you can see that very clearly rising in 2014 in London and it has been rising nationally as well.

Susan Hall AM: The Mayor, of course, thinks it is safer now than it was three years ago.

Sophie Linden (Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime): As I have said, violence began to rise in 2014. If you look at all the graphs you can see that happening, rising in London and outside London as well.

Susan Hall AM: Deputy Mayor, we will stop because you are not going to give a yes/no answer to that. The Mayor did. He thinks we are safer, which is extraordinary, as we know.

If I can ask you a quick question about the Violence Reduction Unit (VRU), the VRU is supposed to be having two reports being produced in July [2019]. The homicide and serious case review is one and there is a

strategic needs assessment to explore the underlying causes of violence. Do you have sight of either of those reports?

Sophie Linden (Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime): Both of those reports are being commissioned and are being worked on at the moment. I am not completely sure whether they will be published this side of summer but they are being worked on and are in progress.

Susan Hall AM: They were supposed to be ready in July. Can we certainly have copies of them when they are out?

Sophie Linden (Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime): Absolutely, they will be published on the website and we will send them to you when they are produced. The work was quickly procured, undertaken. It is not being undertaken by the VRU. That has been put out. The serious homicide one is being undertaken by a consortium with University of Bedfordshire, but of course those will be public documents.

Susan Hall AM: If you can try and chivvy them along, often these documents go on and on. Then we find various documents are produced after we want to talk about them, but thank you anyway, Chair.

Unmesh Desai AM (Chair): Thank you. The next set of questions. Assistant Commissioner, can I ask you about something that the Commissioner said in a keynote speech at the Police Foundation lecture last week? She said the police would need more resources, better technology and greater skills to tackle rises in crime and improve sanction detection rates.

Are you worried about the future? What does she mean by “greater skills” in particular? What will the MPS look like, say, in five years from now if you do not get that investment in technology, training and money for more police officers?

Mark Simmons (Assistant Commissioner, MPS): There are different aspects to the range of issues that the Commissioner has talked about, which you have referred to there, Chair. There is the technical investment that we need. We talked a bit earlier on about digital investigations. They come into not just the most serious crimes we were talking about before but they come into virtually every crime now, even relatively low-level drug dealing, for example, the connections, new evidence through phones is a critical part of the evidence. The demand goes right through all levels of crime.

There is definitely the technical challenge that we have talked about already. In the skills challenge, as Members will absolutely be aware, we have significantly changed the structure of how we investigate the overall volume of crime in London. Our intention is absolutely that it should be part of the role of every police officer in London to be able to investigate certain types of crime to their conclusion. That is a big change for an organisation where, in a different environment, we tended to have lots of squads to do different things. We are still investing heavily in building the skills of those officers. We have a programme through this coming year - well it is less than a year now - through this current financial year to do so, with a training investment of people, like Detective Sergeants, to work alongside uniformed officers to help them develop their skills.

At the moment, the changes that we have made to how we deal with crime are still undoubtedly bedding in. In 12 months' time, for example, we will be in a very different place around the skills and capabilities of officers investigating crime right across London. At the same time, you will know that we have a lot of work to try to increase the recruitment of Detectives, to make sure Detectives are focused on the crimes that use the

particular skills and training that go with that role, and that we have the numbers able to deal with crimes such as the very serious crimes we were talking about earlier on. There is a lot of work that we are doing to move along on those fronts.

Of course, what we cannot get away from is that some aspects of crime are still increasing in terms of the demand for officers. The complexity, whether digital or in other aspects of investigation, continues. For example, the challenges around disclosure, which is linked to some of the technology and is a broad challenge for us, are well rehearsed. The challenge is a significant one. It is not one where I can say with confidence, "In 12 months' time this will be the position we are in" because we talk, for example, about burglary, robbery and some of the upward pressures that are being seen nationally around some of those crimes and the context is moving continuously.

One of the key points from what the Commissioner said is the importance of - among all the things I have talked about in terms of building the skills and capability of officers generally - the role technology can potentially play in that. We touched earlier on in Members' questions on some of the areas where that is significant at the moment.

Unmesh Desai AM (Chair): Thank you for that. Moving on to the next set of questions on women in the criminal justice system, Assembly Member Eshalomi.

Florence Eshalomi AM: Good morning, Assistant Commissioner, Deputy Mayor. I want to focus on the report that we released last year, *A Long Way from Home*, looking at women in the criminal justice system. One of the recommendations we put forward in that report was around how the Mayor could use his power and influence to improve the response throughout the criminal justice system for women. I just want to know if there has been any update from MOPAC and the Mayor over the last 12 months on the back of that report.

Sophie Linden (Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime): Yes, and thank you very much to the Assembly and the Committee for that really good report in terms of women in the criminal justice system. Genuinely, London is leading the way in this. I am very happy to give you a table of progress against your recommendations; I am happy to give that to you. I will not read it out now.

Florence Eshalomi AM: OK. That would be helpful.

Sophie Linden (Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime): Some real highlights: part of our devolution negotiations with the Ministry of Justice (MoJ), and female offending is a key part of that. There has been a lot of progress made with the MoJ around looking at what the budget might look like and how that is working. We have had a new women's centre open up in Islington because there of the Co-Commissioning Fund (CCF), and I am sure you will remember that we top sliced some money off the LCPF. Part of that meant that we could open a new women's centre in Islington being run by Advance and Minerva. That is now open. The Mayor has --

Florence Eshalomi AM: Sorry, just on that because I was going to ask you about that women's centre, you are saying that centre is now open?

Sophie Linden (Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime): There is a centre open in Islington funded by the CCF, yes.

Florence Eshalomi AM: Yes. We knew that that was being co-funded. If we could get details of that because that would be something we would be keen to look at.

Sophie Linden (Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime): Of course, absolutely.

Florence Eshalomi AM: Thank you.

Sophie Linden (Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime): The Mayor has invested. We are probably the majority commissioner for female offending services in London. We are certainly outstripping the Ministry of Justice. We have enhanced community provision across 21 boroughs now. As I said, there is a women's centre open. We have had good discussions around the whole system approach to female offending, and very shortly I hope that all partners and ourselves will formally sign up for a blueprint for London on female offending. There is some good work that we have with the Prison Reform Trust.

We have had indications through the London Crime Reduction Board (LCRB) that all partners will be signing up to this. That is a blueprint of a whole system holistic approach to female offending in London. That is the first of its kind in the country, a massive step forward and that has been matched by investment and services as well.

Florence Eshalomi AM: That sounds like there is good, steady progress and - like you said - you will send us a more comprehensive update of what has been going on. It seems like things are going in the right way.

One of the things that we also looked at was the fact of: how do we stop women going through the criminal justice system in the first instance. We appreciate that the issue around sentencing lies with the MoJ and that is not something that the Mayor controls, but there was going to be a pilot to help divert women away from the criminal justice system. Has that started and is there any progress you could update us on?

Sophie Linden (Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime): You are right - and it was one of your recommendations - that female offender pilot is starting in August [2019]. It will run until June 2021. Yes, it will run but it will be starting in August.

Florence Eshalomi AM: We would be grateful if we could have some more details.

Sophie Linden (Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime): Yes, of course.

Florence Eshalomi AM: In terms of specifically of which boroughs they will be operating from and which women's groups they will be working with. That would be great.

Another issue that came that comes up all too often is the issue around out-of-court disposal orders and the fact that, again, this could help in terms of not sending - yes, they are offences - some of the smaller offences that may not require a sentence. The rates for that continue to fall. Assistant Commissioner, do you have any reason for why that is not being used and is it something that the MPS should probably be pursuing a bit more?

Mark Simmons (Assistant Commissioner, MPS): The latter part of the question is the easier one to answer. We do not fully understand the change in there at the moment. We know there has been a dramatic reduction in the number of women being brought into police custody, for example. That is down by about

40%-something, so there has been a big overall reduction in the number of women coming into custody. I am not going to state this as a thing because I do not know it to be the case for certain, but if the presumption is that those tend to be the more serious offences that are still coming in that might be one of the things that links with the reduction in the out-of-court disposals. I do accept that we need to look at that in more detail to understand that better.

Florence Eshalomi AM: Again, one of the things that we touched on was around the triage support and if that is something that is going to be looked at in a bit more detail. Is that your understanding?

Mark Simmons (Assistant Commissioner, MPS): Yes, it is.

Florence Eshalomi AM: The only other area that I want to focus on is the issue around community sentencing. That is something that was included in the Police and Crime Plan. Is there anything that you could update us on that, Deputy Mayor, in terms of how that will be rolled out and if you are still pushing to try to get more of that across London boroughs?

Sophie Linden (Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime): Yes. In terms of community sentencing, as part of that discussion I talked about the devolution and the second memorandum of understanding (MOU) with the MoJ. Part of that has been subsumed into that with redesigned probation services and our discussions around co-commissioning that.

We have also been in discussions with the Department of Health and Social Care (CHSC) as well as the MoJ around a community sentence treatment requirement, which will be up and running soon. It has been announced by the Minister of Justice that it will be one of the pilots in the community sentence treatment pilots. That means that as part of the sentencing there will be support for women available. That is going to be tested at the Beth Centre in Lambeth.

Florence Eshalomi AM: That is good to hear. One of the things that we specifically did ask, which we did not get a response from the Mayor, around the community policing is that, in a sense, women would be targeted as a special group in reviewing that community sentencing. Is that something that you probably want to review and maybe look at as part of the review?

Sophie Linden (Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime): Female offenders have been in our discussions on devolution with the MoJ, which have been positive. Female offending is a cohort that has been really focused on and, absolutely, it is not just about community sentences and the probation redesign, we are focusing on that. That is why we have managed to make such progress in the other areas that I have talked about, as well as the community sentencing treatment requirement. That was not going to be in London and we proactively chased the MoJ to get that into London because it seemed to be such a good step forward in terms of: (1) a community centre; but (2) actually ensuring that female offenders get the support that they need to ensure that they do not reoffend and they are not going back into custody into prison when they should not have been there in the first place.

Florence Eshalomi AM: That is good because definitely looking at more creative community sentencing not just a blanket, "This is community sentencing for all offenders", but something that is specifically targeted at those female offenders. I will leave it there, Chair. Thank you.

Peter Whittle AM: Assistant Commissioner, on the report that Assembly Member Eshalomi referred to there about women in the criminal system, one of the things that emerges is that one of the main reasons women are in the system is evasion of the TV licence fee. It might even numerically be the biggest reason and I wondered what your view on that was. It seems incredible. Would you not say that, if this is the main reason, that this is utterly archaic and that these women should not even be in the courts for this reason? This thing should be at least a civil offence or something, but the idea that it is a crime, just even on a cynical level, taking up court time, but could you not strongly recommend or lobby that this is changed?

Mark Simmons (Assistant Commissioner, MPS): I am not sure that that is a matter for the police because we do not investigate or deal with television license offences. I suspect that is an issue for a different prosecuting authority.

Peter Whittle AM: It is the main reason women are in the criminal justice system.

Mark Simmons (Assistant Commissioner, MPS): Not through the police processes.

Peter Whittle AM: Anyway, that is the main reason that they end up in court. That is the reason they are in our Assembly's report and so I would have thought you might have a view on that. That is all.

Mark Simmons (Assistant Commissioner, MPS): I have views on a whole range of things but I suppose, in terms of the police involvement, it is not in that territory and so ...

Peter Whittle AM: You might not be involved but the mere fact they end up there surely has a knock-on effect in terms of procedure and time.

Mark Simmons (Assistant Commissioner, MPS): It is important for the criminal justice system to be focused on the issues that are most important for society as a whole.

Peter Whittle AM: Absolutely, and not paying a TV licence fee is not it really, is it?

Mark Simmons (Assistant Commissioner, MPS): It is important the criminal justice system supports desistance from criminal activity and so on but, beyond that, it is not really an area for me.

Peter Whittle AM: Thank you.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM: Deputy Mayor, in all the discussions, you talked about the devolution agenda with the MoJ, which has been going on for some time. I may have not heard you say it and you may have done, but when are you likely to have this whole package signed? There is a lot going on here and it would be helpful when it is ready if we could perhaps have a briefing on it.

Sophie Linden (Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime): I would be happy to arrange a separate briefing on the MOU we have already signed. We have signed an MOU - the first one - which had some significant devolution. For example, we had the devolution of the witness service plus the witness service budget and so we have now re-procured an integrated victims and witness service, which is again one of the first in the country. Certainly, my colleagues, Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs) around the country, have been asking me, "How did you do that?"

In terms of the second MOU, I went into the MoJ yesterday and had two meetings with Edward Argar [MP, Under Secretary for Justice] and Robert Buckland [MP, Minister of State for Prisons] to talk about devolution. I am very keen and they are very keen to get on and sign it. This is a genuine issue. It will depend on what happens with the next Prime Minister. Will those Ministers still be there? Will they be able to take those decisions? If not, that will delay things.

It has been going on for some time and, to be fair to the officials and the MoJ, it is not because they do not want to do this but actually - and I am sorry to talk about this here at the Police and Crime Committee - Brexit has had an impact because officials have been taken off and it has not been --

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM: It has had an impact on the Government, of course.

Sophie Linden (Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime): You can sigh, Peter, but it is true.

Steve O'Connell AM (Deputy Chairman): Deputy Mayor, get it out of your system and then we can move on.

Sophie Linden (Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime): It is very frustrating because --

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM: Nothing else is happening.

Sophie Linden (Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime): -- on the devolution package, we have been on the verge of making quite substantial progress, especially around female offending.

Your point, Peter [Whittle], around debt and women in prison absolutely stands. There are too many women in prison who are there for small offences who would be far better served - and the community and their families would be far better served - if they had good community sentences and good rehabilitation services to enable them not to reoffend. This has been delayed and decisions are not being taken because of that.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM: OK, thank you.

Unmesh Desai AM (Chair): Moving on to the next section, finances, Assembly Member Hall.

Susan Hall AM: Thank you. This is to start with for the Deputy Mayor, please. The MOPAC out-turn position at the end of March is a net underspend of only 0.4% against the gross budget. What has been the key, do you think, to this success?

Sophie Linden (Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime): Overall with the MPS budget or are you talking about separately, sorry?

Susan Hall AM: The out-turn position at the end of March. I am being positive for a change here, Deputy Mayor.

Sophie Linden (Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime): That is why I was so taken aback.

Susan Hall AM: I know it is a shock to you. Take a deep breath. There is more to come, do not worry, but on this particular subject how have you done so well with your underspend as in nearly coming in on budget?

Sophie Linden (Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime): If you are talking about MPS as well as MOPAC, I know there has been in terms of over the last couple years – both within MOPAC and MPS – significant improvements around financial management, monitoring of decisions and monitoring of spend. There has been a significant improvement on that. It is not to say that it does not need to get better but there has been significant improvement, both within the MPS and within MOPAC, in order to be able to get to the point where there are still underspends but, in terms of the volume and the size of the budget, they have done pretty well to get to that point.

Susan Hall AM: Yes. We are in agreement. Hang on to that. How likely is the MPS to reach its target of 31,000 officers in 2019/20?

Sophie Linden (Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime): I have had discussions with Robin Wilkinson [Director of Human Resources, MPS] from the management board on this last week, as part of investment advisory and as part of the meetings I have already talked about today. I am told we are on track to get to 31,000 police officers by the end of the calendar year. It is certainly something that I know Robin and his team are absolutely focused on. Every sinew has been strained to make sure that they get the applicants in, that they train them and get them through the process and that they are out on the street by the end of the year.

Susan Hall AM: Yes, it is a great shame it cannot come earlier because I am practically sick to death of listening to Mayor Khan screaming that there is not enough money for officers, when in actual fact the money is in place for those officers. It is not the Government's fault that the MPS is incapable of getting new recruits. Why is it taking so long? He announced £5 million to go towards training not this February but the February before [2018] and yet it took until September/October [2018] to start putting all that into place.

Sophie Linden (Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime): As you will know, I am sure you will have been briefed by the MPS on recruitment processes and you will also know that, in terms of budget setting, the vast majority of the money comes from the Government. We do not get and the MPS does not get certainty around the budgets for financial years. Allocation of funding is not certain until January/February when the financial year starts in April. You cannot recruit and train police officers knowing the money is not going to be there in April. You cannot just turn on a tap. It does take – and the time it takes has come down – nearly nine months to recruit and train an officer.

Because the Government will not give multi-year funding settlements to the police – not just the MPS but across the country they are calling out for this – you are going to get fluctuations in recruitment because of the uncertainty of funding. We are pressing the Government to give multi-year funding so that police forces – the MPS in particular because that is our concern – are able to plan and plan properly ahead in terms of recruitment.

Susan Hall AM: Yes, I hear what she says but then last year there was money in the budget for 30,750 and at one point you got down to 28,000 or slightly more. Last year you did not have the number of officers that you actually had the money in the budget for.

Sophie Linden (Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime): Because of Government funding, police officer numbers have fallen and did fall below 30,000. They have never gone to 28,000.

Susan Hall AM: Deputy Mayor, if you actually had the number of officers that you have the money for, there would not be such a bad situation. The truth is - certainly, even going back to last year - you did not have the officers that you had the money for. That is why you have such an incredibly large overspend relating to police officer overtime.

Sophie Linden (Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime): There is a net underspend of £11 million, which you will have seen in the accounts, on police officer pay. I come back to the fact that the Government only give annual settlements to the police forces, not just the MPS but across the country.

Susan Hall AM: Yes, you said that.

Sophie Linden (Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime): It means it is very difficult.

Susan Hall AM: I understand that.

Sophie Linden (Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime): We cannot recruit officers at the drop of a hat. It takes time to recruit them and there will be some variation and fluctuation in recruitment but, in terms of: will we get to 31,000? I am promised that we are on track for that to get to 31,000. What the MPS need is multi-year funding, so that we do not get fluctuations in police officer numbers in the way that we have seen.

Susan Hall AM: Deputy Mayor, there was not the number of officers last year - in the last financial year - that you had the money for, so you were not recruiting properly last year either or the year before. It is no good saying that there are not enough police. I agree with that and I would put a lot more.

Sophie Linden (Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime): I know you do.

Susan Hall AM: You know our budget amendment allowed for an extra 1,400 police on the streets, because we passionately believe there should be more police officers. I also passionately believe that if you have the money in the budget for more officers than you have, it is disingenuous to then blame the Government for not enough money when there is the money in there for officers.

Sophie Linden (Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime): We are not really going to get much further on this because --

Susan Hall AM: No, we are not. We are not.

Sophie Linden (Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime): -- the real issue is around proper funding from the Government to ensure that the police officer numbers cannot just be maintained but can increase. In order to do that we need multi-year funding and we need the Government --

Susan Hall AM: Yes, you said that three times now.

Sophie Linden (Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime): Because it is true.

Susan Hall AM: Deputy Mayor, the simple fact is this: if you put the amount of police officers that you have the money for then start moaning about the Government. Until such time, do not blame other people for the inadequacies of not getting enough police officers in place.

Sophie Linden (Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime): You are probably the only person that does not go through that. In terms of recruitment of police officers, it takes up to nine months to recruit a police officer.

Susan Hall AM: Yes, I know that as well.

Sophie Linden (Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime): If you are given your settlements only a couple of months in advance --

Susan Hall AM: I know all of that.

Sophie Linden (Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime): -- it is very difficult to plan. If then you also know that there are millions of pounds to come out of the budget, you have to plan, and you have to plan robustly but you have to plan - I am sorry to use the word - crudely.

Susan Hall AM: Deputy Mayor, you can repeat it as many times as you like but the fact is you need to get the people that you have the money for in place. I will move on.

The MPS accounts show that the amount in business rates allocated for the police is £220 million from the business rates this year. That is up from £92.5 million last year and so it is quite a large increase. What does our future MPS business rates funding look like?

Sophie Linden (Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime): That is going to be a matter for the Mayor's budget in terms of setting the -- as you will know, the last budget the Mayor has taken the decision to divert business rates into the MPS budget, so that will be a matter for the budget going forward when the Mayor sets his next budget.

Susan Hall AM: He has given you no indication as to whether it would be around, though?

Sophie Linden (Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime): We can be pretty safe to presume as we all know that policing and keeping London safe is the Mayor's number one priority. He will do everything he can to ensure that police officer numbers increase and stay at the level they should be. I am sorry to say this: the Government is going to have to put its hand in its pocket.

Susan Hall AM: If you are sorry to say it then perhaps do not say it.

Sophie Linden (Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime): Both of your leadership candidates now have said, absolutely, that the cuts to policing have gone too far, been promised. The Home Secretary [Sajid Javid MP], when he was a leadership candidate, was promising extra police officers.

Susan Hall AM: Yes, so spend your money properly. If you have enough money for a certain number of officers, then make sure you have the officers. I will leave it there.

Unmesh Desai AM (Chair): We will move on to the last set of questions.

Steve O'Connell AM (Deputy Chairman): Under the inspired new chairmanship, we are moving on really quickly. This is fantastic!

The context of this, if I may, is the visit by the Health Committee, which I am on as Deputy Chairman, to the Archway Children's Centre and a work that we are doing there. It was interesting to go to this fantastic centre and to hear this phrase used a lot. It is clearly a phrase that is embedded with the education health community, which is 'toxic trio'. I was a bit surprised because all the work that we had done on the VRU - and I have been around probably far too long - I had never heard that term before and so I am interested to see the read across between the education/health toxic trio across to the sphere of violence. Particularly, bear in mind, we do know very much about the phrase 'adverse childhood experiences' (ACEs). There is a read across the two.

I will start off the questions on this subject to Mark, if I may. What work has the MPS undertaken specifically targeting what is phrased as the 'toxic trio'? Just a reminder for those in the audience and those many people watching that the trio is domestic violence and abuse, substance misuse and mental health issues. That is the trio. Mark, do you want to comment on this?

Mark Simmons (Assistant Commissioner, MPS): Yes, certainly. Thank you. I have not heard the phrase 'toxic trio' before, either. It is fair to say that we recognise that on any of the three issues that are part of the toxic trio, there are a whole range of interconnected issues. You could broaden it out from those three, probably, in terms of interconnected issues.

One of the first things that we have been trying - notwithstanding the challenges around where we are in terms of the new structures - one of the key things we were trying to do by bringing together different parts of the MPS that respond to support people in domestic abuse and other aspects of need that we were making that more joined up and more integrated, so the safeguarding setups on the BCUs. There is a mental health hub that sits alongside those to try to co-ordinate that work, join up that work better, as well as mental health issues that affect other areas of policing, of which Members will know that that is substantial.

On substance misuse, again the MPS's drug strategy talks about our work on drugs. A lot of our focus, it is fair to say, is around the drugs as a driver for violence. That does include where that is violence in the home or in a relationship, and so it is fair to say we are conscious of the overlap, the link, the kind of interconnectedness of the issues.

You referred to the ACEs work. We know that brings into focus where those issues join up and there is work we are doing on how the understanding of ACEs fits into policing practice and how officers work. Similarly, the trauma-informed practice that brings in some of the impacts of those different experiences and the cumulative experiences that people have of different issues that would come together in this way. That is all good work that is happening at the moment. In this development now, some of these concepts are relatively new for policing but very important for us as we look forward in terms of our approach.

Steve O'Connell AM (Deputy Chairman): Yes, indeed, the trauma-informed approach was something that I was not particularly sighted on and was learning about. We understand also in that context the MPS is planning to visit Merseyside Police who are further ahead. I know the MPS always likes to go along to find out if someone is doing something better than they are, which is rare, of course, Mark. What is your understanding about that visit and the learnings to come out of that?

Mark Simmons (Assistant Commissioner, MPS): Apologies, I do not have the details of that visit, I am afraid, but I will find that out and we can pass that on.

Just as an aside, we are very keen to learn from colleagues across the country and recognise that policing is a team exercise across the whole of the UK.

Steve O'Connell AM (Deputy Chairman): Before I turn to the Deputy Mayor's comments around this, a very good example that the MPS is involved in is Operation Encompass, which Mark can tell us more detail about. My understanding is that it is a joint agency that is supporting children and young people. The object is when a child or young person is exposed to a domestic abuse incident one evening within this operation area, it allows your officers to report to the school before the start of the next day so that the school is sighted on potential issues. Do you want to put a bit more detail around that, Mark?

Mark Simmons (Assistant Commissioner, MPS): I can put a little bit more detail around it, but I do not know if it will be as much as you wish at this stage. Encompass is an important initiative for us. We have briefed right across all the borough safeguarding teams and the particular people who are involved in the Multiagency Safeguarding Hubs teams on Encompass. It is fair to say it is in different stages of development in different parts of London. Part of the implementation of it involves negotiation with local authorities around how we jointly work on the initiative. It is fair to say that, yes, we think it is a good thing to do but it is work in progress at the moment. I hope to be able to report further progress over coming months as we continue the work on it.

Steve O'Connell AM (Deputy Chairman): Are you able to tell us today, for example, how many boroughs, how many schools and how many incidents have been reported? Do you have that sort of information?

Mark Simmons (Assistant Commissioner, MPS): I do not have that with me, I am afraid, but I will find that.

Steve O'Connell AM (Deputy Chairman): Could you write to us? That could be really helpful.

Mark Simmons (Assistant Commissioner, MPS): Yes, absolutely.

Steve O'Connell AM (Deputy Chairman): Deputy Mayor, on this issue of the trauma-informed approach, we have heard about Operation Encompass. Do you want to tell us about the Mayor's response to that, in particular perhaps the commissioning process and your thoughts around what you have heard today around that area?

Sophie Linden (Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime): You have mentioned yourself the ACEs and that is very much, as you will know, part of the strategy with the VRU and how you tackle ACEs with really early prevention intervention to try to ensure that those with ACEs do not mean that those young people go on to commit violence or become offenders themselves. That is very much at the heart of the VRU's work. One of the papers to the Partnership Reference Group was on ACEs. We have heard from the Children's Commissioner [for England, Anne Longfield] on that as well.

The trauma-informed approach is one that we flagged up in the Knife Crime Strategy as well that we published in 2017. Our own commissioning does also take that approach in terms of some of the work that we have commissioned, for example, the county lines work from Response and Rescue and ABIANDA. The specialist

service for young women and girls [ABIANDA] is very much taking a trauma informed approach. The work that we do in A&E units via Redthread as well as Oasis is very much a trauma informed approach as well. It is certainly something that is not just on the radar. It is being embedded in the work that we are doing in tackling violence but, also, work that we are commissioning as well.

Steve O'Connell AM (Deputy Chairman): OK. My last point is that these were new phrases to me with a read across. It would be worth you going away and talking to your reference group about: there seems to be a whole narrative out there quoting the toxic trio. Is that a complete read across to the work that the VRU is doing so that you are working together, not least using the same phrases and the same working together?

Sophie Linden (Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime): Yes.

Steve O'Connell AM (Deputy Chairman): It seemed a bit of a silo - not mentality, it is the wrong thing - or there seemed to be a separation when we were talking to those good people over in Islington, and so I am just flagging it up.

Sophie Linden (Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime): It is helpful to have it flagged but, in terms of the toxic trio, with mental health, substance abuse and domestic abuse, it is absolutely a part of the ACEs.

Steve O'Connell AM (Deputy Chairman): Indeed.

Sophie Linden (Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime): That is why, for example, the scope of the VRU is what is violence? That is kind of strange because violence is about domestic abuse as well. We are being clear from the start that we have to be tackling domestic abuse in order to be able to do early prevention work, to ensure that children who are much more likely to be involved in violence if they have had violence in the home are protected, supported and we can tackle domestic abuse as well. Of course, we have had lots of discussions here about mental health, mental health services and the importance of mental health in relation to policing, not just demand but in relation to really understanding what is happening.

Mark has already talked about the mental health units that are now in the BCUs. We have also had discussions around drugs and substance misuse and so it is there, maybe using different phrases and terminology. We may need to look at that but that is absolutely within the work.

Unmesh Desai AM (Chair): Can I thank our guests for attending today and for their answers to our questions?