

Transcript of the Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime Challenge Meeting held on 19 July 2012.

Present:

Stephen Greenhalgh (Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime)

Bernard Hogan-Howe (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis)

Craig Mackey (Deputy Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service)

Alison Saunders (Chief Crown Prosecutor, CPS London)

Dave Weston (Head of Crime (London), HM Courts & Tribunals Service)

Stephen Greenhalgh (Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime): Good morning, everybody. This is the first of something called the Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime (MOPAC) Challenge, which we are holding in public, and I am delighted to see representatives from Metropolitan Police Service, the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) and also the Courts, because our first topic is looking at seeking justice for victims.

I thought I would start off by explaining the mission for the Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime, and the mission is: a Metropolis considered the safest global city on the planet; a Metropolitan Police Service that becomes the United Kingdom's (UK) most effective, most efficient, most respected, even most loved, force; and finally a capital city where all public services work together to prevent crime, seek justice for victims and reduce reoffending.

The MOPAC Challenge is going to be a monthly meeting and it is looking to scrutinise, not just the Metropolitan Police Service, but the whole of London's criminal justice system, the entire breadth of that, and today, as I said, seeking justice for victims. It is a meeting that will be taking place in public rather than a public meeting. In that sense, it replaces the meeting that first took place when I took office called the MOPAC Performance and Accountability Board, which was held in private, and I felt very strongly that these kind of public accountability meetings should take place so that the public could witness the scrutiny of the criminal justice system. So let us look at the first MOPAC Challenge, seeking justice for victims, and perhaps everyone who is in front could just quickly introduce themselves.

Bernard Hogan-Howe (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): My name is Bernard Hogan-Howe, Metropolitan Police Service Commissioner.

Craig Mackey (Deputy Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service): Craig Mackey, Deputy Commissioner.

Alison Saunders (Chief Crown Prosecutor, CPS London): I am Alison Saunders, the Chief Crown Prosecutor for London.

Dave Weston (Head of Crime (London), HM Courts & Tribunals Service): I am Dave Weston from Her Majesty's (HM) Court Service.

Stephen Greenhalgh (Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime): Thank you very much. So I think the central challenge today is whether the people of London can have confidence in the criminal justice system, can victims have confidence that they will receive justice. I want to start off in the first instance looking at the police service and solving crime. Commissioner, can you give an idea of where the Metropolitan Police Service is in terms of performance in this area?

Bernard Hogan-Howe (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): I think if we look across the country then we are not at the top of the table at the moment, in fact we are towards to the bottom, it varies a little across all crime compared to certain types of crime, because obviously different detection rates if we talk about rape and different detection rates if we talk about shoplifting, or murder. So we see a varied performance, but on the whole we see it towards the bottom of the quartile rather than at the top.

Stephen Greenhalgh (Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime): Yes, according to our figures you are the eighth lowest, which would be sort of bottom third I guess.

Bernard Hogan-Howe (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): That is correct.

Stephen Greenhalgh (Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime): You come from a force that was the seventh highest and the Deputy Commissioner from a force that is third highest. Is this something that London will always be towards the bottom or is there an aspiration to do better?

Bernard Hogan-Howe (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): My personal aspiration is to be the best. There are challenges in London, as there are in any large urban or large metropolitan area. If you look just at the challenges in London alone, as we have seen with the census this year, even earlier last week, the population is rapidly shifting, which leads to people moving about, it leads to large numbers of tourists coming and going, and one of the ways we detect crime is to spot different patterns of behaviour. We see the unusual, as do the public, and by seeing the unusual they report to the police and then we go and investigate. If you have a transient population that causes its own challenges. But I do not accept that means that we cannot get better at detecting crime.

One of the big issues that we are looking at, at the moment, is the number of foreign national offenders, and about one in three of the offenders in London at the moment is a foreign national, so that is something we have to deal with and make sure that we have systems in place to get better. So I am determined that we can get better. I believe that we can be the best, but there are many challenges and you have just sketched out the scale of the task.

Stephen Greenhalgh (Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime): Just so we understand, in statistical terms, I have come to lean this phrase “sanction detection”, can you explain what that means?

Bernard Hogan-Howe (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): Yes, I will not go on too long because there is a long definition, which I could bore you with, but I think the bottom line probably that the public might understand is that an offender is either charged, i.e. goes to court; is cautioned by the police, or the alternative is reported for summons. If someone is reported for summons they also go to court but it is because they receive a summons rather than we have arrested them and charged them in custody and then either bailed them or put them into a court. So those are the primary detections.

The reason I hesitate to say that is the only definition is because we have other forms of detections too. I would call them, from a few years ago, secondary detections. So that is when an offence might have been taken into consideration at court when an offender is being charged or is in prison and admits an offence. In my view they have a lesser value; they are not charged, they have not passed the evidential test, but for recording purposes the offender accepts they did it, the victim is told, and hopefully at some level gets some kind of benefit from that.

So the simple answer to your first question is, someone who is charged, reported for summons or cautioned for an offence; that is a detection.

Stephen Greenhalgh (Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime): That is helpful. Primary and secondary is helpful. I have also heard the phrase “active”, which I think is more primary, and “passive”. My understanding is that your sanction detection rate is around 23.5% currently, so nearly 80% of crimes go without sanction, but about half of those 23.5% are so-called passive or secondary. Is that broadly correct?

Bernard Hogan-Howe (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): That sounds about right. I think you see different ratios as you look around the country, but you get that split. As I said, what I call my old term of primary and secondary can otherwise be called active or passive. It is really about whether and what you call it, and this other term, “sanction detections”, is it accepted by a court or it is accepted by the offender, is it a caution, or is it something that is recorded as a detection when the offender accepts it and never been charged.

Stephen Greenhalgh (Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime): I am delighted at the desire to improve the situation and not taking the difficulties of policing in London as an excuse. The concerning thing from the data that MOPAC have received are that the five-year trends are trending the wrong way. So, if we look at rape sanction detection rates, they have gone down from 33.2% to 17.4%, so it has almost halved. Residential burglaries have gone down from 14.3% to just under 10%. An area that was incredibly low already, motor vehicle crime, has gone down from 7.3% sanction detection rate down to 5.1%. I received your latest weekly summary and, if it could not go any lower, it has gone lower, it is not at sort of 4.9%. So, can you give us an idea, given those long-term trends, why we should have a cause for

optimism and what the Metropolitan Police Service are going to do to improve their ability to solve crime?

Bernard Hogan-Howe (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): You are quite right, those five-year trends are dipping, or they had dipped, and although the weekly one may appear low, the trend is now starting to turn. If you look to, as you mentioned, rape, in 2009 that dropped quite drastically, and I think there are particular reasons for that we need to understand. However, we are determined to reverse that trend and I think what you see this year, since April, is we are starting to see a change in that. So if you look at burglary, it is risen from a 10% to a 14% detection rate. That is still only 14%, but it is 40% more than it was.

What we are putting in place is things that will make a difference. There are three ways to detect crime and find a suspect: first of all we have to attend the scenes, and if we catch them then that is the first method; the second one is forensic evidence, we match the offender to the scene by forensic evidence; and the third one is someone tells us. What we can do is maximise our opportunities in each of those areas to find the suspect. What we have already started doing, first of all we are now attending scenes of crimes when the victim requests it, so therefore I think we have increased our numbers of attendance at scenes of crime by about six times, particularly around motor vehicle crime. So we are starting to see that we are attending scenes of crime to give us the best chance of either catching the offender, getting the forensics, or getting the witnesses who are the people who might tell us who committed those crimes. That has changed over these last six months and we will see an impact on that. We are already seeing higher forensic retrievals from the scenes of crime, so that is a good start.

Having identified the suspects and having taken them into custody usually, then we need to do better interviews, and then we need to work with the Crown Prosecution Service at presenting a good file so that a court might consider whether or not the person is convicted of the offence. Those are the three blocks of work that we have already started on, and I know we will make great progress in the coming years. Of course the primary thing, which is what you are doing today here, is caring enough to make sure that people believe that actually it does matter how many crimes we detect, and frankly there are some forces in this country where it seems that does not matter. For me it always has.

Stephen Greenhalgh (Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime): Just in terms of, you said you started to put these changes into effect to drive up your ability to solve crime. Can you just give us an understanding of what will happen and by when? Because clearly in a large organisation like the Metropolitan Police Service you cannot just flick a switch and it happens, but I think the public really would want to know, we started at this point, and by this stage we will have implemented all that we need to do to ensure that we have improved our approach to scenes of crime, total care for the victim, forensics and so forth.

Bernard Hogan-Howe (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): You are quite right. It does take a while to change a big ship around, but I expect within 12 months that we will see a very significant improvement. Whether or not we will achieve the best by the end of the year, I think that is very difficult to say. But I think within five years then I would hope to see us in the top quartile at least, and certainly not where we are now.

Stephen Greenhalgh (Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime): One of the things that is concerning, and this may be wrong, because I just read it in a report by a think tank, and they are sometimes wrong, these think tanks, but I will quote the figures anyway. They point out that the ability to solve crime has gone down over time and, as well as a dramatic increase in investigation costs. So they have quoted a 54% increase in burglary, 46% in robbery, and what you have described clearly has to happen within existing resources, or within reducing resources in the case of the Metropolitan Police Service. So how are you going to be able to do this with the current tough financial challenges that lie ahead.

Bernard Hogan-Howe (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): I do not recognise increasing crimes that you just described, because if you looked at burglary it is at about a 26-year low, so I do not understand why it would be 50% higher. You would have to understand the time period over which that was taken.

Stephen Greenhalgh (Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime): It is investigation cost, so they are saying the costs of investigating burglary have gone up 54% and the costs for investigating robbery have gone up. I do not know if these are correct or not.

Bernard Hogan-Howe (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): I am not sure. Maybe what you would be seeing is a growth in the police during that time, so we have more police, so the costs would go up, and I suppose salaries go up. So I would have to understand more and I have not seen the report, so I am sorry I cannot comment too much on that. But I think in terms of our plan for the future, some of the things that we are doing are cost-free, so better training, better attendance at scenes, we already have officers and we want them to attend scenes and then make sure that they act better. We want better interviews; we want better files for court so that we can present high-quality evidence. So for me, although obviously it is always better to have more money, and no doubt we will come to this forum and argue for more money from time to time, but for me we get £3.5 billion of public money, we have 50,000 people, and it is our task to keep 7.5 million people, well 8.1 million people safe. So I think it is quite possible to get better and more efficient and from time to time we may need to make investments, not least of which is around the training of our leaders.

Stephen Greenhalgh (Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime): You mentioned the importance of forensics in driving up the ability to solve crime, and I think before your changes that you are introducing, the data that we have is that the Metropolitan Police Service records the least number of primary forensic detections; I think that is the figures that we have had from Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC), so presumably they came from you, compared to the most similar group in the UK, or similar forces in the UK.

Can you put some numbers around where you are trying to come from and where you are going to move to with a move to increasing the use of forensics?

Bernard Hogan-Howe (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): I think, as I said already, what we want to do is be the best. So what we need to do I think as a starting point is we have set our targets to aim at the best in our family of forces. What people may not understand in the public domain is that the 43 forces in this country are grouped into families, and the idea is to make comparison possible. London is such a unique environment that it is difficult to group other force areas with it, but an attempt is made. So Birmingham and Manchester are thought to have some comparability. Our first aim is to get to the top of that family, so I would expect within 12 months that, if we are not at the top, we are very close to being the top.

Within the figures this year, we are starting to see that change. What I cannot report to you at the moment is that it has happened, because it is two months' figures, but by the end of the 12-month period I do expect that you will see that we are improving, and I already know that, for example, we are very near to West Midlands' performance, and that is already quite an achievement. It may be small percentage differences, but it means a lot of people will have the satisfaction of knowing their crime was detected.

Stephen Greenhalgh (Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime): So the first stage is to get to the top of the group that are policing big cities, and then eventually the aspiration is to be the best in the UK?

Bernard Hogan-Howe (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): That is right. I think mainly the reason I say that is that, I mean I would love to go from 36 to number one in the space of 12 months, but I think there is a benefit in setting stretching, but realistic, targets, because otherwise I think the staff that I lead would expect that I am being unrealistic, and I think that is not a good aspect to leadership or management. So we are trying to set stretching targets, which I genuinely believe we can achieve in a relatively short period of time.

Stephen Greenhalgh (Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime): OK, that's helpful, so we can get a lot further in four years, but in the next year it is to get towards the top of the most similar group, if not the top.

We have talked a bit about forensics, you talked about other matters. Technology, I know something that is very close to your heart, and within total policing you have talked about total technology. Can you just outline how technology can help to solve crime?

Bernard Hogan-Howe (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): We have been starting to invest, and I know yourself and the previous Deputy Mayor has helped us to invest in, for example, automatic number plate recognition (ANPR). My view would be that, although nationally we have investment in automatic number plate recognition, in fact if you

compare us internationally the UK system is probably the best in the world. My view would be that strategic investment could be far better. The three legs to that investment: there are the fixed sites, which at the moment involve congestion charging, and we see the ring of steel in the city following the bombing, around Canary Wharf; then we have ANPR in vehicles, police vehicles, so we can move a unit around London to meet the challenge where a particular crime type is.

The third group I would like to see more investment in is around what I call the tertiary system. These things called cars drive around the roads, they pull into petrol stations, and, as we know, the different petrol providers have ANPR. They do it because they do not want people to drive off and steal the petrol. My point is that this is an opportunity to actually either prevent or detect crime.

So I think first of all we need to invest wisely in those areas and make sure that we have a network of cameras, which is properly protected around human rights and intrusion into people's lives, but it gives a great opportunity, I believe, to stop crime. The only other practical thing I have mentioned, probably people are aware that we have seized a huge number of cars, 27,000 vehicles we have seized from uninsured drivers since October of last year, and we expect to see well over 50,000 by the end of the year. The reason that is vitally important as an impact on crime is that 70% of the people whose cars we seized not only were uninsured, they were also criminals. So we are inhibiting their ability to go on and commit further crime, if they are a burglar they do not commit quite as many.

So that type of investment, I think, can have a real benefit. We have issued 250 fingerprint readers to our vehicles in I think it is now eight of our boroughs so that officers out in the street can take the fingerprint of somebody they are challenging, and that gives us two benefits: they may be wanted, they may be on bail and have a curfew arrangement; and it may also help us with another issue we are trying to get better at, which is around stop search. So it is that type of investment I think could make a real difference, together with things like facial recognition and voice recognition. I do not think we will ever replace all the officers we have, but I think this type of investment can make them more effective and a smarter use of our resources.

Stephen Greenhalgh (Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime): All right, so judicious investment. You mentioned obviously automatic number plate recognition, or ANPR, the network of cameras, I mean presumably you have a network of cameras already, so how are you looking to build on that, can you be a bit more specific?

Bernard Hogan-Howe (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): There is a network of cameras, but I think the investment has gone in rather sporadically, so the investment has gone in often when a local authority can afford it or the Government can afford it, but not according to a large plan. So, for example, one way might have been to invest this money that we have available around the motorway network so that you can either get on to it or off

it without some kind of recognition. Or the arterial road into London would have been another nexus for investing in. But it has not really gone in that way.

There is a second way in which we can use ANPR, which is to put the software for ANPR on to the CCTV systems that exist. The investments in CCTV did not go in with the idea of investing in ANPR. So there are ways in which the investment has gone in, it has been good at the time, but I genuinely think this is a good time, second phase, to make sure that investment can give us more rewards in future years.

There are some very simple tactical things, if you put ANPR in at one end of a tunnel, by the time the car gets out the other end you could have stopped it when it pings to say it is wanted for a murder. That is what we have seen around the country sporadically that in my view, both at Government, local government and police level, we have not really invested in a way that I think will drive up the good return on that very significant investment in terms of millions of pounds.

Stephen Greenhalgh (Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime): The last example you gave was these fingerprint vehicles, so the ability to do fingerprinting close to the scene of the crime I guess, and you mentioned that you have it in eight boroughs?

Bernard Hogan-Howe (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): That is right.

Stephen Greenhalgh (Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime): I am just interested, and obviously you have finite resources, how do you target which eight boroughs get that particular technology? There are obviously 32 London boroughs, but how do you get into the top eight and when are you proposing to roll out, and when do you know that this is something that is worth expanding?

Bernard Hogan-Howe (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): They are rolling out now, they have been going out for a couple of months. In terms of selection, we have tried to go for two ways really: one is to test where there is most crime, so that hopefully we see most impact; and secondly we have tried to compare the different parts of London, and, as you know, there are different areas within London that are quite unique. So, for example, Westminster is different compared to the inner boroughs, compared to the outer boroughs. So really what we tried to do is make sure that we test the idea in all of those, but particularly concentrating in each of them on those areas that have the most challenges around crime, so hopefully if we are going to see an impact we see a quick impact.

Stephen Greenhalgh (Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime): So it is driven by demand effectively, if there is high crime then --

Bernard Hogan-Howe (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): Yes, given that there are finite resources, we have to target them where we get most effect.

Stephen Greenhalgh (Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime): So we have touched on forensics and technology. When we look at intelligence as being a key to solve crime, how can the Metropolitan Police Service improve its use of intelligence?

Bernard Hogan-Howe (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): The first thing is, if you remember, I said that in my view there are three things that help to solve crime: the forensics; the attendance at scene, and as you are probably aware we have put 2,000 extra officers into Responsive Neighbourhoods to help us with getting to the scenes of crime quicker and we have changed the shift system to do that; but in terms of intelligence then there are three big ways really. First of all is that we take good witness and victim statements, because often the victims and witnesses, until you properly, and if their account is taken carefully, will be very powerful witnesses, but certainly will also help us detect the crime in the first place, so a little more time taken and invested in that is always worthwhile.

The second thing is that, if we have a good neighbourhood policing system, so we have officers out there talking to people, people know generally who commits crime, particularly in their neighbourhood. So we have to have a good relationship where the public trust us and tell us stuff. Police Crime Community Support Officers, our neighbourhood officers, are out there walking, meeting people, working through the schools, a great opportunity to get information from people. But our further investment in the neighbourhood policing model, which we will be bringing back to you and also I hope to the Crime Scrutiny Panel later in the year, I think you will find, number one is we will have more people, and number two is we will be better using those to get that intelligence I have just discussed.

The final group is very important but generally smaller in numbers, so we do have informants, and there are two broad groups of informants: there are informants who are generally from criminal groups, they often tell us for various motives, sometimes for payment, but we have to make sure that we are managing that group properly; that we have a wide group of informants and we are using them appropriately and with integrity. The final area, which is vital, and is often misunderstood, is around Crime Stopper. Crime Stoppers is a free independent charity where you can make a free telephone call, anonymously report crime, and sometimes, even if it has been anonymously reported, a reward can be delivered. I think that we always need to keep getting that out, particularly to the younger generation who often do not understand the benefits of Crime Stoppers. But every day people ring us with information about who committed crime, where drugs are, where weapons are, and it is our job to make sure that we maximise that opportunity.

Stephen Greenhalgh (Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime): That is interesting; it is not just information from criminal groups, but actually from members of the public, really does help to solve crime. Can you just give us some examples, I do not know how specific you can be, but that is striking. So you often watch Crime Stoppers and you are not sure whether it really does work, but could you just emphasise by some examples?

Bernard Hogan-Howe (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): It works in two ways. I think generally it works in the sense that people ring us and say there are some drugs in a house, there are some drugs in a shed. What we would not do is, just for that reason, particularly if it was anonymous, therefore get a warrant to put the door in. We would check our whether there was support and corroborating evidence to see whether or not the initial information was accurate. But often Crime Stoppers information is accurate. There are various reasons people call, and it is our job to make sure we act on that intelligence quickly and take executive action very quickly, and that has been a challenge over the years for the police, but we have done that.

The second area in which it is vitally important, where there has been what is called a signal crime, but often a murder or a very serious crime of rape, where the public has become interested through the mass media, we often get calls on the back of a press release or a press statement where somebody may call us and say, "We think we know who that is". Of course the biggest example I suppose would be Crime Watch where millions of people watch the television (TV), see crimes in action, and they will call in and say, "We think we know who that person is", if there is an image or whatever it happens to be. The most rarefied area is around terrorism, so we have a separate Crime Stoppers line around terrorism, and particularly if we have a terrorist incident, and then people can ring in on a separate line. But it does work, and now the challenge for us is to make sure that when we get that stuff, every day we get hundreds of these pieces of intelligence, we grab it and we do something with it. I think over the years it has been a challenge for police systems in making sure they do that and it does not sit on someone's desk and they leave it for a few more days. For me it is a vital part of our management that we manage that.

So those are some of the various forms of intelligence we get and I talked about forensics, but if we link forensic scenes by forensics, we can see patterns of behaviour and we can make sure that we make further investigation. So there are various ways we are getting intelligence but I would say the people-based stuff is the most important.

Stephen Greenhalgh (Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime): That is very helpful. If we remember, Sir Robert Peel famously said, "The police are the public and the public are the police", and what you are saying in effect is that the London public can play their part in solving more crimes and just how important that is.

I am just interested, given that we have a large spectrum of the criminal justice system, how the Metropolitan Police Service can work with the criminal justice system to solve more crimes and what each of you can do. Because obviously we talked about the importance of witnesses and taking proper statements, but what can be done working closer together to solve more crime?

Bernard Hogan-Howe (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): I think first of all we do work an awful lot together, so we have to be sat here, but not just for today. Every day of the week we are working together and I think you do see a collaborative approach. I think

really one of the big drivers for that was the Local Criminal Justice Boards, which right around the country have caused the criminal justice agencies to come together and I think that was a great opportunity that started now probably seven years ago, something of that order, and we are still getting the benefits from.

One of the things we tried in Merseyside, and I have not had a chance to mention today, but I was talking to Alison [Saunders] about yesterday, was that we had in Merseyside a sort of a constant approach to performance around criminal justice. So we sat together and held our people to account as a team, and I think it is something that we could explore here. But in particular I think the main thing is that we see the criminal justice system at best when we see it from the victim's point of view. There is a danger we all, in our own agencies, say, "We have to deal with the crime", and then we pass the victim on to the CPS, and then we pass them on to the courts. The danger is, in that process, we see it from our point of view, and all the victim sees, or the witness, is, "I am being handed over, now what do I do?" I hate the word "holistic" but there is not sometimes, from the victim's point of view, a comprehensive feel to that.

But I think it is far better than it was probably five years ago, but I still think there are gaps. We are investing a lot in things like texting people to advise them of what is going to happen next and remind them of court appearance. We give particular help to intimidated witnesses so that we make sure that we provide protection. The Crown Prosecution Service take care of them during the prosecution phase and the courts make sure they are protected while they are at court. So there is an awful lot in place, but that type of particular investment is relatively rare. Thankfully most people are prepared to stand their ground in a court and do not need that sort of protection. But where it is needed we do work very hard together to make sure that people are protected in that way, to encourage more to come forward.

So I think probably if I was to target a particular area where we all need to work better, it tends to be from seeing the system from the victim's point of view rather than our individual agencies. Probably only one final thing to mention on that, we have a real aid in that, and that is the Victim Support charity. They are there sort of standing behind us; that when a victim reports a crime they are the initial point of contact and, if there is a prosecution, they will almost hold their hand into court. That is a charity, it generates its own funds, and it is based on volunteers, people who will do exactly what I have just said, physically hold people's hand and walk them into court. It is often unrecognised, it is not a service we provide, but we do work with. The Victim Support charity, which is a national body, but we have one here in London, and it is a great thing that is often unrecognised and I think it is something probably we could make more of and perhaps others could consider.

Stephen Greenhalgh (Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime): Do you want to add anything to that?

Alison Saunders (Chief Crown Prosecutor, CPS London): No, really just to sort of endorse what Bernard said. I think it is really important, if we do not have victims and

witnesses who are prepared to come and give evidence, then we do not have a case to take to court. So it is as fundamental as that. They do not see three different agencies; they see one process, and what they want is sort of a smooth transition through to giving their statement, giving their evidence in court, where we can give them protection we will do that if they need it, and we take that before the court, but it is really important that they have somebody who can help them through what is a very strange system, it is not something you would ordinarily come into contact with, and we forget sometimes that when they are giving their evidence, giving their statement, it is because there has been a traumatic incident that either they witnessed or they have been the victim of, and what we need to do is help them through that. Certainly Victim Support and Witness Support at court do that as well, so I think the more we can work together to do that, then the better.

Stephen Greenhalgh (Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime): David, anything?

Dave Weston (Head of Crime (London), HM Courts & Tribunals Service): I would absolutely agree with that, and I think, as well as the victim or the witness potentially being intimidated by the original crime, the court system in itself and the court environment is a very intimidating environment for a lot of people. So I would echo what Bernard said about the invaluable service that the victims' service gives at court in actually supporting victims and witnesses through the system. I know the judiciary hold the victims' service in very high esteem as well for that sort of impartial role that they play in supporting victims and witnesses.

Stephen Greenhalgh (Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime): Do any of my colleagues have any questions? No, OK.

I think that has been very helpful. If I understand, you recognise there is massive room for improvement, so 43 forces in the United Kingdom, you are the eighth lowest, but you want to get to the top of the most similar group probably in a year's time. You recognise the importance of forensics, attendance at the scene and getting more police officers to scenes of crime. We have talked about the judicious use of technology and the use of intelligence and working across the criminal justice system.

What I think would be helpful to the public is just to get a feel for what you are setting as your personal target, if you can put a number, if we are saying you are solving just around less than a quarter of crimes, whether it is primary or secondary, where would you like to be in a year's time.

Bernard Hogan-Howe (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): I came unprepared for a number, but I think solving something in the order of a third, for me a professional test would broadly be a third. These are variable beasts, and I think one of the things we just have to be really careful about is that these figures can mean anything to anybody if we are not careful. We have 97% detection rates in murder, but we have, as you pointed out, 4.9% in vehicle crime. There is a difference. One happens on the street and there are very few

witnesses, another one happens very rarely and we put 40 detectives into it. There will be a different approach. So I think our general detection rate we have to be careful about, but if you are asking me for broad professional guidance, I would like to see us nearer to a third than I would to a quarter.

Stephen Greenhalgh (Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime): So we are going to be looking at this in about a year's time and we want to be shifting from about a quarter to broadly a third over time; that does not happen overnight.

Bernard Hogan-Howe (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): Yes, and I think, within that year, what I would like to do is that, as we make the progress that I believe we will, is that then that seems to me that is a good time to then set the new target for say four to five years, when we see the progress we have made, what has worked, and then say, "Let us have a look now at what we can set as further targets in succeeding years".

Stephen Greenhalgh (Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime): Great. I think we should call a halt to the discussion around solving more crimes and then look at how we can reduce unsuccessful prosecutions in London and the Minister announced a paper around swift and sure justice and I think we should look at, in the same way we did around solving crime, current performance. The figures that MOPAC officials have provided is that criminal cases take the longest time in London, and as I understand it, it is around 161 days, which is over five months, against the national average of 154 days. Once again, I appreciate London is a very special place and obviously provides challenges for the whole criminal justice system, but can we do better than that?

Alison Saunders (Chief Crown Prosecutor, CPS London): I think we certainly can and I think already we are beginning to see some indicators that show that we are beginning to get it right and do it better. There are a number of different factors about why cases take so long to go through the courts: it could be about getting evidence right at the first hearing; it is about making sure that we case manage things through the court process, we do not have unnecessary adjournments; and it is around making sure that we get things on time. It is really important to have trials dealt with speedily because again, if you are looking at victim and witnesses, it is important for them that they give their evidence and they get the whole process completed as quickly as possible. We know through some of our unsuccessful case outcomes that one of the biggest reasons - apart from jury acquittals - for unsuccessful cases is witnesses failing to attend court. You can see that, if they have to go five months before they get to court to give their evidence, they might be disengaged by that point and decide not to come and give evidence. So it is really important that we shorten that time.

There are a number of initiatives that we are looking at to do that, things like making the courts much speedier with the process, so Stop Delaying Justice, which is a judicial-led initiative in the Magistrates Court, is around making sure that we literally have a first hearing that is effective, you either have a guilty plea or you case manage it to trial, which should be the next hearing date. We have some interim findings from that, which are showing some

really positive signs that this is beginning to work, and it is not just about that, but it is about things like not having police witnesses attend unnecessarily. So where you have a case in which you have four police witnesses, why do you need all four of them to attend, you might just need one of them to give that evidence. So we are looking at that, and that is beginning to show some really good improvements.

In the Crown Court we are looking at an early guilty plea scheme, which again is judicially-led, we are rolling that out at Wood Green and Inner London Crown Court, and that is all about making sure that at the first date of hearing those that are going to plead guilty do so, so victims and witnesses get some certainty about what is happening to their case, and then you can leave the rest of the court time, our time, to really focusing on the cases that need the time, which is the trials.

Stephen Greenhalgh (Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime): You mentioned, went straight to the heart of the matter, when looking at unsuccessful cases, and clearly the major driver from your own data is witnesses not attending, and I think we mentioned it is 27% of all unsuccessful cases, so broadly more than a quarter, are down to this. So can we just focus in on that and say what needs to happen across the criminal justice system to reduce that figure, because clearly that is the major driver.

Alison Saunders (Chief Crown Prosecutor, CPS London): I think the timeliness is one of the important things as far as victims and witnesses are concerned, because especially if you are in the Magistrates Court, where you expect it to be much swifter, and if it is five months down the line your life has moved on, you might not think that fight outside the pub was really quite as important as it was five months ago and things have moved on. You might have been to court, because what we do see sometimes is that people are warned to attend trial more than once, and again that is not a good way to treat victims and witnesses, because they need to just come to court once, give their evidence, and then deal with it and move on and know that the case has been concluded. So the work that we are doing around making sure cases speed up is really important.

Stephen Greenhalgh (Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime): So timeliness is not just down to the Crown Prosecution Service, presumably there is the efficiency of the court system, and perhaps, David, you could comment on how that can improve over time.

Dave Weston (Head of Crime (London), HM Courts & Tribunals Service): I think a lot of it is about making maximum use of the resources that we have available in the courts. We have the courtrooms there and we have cases queuing up to get into court. We are very mindful of the fact that we need to try and get them on as quickly as possible, but also balanced against that we need to make sure that we do look after the victims and witnesses as well. So there is this sort of challenge, if you like, to try and move cases through as quickly as possible and give the earliest dates for the benefit of victims and witnesses, but also to avoid unnecessary adjournments. I am not saying we necessarily have that balance right, it is very much a judicial decision as to when you list a case, but we are working together now to

try and look at how we can make better use of the court resources without creating effectively ineffective trials, trials that go off to a new date, thereby requiring victims and witnesses to come back for a second attendance at court. But that is something that requires all the agencies to work together on that to make sure that the expectations of the victims and witnesses are managed from the outset; that the availability of those victims and witnesses to attend court is established from a very early stage so that the court can then list the case armed with that information so that we do avoid unnecessary adjournments. But there is something of a dilemma I guess between the speed of getting a case on and making sure that it is effective when it does get on.

We also have to bear in mind that we have sufficient but limited court resource and we need to make sure we use that effectively as well, so that we do not just list single cases that then fall out, leaving an empty redundant courtroom for a significant period of time. So there is a listing decision to be made with an element of risk about whether or not you over-list in courts to make sure that you keep the courts occupied and get cases on as quickly as possible. But, as I say, that is a listing decision, a judicial decision, assisted by all the agencies really in providing the necessary information for the judges to make those decisions.

Stephen Greenhalgh (Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime): That is helpful, so something on witness non-attendance, I mean that really is, all the agencies have to work together starting I guess with the police, the quality of the witness statement, working closely with them, and then obviously the timeliness aspects through the court process.

Alison Saunders (Chief Crown Prosecutor, CPS London): I should say that we have been looking at this, specifically looking at individual courts through the Local Criminal Justice Board, and we have been looking at where courts are particularly slow in getting cases listed or where there are high numbers of ineffective trials, because the figures do vary across London. What we have been doing there is calling the local police, CPS, courts members in to talk to us about what is it that they are doing, what are their plans, how they want to improve and where their milestones are. So we have been looking at individual courts as well because I think that is really important, because things do vary across the boroughs and across the different courts,

Stephen Greenhalgh (Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime): So there is a variation in performance.

Alison Saunders (Chief Crown Prosecutor, CPS London): Yes.

Stephen Greenhalgh (Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime): All of you have now mentioned the Criminal Justice Board as being a major driver of performance improvement across the criminal justice system. I am not sure all members of the public would know about its existence, can you just explain a little bit about how it works?

Alison Saunders (Chief Crown Prosecutor, CPS London): The Criminal Justice Board is the police, CPS, courts, probation, National Offender Management Service (NOMS), so prison and offender management, and we come together to talk about the performance across the criminal justice system, where we are doing well, so we can continue to improve, and there are lessons where we are not doing so well, and come up with plans and priorities about what we are going to look at. So we look at performance data such as cracked and ineffective trials, and we look at witness attrition and how we are performing in relation to witnesses, and we come up with plans around how we are going to do that and hold local boroughs to account.

So Dave and I sit on it, I chair the Criminal Justice Management Board, and we look at how we are going to do that.

Dave Weston (Head of Crime (London), HM Courts & Tribunals Service): It is right to say as well, it does look at the end-to-end criminal justice process, because I think hitherto, before Criminal Justice Boards, one of the problems was that each agency had its own process at a particular stage, but nobody was looking at it holistically to make sure that those processes tied up and it was a streamlined process right the way through from beginning to end. One of the values that the Criminal Justice Board brings is that we are now able to look at that end-to-end process and make sure that all our processes fit together to make one end-to-end process.

Stephen Greenhalgh (Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime): It is interesting; performance management must be challenging, I am not saying it is impossible, but challenging, because we are now looking at, after solving more crime, reducing unsuccessful prosecutions, and one way of reducing unsuccessful prosecutions is not prosecuting. Clearly that is not going to give confidence to victims of crime, if they feel that reasonable steps are not taken to prosecute.

Can you explain a little bit about the thresholds and the decision-making that goes behind the decision to prosecute?

Alison Saunders (Chief Crown Prosecutor, CPS London): Absolutely. We make decisions to prosecute in accordance with the Code for Crown Prosecutors, which is a national document that was laid before Parliament, so it is a public document; it is on our website so everyone can see how we make the decisions. Before we will prosecute a case there are two parts of a test that need to be satisfied: one is that there is a realistic prospect of conviction, and that is that a jury or a Magistrates Court are more likely than not to convict; and also that it is in the public interest to prosecute. So those are the two parts of our test that we have to satisfy before we will prosecute anything.

In order to get a case charged, the police will charge some cases, we charge the more sort of serious end or give police advice in relation to that, so we work very closely about making sure we build a strong case to charge. But it is dealt with in a very consistent manner because

it is either dealt with it is out of hours by a national CPS direct telephone system, charging, or by CPS London Direct, which is a unit that I manage that has about 20-40 prosecutors who do nothing but charging decisions day-in/day-out, so all the charges go through them, apart from the more serious complex cases, which are dealt with by, if they need face-to-face charging, looking at videos, going through the evidence, building a case up. So a very good example of that is rape cases. We have a unit now called the Rape and Serious Sexual Assault Unit and they do all the charging across London. That unit has been in place for just over 18 months and what we have found is that has actually had a significant impact on our unsuccessful cases and we have reduced our unsuccessful cases by about 10% over the last two years.

Stephen Greenhalgh (Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime): So it would be wrong to say that every branch prosecutor has a different threshold, you are operating to very clear guidelines?

Alison Saunders (Chief Crown Prosecutor, CPS London): Absolutely; we have national guidance, we have a national test, so every prosecutor across the country should be doing the same test, not just in London. We have a small unit of prosecutors who do the charging, so it is a small unit of people. Part of the reason for that is that they can specialise, they know what they are doing, and they have consistent standards and we can monitor that far more easily than spreading it all across London.

Stephen Greenhalgh (Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime): I understand the idea of national criteria, standards, seeking uniformity. Before being asked by the occupant, the Mayor, to become Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime, I ran a borough in London and there were also uniform guidance for instance to the eligibility for social care, but it is fair to say that, if you talk to people who are operating within the national guidance, there seemed to be some latitude as to how you implemented that. So what can you say you do, in addition to having the criteria, the national guidance, to ensure there is a uniformity of application?

Alison Saunders (Chief Crown Prosecutor, CPS London): I mean (a) we sort of limit the number of people who are doing charging to try and make sure that there is consistency, and there will always be within that guidance, there is always a discretion, and there is always a judgment to be made about particularly the evidential test and public interest factors. So what is a public interest factor in Hackney may be very different to a public interest factor in Richmond, if you look at prevalence of crime for example, the impact on the community, and those are things that we do take into account.

How we make sure that our decisions are right is that we have a monitoring process where we review decisions and check that decision is right; that is called core quality standards and that is on our website so the public can see how we measure our cases. If we do find that we have something wrong, we will review the decisions, and I have the power to change decisions. So, if we have decided not to prosecute something where we think we should have, in

exceptional circumstances I can reverse that decision, and we do that. It is not common, but we do that just to make sure that we are getting it right.

Stephen Greenhalgh (Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime): Just going back to one of the things that clearly from your own performance data, attrition rates, broadly speaking, when we looked at sanction detection and solving crime, it looks like London is trailing the national average in both Crown Courts and in Magistrates Courts, but trending the right way I guess you could say. Could you just talk through current performance at the moment on attrition rates?

Alison Saunders (Chief Crown Prosecutor, CPS London): Yes, absolutely. We are below the national average in relation to both Crown Court and Magistrates Court attrition rates. Over the last two years we have seen a steady improvement in our performance and our attrition rate is coming down. Interestingly, where we have focused prosecutors, so in relation to hate crime, domestic violence, rape, our attrition rate is falling much more quickly. So rape, for example, in the last two years, it has been 10%, but our attrition rate has fallen, which is good. If we carry on at the same steady sort of rate of improvement, we will take about two years to get to the national average if we just do a straight trajectory. I think that is too long and what we are aiming to do is to get to the national average within a year.

We have various improvements in place that will help us to do that. So we are, later this year, undergoing a major reorganisation and also a move, which will help us to centralise and move towards more focused units to learn the lessons that we have out of the rape unit and our hate crime prosecutors.

Stephen Greenhalgh (Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime): So your ambition effectively, similar to the Commissioner's ambition of solving crime is broadly to get to a third, your ambition is to be at the national average at twice the speed that current trends suggest effectively?

Alison Saunders (Chief Crown Prosecutor, CPS London): Yes. I think we can do far more. We have made significant progress over the last two years, which has been interesting, because that is also in a sort of timespan where we have had diminishing resources, but we have been able to improve significantly the way in which we have operated and I think by working together across the criminal justice system with colleagues then we will be able to hit that national average. The current national average, of course we are 23% of the national business, so if we improve then obviously the national average improves, but what we are looking to do is to get to the national average as it is today within a year.

Stephen Greenhalgh (Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime): I am just conscious the public might not understand the concept, like sanction detection and attrition rates, can you just explain that so we --

Alison Saunders (Chief Crown Prosecutor, CPS London): What we look at is what we term unsuccessful case outcomes, not all of them are bad because some of them will be jury acquittals or dismissals by the Magistrates, and actually we would not want to be in an environment where we only ever get 100% of conviction rate, because that would mean we are probably being risk-averse, we are not taking those cases that we should be taking, we are only taking safe bets. So there will always be some unsuccessful case outcomes.

What we are looking to do is reduce the number where we have some influence, so on those cases that are dismissed late because of the prosecution evidence was not strong enough and they should not be in the system at all. We want to get those out at an early stage. Where witness and victims do not turn up, we want to make sure that they do come to court and therefore can give their evidence, and that will again impact on the successful rate of outcomes.

Stephen Greenhalgh (Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime): OK, so an unsuccessful court outcome is not necessarily the wrong thing, but what you are saying is that where it is driven by a witness non-attendance, which is broadly speaking a quarter, that needs to be avoided.

Alison Saunders (Chief Crown Prosecutor, CPS London): If you look at the Crown Court attrition rate, about 33% is jury acquittals, so that is not all bad, some of those we need to look at and say, can we put stronger evidence before the jurors and therefore are they more likely to convict. But there will always be that one because the test for jurors is, "Do you have any doubts? Are you sure that this person committed the crime?" There will always be cases that we would want to take to court where that is a decision for the jury and they quite rightly might acquit.

Stephen Greenhalgh (Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime): Something else I learned, added to my lexicon, the idea of a cracked trial and an ineffective trial. Is that something that we need to improve on?

Alison Saunders (Chief Crown Prosecutor, CPS London): Ineffective trials, we particularly need to improve on, because, if you have an ineffective trial it means you get to the date of the trial and then it is adjourned for one reason or another. Lots of reasons, defence reasons, prosecution reasons, court. Prosecution reasons are going down in relation to ineffective trials, which is good, so we need to work to make sure that they really do get to the bottom, because what we need is speedy justice, we need victims and witnesses to know that when they are warned for court that they will be going to court to give their evidence; it will not be adjourned.

Cracked trials, not necessarily all bad, because if they crack for reasons that we get a guilty plea, then that is good because it is an outcome and it is a good outcome and it avoids witnesses and victims having to come to court to give their evidence. What we need to make sure is that the cracked trials get much earlier. So, again, if it is cracked because we are

taking cases out of the system, we need to do that at the first opportunity. If it is because defendants are pleading guilty, again we need to get them to do that at the first opportunity. So that is where initiatives such as the early guilty pleas scheme are in, which are looking at how we encourage defendants to plead guilty at an earlier stage. So when you look at some of the work that we did during the disorder last summer, what we found there was we got cases to court very quickly, there was quite a high rate of guilty pleas, and our attrition rate was very low in relation to those cases that we took to court. So, again, it was something about speedy justice, but also making sure we had good strong cases.

Stephen Greenhalgh (Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime): So ineffective trials are what you are looking to reduce. With regards to cracked trials, you want that to happen early rather than late in the process, and the early guilty plea scheme would be something that, if successful, would lead to cracked trials earlier rather than later as I understand it, is that right?

Alison Saunders (Chief Crown Prosecutor, CPS London): Yes.

Dave Weston (Head of Crime (London), HM Courts & Tribunals Service): That rather feeds into the point I was making earlier about the efficiency of listing as well, because at the moment we are listing for the inefficiencies that from a court's perspective a cracked trial is, because, if you put aside five days for a criminal trial in the Crown Courts and you get a plea on day one, you then have to fill that void of four and a half, five days, worth of court time. So there are real benefits for the whole efficiency of the listing system as well, and the impact on victims and witnesses, if we can get early guilty pleas and also drive down the ineffective trial rates.

Stephen Greenhalgh (Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime): Yes, so that has a huge knock-on effect for the productivity of the court system.

Dave Weston (Head of Crime (London), HM Courts & Tribunals Service): It does, absolutely.

Alison Saunders (Chief Crown Prosecutor, CPS London): It does for everybody across the system because it is about everyone getting it right first time; it means that police witnesses do not have to come and wait at court; it means that preparation time for both police and CPS in preparing papers, getting things ready, is lessened, and court time is lessened too, and for victims and witnesses, and indeed for defendants, it means their cases are dealt with more quickly and that they get some sort of finality and certainty about what is going on.

Bernard Hogan-Howe (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): It just seemed to me that there is a public policy issue, which is about obviously everybody wants to get an early plea, but there needs to be an incentive for the defendant to think that is a benefit, so that

there is a discount in the sentence if someone pleads guilty, but as far as I am aware there is no discount for pleading guilty early.

Alison Saunders (Chief Crown Prosecutor, CPS London): There is, it is not necessarily consistent in its application, and it does perhaps need to be looked at in relation to the sort of amount of discounts that you get, but certainly there is a discount, the earlier you plead.

Bernard Hogan-Howe (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): Because otherwise the perverse incentive is that you play it long and if the witnesses drop out in the way described right at the beginning, you have a higher chance of having an ineffective trial because there are no witnesses. So therefore just play it long and then -- that is a dynamic that is playing out and I think it is just something that, between us, we are always trying to manage.

Stephen Greenhalgh (Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime): So it sounds like the system does enable discounting, and you are looking for consistency above all else. I know the Mayor has pledged to set up a sentencing unit that is looking into this, is that not right? That is right, yes. Any member of the public can question sentences if they consider them too lenient, but we are looking at also to ensure that consistency with regard to discounting.

Alison Saunders (Chief Crown Prosecutor, CPS London): We make sure that happens anyway because the public can in any event complain to the Attorney's Office if they think sentences are unduly lenient, and we have a track record in London of referring cases to the Attorney's Office if we think they are unduly lenient and he will then make a decision to take it to the Court of Appeal. So, for example, one of the most high profile ones recently was a case in the disorder last summer in Croydon where the chap was convicted of 16 various offences in Croydon. He received four years and we thought that was unduly lenient and referred it to the Attorney who agreed. When it went to the Court of Appeal it was increased to seven and a half years, so that is happening. But certainly the members of the public do not necessarily understand that happens, but it is there and it is something that we do take very seriously.

Dave Weston (Head of Crime (London), HM Courts & Tribunals Service): It is also right to say that the early guilty plea scheme, one of the main aims of the early guilty plea scheme, is to make sure that we do get that consistency of message to defendants who have indicated a guilty plea, stress to them what the discount is at that point, and that will hopefully bring more consistency, because that is written into the guidance around the early guilty plea scheme for all the judiciary to apply.

Stephen Greenhalgh (Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime): It is good to see that anyway the framework enables consistency but also an appropriate discount that will also see a more productive court system.

I want to go back to the original conundrum, if you like, about the length of time that it takes to get a case completed, 161 days, and one thing I gather that is an issue are there are too many hearings per case, and perhaps you could just elucidate, Alison, on how that number could come down and what is appropriate.

Alison Saunders (Chief Crown Prosecutor, CPS London): Again, the initiatives that we have been talking about today are really around making the whole system more effective, so we are looking at digital working as well, so moving towards electronic files; that is enabling us to look and monitor far more clearly both timeliness and quality of files throughout the process, both from the police to the CPS and the CPS to the courts. What we are looking at, measuring what we do measure with the courts and discuss frequently is the number of hearings per case. So the Stop Delaying Justice is all around making sure in the Magistrates Court we have one initial hearing and then the trial, whereas our statistics at the moment are showing that we have three or four hearings per case, and again it varies across the different courts across London. In the Crown Court our hearings per case go up to about five hearings for each case once it is completed, and obviously that is too many, because each time you get into court it means more resources, more preparation time, and if you can reduce that and make it much more effective and quicker then that will benefit everyone.

Stephen Greenhalgh (Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime): You mentioned, rather than one, it is often three or four, and the Crown Court it is five or more. In a year's time, roughly speaking, where would the system like to be in terms of hearings per case with all the digital working and so forth?

Alison Saunders (Chief Crown Prosecutor, CPS London): For Magistrates Court hearings for cases we would want to see sort of two, three maximum. For Crown Court cases, instead of five or six, we would be looking at three or four at the most. That is really on the basis that we are resourced. Again, it is around things like, in the Crown Court we are monitoring judges' orders and our compliance with judges' orders. One of the things that previously has led to lots of hearings has been if we did not comply with a judge's orders it would be listed for the court to ask us why we had not. We decided to monitor that and we were the only area in the country that did up until a year ago when it was adopted as a national system. But what we are finding in London is that, because we have had that focus on judges' orders and compliance, our performance is increasing in relation to court hearings, because the judiciary do not have to list it for non-compliance.

Where we are now also getting on to the front foot is listing cases if the defence are not compliant, because there is a two-way process here, it is not just about prosecution, it is about the defence also managing their cases and being effective and being ready for the hearings as well, and that is interesting, where we are in the Magistrates Courts, where we are seeing the defence reasons for ineffective trials going up.

Stephen Greenhalgh (Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime): OK, so everyone has to play ball effectively for this to work.

Alison Saunders (Chief Crown Prosecutor, CPS London): Absolutely, and that includes case management by the court as well.

Stephen Greenhalgh (Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime): Yes. You have mentioned obviously some important things that will drive efficiencies in the system. You have mentioned digital working but also your restructuring and centralising. But on those two points, I mean something clearly like the Metropolitan Police Service, your service, it takes time to bring these things on board. Can you give the public a flavour of how quickly you will move to more digital working and also where you are on your centralisation and restructure?

Alison Saunders (Chief Crown Prosecutor, CPS London): Yes. On digital working, we are already pretty well advanced. We have over the last year been working very closely with the Metropolitan Police Service and also the courts but particularly the Metropolitan Police Service around making sure that we have digital files being delivered to us. So over 80% of files are now being delivered digitally. The infrastructure is there. What we need to do is work more on the quality and timeliness of getting those files to us. We have set some very stretching targets jointly with the Metropolitan Police Service and the courts around when we expect files to be delivered and the quality and now we need to make sure that we hit those targets. What we are finding is that papers are being delivered for the first hearing to the court more quickly than they ever were when they were paper files, so lots of things that we put up with paper files we are no longer accepting as acceptable with digital files, so that is good. What we need to do now is work on actually getting the files into court and dealing with digital files in court. But you will see around London prosecutors with their tablets presenting cases electronically, which is great.

Stephen Greenhalgh (Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime): All right, so you will digitise and now you are wanting to make sure that that rolls into the court environment as well. So, David, where are we on the digital world within the court environment?

Dave Weston (Head of Crime (London), HM Courts & Tribunals Service): It has quite deliberately been split into two phases. The first phase was to actually make sure that we have the exchange of papers digitalised between the agencies and transferred between the agencies. As Alison says, we have pretty much achieved certainly the capability of doing that and we are now concentrating on the problem-solving around the quality of that documentation coming through digitally.

Phase two of what is generally described as the Criminal Justice System Efficiency Programme is to move the digitalisation into the courtroom. That is a significantly bigger challenge, actually, than just transferring papers digitally between agencies because we are then talking about conducting hearings digitally. We are talking about the judiciary, the defence and everybody else working digitally as well.

That is complicated in two ways. One is we need an IT infrastructure that supports that in the courtroom and I would not pretend at the moment that we have that. We do not. So there is an issue there about future investment to make sure we can work entirely digitally end-to-end. The other one I think is more of a cultural issue about actually changing the way a courtroom functions. That is all the way through from the judiciary, as I say, to the prosecution, to the defence and the Crown Courts. It is how jurors would work as well. I

think that is going to be a longer-term challenge. Having said that, in London we are actually starting to pilot digital working in Croydon and looking at developing what the solution might look like in the courtroom, particularly in the Crown Court. We are doing that as part of what we are developing, which is a national model for a courtroom. Coming back to Bernard's point about lots of people investing in different infrastructure in isolation, what we want is a common IT infrastructure that services the whole of the courtroom across the whole of the country, regardless of where you are. So we are on that journey at that moment.

I think we really need to overcome the issues around the quality and timeliness of getting the papers to the courthouse and the courthouse then processing those papers properly before we really leap into the next stage, which is digital hearings. But we also need to tackle the issue around IT investment as well, which we are starting and we are growing it very small in Croydon, but the idea is that we will end up with what we rather crudely described as a "model courtroom" and what that might look like for 21st century digital hearings. But I think to manage expectations that is a way off.

Stephen Greenhalgh (Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime): So Croydon, if you like, is the cutting edge of the digital era within the courtroom?

Dave Weston (Head of Crime (London), HM Courts & Tribunals Service): It is and it is the first national pilot, so we are not just looking at it from a London perspective; we are looking at it from a national perspective, yes.

Stephen Greenhalgh (Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime): If we look across the globe, let us say, at other big cities, are they further advanced in the digital era within the court environment?

Dave Weston (Head of Crime (London), HM Courts & Tribunals Service): I went through a European IT conference a couple of months ago looking at just that. I think it is fair to say that it is mixed. I would not say anybody is significantly further ahead than us. I think there has been quite a lot of experimentation across Europe for digital working. Some countries pride themselves on having got to where we got quite a few years ago, quite frankly, in terms of prison video-links and witness links into the courtroom, which is something that we are doing quite a lot now.

As far as the total digital courtroom, I did not find a single example, actually, of where anybody has actually been brave enough yet to take that extra step. So I think actually England and Wales are pretty much paving the way on that aspiration for a completely digital video court system for the future.

Stephen Greenhalgh (Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime): So that was a European conference?

Dave Weston (Head of Crime (London), HM Courts & Tribunals Service): It was a European conference in Copenhagen.

Stephen Greenhalgh (Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime): Just intuitively, the place I would look first for cutting-edge digital solutions would probably be the west coast of the United States. That is essentially Silicon Valley or even on the eastern seaboard, but

particularly Silicon Valley. Are we saying the United States is not further ahead on the digital courtroom?

Dave Weston (Head of Crime (London), HM Courts & Tribunals Service): I do not know the answer to that.

Stephen Greenhalgh (Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime): We do not know what the United States is up to?

Dave Weston (Head of Crime (London), HM Courts & Tribunals Service): No.

Stephen Greenhalgh (Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime): Perhaps we should have a look.

Dave Weston (Head of Crime (London), HM Courts & Tribunals Service): Yes.

Stephen Greenhalgh (Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime): Maybe have a video-link.

Dave Weston (Head of Crime (London), HM Courts & Tribunals Service): We do have video-link to the United States --

Alison Saunders (Chief Crown Prosecutor, CPS London): We do.

Dave Weston (Head of Crime (London), HM Courts & Tribunals Service): -- but not necessarily to that.

Stephen Greenhalgh (Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime): Yes, OK. Just going back to reducing ineffective trials and that issue of how we can improve, just take us through what you are doing with the reorganisation and restructure. That is something that we have not fully plotted out.

Alison Saunders (Chief Crown Prosecutor, CPS London): Across London, CPS is just under now 1,200 staff. At the moment we are spread across just short of 40 locations, which obviously spreads us quite thinly. What we are doing is moving to three locations in October, so by the end of October we will be based in three locations which will help us to make sure our units are far more robust and resilient.

But beyond that, what we are using is an opportunity to really refocus the way in which we do our work, so we are splitting into Crown Court units and Magistrates Court units. What we have learned from things like charging from our rape and serious sexual assaults unit or our complex case work unit, which are all specialist units, is that their performance is really much better than the average across London where we are asking people to do a bit of everything.

Stephen Greenhalgh (Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime): I mention that actually rather like we have seen in the structure of the police service, yes, you can have a neighbourhood territorial policing model that works, but effectively you also need those specialist units as well. So you are saying that within the CPS, particularly the specialist units are driving improved performance?

Alison Saunders (Chief Crown Prosecutor, CPS London): Yes, absolutely. We are seeing much better improvement in their performance and much quicker, so we are reorganising the rest of the area so that we can really focus on either cases in the Magistrates Court or cases in the Crown Court. Within that, there will be early review teams which are all about making sure that we get cases into the system that should be there, weak cases are taken out of the system and we encourage the early guilty plea, so again that will have a direct impact on things like ineffective trials as well as our attrition rate.

Stephen Greenhalgh (Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime): The last area I wanted to touch on in this section, reducing unsuccessful case outcomes, was the response to the rather less-than-favourable report that you had from Her Majesty's CPS Inspectorate. Perhaps you could say what they broadly found and where you are relative to those recommendations?

Alison Saunders (Chief Crown Prosecutor, CPS London): The Inspectorate was March 2010. That was the first Inspectorate report which basically found that CPS London was not delivering a satisfactory service. Our attrition rate was even higher than it is now and we had staff based around the area so we were not delivering an efficient and robust service to Londoners.

They have come back and done a follow-up report and they found that out of the 18 recommendations that they had made in 2010, we have dealt with all of them either fully met or some of them have been partially met but we are well on our way to meeting all of them. What they also found was that they thought we had done lots of things to improve performance and we were on the right road. They recognised our performance improvement and indeed over the last year out of the 42 areas across England and Wales out of the CPS, we are the third best improver, so we have improved by the third most across the country. The Inspectorate recognised that all the things that we are putting in place such as the reorganisation, the move, the things that we are doing around cracked and ineffective trials, all of that they think is the right thing and they recognise that we therefore should improve performance significantly.

Stephen Greenhalgh (Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime): It is always good to be a good improver and to get a bronze medal is better than being fourth, although gold would be best. Could you let us know where you are? We now know for sanction detection the Metropolitan Police Service is the eighth lowest out of 43 forces. Where are you at the moment or what are the latest figures within the table of the 42 CPS areas?

Alison Saunders (Chief Crown Prosecutor, CPS London): We are towards the bottom.

Stephen Greenhalgh (Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime): Where exactly?

Alison Saunders (Chief Crown Prosecutor, CPS London): It depends which measure you look at.

Stephen Greenhalgh (Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime): Give us a couple.

Alison Saunders (Chief Crown Prosecutor, CPS London): If you look at our attrition, we are at the bottom.

Stephen Greenhalgh (Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime): On attrition you are bottom?

Alison Saunders (Chief Crown Prosecutor, CPS London): Yes. If you take specific crimes such as rape, we are not. We are about tenth or so. If you look at other things, we are bottom, so overall we are very much towards the bottom end and within the bottom three or four areas.

Stephen Greenhalgh (Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime): If we look further forward, a year from now when we would like to reconvene something looking at this issue once again and check that we are on the right track, you have said broadly speaking things are improving over the last two years. We have mentioned attrition rates getting, broadly speaking, to where the national average is now today in about a year's time rather than two years' time. We have talked about reducing the number of hearings per case whether it is the Crown Court or the Magistrates Court. Can you give a picture of beyond that what would define a successful year for CPS London?

Alison Saunders (Chief Crown Prosecutor, CPS London): I think in a successful year for us we would be the best performing area rather than just the third and I do not see any reason why we cannot do that. As far as rating amongst my colleagues, I think it is more realistic to look at the 13 groups rather than the 42 areas because judging us against places like Warwickshire or Gwent or someplace is unrealistic. But if you look at the 13 areas, then I would expect us to be up in the top half.

Stephen Greenhalgh (Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime): OK, so in the top half of the most similar areas as opposed to the national rankings with similar aspirations. Although the Metropolitan Police Service wants to be the best of the most similar police forces, the big cities, if you like, in the UK, your aspiration is to be in the top half of the most similar, although nothing is quite the same as in London. But that would be your aspiration?

Alison Saunders (Chief Crown Prosecutor, CPS London): My aim is to get to the top as well.

Stephen Greenhalgh (Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime): You want to be the top but you will not be next year?

Alison Saunders (Chief Crown Prosecutor, CPS London): But I am realistic about timescales.

Stephen Greenhalgh (Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime): So first you have to get to the top half and eventually you want to be best?

Alison Saunders (Chief Crown Prosecutor, CPS London): Yes.

Stephen Greenhalgh (Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime): And you would like to be the most improved rather than the third most improved in a year's time?

Alison Saunders (Chief Crown Prosecutor, CPS London): Yes.

Stephen Greenhalgh (Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime): OK. That is helpful. Lastly, recognising all of this improvement that we want to see in solving crime and in reducing unsuccessful prosecutions, then we move to need the right court environment. We have touched a little bit on the importance of embracing new technologies and delivering a 21st Century court environment. David, what are the major steps that you can take beyond the experimentation in Croydon? What is something that will lead to a 21st century environment for London?

Dave Weston (Head of Crime (London), HM Courts & Tribunals Service): I think first of all it is right that we get the processes correct, so the bit about digitalising the process is important because, if you do not get that right, then you are putting rubbish into the system and just digitalising it, so I think there is a real priority there about making sure that we get our processes between the agencies correct and as efficient as possible. That, if you like, is a precursor to moving to the next stage of then looking at the 21st century courtroom.

The purpose behind the modern courtroom in Croydon really is to test the processes that might work within the courtroom to try and come up with a single standard model that we can use across the country. Although it sounds as though we are maybe not being as ambitious as we should be, what we do not want to do is to end up with a proliferation of processes across the country, some of which work and some do not. So we are looking at trying to standardise the process both before the court and when we get into the courtroom as well. Within the next year, the ideal is to actually have a specification, if you like, for a model courtroom which will then be supported by efficient processes feeding the data into the courtroom so that we can then work better in the courtroom.

So I think the ambition for the next year is to get the processes right so we are feeding in correctly and appropriately to the courtroom and to start to exploit the technology and develop the process for the in-court procedures.

Stephen Greenhalgh (Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime): OK, so you have to get the processes right and specify those correctly.

Dave Weston (Head of Crime (London), HM Courts & Tribunals Service): Yes.

Stephen Greenhalgh (Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime): Just so we get a flavour, clearly, getting the digital courtroom, you have explained, is a challenge. It is not a slam-dunk. It is not easy to get right. You are testing that in Croydon. Just give us some timeframes, so how long does that process take before you can even have the confidence of being able to roll that out?

Dave Weston (Head of Crime (London), HM Courts & Tribunals Service): Our aim is to have a definitive model for the courtroom by April next year. That I think is extremely challenging but that is what we are committed to under the national programme. London, together with the southeast region of Her Majesty's Courts & Tribunals Service (HMCTS) are leading on this nationally, so the commitment is a national one rather than just a London commitment and we will be held to account on delivery of that. So we are looking at April next year to have a model courtroom constructed and tested.

Stephen Greenhalgh (Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime): OK, so when we hold this meeting this time next year, that will not be April. That is going to be July time. There should be at least a model in place and we could see whether it works or not?

Dave Weston (Head of Crime (London), HM Courts & Tribunals Service): There should and at that stage I should have a better idea as to where we then take that model both across London and nationally as well.

Stephen Greenhalgh (Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime): Also an idea of a rollout, if you like.

Dave Weston (Head of Crime (London), HM Courts & Tribunals Service): Absolutely and that is when we get into the issues of investment.

Stephen Greenhalgh (Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime): The processes, which you say are intrinsic to getting this right as well, do you have to specify those? Just go through the timeframes on that.

Dave Weston (Head of Crime (London), HM Courts & Tribunals Service): The processes are there now and I think, as Alison has already said, the challenge now is adherence to those processes. So we have rolled out those processes across all agencies. They are, again, standard processes so there should be no real deviation from them. The idea is that there is one way of doing things and one way only. But it is right to say that across all the agencies at the moment we are struggling with those processes. They are relatively new. We only really rolled them out in April this year. So the challenge now for all the agencies working together through the Criminal Justice Board is to make sure that we get those processes working effectively. That is a precursor, as I said, really, to the model court going further, so the same sort of deadline really exists there. We need to have everything working effectively from a digital perspective by April next year.

Stephen Greenhalgh (Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime): OK. I misunderstood. So, essentially, you have the processes in place and it is now about putting it into practice across all the different agencies. How do you monitor that? How do you know you are winning, if you like? What is the single easiest way of seeing whether we are on the right road?

Dave Weston (Head of Crime (London), HM Courts & Tribunals Service): In London we have a board, a Streamlining Digital Ops Board, as we call it, an operational board, which again is made up of each of the criminal justice agencies and who have the data produced on a regular basis to them both in terms of timeliness and the quality of the digital data coming through the system and will then go out and charge particular areas for improvement in those processes if they are not being applied properly. It is a formal governance structure to make sure that it actually is rolled out properly.

Alison Saunders (Chief Crown Prosecutor, CPS London): There is a huge amount of work going on in relation to this at borough level. There is regular checking every day of every file that comes through to make sure that the quality is right, the timeliness is right and then that it is passed through to court.

Stephen Greenhalgh (Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime): So right from borough level up, there are clear performance metrics to check that this is getting adhered to?

Alison Saunders (Chief Crown Prosecutor, CPS London): Yes.

Stephen Greenhalgh (Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime): One of the things that we have not touched on - and we have talked a lot about digital, which is fascinating - is the use of virtual courts. I may have this wrong, but how is that decided? Is it essentially the defendant that can opt for a virtual court? Can you explain how that works, then, and whether there is a --

Dave Weston (Head of Crime (London), HM Courts & Tribunals Service): The presumption is that the first hearing from the police station into the Magistrates Court will be by virtual court unless it falls outside judicially-agreed suitability criteria. So, for example, if a defendant has mental health issues or if the case is so grave or complex that a virtual court would not be appropriate, certain cases can be excluded by default. But generally speaking the presumption is that a case will go through the virtual court.

Stephen Greenhalgh (Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime): OK, so that is not something that is driven by a defendant's point of view. Essentially, there is a presumption in favour of a virtual court and various guidelines, essentially?

Dave Weston (Head of Crime (London), HM Courts & Tribunals Service): Yes. Obviously, the defendant has the right to object but then that objection would go to the judge in the court and it would be a judicial decision.

Stephen Greenhalgh (Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime): OK, so that is judicially-led. You have talked, I think importantly, about the processes and getting that right. We have discussed digital. Also, I think, just in the discussion up till now, you have also talked about the importance of getting the culture right or case management and other things. Can you just expand on that?

Dave Weston (Head of Crime (London), HM Courts & Tribunals Service): I think we are currently going through probably one of the biggest changes to the criminal justice system that we have ever seen. We are talking about moving from a paper-based system to a completely digital system. That is our aspiration with paper really only by exception. We are also looking at taking the virtual court model of presumption of video and over the next year or so really pressing ahead with that with a view to trying to maximise the use of video technology.

But we are working with a system that for hundreds of years now has been working as a paper-based system and has been working in a particular way with particular processes, so - coming back to Bernard's thing about turning a ship around - it is about turning a big ship around. Certainly my experience in London is that every agency is very keen to make this work and very committed to make it work, as are the judiciary, actually, which possibly it might have been anticipated might have been one of the bigger hurdles in trying to change the system. But to the contrary, actually, all I have had is very positive judicial interest in digitalisation and the use of video and we have senior judiciary actually sitting on our project boards and actually promoting that and taking that forward. I think it is fundamentally important, actually, that we have every single player in the system now tied into those massive changes that we are trying to achieve.

Stephen Greenhalgh (Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime): Obviously one of the technologies we have not touched on is the use of live links or video evidence. I know we are working on defining an environment in Croydon but to what extent can we also move quicker to employ what is fairly ubiquitous in the business world, to use digital links and so forth? What about conferencing facilities?

Dave Weston (Head of Crime (London), HM Courts & Tribunals Service): Yes. We already have some IT infrastructure there in our courtrooms. For years we have been doing prison-to-court video-links. We have been using links for vulnerable and intimidated witnesses to give evidence remotely. What HMCTS are currently doing is planning, we hope next year, to network all the IT infrastructure that we have in our courtrooms at the moment so that it can be used for any particular discipline. That is ahead of any major capital investment in future IT infrastructure, so effectively it is just making better and more flexible use of the infrastructure we have out there. By way of example, we have prison-to-court video-link equipment sitting in our courtrooms at the moment that can only be used for links to prisons. That seems ridiculous if we want to make links elsewhere, so part of the networking solution that we are looking at next year is to make all that equipment multifunctional so it can be used for any video-link. That starts to then open up the possibilities of expanding virtual courts, significantly expanding things like live links as well, as well as increasing the use of prison-to-court video-links and witness links as well.

Stephen Greenhalgh (Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime): It makes sense to have links into police stations, I would have thought.

Dave Weston (Head of Crime (London), HM Courts & Tribunals Service): It does, but it needs a link at both ends, so it is an investment issue for the Metropolitan Police Service as well as it is for the court service. But we manage this through a London Video Services Operations Board. It sounds as though there are lots of boards but this is the other one. It is similar to the one we talked about, the Streamlining Digital Ops Board, but this is looking at the video element of it. Again, it is a cross-agency board that is managing the expansion of video usage and the usage levels of video across the whole of London.

Stephen Greenhalgh (Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime): It seems to me that this would be a piece of technology - networking in police stations - that would be incredibly valuable from a productivity standpoint. My one concern, obviously, is that when you use the phrase "investment", you mean spending public money, essentially. I am just wondering what sort of numbers we are talking about. Do we have any idea of the scale of investment required or expenditure required and can we do this within existing resources? Clearly, we are stretching to find extra money at this point in time.

Dave Weston (Head of Crime (London), HM Courts & Tribunals Service): I think that is a discussion that would need to be had once we have the model court so we have an idea of what it is going to cost to put an IT infrastructure into every courtroom, effectively, across London. So I would not like to be drawn on anything like a figure at the moment.

We also need to have the discussion at a national level across all agencies as to where the benefits of the video technology might fall as well and where any contribution towards the future investment would come from. I know early discussions are already taking place around that across agencies at a national level, but we really need to bottom-out this model court to establish the sort of figures that we are talking about for the future.

Bernard Hogan-Howe (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): If I may, it just seems to me that one thing to just keep an eye on - because I think sometimes particularly from the public's point of view it can get a little confusing - is that first of all the video-links are really powerful.

There are two separate sets of occasions when people appear in court. There are hearings on the way to a trial and then there is the trial. One of the things that the virtual court has been really powerful at is preventing the offender having to appear in a court and travel or return from prison to court for a hearing before the trial because there are various review stages. It has also been helpful in the same way from preventing police officers having to attend court and stay there and perhaps sometimes not be called, as other witnesses will be, too. So the first thing is it has been really helpful in managing the hearings.

Then, when it comes to the trial, there are some witnesses who get particular help by providing a video-link, so a video-link for a child, sometimes a victim of a sexual offence, can be a really powerful way of allowing them to give their evidence in a court but not physically in it. That has been a help, but not every witness would be in the trial just by turning up for a video, as we see today. We could have done all this by video but there is a difference about having something in a public forum.

The second area is the one that David's talking about particularly as well. It is the digital sharing of evidence within the court environment. I think they are not different in one sense but I think it is probably pertinent to remind the public that those different aspects are being considered. Certainly for the police we will invest within our budgets as much as we can because I think the chance of an officer not having to perhaps being on a response **block**(?) on an afternoon and if they are needed going into a room and being on a video-link for an hour rather than travelling three hours to a court and staying there for three and effectively we have lost a whole shift.

So I think they are the great financial benefits and opportunity benefits we can get. It is not always easy to put a pound note on it but that will help.

Stephen Greenhalgh (Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime): So there needs to be a business case, but a business case can be made because effectively on the one hand you can save a lot of time and resource in terms of police officer time and other public bodies and what they spend, the CPS and also the courts, so that sort of saving. But is it a cashable saving? That is the real question.

Bernard Hogan-Howe (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis): Yes, I would think so. I think a business case can be made with some real cash. But then the major thing probably would be opportunity costs. You cannot dismiss that. I know you are not trying to, but for the public's sake, if we have officers tied up as we have for hundreds or thousands of days a year in a court for which we could only send them let us say 10% of the time, that means we have more officers on the street. Otherwise, all we have to do is just stand the fact they are not there and the others work harder or we pay overtime. So it is a real cost sometimes as well as the opportunity costs.

Dave Weston (Head of Crime (London), HM Courts & Tribunals Service): I think it is right to say that the earlier discussions around a business case for major investment have not

centred necessarily on cashable benefits. It has actually looked at those opportunity benefits and costs to particularly the police but also to the Prison Service as well. There are major benefits for the Prison Service. They are non-cashable, potentially. But also, actually, for certain victims or witnesses it is the right thing to do. If it makes the court experience less intimidating for that victim or witness, then it is the right thing to do and you cannot really put a cash sum on that.

Stephen Greenhalgh (Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime): Sure. Not everything boils down to cash. But what you are saying is it is the right thing to do, it increases productivity, it is good for witnesses and victims and effectively the system will run better, but also the digital comes towards the sharing of information more efficiently as well and effectively.

In the same way when we looked at the issue of solving more crime or reducing unsuccessful prosecutions, can you give a flavour of where we might be when we reconvene this in a year's time with regard to the 21st century court environment? What would you define as success in 12 months' time from where we are today in a largely cumbersome but paper-based system that wants to be digital?

Dave Weston (Head of Crime (London), HM Courts & Tribunals Service): I think that paper should be by exception within the next 12 months and we should be working effectively digitally across all agencies and starting to move into the courtroom. I think it would be over-ambitious to say that we will be digital in the courtroom within 12 months, but certainly the supporting processes up to the court door I would expect to be effectively digital across the system within the next 12 months.

Stephen Greenhalgh (Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime): That has been very helpful. So in the first session looking at seeking justice for victims we have heard the aspiration from the Metropolitan Police Service to drive up the number of crimes that they solve, broadly speaking, from slightly less than a quarter towards a third. That is professionally speaking what would define success and moving that way as quickly as possible towards the top of your most similar forces policing the other big cities in the United Kingdom.

We have heard around reducing unsuccessful prosecutions that certainly the bronze medal for improvement should be superseded with a gold medal for the best improver and also within the 13 CPS areas that are broadly comparable, to be the top of that in the first instance, and moving a lot quicker on the path of progress to see the attrition rates falling towards the national average in a year or two years.

On the 21st century court environment, you are essentially saying we are on the cusp of the digital era and it is the biggest shake-up in terms of the use of technology to change the court environment that we have seen. I do not know. When was the last time we saw it, David?

Dave Weston (Head of Crime (London), HM Courts & Tribunals Service): I do not think we ever have.

Stephen Greenhalgh (Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime): So that is exciting, is it not, then? So it is the 21st century digital era and we are looking to certainly change things. It is the right thing to do and the right experience for victims and witnesses and ensuring that also the processes are more productive and more effective. So we should be confident,

therefore? London should have confidence that this part of the criminal justice system will be working far better than it has been up to now and should improve dramatically in the next 12 months?

Alison Saunders (Chief Crown Prosecutor, CPS London): Yes.

Stephen Greenhalgh (Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime): Yes. We will see next time in 12 months, then. But thank you to the Metropolitan Police Service, to the Commissioner and to the Deputy Commissioner, to Alison as head of the CPS and to David from the courts for coming along and providing us with those insights. I am looking forward to the next MOPAC Challenge in about 12 months. We will be having these monthly and hopefully looking at performance as well on a quarterly basis with the occupant, the Mayor. But this has been the first time to have a MOPAC Challenge and I thank all of you for coming along and providing those insights. Thank you.