



City Hall Greens

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City Hall
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LONDON E16 1ZE

Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis
Sir Mark Rowley
(via email)

18 March 2024

Dear Commissioner,

Concerns about stop and search charter survey

I am writing to you to express the serious concerns I have regarding the Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) survey on your proposal to create a Stop and Search charter. My points are detailed below, and I hope these issues are considered before any decisions based on the survey responses are taken.

My primary concern regarding the survey is the inherent assumption that stop and search is an inevitable fact of policing. You have spoken convincingly on the need to 'fix the foundations' of the MPS so this assumption is disappointing. Many Londoners don't believe that stop and search is either a useful or effective tool – but the survey contains no space for this view to be expressed by participants.

The format of this survey with its limited options for response and lack of space to record further comments, will not accurately capture the wide and nuanced range of opinions held by Londoners on this tactic, including people and organisations who strongly disagree with its routine use.

A participant who strongly opposes stop and search cannot answer a question regarding how the police should conduct themselves during a stop and search, or how often they should be trained about it, or the utility of a charter. They are likely to either choose one of the multiple-choice options that do not capture their real opinion, such as 'don't know' or abandon the survey in frustration, leading to their data not being used. In this way, the results of this survey are skewed towards those who support stop and search.

I am therefore worried about the quality of the evidence that you are gathering through this survey and that any actions you intend to take, or new policies introduced based on it, will not have the support or consent of all Londoners.

I am therefore writing to you to highlight some of the issues that I do not believe are adequately addressed by the questions, or answer options, in the survey.

I have strong objections to widespread use of stop and search as a tool, as it can irreparably damage relationships between communities and the police, can be harmful and affect the wellbeing of those it is used against, and isn't an effective as a tool for tackling violent

crime. Met officers told me on a London Assembly Police and Crime Committee (PCC) visit to Bethnal Green police station to learn about Project ADDER that stop and search is 'a blunt tool, like taking a bulldozer to an archaeological dig'.

We know that the vast majority of what police officers find during stop and search operations are small amounts of drugs for personal use. As drug policy is rightly pivoting to harm reduction, rather than tackling personal possession, stop and search is no longer an appropriate tool for drugs policing and isn't effective enough against violent crime.

Stop and search has also historically been deployed disproportionately against Black Londoners, something I have raised repeatedly through the PCC. Today I shared data that the number of Black Londoners stopped and searched at Notting Hill Carnival in 2023 was nearly five times as many as for the number of white Londoners – and there was a significant failure to even record ethnicity, with nearly half of stop and searches during Carnival left as 'unknown'. In my attempt to respond to your survey there was no option to record my concerns over disproportionality. **The stop and search charter must address the need for consistent data collection and full transparency on the use of stop and search so that Londoners and their elected representatives can hold the Met accountable.**

I am also worried about a question regarding the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in stop and searches, 'using algorithms of body worn video footage, to assess the quality of a Stop and Search encounter'. **I would appreciate you writing to me with more information about the proposed use of AI in stop and searches, including if there is also a live element, if this will be used for training and if it is proposed that facial recognition technology will also be deployed through this system.**

I previously provided you with Liberty's report, Holding Our Own: A guide to non-policing solutions to serious youth violence, which warned against use of stop and search, and should also be considered while gathering evidence for the Stop and Search charter. In my work on the PCC I have repeatedly heard from young people talking to me about their concerns and lived experiences, and the consensus that stop and search doesn't work as intended is growing. The Met needs to be able to hear those opinions accurately, to engage with them and act on them.

Could you write to me to tell me what other work are you doing to gather information from a range of Londoners with range of opinions so that your new stop and search charter genuinely has the consent of Londoners before it is introduced?

Yours sincerely,



Caroline Russell
Green Party Member of the London Assembly