



POLICING FIT FOR THE FUTURE

Insights from senior policing leaders

Dee Doocey

Liberal Democrat Policing Spokesperson
House of Lords

February 2025



Contents

Methodology.....	2
Acknowledgements	2
Executive Summary	3
Organogram	4
Chapter 1: trust and accountability	5
Defining function	5
Vetting and conduct	6
Accountability	7
Performance measurement	7
Balancing national consistency with local accountability	8
Chapter 2: prevention and priorities .	10
Prevention	10
Drugs	11
Neighbourhood policing	12
Knife crime	13
Hate crime	13
Mental health	14
Children’s services	15
Modern slavery and child exploitation	16
Violence against women and girls	17
Other serious and organised crime	19
Asylum	19
Lessons from counterterrorism	20

Chapter 3: The tools for the job	21
Funding - see also Appendix 3..	21
Technology and co-ordination ..	22
Data, AI, and the skills shortage	23
Forensics	24
Recruiting the best person for the job	24
Uplift: ripe for reform	25
Officer retention and morale	26
Pay and conditions	26
Training	27
Chapter 4 a whole system approach to criminal justice	28
Prosecutions	28
Courts	30
Prisons and probation	31
Appendix 1	34
The key national bodies tasked with managing policing	34
Other key bodies	35
Appendix 2.....	38
Policing strategy and priorities .	38
Appendix 3.....	40
Police Funding	40
Appendix 4	42
Forensics	42
Appendix 5.....	44
Police Ranks	44

Methodology

This paper is a summary of interviews conducted with senior police leaders in England and Wales during 2024. These conversations took place over a period of nine months, before and after the election of the new Labour Government, on condition of complete anonymity.

Each participant was told that the objective was for Baroness Doocey as Liberal Democrat Policing Spokesperson in the Lords to gain critical insight on the issues facing police forces, both at a strategic level and operationally.

Participants included all 43 serving Chief Constables and Commissioners of the territorial police forces of England and Wales, as well as senior representatives of the National Police Chiefs Council; the College of Policing, the Association of Police and Crime Commissioners and the Crown Prosecution Service.

Leaders were asked to identify what they considered to be the main present-day challenges for policing at both local and national levels, before giving their perspectives on a range of critical topics.

The data collected was then analysed and divided into key subject areas, with the information then anonymised and summarised to highlight the principal emerging themes.

The result is an evidence-based paper which draws on the firsthand insights of all Chief Constables in England & Wales, reflecting their daily frontline experience and the priorities of the police and public alike. While not a policy document, it lays the foundation for a follow-up paper that will set out the Liberal approach to policing reform.

Acknowledgements

I would like to place on record my thanks to everyone who took part in the interviews. I was very impressed with their dedication, their professionalism and their burning desire to provide excellent service and to keep the public safe despite having to work in what can at times be very difficult situations.

Executive Summary

Public trust in the police is hanging by a thread, undermined by scandals, stretched resources, and an ever-expanding list of responsibilities that leave forces struggling to meet public expectations.

Morale is low, with officers burdened by heavy workloads, outdated equipment, and pay structures that fail to reward specialist skills.

Leaders emphasise the need for clarity on the police's role, alongside reforms to outdated accountability structures and performance metrics.

When, and only when, the functions of the police are properly defined for the 2030s, leaders believe the current 43-force model will need to be overhauled to balance the imperative of local connections with the necessity of expertise and efficiency.

Neighbourhood policing has proven effective in reducing crime, yet resources are thin, and its role lacks a consistent national definition.

Meanwhile online crime is surging, compounded by a lack of digital and forensic specialists to address threats like child exploitation and fraud.

Yet policing is still a largely analogue service, attempting to function in a digital age.

Forces operate with archaic IT systems—some over 50 years old—while short-term budget cycles prevent long-term planning. New technologies such as machine learning, AI and drones are hopelessly underused.

Recruitment for, and retention of, skilled civilian specialists is a constant challenge with the private sector outcompeting forces on pay and conditions.

The "Uplift" programme, while increasing headline officer numbers, has diverted resources from essential civilian staff, further straining capacity.

The broader criminal justice system is also in crisis. Coordination between police, prosecutors and the courts is sorely lacking, with officers forced to spend hours redacting case files for want of a basic data protection agreement between agencies.

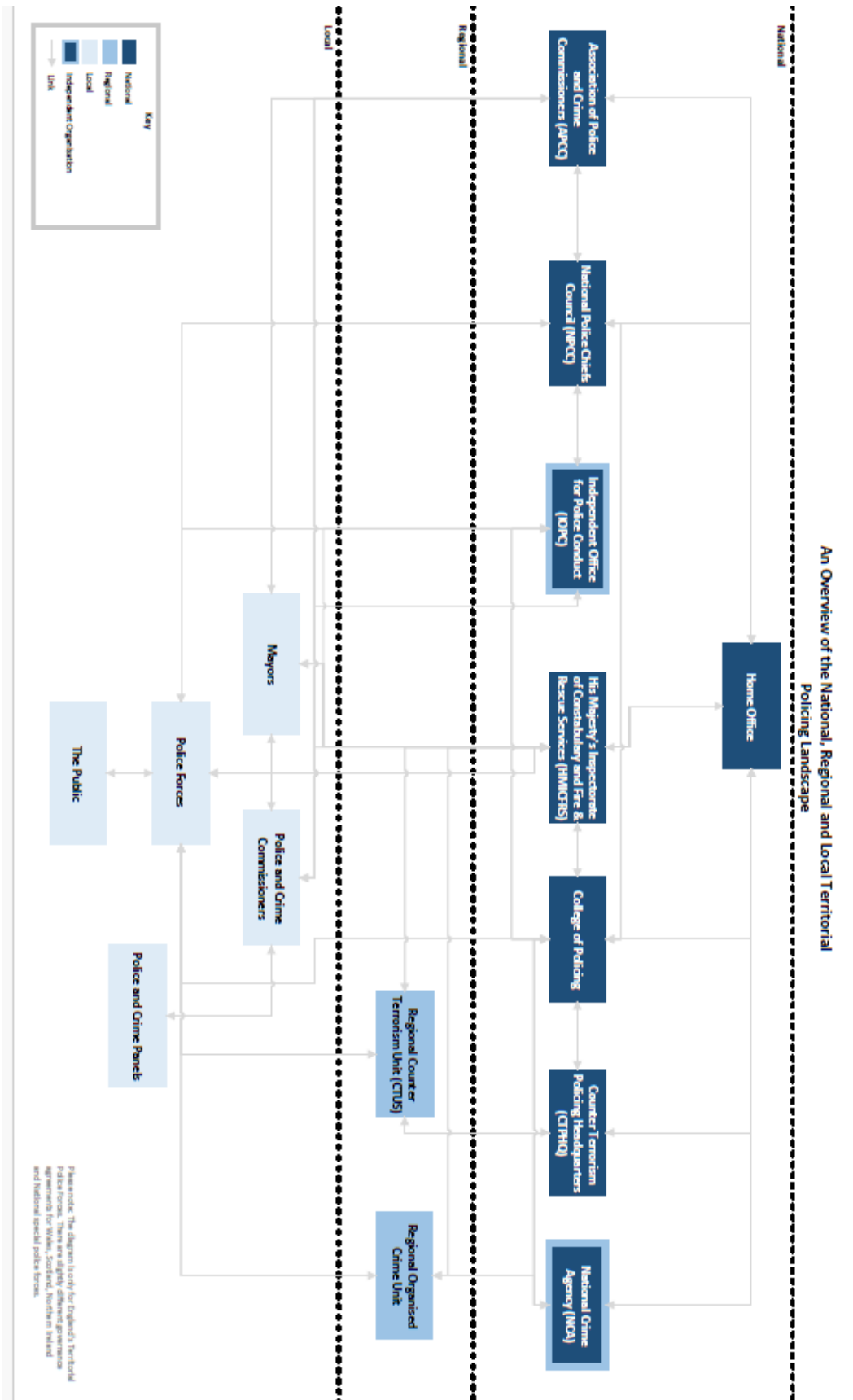
Backlogs in courts, and overcrowded prisons mean there are too many people on the streets who should be in prison. Underfunded probation services mean too many people in prison who should be in the community.

Prisons often release offenders into homelessness and without support, fuelling reoffending, while short-term sentences, which "teach people to be better at crime" remain prevalent.

At every level—prevention, detection, prosecution, and rehabilitation—the system is failing.

This paper presents the evidence, laying the foundations for discussion in the party about a liberal remedy.

Organogram



Chapter 1: trust and accountability

Trust and confidence in the police have declined significantly, shaken by a series of revelations about officers behaving badly and the constant pressure of increasing responsibilities and declining resources. A YouGov poll in October 2024 found more than half (52%) of those surveyed had no or not much confidence in the police to tackle crime locally, compared to 39% in October 2019, while just 4 in 10 of 8000 people polled between July 2022 and September 2023, across 9 English regions, expressed their trust in the service.

Victims of crimes, from phone theft to something as devastating as rape, now think twice before reporting to the police, fearing it is a waste of time, with little realistic hope of justice.

As a result, many leaders say rebuilding public trust and confidence is now the service's most pressing and important challenge.

Defining function

The UK's public services are buckling under pressure, with the police routinely left to pick up the pieces. A huge proportion of police work – at times up to 80% in one force – is now unrelated to crime.

“There is an urgent need to clarify what we want from policing”

Officers can spend entire shifts in hospitals, waiting for mental health assessments; or in police stations looking after vulnerable children who've either absconded from care, or been removed from the family home for their own protection. Police officers are effectively left to 'babysit' these often-traumatised youngsters – for up to 72 hours – while they wait for overwhelmed children's

services workers to come and collect them.

Today's expanding mission results in a service stretched too thin to meet ever rising demand. Leaders are constantly firefighting, scrambling to cover commitments by shifting resources - robbing Peter to pay Paul.

Frustratingly, this is not always driven by operational necessity, but by shifting political priorities or media headlines. Additional responsibilities, such as the requirement to seize unlicensed XL Bully dogs, resulted in significant unexpected costs. The cost of kennelling and vet's fees for these dogs for example is eating into already overstretched force budgets, with cases taking up to a year to reach court.

One leader recalled the recent directive received by forces around the need to make asylum enforcement arrests, and how these orders were only received on a Friday, with the arrests scheduled to be made the following Monday. Despite the huge impact and disruption this brought about, the service wasn't involved in conversations beforehand, meaning little attention was given to matters such as the need for community impact assessments.

Chiefs feel strongly that any new responsibilities handed down by Parliament must come with the funding needed to carry them out effectively. Similarly, recommendations for change risk gathering dust and remaining unimplemented if they aren't backed by adequate funding. Underlying all of this is a need for better communication between policing and government.

Policing *must* deliver value for money, showing the public it can manage resources wisely, handle major incidents, and meet its core mission. But to do that, the police need something in return: clarity on what that mission really is.

When a victim of crime calls for help, and no one turns up, the public do not know that every available officer may be handling a mental health emergency or protecting a vulnerable child. All they see is failure. Clarity about function is a pre-requisite for building public trust.

Vetting and conduct

Police leaders believe they have made significant strides in improving ethical standards and internal accountability. For example, new rules ensure vetting standards are now consistent for both new recruits and serving officers. Previously, past misconduct proceedings did not necessarily bar an individual from continuing their police career, whereas a poor record can now result in dismissal.

The Angiolini Inquiry – established in the wake of the Sarah Everard case – has highlighted inconsistent vetting practices; backlogs caused by the unprecedented scale of the recent Uplift recruitment; and concerns around the vetting of officers transferring between forces. This has already led to changes in policy.

However, the inspectorate lacks enforcement power to *ensure* forces comply with the action points they have been given. Countless well researched reports from the Inspectorate and others have been published over the years, but recommendations are seldom if ever implemented in full.

For example, the Jay report – following a seven-year independent inquiry into child sexual abuse – was published in 2022 with 20 recommendations for change. More than two years later, none have been put into practice.

Meanwhile concerns remain about the resourcing of forces' own professional standards departments, which are being inundated with record numbers of complaints. The way forces deal with this is hugely inconsistent. For example, one force investigates only 2% of formal complaints, while there have been concerns around racial disparities, with BAME officers almost twice as likely to face misconduct hearings, despite receiving proportionately no more complaints than colleagues.

The Independent Office for Police Conduct (IOPC) is key to maintaining the public's trust, by demonstrating police misconduct will be handled swiftly, fairly, and transparently. Within policing, the IOPC is seen as effective in identifying issues, but much too slow in delivering results. Investigations can drag on for years. IOPC reform is therefore necessary and should prioritise improved leadership and more focused investigations.

Accountability

Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs) are responsible for ensuring a force is effective, setting its strategy and controlling its budget. They also have power to hire and fire the Chief Constable. This puts too much power in the hands of one person and causes inevitable tension between PCCs who control budgets and Chief Constables who are supposed to enjoy operational independence.

PCC control over a chief officer's contract terms creates a power imbalance – chiefs who are offered just a three-year contract for example have an incentive to 'toe the line.' This does little to serve the public, especially with some commissioners seen to prioritise short-term political wins over evidence-led, long-term investment. Short contract offers put additional pressure on chiefs to go along with their commissioner's priorities, further undermining their autonomy.

A *quarter* of leaders now leave their post every year on average. In the most recent case, a Chief Constable was suspended from his job only to be reinstated 12 days later. Such instability heightens existing concerns about the appointments process,

"As soon as Police
& Crime
Commissioners are
elected, they are
back into election
mode"

with PCCs criticised for poor judgement, lack of scrutiny and nepotism, exacerbating public anxiety about the culture within policing. The police now want regulatory change to ensure commissioners are required to consult with the police inspectorate *before* taking a decision to dismiss a chief officer.

Ultimately many leaders see the current PCC model as a failure, some branding it a 'costly disaster.' In addition, some believe the model to be "a real block to reform."

Public turnout in the most recent PCC elections averaged 23%, a drop of 11% (from 34%) in just three years, also weakening claims to accountability.

Many leaders support a model with broader oversight, such as a police board (not dissimilar to the former Police Authorities), which would ensure more diverse and representative leadership.

Performance measurement

The value of His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) inspections is widely recognised. Perhaps surprisingly, a significant proportion of chief officers would accept the inspectorate being given the power to issue directions to forces, requiring them to implement urgent change, although only in limited and exceptional circumstances where public safety is at significant risk.

However, the HMICFRS performance measurement system is a source of widespread frustration. It relies on metrics some see as 'arbitrary' and bearing little relevance to current local operational demands or public trust. It is not yet clear what impact a newly created Home Office-based 'police and performance unit' will have in addressing these concerns.

The system can overlook important differences between forces, offering an incomplete picture and making fair comparison difficult. The fixation on percentages – branded by

one chief as “an obsession with solved crime rates” - encourages some forces to game the numbers, prioritising targets that are easiest to meet, rather than the issues mattering most to the public. It also risks oversimplifying the complexities of policing, for example failing to account for the need to appropriately handle victims of sexual offences. While police inspectors regularly change the criteria they use to measure performance within forces, there is some residual concern that modern harms like digital sexual exploitation still receive less scrutiny than more traditional measures like burglary rates.

This risks skewing public awareness and leaving critical areas of policing under resourced by forces under pressure to demonstrate value for money. Some chiefs want a more nuanced approach to performance measurement, changing the emphasis to measuring *outcomes* that better reflect a force’s success, such as reduced harm, increased reporting, and public trust and confidence.

Some believe the police inspectorate remains too rigid and outdated, and call for a more agile, timely approach to inspections. Currently inspection findings are published many months after an inspection, meaning the data may already be out of date, with forces already having made the required improvements. This demoralises the workforce and potentially misleads the public. Other chiefs want an inspectorate that is less bureaucratic and more supportive, which focuses on helping forces improve, rather than pointing out flaws.

Balancing national consistency with local accountability

There is widespread recognition among police chiefs that the current 43-force model is outdated, inefficient, and leads to a postcode lottery in the standard of service received by the public.

Despite huge differences in size - Leeds district alone is bigger than 14 entire forces - every force operates with the same structure. This was characterised by one senior leader as ‘a very old-fashioned hierarchical system,’ with *nine* levels between the Chief Constable at the top and the person on the ground delivering the service.

The current model of ‘local policing, local accountability and local budgets’ was designed for a time when crime tended to be local...but this model is now proving a barrier to success, making it difficult to deal with modern day crime which increasingly crosses national and international borders, demanding a more streamlined policing structure.

Despite this there is unanimous agreement within policing that keeping the traditional local connection remains vital. Forces need to strike a balance: large enough to handle specialist operations, yet small enough to stay connected to communities, with around two million residents per Chief Constable considered manageable.

Leaders strongly back building on the structures already in place, which could involve delivering specialised services regionally while staying connected to local communities.

They point to the success of the current counterterrorism model, which operates nationally through regional hubs but relies on locally embedded officers who know

their communities. Unlike the centralised National Crime Agency, this model balances national expertise with local knowledge.

Yet despite support for more force collaboration, big challenges remain aligning different forces, breaking through political barriers, and ensuring local accountability among them. It is crucial that local needs do not get buried under regional or national priorities. Smaller forces must always retain the ability to respond effectively to local issues like domestic abuse and county lines.

Nevertheless, it is clear that policing can't sustain its current system. A limited budget is being stretched too thin across too many constituent parts, with waste and inefficiency the result of too many people trying to do the same thing.

Moving forward most leaders agree structural reform should only happen *after* a fundamental review of what a modern British police force should and should not be doing. The consensus is also that it should be done in stages. For example, the creation of a strong national body to direct standards from the centre could be followed by the brigading of services, allowing a more consistent national service to be delivered on a regional basis.

This would be followed by the establishment of new funding relationships, with contracts for items like aircraft brought into the centre, potentially saving millions. *Only then* would this lead to the consolidation of forces themselves, similar to what has happened in Norway, where 54 forces were gradually reduced to 12 over 20 years.

Chapter 2: prevention and priorities

Police leaders believe the only way to manage long-term demand is to tackle crime at its roots, shifting the focus from reactive responding to proactive policing. Although they recognise that regeneration, poverty reduction, and creating opportunities are crucial to crime reduction, these lie beyond the policing remit.

The role of mental health and addiction in driving crime has prompted some forces to fund their own counsellors and drug workers, reflecting a growing belief in the importance of upstream prevention. With demand rising inexorably, this kind of work becomes increasingly vital.

While strong leadership within policing is essential to balance resources and demands, a broader, holistic, system-wide approach is called for. Effective collaboration across agencies, driven by realistic funding, better leadership, and management, is key to meaningful change.

Prevention

The last government's failure to prioritise prevention left forces to take an ad hoc approach to this vital aspect of policing. What is required now is an integrated, evidence-based prevention *framework*. The lesson from Wales, which already prioritises prevention, is that short-term funding for prevention initiatives can be counterproductive. Success requires government funding over the long-term.

Neighbourhood strategies like crime prevention officers and "designing out crime" can also help reduce long-term demand. The latter is an area which could be better prioritised by Government, with one chief suggesting that securing all buildings "by design," such as through better door and window locks, would result in "6,000 less burglaries" on his patch alone. Indeed leaders already work with developers on a voluntary basis to ensure new homes meet the highest security standards. The police not-for-profit Secured by Design (SBD) initiative aims to improve the security of buildings and their immediate surroundings.

It recognises that criminality and antisocial behaviour are often facilitated by poorly designed buildings and spaces, often dating from the 1960s, '70s and 80s. Yet there are now thousands of 'attack resistant' crime prevention products on the market with the ability to make these places safer and more pleasant to live in. Secured by Design's accreditation scheme – the Police Preferred Specification – provides a recognised standard for security products that can deter and reduce crime, with products currently available across 30 different crime categories. It's proving a real success - developers taking part in the initiative are witnessing 65% fewer burglaries in new properties built to SBD standards, compared to properties meeting current minimum standards. However, although 1.5 million UK homes are now built to SBD standards, England lags Scotland and Wales in *mandating* its adoption within the social housing sector.

“Prioritising diversion over criminalisation is a much better way of dealing with youth crime”

There is also significant potential to address more issues outside the criminal justice system through pre-charge and pre-prosecution diversion programmes. However, there is currently no national framework for diversion, resulting in the inconsistent provision and uptake of these programmes. At the same time there needs to be more transparency around the use of diversion, with the public better educated about what this entails, to provide reassurance about its potential effectiveness, and that these programmes are not an ‘easy option.’

A more preventative approach is also required around the ‘frequent flyers’ who come in and out of prison after low level offences only to reoffend, sometimes within hours of their release. Much of the support available in the current system is wrapped around acute offending, rather than volume crime, ignoring this significant cohort. One chief summed up the attitude of many in calling for “justice where appropriate – diversion where not.”

Drugs

Illicit drugs are the elephant in the room. Drug-related deaths are now at their highest level since records began, doubling since 2012 having previously been relatively stable. Opiate deaths, including from heroin and synthetic opioids, continue to soar, while cocaine-related deaths surged by over 30% in the latest figures, nearly ten times higher than in 2011.

The rampant illicit drugs market is implicated in everything from the mental health crisis to shoplifting and organised crime, and to domestic abuse, where cocaine use is particularly prevalent. Shoplifting has reached epidemic proportions, much of it driven by criminal gangs and heroin and synthetic opioid addicts who are chaotic yet organised.

“The rise in shoplifting is largely driven by criminal gangs and heroin and synthetic opioid addicts who are chaotic yet organised,.”

The police have the power to test arrested suspects for specified Class A drugs, like cocaine and heroin, with the aim of identifying those who may need treatment or support. Refusing a test can lead to imprisonment, with a positive result triggering a mandatory assessment, with nine out of ten individuals currently attending this assessment. However, the police cannot force individuals to stay in any

subsequent treatment programme.

What the police now want is to expand the scope of when drug testing can be carried out. Currently, testing is only allowed if a person is arrested or charged with a ‘trigger offence,’ typically theft, fraud, or drug-related crimes. However, this approach is outdated. Drug habits are no longer simply linked to acquisitive crimes like burglary –


the societal prevalence of drugs like cocaine means many people with a drug problem do not need to steal to fund their habit. The police are therefore advocating for a broader list of offences to trigger testing, particularly in relation to domestic abuse.

Of the almost 60,000 tests reported by forces last year, 53% were positive. But there is a lack of data on what happens next, with only 12 forces returning figures for treatment referrals. Better data recording is required to understand the long-term value of drug testing, and to uncover patterns between drug use and offending. However constant changes to recording requirements around drug testing on arrest, three in the last year alone, mean what is now needed is a period of stability.

Neighbourhood policing

Neighbourhood policing can greatly ease the burden on response teams. It is not just about engaging with locals - it is about knowing where domestic abuse victims and offenders live, where vulnerable children are, and what low-level drug dealers are doing.

Neighbourhood officers act as a force's eyes and ears, spotting emerging issues and antisocial behaviour, and enabling proactive measures such as applying for orders, preventing the creation of further victims.



“Neighbourhood
policing isn’t just
about chatting to
nice people.”

Repeat offenders are at the core of demand in many areas of policing. For example, the evidence suggests victims of domestic abuse tend to experience around 40 incidents before contacting police for the first time. Visible, skilled, tactful, and approachable community officers can make the traumatic experience of reporting easier for such victims, the vast majority of whom are women.

Some forces are setting up dedicated neighbourhood teams, with promising results. These teams focus on building community trust through visible policing, youth events, and activities like bike marking.

However, if community policing is to be truly effective, there needs to be a clear, consistent understanding across all police forces of what effective ‘neighbourhood policing’ actually entails, backed by evidence and a national definition. Without this consistency it is unclear what difference Government promises of extra ‘neighbourhood officers due to be in post over the next four years’ will make in practice.

However, balancing effective neighbourhood policing with data-driven targets, while also filling critical vacancies for positions like detectives, remains a challenge. To strike the right balance with other operational demands, it is therefore crucial that neighbourhood policing is protected with ring-fenced funding, guaranteed for several years.

Knife crime

The number of children cautioned or sentenced for knife or offensive weapon offences has risen almost 25% in the last decade, while the latest figures show 507 children were treated in English hospitals for knife injuries in the 12 months to April 2024. There is growing recognition of the need for a public health approach to knife crime, which has seen some success in Scotland and involves closer collaboration between police, social services, youth and community services, offending and probation teams, the NHS and local voluntary organisations. Leaders want to see more funding around prevention for children in their pre and early teens but currently struggle to balance prevention with visible policing.

At least one Chief Constable has chosen to make savings in other areas to enable officers to work in schools, where their force uses innovative approaches like Virtual Reality to engage young people and prevent future offending. Some forces also carry out regular knife amnesties, placing weapons bins in police stations as part of ongoing prevention efforts. One force saw about 150 large knives, machetes and other weapons handed in during a week-long amnesty last year, with around another 20 'zombie-style' knives given up as part of a national Government-backed campaign. However, evidence from previous national amnesties suggests that while they can send an important message, and have value as part of a set of broader initiatives, on their own amnesties tend to have a very limited and short-term impact on crime levels, largely failing to address issues of availability, or the motivations underlying a person's decision to carry a knife.

High-visibility local policing is particularly essential for combating knife crime. This is showing success in one force, demonstrated by lower homicide rates and 'minimal' knife-related deaths. As one chief commented: "Most local cops would like more time to work with teenagers in their area, so they can build up a relationship. There's a real role for police here – schools can't tackle this alone." However, once organised criminal gangs are dismantled, it is vital to focus on rebuilding communities and strengthening resilience, to prevent these predatory criminals from moving back in. This is underlined by recent figures showing the reoffending rate among children has risen for the second consecutive year (to 32.5%), while inmates with the highest rate of reoffending are aged 10-17. Tackling this requires funding and collaboration across multiple agencies.

"Getting to young people very early is essential. It's the one thing that works and we're failing to do it remotely well"

Hate crime

Forces report a significant rise in hate crime, with racialised attacks and incidents such as the daubing of swastikas on property. Recorded hate crime is at more than twice the level of a decade ago. In 2023/24, there was a 25% increase in religious hate crimes compared with the previous year. This is driven by a rise in hate crimes against Jewish people and to a lesser extent Muslim people and has occurred since the beginning of the Israel-Hamas conflict. However over two thirds of hate crimes continue to be racially motivated¹.

¹ Official statistics, [Hate crime, England and Wales, year ending March 2024](#), released October 2024

Mental health

” The impact of mental health issues is absolutely overwhelming with a history stemming back to school and that affects all aspects of policing including terrorism”

Chapter 1 highlighted concerns about police shouldering the responsibilities of other agencies, a problem driven by years of underinvestment in other public services.

The police are now effectively the agency of first and last resort. Despite the introduction of Community Support Partnerships, which aim to unite police with local authorities, health services, fire and rescue, and probation, these overstretched agencies continue to operate in silos, leaving the police to fill the gaps.

Police-led initiatives like ‘Right Care, Right Person’ aim to reduce pressure on officers by

ensuring mental health crises are handled by healthcare professionals, unless crime or serious risk of harm is involved.

This is easing some of the burden, but officers still find themselves spending entire shifts waiting in hospital A&E queues. During a recent 30-day period, one force calculated its officers spent 1,800 hours supervising individuals detained under the Mental Health Act; in another force it is taking more than 12 hours on average to hand a person over to the appropriate agency. Yet another force said the time its officers spent just on mental health issues was the equivalent of the work of 20 full-time officers. Another revealed ‘*nearly every call*’ their force receives is linked in some way to poor mental health.

Much of this work should lie with health and social care services. But police suggest other agencies simply refuse to take up this burden without extra funding – the ambulance service for example told one force that “they’re not commissioned” to do this kind of work. Policing however “is not good at saying no.” Leaders therefore say substantial investment in the health and social care sector is also critical for policing.

Children's services

A strategic shift into prevention and diversion is particularly critical for those 'on the cusp' of children's social care. Children in the 'looked after' system, and children more generally, are a key driver of repeat demand on policing, because of the scarcity of prevention in terms of youth services.

"Our only opportunity to police the future is the work we do with communities and young people now."

The solution lies in earlier identification of childhood trauma – one leader suggests this means at the age of 2 or 3 - with a pan-system approach to prevent young people going on to be being criminalised. In addition, there needs to be a prevention focus around drugs, and mental health.

Meanwhile, significant policing resources are also spent filling day-to-day gaps in the failing children's residential care and child protection systems. Inadequate care and prevention services mean vulnerable young people are frequently picked up by the police, who take ultimate responsibility for ensuring their safety. Officers must then look after them, sometimes for up to 72 hours, because social services are unavailable.

In addition, because of budget constraints and a national shortage of care facilities for young people, local authorities are often placing vulnerable children out of area, sometimes hundreds of miles away in parts of the country where housing costs are much cheaper, usually the north of England. Police find themselves responsible for transporting vulnerable children sometimes hundreds of miles, not least because the social workers cannot turn up swiftly in an emergency.

These children often run away, wanting to return to a familiar environment. Once the child is located by the police, the process of returning them to their legal guardian then tends to take longer as the same relationships will not be in place between the local force and the relevant out-of-area child safeguarding team. This is exacerbated by the general lack of social workers available and those that have excessive and urgent workloads.

"Social services regularly clock off at 4pm on a Friday assuming the police will cover for them over the weekend"

One chief describes how the exhausted and overstretched local social services team commonly "clocks off at 4pm on a Friday, assuming the police will cover for them over the weekend". Police officers can be left spending hours driving across the country with these children, as it is quicker than waiting for a social worker to turn up.

As well as the issue around sometimes very troubled young people spending this amount of time in police custody, there is a further risk that if the child comes to any harm, it is the police

who will be subject to a lengthy investigation, despite the fact they were not the appropriate agency to be dealing with the situation in the first place.

A systemic approach, early intervention and prevention is crucial to reducing long-term demand. This means identifying at-risk young people early and focusing on mental health, including the impact of adverse childhood experiences - key factors in the risk of offending. Cross-government agreements are essential to drive collaboration between departments both nationally and locally. This would allow a more integrated approach, bringing together social services, health agencies, and the criminal justice system to deal with problems before they escalate.

Modern slavery and child exploitation

In 2024 the National Crime Agency estimated there were between 710,000 and 840,000 UK-based adult sex offenders posing varying degrees of risk to children, equivalent to 1.3% to 1.6% of the UK adult population. Around one third of physical sexual abuse offences against children recorded by the police occur within the family environment, although other estimates suggest this figure is likely to be closer to two-thirds, with familial abuse believed to be significantly underreported. What is evident though is that the scale, complexity, and severity of the child sexual abuse threat is increasing.

Growing public concern around the risk posed by grooming gangs highlights the urgent need to safeguard vulnerable children within every community to ensure they do not fall prey to these predators. Grooming and child sexual exploitation are complex and resource-intensive areas to police, particularly given the speed at which offenders adapt. For example, police are attempting to disrupt abusers through initiatives like Operation Makesafe, working with high street hotel chains to raise awareness of child sexual exploitation on their premises, training staff in how to identify signs of abuse and how to report concerns. Yet the growth in contactless check-ins threatens to undermine its effectiveness. The police also note it's extremely rare for children to experience only one form of exploitation: sexual abuse commonly occurs at the same time children are being coerced into moving drugs or money laundering.

Yet while offline abuse continues, much of this criminality has now moved online. National reports of online grooming rose 80% in the four years from 2018/19. More recently, increased use of Snapchat is making it harder to track offenders; while there are growing concerns about virtual reality spaces being used as a tool of organised abuse, and around potential exploitation on online mental health forums. Police leaders warn levels of online child sexual abuse are now 'frightening' – explaining they could put 10 times more people into online paedophile investigations and they'd still be overworked.

Unfortunately there is a serious shortage of cyber experts, who are critical to identifying organised criminals by deciphering encrypted material and infiltrating the dark web. This work is extremely complex – police now deal with cryptocurrency-linked kidnappings; a rising tide of AI-generated ‘deepfake’ child abuse imagery; and the phenomenon of online (virtual) sexual assaults, which are often committed through gaming platforms.

“We could put 10 times more people in online investigations and keep them busy”

Covert tactics to disrupt criminal networks at source are critical but surveillance capacity is limited. Regional and national collaborations support local policing in launching undercover operations, but regional specialists are critically overstretched. For example, one regional unit

currently only has the capacity to investigate 10 organised crime gangs at any one time, barely skimming the surface of local demand. Meanwhile, forces must balance effective covert operations to smash these gangs, with visible policing to reassure the public.

Violence against women and girls

Forces are facing a sharp rise in gender-related crimes, from rape and serious sexual offences to ‘epidemic’ levels of domestic abuse, online harassment, and exploitation - particularly of children and young people.

Police say there are now vast numbers of offenders in the UK, driven by many factors, including the increased sexualisation of young people and access to toxic online content. Reported violence against women and girls has more than tripled over the last decade. But while capacity within policing and the wider criminal justice system is critical, leaders also stress that justice solutions *alone* will not be enough to make a significant dent in this.

“The current approach to VAWG is like asking a mouse to swallow an elephant”

One chief described current demand in this area as like ‘asking a mouse to swallow an elephant.’ The complexity of these cases makes them highly resource-intensive, putting immense pressure on police budgets. Most but not all forces now have specialist teams to investigate rape and serious sexual offences, with more officers training to work in this area. However an inexperienced workforce means it will take time to build this specialist capacity.

Some progress has been made around how rape cases are handled, but more can be done to support domestic abuse survivors. Slow case progress after an abuser is arrested leaves victims frightened, anxious, and highly vulnerable to intimidation. These cases must currently be referred to prosecutors for a charging decision, but some chiefs want more flexibility, with police given the power to directly charge lower-level cases, including domestic abuse incidents, allowing officers to bypass prosecutors and speed up justice (see page 26). Delays mean the current wait for a

charging decision is 45 to 50 days: the maximum should be 28. Quick charges and court hearings could transform victims' experience.

Innovative work in this area is being constrained by resources. A recent push by one force to get domestic abuse cases into court within days saw victims presenting in court with visible injuries, including black eyes. This resulted in a significant spike in early guilty pleas, only for the pilot to have to be cut short due to lack of court space.

Court delays of up to two and a half years also mean domestic abuse perpetrators are routinely bailed, leaving them free to intimidate witnesses, who typically withdraw their complaint within just five days. Since breaching bail is not itself a criminal offence if a suspect is not charged, the police can do little other than re-arrest the perpetrator before releasing them again, leaving victims further exposed. On other occasions suspects are simply released under investigation, without any bail conditions in place.

“Victims of domestic abuse tend to experience 40 or so incidents before getting in touch with police for the first time”

Forces are struggling to balance specialist teams with local responses, especially in tackling domestic abuse. There is a push for these cases to be managed more holistically, but limited resources hinder progress. Some forces are investing in prevention and intervention. However promising initiatives - like a pilot scheme using plain clothes officers to build trust with domestic abuse survivors - remain underdeveloped, due to the need for significant extra cash.

The fact a small group of repeat offenders are responsible for a disproportionate amount of domestic abuse makes them a key target for prevention. In recent years victim support has understandably been the priority. Yet the ongoing lack of effective perpetrator programmes is seriously hampering efforts to break the cycle of abuse, allowing offenders to create yet *more* victims. Work is urgently needed to evaluate and expand the most successful of these programmes⁵.

Progress is also needed on Clare's Law, a national disclosure scheme introduced in 2014 that lets individuals ask the police if their partner, or partner of someone close, has a history of abuse or violence. This is an important preventative tool, but while one force has a unit dedicated to providing this information, others are rejecting most requests.

“One force has 90 domestic abuse incidents every day, ranging from murder to assaults.”

The creation of Domestic Abuse Protection Notices (DAPNs) and Domestic Abuse Protection Orders (DAPOs) under the Domestic Abuse Act is helpful but require police resources to ensure that an offender is keeping to the terms of their DAPN or DAPO, and to liaise with probation and others where tagging is part of the order.

Overall, the police believe the true scale of domestic abuse is still not fully understood, with a long-term focus on prevention required to

address the spread of insidious beliefs that are linked to factors like young boys having access to pornography and harmful online content.

Other serious and organised crime

Tackling organised crime groups (OCGs) drains significant policing resources, but there is concern the level of intimidation they cause in certain areas is still overlooked. These gangs are involved in drug trafficking, county lines operations (which forces are dismantling daily), and agricultural theft - high-tech equipment such as satellite domes are now regularly stolen to order from tractors and farm vehicles before being exported. They also organise what is thought to be the ‘petty’ crime of shoplifting, which is linked to drugs but also increasingly connected to overseas criminal organisations.

In addition, a vast amount of fraud is falling through the cracks, particularly lower level ‘everyday’ fraud not considered serious enough to be diverted to regional investigators. Despite financial fraud now making up 40% of UK crime, just 1% of the police workforce is being allocated to deal with it. Some forces are attempting to investigate fraud better ‘in-house,’ but they lack the technical expertise required, with the wider workforce still not possessing the skills needed to knowledgeably advise and support victims. In addition, the complexity and labour intensity of this work means it is rarely prioritised. A further complication for policing serious and organised crime is the sheer number of different funding streams in this area. In contrast to the clarity around the money available for counter terrorism, around 30 different funding streams go towards tackling the fight against organised crime.

Asylum

A potentially growing area of concern was hinted at by one Chief Constable, who outlined growing fears that criminals are badly abusing the asylum system, particularly in terms of sexual offending. The level of such offending is now so prevalent in one area the force has formed a ‘foreign national offenders’ team’ to deal with the fallout.

Children have been sexually assaulted by asylum seekers, who are then unable to be deported due to fears about their safety in their country of origin. A number of these abusers are repeat and “prolific” offenders yet, in at least one case, have gone on to be granted citizenship. This makes deportation almost impossible unless they are implicated in terrorism or involved in international organised crime.

Lessons from counterterrorism

Counterterrorism (CT) is funded separately, with responsibility lying primarily with national and regional networks. Local forces contribute but lack direct control over CT assets.

However, training does incorporate counterterrorist practices across all policing levels, including neighbourhood teams, who are often best placed to pick up on the symptoms of organised criminality. The existing policing model in this area is particularly successful, with extensive collaboration across local, regional, and national units, including Regional Organised Crime Units (ROCUs) and the National Crime Agency (NCA).

Chapter 3: The tools for the job

The police struggle to keep up with both public expectations and modern crime patterns, hindered by an array of systemic issues including outdated technology and rigid pay structures.

Senior leaders want the service to radically change how it goes about doing things, with root-and-branch reform required in areas ranging from funding to recruitment, to how policing is organised.

Above all leaders express frustration at policing's failure to take full advantage of potentially game-changing existing and new technologies, limiting law enforcement's ability to keep up with, let alone get ahead of, criminals.

Funding - see also Appendix 3

Police funding settlements are characterised by short-termism, creating huge challenges for long term planning. Annual uncertainty around budget allocations means forces have to make multi-million-pound investments, despite having no idea what they can realistically afford.

For example, forces might need to sign a contract for the delivery of a fleet of new drones over the next three years – without knowing if they will have the funds to cover this commitment in years two or three. If future budgets fall short of what is expected, forces then need to make unplanned savings. Therefore, a key ask now is for long term stability and clarity around available budgets.

The previous government also scrapped the funding pot earmarked for forces' capital expenditure, shifting all core funding to resource budgets. This single pot must now cover day-to-day spending, *and* help forces maintain ageing estates which have been starved of investment for several decades – if policing fails to get any capital funding in the upcoming Comprehensive Spending Review, forces will have gone a decade without any local capital funding. This has variously led to damp, crumbling police stations; clapped out vehicles that run the risk of breaking down; and antiquated radios unfit for a modern 21st century workplace.

Inflation, rising operational costs, and increasing wage bills are also not properly accounted for in funding settlements. This has left many chiefs grappling with million-pound shortfalls in their day-to-day budgets. In practice, tight finances and rising demand mean many forces simply do not have the ability to invest in vital infrastructure. Policing offers many opportunities to demonstrate the innovation and talent within British science, yet this potential remains largely untapped.

Frustration around this is made worse because the police funding allocation formula – introduced in 2006 - is widely recognised as fundamentally flawed and out of date. Resources are allocated to forces based on complex calculations few people understand, and which largely rely on Census data from 2001 and 2003/04 data.

These outdated figures fail to reflect population growth and shifts, leaving some forces relatively well-funded while others fall further behind. Grants are distributed according to this same formula, with the gap further entrenched by increasing reliance on the

council tax precept to fund policing. This disproportionately disadvantages areas with more properties in lower council tax bands.

The overall outcome is that comparable forces now face significant differences in their core budgets. Reform in this area requires political courage, given it will mean winners and losers, but is widely considered overdue.

Technology and co-ordination

Perhaps more than any other public service, policing is an analogue operation trying to command public confidence in a digital age. Across the 43 police forces, there are 43 different IT systems, each with a varying ability to communicate with the others.

This is good news for commercial suppliers but reduces the efficacy of the overall service and sees millions of pounds wasted. The only 'national' systems currently in use are the 51-year-old Police National Computer (PNC), and the Police National Database (PND), which although 'only' 14 years old is already seen as effectively obsolete, with issues integrating it with more modern IT systems. Outdated technology and disconnected systems also increase vulnerability to cybersecurity risks. Policing is particularly vulnerable in this regard, because of the multiple 'in' points to these systems, and because the data it holds is of the highest street value on the dark web.

"There is a significant technological debt in policing and a pressing need to invest in ICT and data skills if the service is to remain relevant".

A lack of strategic coordination makes it difficult to implement cutting-edge technology on a national scale, with each force responsible for its own technology planning, and funding coming from their own local budgets. The scrapping of ring-fenced capital funding for individual forces in 2016 also holds progress back. As of now up to

90% of the money forces invest in police technology is spent on maintaining existing systems.

Good practice can and does take place, such as the roll out of GoodSAM, which assists forces to open a caller's phone camera while they are on the line, track a caller's exact location and even take recorded witness statements. Yet one in four forces still do not use the technology, some 12 years after it was first developed.

Likewise, drones are becoming a cost-effective, efficient alternative to helicopters for tasks like finding missing people, monitoring antisocial behaviour, and managing public order. While deploying a police helicopter through the national police air service for 56 hours per year costs a force around £250,000 - and any additional use beyond that is charged by the minute - the cost of deploying a drone instead can be measured "in the pence".

Drones' quick deployment also makes them invaluable in time-critical situations: in more rural areas it can take a helicopter at least 30 minutes just to get to the scene, potentially making the difference between life and death. Drones' versatility is

particularly useful for surveillance and rural crime. Many forces now use this technology daily, often collaborating on licensing, pilot training and equipment sharing.

But lack of national coordination and procurement means police are still not using them to their full potential. Current regulations restrict drone usage to 'line-of-sight' operations, limiting the police's ability to pursue suspects, act as first responders, or provide early situational awareness. New legislation for 'beyond-line-of-sight capability' is now awaited.

What is now needed is a slicker, unified IT, and technology setup to get forces sharing information and good practice seamlessly. A modern, cloud-based system which makes it easier for police forces to talk to each other alongside common procurement would "change the game" in terms of police productivity and economies of scale.

Very significant investment in IT and AI is required, but it holds the promise of a quick return in improved outcomes.

Data, AI, and the skills shortage

Forces have a wealth of data at their fingertips, but lack of technological investment means much of it is still not exploited operationally. Online offending now makes up half of all crime, with much of originating as far away as West Africa and Russia.

Yet chief constables struggle to recruit experienced staff capable of keeping up with rapidly developing technologies like AI and machine learning.

More digital experts are badly needed, with policing losing out to a private sector which lures talent away with bigger salaries and better working conditions. Worse, when forces train up their own people they are often poached by big business, allowing industry to reap the benefits of specialist police training.

Forces cannot compete with companies who can offer staff "double the salary for half the stress" in sectors such as financial investigation. One leader cited the example of a cryptocurrency expert, who left the force after being offered five times his salary by industry. Another notes "almost having to untrain (new highly skilled specialist recruits) or take them back in time" to enable them to work with their force's antiquated technology and IT systems.

Smaller forces cannot afford digital investigation teams of their own, relying on access to cyber specialists at Regional Organised Crime Units (ROCU). Yet these small teams of specialists are themselves overstretched, and often restricted to taking on only the most urgent, high-level cases.

Policing is working hard to plug these skills gaps. Some recruit from local universities and run direct entry investigator schemes, in fraud investigation for example. One employs 200 students to give cybersecurity training to companies, and a number work with the private sector, including big technology. Other leaders stress the need for all officers to be 'omnicompetent' and have better basic technological investigative training. However, policing remains in dire need of staff and officers with technical knowledge if it is not to be left trailing in the wake of online criminals.

Forensics

Delays in forensic analysis, particularly for digital evidence, slow down prosecutions, and lead to court delays for victims. Despite improvements in turnaround times, digital backlogs persist, with around 19,000 devices awaiting analysis at the time of writing. This is the lowest level for 3 years, with the majority of other forensic services meeting demand. However, the physical forensic market has seen instability, and backlogs remain, particularly in drugs and biological testing for bodily fluids and DNA; and in analysing samples taken from drivers involved in drink and drug driving cases.

Forensic services are provided to police through a combination of 'in-house' police and commercial suppliers. However heavy reliance on a few external suppliers creates vulnerability, with the commercial market struggling with increasingly low profit margins and high entry barriers. Fluctuating demand, national campaigns and inadequate forecasting means providers find it difficult to scale operations, causing more delays. Policing needs to act with a coordinated voice if it wants a strong and stable market, with national strategies for procurement and contract management needed. Work to improve collaboration between forces and forensic suppliers is ongoing and involves standardising services and turnaround times.

Most, if not all crimes now have some kind of digital footprint, so work is also continuing to improve policing's 'in-house' ability to recover, analyse and interpret digital device data. Accreditation levels for digital forensic units are rising, with 20 forces now reaching the minimum national standard required for gathering evidence from mobile phones, and 33 reaching the required level of competence in capturing computer data. But achieving and maintaining accreditation is a costly, complex process, slowing progress. Further regional collaborations would address this, enhancing efficiency and consistency, and allowing for economies of scale.

Recruiting the best person for the job

One key issue is around who is best placed to do what work – officers or staff? Much of the required skillset is now found among staff, with forces increasingly turning to civilian investigators who can infiltrate the dark web.

“There is a difference between ensuring the public feel safe through more police visibility and keeping them safe and those do not necessarily align”

Unfortunately, this does not fit the current political narrative, or indeed funding model, with the Labour government continuing the focus on *officer* numbers. Yet while leaders welcome any boost in police numbers, they say simply pledging 'more officers' largely misses the point.

The service is still struggling to absorb the tens of thousands of new officers recruited under the previous Government's emergency Uplift programme. Uplift was a necessary exercise in damage limitation after years of damaging workforce cuts. However, the young age of recruits has resulted in a very inexperienced frontline who now need to be trained, supervised, and given time to gain experience and bed in.

A simplistic focus on officer numbers also ignores the changing operational reality of modern policing, where increasingly what is needed are recruits with the skills to catch online paedophiles, or to infiltrate and disrupt criminal operations on the dark web. While community visibility is critical, many leaders would now like to see a shift of political focus, from “more officers” to “more people,” starting with a public conversation around who is actually best to deliver policing.

Current rules on fitness are also outdated, with other skills and traits of increasing importance. Parity of esteem for non-warranted personnel would be a good start. Meanwhile, more flexible career paths and new entry routes are vital to attract mid-career individuals, and to reflect the fact people now move jobs more frequently. Less traditional pathways - such as internships, or the ability to enter the service on a part-time basis – are required. Some forces already do this, with one chief noting the successful results of employing ex-service personnel.

Uplift: ripe for reform

As part of the Uplift programme introduced in 2019, a significant chunk of a force’s annual budget is tied to officer numbers. Chiefs cannot use this ring-fenced funding to recruit much needed staff.

In addition, if they fail to maintain these officer number targets, forces face potentially crippling financial penalties which can amount to millions. In practice this leaves forces with little choice but to spend their workforce budget on warranted officers instead of specialist staff.

This has unintended consequences. Under pressure to make savings, and with the only real option to cut non-officer staffing costs, leaders are having to pull warranted officers off the frontline to fill emerging back-office gaps. The result of this, ironically, is even *fewer* experienced ‘bobbies on the beat,’ with neighbourhood policing (and officer morale) badly damaged. One leader claims the Uplift programme is now “completely disfiguring” the organisation.

Forces finding themselves just one officer short of their Uplift target officer headcount have been liable to lose out on £80,000 a year, with a larger shortfall putting their whole Uplift grant at risk, the equivalent of millions of pounds in funding. For example, the Met lost more than £30million in funding as a result of failing to meet its officer recruitment targets.

This approach is hugely inefficient. Officers are more expensive to employ than police staff, and their training and warranted powers are wasted on tasks better suited to civilian staff. It ignores both local needs and operational priorities. Staff who are gathering intelligence and analysing data are critical to solving crimes. Cutting these roles makes the police less effective.

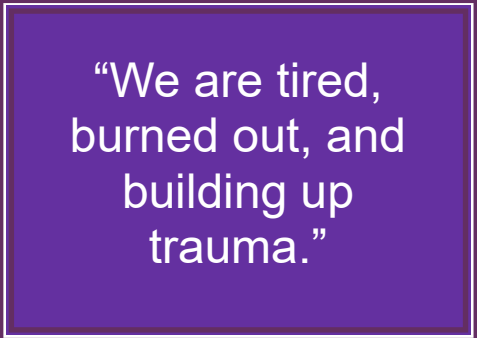
The majority of chiefs now simply want to be allowed to get on with the job of managing their own workforce. They want to be able to use their professional expertise and judgement on who to hire and how best to deploy them. They believe money would be better spent if politicians were to set out the strategic priorities for policing – with Chief Constables given the freedom to deploy whatever blend of officers, staff, specialists, and technology they consider necessary to carry out the brief.

Officer retention and morale

Officer recruitment is generally not a problem, with application numbers high. But retention – of both officers and staff - is a growing concern.

Vetting failures such as that in the Couzens case undoubtedly hit morale, making it harder for many to feel pride in the uniform. The rise in public complaints, (many which are triggered by the length of time victims have to wait for perpetrators to be brought to justice) and a broader narrative of blame, makes officers feel their hard work goes unrecognised.

High workloads, traumatic incidents, and shift work also take a heavy toll on the workforce's mental health and wellbeing. A third of frontline officers report burnout, and around one in five struggles with PTSD. The relentless nature of modern policing means many are caught in a cycle of constant crisis, with little time to recover their equilibrium before the next emergency hits.



“We are tired,
burned out, and
building up
trauma.”

There are increasing levels of violence against officers, and the growing phenomenon of them being targeted on social media, sometimes to the point where they face death threats.

Added to this is the fear they could be prosecuted and ‘hung out to dry’ for actions taken in the line of duty: investigations into misconduct allegations can drag on for years. Morale, especially in firearms units, now hinges

on the Government’s proposed accountability reforms, including the widely welcomed presumption of anonymity for firearms officers facing criminal charges for actions taken in the line of duty.

Many chiefs want the Government to go still further, for example giving officers legal protection if they can demonstrate they followed their training. These calls will need to be balanced against the imperative not to place police ‘above the law’.

Unprecedented numbers are leaving their force, disillusioned by a job that is not what they signed up for. Officers are being thrown into situations that demand specialist skills they do not have, with no time left to build the community relationships needed for effective policing.

Changes to pension arrangements also mean fewer officers are serving a full 30 years, reducing experience at senior levels. Another current debate is around how to best use non-deployed officers, including those on recuperative and adjusted duties. These officers (largely experienced and therefore expensive) make up a significant cohort, yet there is little consensus around how best to manage this potential drain on resources.

Pay and conditions

Police pay structures are stuck in the past, with each officer paid the same rate, regardless of their expertise or the specific dangers they face.

The system of Targeted Variable Payments to supplement pay in hard-to-fill roles, results in only derisory extra payments. Chiefs want far greater ability to better reward specialist skills, and those doing particularly traumatic work.

Pay supplements for certain hard to recruit positions could make these roles more appealing and would make the most challenging operational roles easier to fill. For example, some forces now offer a specific Detective Pay Supplement of up to £1,200 annually, to recognise the additional responsibilities and complexities of investigative work. However, such supplements vary by force, are not universally applied, and are seen as insufficient.

More pay flexibility would also help forces compete with the private sector, particularly for in-demand IT professionals in shortage areas like digital forensics, data analysis and financial investigation. As it stands, the pay system is overly rigid, damaging to morale, uncompetitive, and outdated.

In addition, police employment conditions fail to reflect modern working patterns or expectations. Policing is not attractive to mature candidates with families; those with specialist experience; or with highly prized technical skills.

Training

Despite widespread agreement that *every* officer now needs basic digital investigation skills, this still is not prioritised in national training programmes. As a result, countless cases of low-level but high-impact fraud in particular are falling through the cracks. Forces continue to have different training priorities, creating potential inconsistencies in the service received by the public.

More generally, leaders point to difficulties finding time and resources for proper training. They acknowledge the latest Pay and Morale survey shows many officers dissatisfied with their training and career progression but highlight the unprecedented surge in new recruits to meet Uplift targets, which has left a large chunk of the workforce inexperienced and requiring ongoing training and supervision. This puts extra pressure on experienced colleagues, who are forced to juggle training with frontline duties. For now, the emphasis should be on making training quick, digestible, and more responsive, with force training curriculums already 'saturated.'

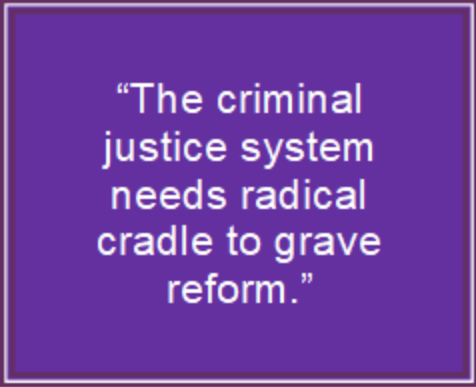
Although the broader debate over whether officers need degree-level qualifications continues, leaders agree police work has become more complex, with a greater emphasis on the 'soft skills' needed to deal with vulnerable people than on the physical agility to play 'cops and robbers'.

Traditional ideas about what makes a 'good cop' are therefore no longer adequate. Training must evolve to reflect this, with a more flexible approach prioritising digital skills and the ability to build strong relationships.

Chapter 4 a whole system approach to criminal justice

Criminal justice is stuck in a vicious cycle. Ambitions to boost arrests and improve charge rates will only be effective if cases can go through the courts efficiently. Public confidence in the police will only recover if offenders are seen to be dealt with effectively, and to receive appropriate punishment.

And yet we will never be able to build enough prisons, or to lock up enough people, to address the current rising rate of demand. In short, the only sustainable solution involves brave and radical structural reform. Smoother collaboration between the different criminal justice agencies is essential as are common measures and standards.



"The criminal justice system needs radical cradle to grave reform."

In particular, a new common-sense, evidence-based approach to reducing offending – and crucially reoffending – is urgently required. While the public must always be protected from serious criminality, police leaders recognise the need to

move beyond a blanket reliance on prison.

Prosecutions

The relationship between police and prosecutors (the CPS) is critical to ensuring victims have their day in court. But despite efforts to improve coordination, there are still long delays in charging decisions.

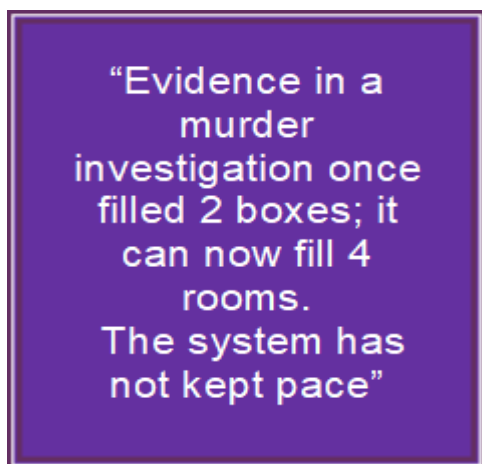
Prosecutors are overstretched and underresourced¹, with 14 regional teams prosecuting cases for 43 police forces. Police are commonly forced to bail suspects while waiting for a charging decision, leaving offenders free to intimidate witnesses and victims, which can prove particularly problematic in cases of domestic abuse.

While the police have the power to impose bail conditions on suspected abusers, breaches are not a criminal offence, leaving officers with few options beyond re-arresting suspects, who they soon have to release again. Yet arresting someone who knows they may never be charged does little to stop them reoffending.

The bar to police securing a charge remains at the high level it was raised to during COVID, making it harder for police to get cases to court. Evidence preparation is also increasingly time consuming, with officers bogged down by the sheer volume of digital data, and delays in forensics resulting in potentially lengthy waits.

In addition, there is ongoing and widespread frustration among police officers regarding the case files they must submit to prosecutors for an initial charging decision. Since 2020, officers have been required to provide a *full* case file before charges are even considered, significantly adding to their already heavy workload, with 'countless' manhours spent preparing these comprehensive documents. This burden is further intensified by the need to redact large amounts of personal data from the files before they're sent, with officers increasingly having to sift through mountains

of digital footage. Although many forces now use automated redaction software to help with this, it fails to address the root of the problem.



Clearly prosecutors need sufficient information to make informed decisions, and to identify evidence that may assist a potential defendant under strict disclosure requirements. However the police believe much of the material currently being submitted is unnecessary at this stage, and that a substantial portion of this work could be delayed until *after* charges are filed – particularly since a quarter of cases will not result in a charge. They suggest that preparing full files for cases that do not go forward is a waste of time and resources that could be better spent on frontline policing.

Leaders want a more streamlined process, with skeletal files deemed sufficient for minor or straightforward offences. These abbreviated files would contain primary evidence – such as a 999 call, CCTV, body worn video, an initial account and victim statement, sometimes even an admission.

Police also suggest a 'data bubble' between forces and prosecutors, allowing confidential information to be shared freely. This would reduce the need for early redaction and speed up the entire charging process. While automated redaction software has eased the burden, it has limitations. Individual forces must find the money for this software and investing in it is dependent on existing systems within a force being modern enough to support the technology. In addition, the law still requires a human to manually check automatically redacted documents.

At the heart of the issue is a system that is not joined up. Police and prosecutors are judged on different outcomes, creating a disconnect. If police increase arrests, prosecutors have difficulty keeping up with the extra workload. The result is case files bouncing back and forth, victims losing hope, cases being dropped, and offenders walking free.

Prosecutions were initially taken out of the hands of the police to ensure these decisions are taken independently and set apart from the apprehension and investigation processes. Broadly speaking this has worked well. However, a more unified system of performance measurement, and joint accountability, is now needed to foster a more coordinated approach between the two agencies.

Many believe placing police and prosecutors in the same building, or having a dedicated on-site prosecutor, would significantly speed up the process. While there is a 24-hour hotline (CPS Direct) for police to get advice, chiefs say it can take hours to get through to anyone². Communication is also hindered by disconnected IT systems. Prosecutors and the 43 forces use a range of different case management systems, sometimes making it difficult to locate material.

Courts

However, at the moment ramping up charge rates risks making court backlogs even worse, with the current waiting list for domestic abuse cases over two years, and other cases now on hold for as long as *three years* – **see Table A**.

TABLE A		
Court	Backlog	As at (date)
Crown Court	68,125	April 2024
Magistrates Court (Criminal only)	387,042	April 2024
Family Law *	40,558	August 2024
Public Family Law **	10,778	August 2024
Employment	46,752	September 2024
*Average weeks from receipt to final order = 38.5		
** Average weeks for disposal – 34.2		

The Crown Court backlog is disproportionately composed of more serious cases, which take longer in court: 23% of outstanding Crown Court cases have been open for a year or more, with 10% not concluded after two years.

Court delays are especially testing for survivors of crimes like domestic abuse and sexual violence, who may live in constant fear of testifying. In addition, the backlogs

“The system is totally snarled up, significantly worse post-Covid and still getting worse.”

mean many defendants are declining to plead guilty to even minor offences, since pleading ‘not guilty’ means they can have their case heard in the Crown Court. The huge backlogs mean they can play the system by delaying proceedings, knowing that because of the long waits their case may never reach trial.

Many plead not guilty even when the evidence is stacked against them, buying themselves at least another year of freedom, during which time then can further traumatise victims. This further discourages victims from reporting abuse or assaults in the first place, or in pressing charges, and contributes to them withdrawing from prosecutions. Meanwhile the number of unresolved rape cases has tripled in four years, undermining police progress in this area. As of September last year, there were 3,291 adult rape cases in the backlog, up 460% from the 588 cases outstanding during the same quarter of 2019.

Forces are increasingly stretched thin supporting victims and witnesses - one force is currently managing 9,000 people waiting for proceedings. Offenders, including sex offenders, are often out on bail for two years, with many continuing to reoffend. During this period, the police cannot apply for criminal behaviour orders.

Meanwhile, 1 in 4 trials now fail to go ahead as scheduled, leaving police officers stuck for hours in court waiting to give evidence. One key factor in this is the shortage of

barristers available to do criminal work. Criminal barristers earn substantially less than those practising in civil or commercial law, meaning there's little incentive for young legal professionals to specialise in publicly funded criminal work, resulting in too few advocates to meet existing demand. Last year 1 in 20 Crown Court trials had to be aborted because there was no barrister available to either prosecute or defend or both, with court scheduling/listing routinely failing to consider barrister availability. The court listings system is seen as out of date, with urgent reform necessary.

Since 2010, 278 courts have closed in England and Wales, including Nightingale Courts, with nearly half (49%) of all physical court buildings shut down. This means waiting times and backlogs have worsened, and people must travel further to seek justice. Yet what remains are crumbling buildings often without basic amenities or reliable technology. Delays are exacerbated by technical problems with video platforms, and limitations on the types of remote hearings courts will permit. Many of the temporary Nightingale courtrooms, originally set up during the pandemic, will need to remain open to manage the ongoing high caseloads.

These issues all severely restrict access to justice. Cuts to legal aid spending – down 39.5% since 2010 in real per person terms – have had serious consequences on the ability of ordinary people to access justice. And the police are not immune. Shockingly, one chief admits their force no longer prosecutes assaults on their own officers, due to court delays and the subsequent impact on time and resources.

Early intervention and diversion

While better mental health support is an almost universal priority, many leaders also advocate for a shift towards early intervention and diversion. Programmes like Checkpoint, which targets low and moderate-level offenders early in the justice process, are highlighted. This voluntary scheme diverts individuals away from the court system, aiming to reduce reoffending and improve long-term outcomes. Successful participants, avoid a criminal conviction.

Pre-arrest and pre-prosecution diversion are broadly supported by police leaders but require both political will and sustained funding. Meanwhile post-conviction diversion for low-level offences remains underused, partly due to a complex, inconsistent out-of-court disposal system.

It is recognised that taking cases through the courts that result in conditional discharges or £10 fines is not delivering justice to anyone. There is now an appetite among some for a serious conversation about what crimes should or should not be prosecuted while courts remain so jam-packed.

Prisons and probation

Prisons are full, meaning cell spaces in courts and police stations are often filled too, leaving nowhere to detain people. Defendants are even failing to turn up for court hearings, with overwhelmed and inexperienced prison staff unable to locate inmates or cajole them to attend.

Last Autumn, the police had to deal with the fallout from the emergency early release of prisoners, with individuals freed to no known address, without support plans or the appropriate electronic tagging.

“Reports of VAWG have tripled or quadrupled in the last decade, but the CJ S capacity has not. Justice and policing solutions will not fix this.”

Offenders, including domestic abusers, are routinely not being fitted with electronic tracking devices before leaving court, despite it being a condition of their release. This failure, often the responsibility of external contractors like Serco, leaves police unaware of offenders' movements, creating significant public safety risks. Prisoner transport services are making far too many mistakes, partly due to the increasing volume of transfers between prisons, often due to overcrowding. This results in trials being adjourned because a defendant, sometimes one of several, has not been brought to the right court on the right day at the right time.

Risk management in general, particularly in relation to sex offenders, is an area of growing policing demand, with the numbers placed under orders exponentially growing.

Shockingly, 1 in 5 prisoners is on remand, waiting for trial or sentencing, and many of them will subsequently be found not guilty. Even if convicted, many will not receive custodial sentences, so their time on remand serves little purpose, cuts family and community ties, interrupts employment, stigmatises them, throws them in with hardened criminals and increases the prospect of their reoffending. This is particularly concerning given rising concern about prison safety, with rampant drug use, unsanitary conditions and escalating rates of suicide and self-harm. The high numbers imprisoned on remand are being mixed with those already serving sentences - sometimes in the same cell. The result is even more interaction with the criminal world and the resultant changes which promote further criminality.

Meanwhile prisons are failing to break the cycle of crime, with little support for inmates during or after their sentence. Prisoners are frequently released without housing or jobs, while overworked probation officers are unable to provide adequate support or supervision. The result is often homelessness, and an almost instant return to crime.

In recent years short prison sentences have been preferred over community sentences, adding further pressure to the already strained system. However, police experience suggests that, in reality, these brief prison stints often increase, rather than reduce, reoffending. The evidence shows that community sentences are more effective than prison in reducing reoffending because they focus on rehabilitation, maintaining social ties, and providing tailored support while avoiding the negative influences of prison. They can also promote accountability through restorative justice and are more cost-effective, allowing resources to be reinvested into crime prevention.

“Short term sentences simply equip people to be better at crime”

Yet currently the lack of rehabilitation and post-release planning is leaving offenders adrift, driving reoffending and police recalls. Alarming, 17% of the prison population finds themselves back behind bars again due to recalls - often for breaches like drug or alcohol use or missing probation appointments.

It is the police who are left to pick up the pieces - having to use police resources to track offenders, enforce rules, and manage potential dangers which a functioning criminal justice system would avoid at the outset.

Appendix 1

The key national bodies tasked with managing policing

Home Office: The Home Office publishes the Strategic Policing Requirement (see Appendix 2), setting out national threats and how police forces should respond to them; provides police funding through the annual Police Grant Report; provides statutory guidance around certain police powers; and provides political leadership to certain national policing bodies and ad-hoc issues as they arise, through bodies such as the National Policing Board.

The National Crime Agency (NCA): a non-ministerial civil service department, operationally independent and accountable to Parliament through the Home Secretary. Its mission is to lead the fight against serious and organised crime by targeting and pursuing those criminals posing the greatest risk to the UK. NCA officers work at the forefront of law enforcement, building intelligence, analysing data to track the most serious and dangerous offenders, and developing and delivering specialist capabilities.

Operational teams aim to dismantle criminal groups and degrade the international networks supporting them. NCA headquarters are in London, with major hubs in Bristol, Birmingham and Warrington, as well as regional offices across the UK. It also works globally, with teams and officers based in more than 40 countries. The NCA partners with police forces, HMRCFRS, Border Force, the UK intelligence community, government departments and international organisations such as INTERPOL and EUROPOL, and works closely with organisations in the private, charity, and regulatory sectors.

National Police Chiefs' Council: The NPCC is a coordinating body which brings together senior police leaders from across the UK to set national direction in operational policing and to drive progress. Working with partners such as the Association of Police and Crime Commissioners and College of Policing, the NPCC determines the operational response to the most serious and strategic threats.

Chief officers take on responsibility for national issues by chairing committees and leading on portfolios, in addition to their local force role. There are 13 coordination committees, each led by a chief officer and supported by a number of chief officer-led portfolios that sit underneath them. These committees then report into Chief Constables' Council, made up of all chief constables.

Coordination

Committees



As an example, the Local Policing committee has 14 portfolios reporting into it. These cover issues ranging from anti-social behaviour, to the use of stop and search. There are also various national programme teams working on issues such as the Police Race Action Plan, Violence Against Women and Girls, and Serious and Organised Crime, as well as the Office of the Chief Scientific Adviser.

The Chief Constables' Council is the senior decision-making body for the NPCC. This is attended by all chief constables and meets three to four times a year to discuss and consider challenges in operational policing, agree national standards and common approaches.

The National Police Coordination Centre works within the NPCC and provides a central operational coordination function to UK policing. They manage the deployment of police officers and staff from across UK policing, to support forces during large scale events, operations and in times of civil emergency.

Police and Crime Commissioners (and equivalent bodies): PCCs are elected officials in England and Wales responsible for ensuring efficient and effective policing in their area by setting strategic priorities, police governance, setting an annual budget, and devising Police and Crime Plans for their force. They are responsible for appointing a chief officer to run the force and holding them to account for the delivery of the Police and Crime Plan, and force performance. They are also responsible for commissioning victims' services and some crime prevention programmes in their force area.

The Association of Police and Crime Commissioners (APCC): All Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs) and Police, Fire and Crime Commissioners (PFCCs) are members of the APCC, alongside the following organisations: City of London Police Authority; the Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime for the Greater London Authority; the Greater Manchester Combined Authority; the West Yorkshire Combined Authority; the York and North Yorkshire Combined Authority; the South Yorkshire Combined Authority; Jersey Police Authority; British Transport Police Authority; Civil Nuclear Police Authority; the Ministry of Defence Police Committee and the Scottish Police Authority.

The APCC is a company limited by guarantee overseen and directed by an elected Chair and Board of Directors. It performs various functions for members, including providing information on national policing policy issues and legislation; consulting with PCCs to aid the development of policy positions; facilitating PCCs in dealings with bodies such as the College of Policing and National Crime Agency; and helping PCCs to share practice and identify ways to achieve efficiencies through collaboration.

Other key bodies

The College of Policing: is the professional body for policing in England and Wales. It is an operationally independent non-departmental public body which sets standards for key areas of policing, and shares knowledge and good practice. Its staff support professional development, setting requirements, accrediting, quality assuring and delivering learning and professional development. It also has statutory responsibility for issuing Codes of Practice to chief officers.

The College is additionally tasked with promoting diversity and wellbeing and helping to bring on leaders at all levels. It is staffed by officers and staff seconded from forces, as well as outside specialists including trainers, assessors and expert witnesses.

His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS): The inspectorate monitors the performance of all police forces in England and Wales to ensure efficiency, effectiveness and legitimacy. It provides an annual assessment of each force, identifying key areas for improvement or causes for concern. This process is informed by, although not limited to information from PEEL assessments, which use inspection findings, analysis and professional judgement to assess how good forces are in several areas of policing, with these then graded as outstanding, good, adequate, requires improvement, or inadequate.

Quarterly monitoring is undertaken to identify issues for closer scrutiny, allowing causes of concern to be highlighted. Inspections must be responded to by PCCs. However, if a force is not responding, or not succeeding in managing, mitigating or eradicating the identified cause of concern, it may be placed in Engage, under which it will be subject to an enhanced level of monitoring. Forces will then be expected to develop an improvement plan to address the specific cause(s) of concern, and may potentially receive support from external organisations such as the College of Policing or NPCC. The inspectorate also conducts thematic inspections commissioned by the Home Office where there is an area of national policing concern; and produces an annual 'State of Policing' report.

The Independent Office for Police Conduct (IOPC): an independent body responsible for overseeing the police complaints system in England and Wales, as well as investigating the most serious complaints relating to police conduct. While most complaints are dealt with by the professional standards departments of local forces, the most serious or sensitive cases, and those deemed of public interest, are referred to the IOPC, who then decide if they wish to investigate independently; supervise the local force's professional standards investigation; or refer the investigation back to the force to investigate without IOPC input. Situations where a person dies or sustains serious injury following police contact are automatically referred to the IOPC, which can also initiate its own investigations.

The IOPC ultimately decides the outcome of investigations, which might involve an apology, further training, or disciplinary proceedings for misconduct or gross misconduct. Disciplinary action is carried out within forces, with options including a written warning, reduction of rank or dismissal without notice. The IOPC sends its report to the Crown Prosecution Service if it thinks a crime may have been committed. It can also review forces' handling of complaints to determine if the outcome was reasonable and proportionate.

The Police Superintendents' Association: represents superintendents and chief superintendents in 49 police forces – the 43 Home Office forces, British Transport Police, Civil Nuclear Constabulary, Isle of Man Constabulary, Bermuda Police Service, Royal Gibraltar Police and Gibraltar Defence Police. It aims to support and represent members, while being a trusted and positive influence in policing.

The Police Federation of England and Wales: (PFEW) is the staff association for police constables, sergeants, inspectors (including chief inspectors), and special constables. Established in 1919, it aims to voice the views of more than 145,000 rank and file police officers. It's the official body existing to represent and support police officers on issues such as pay, allowances, terms and conditions, as well as advising and lobbying on operational policing issues and influencing legislation. It also provides training on equality, promotion, discipline and health and safety.

Appendix 2

Policing strategy and priorities

No one single body is responsible for setting an overall strategy for policing. The Home Office stepped back following the 2012 introduction of Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs), after which strategic planning was expected to emerge via a complex system involving PCCs, Chief Constables, the National Police Chiefs Council and the Association of Police and Crime Commissioners. However flaws have emerged in this self-governing system. It lacks a mechanism for making national decisions that all parties must adhere to, and also blurs the lines of who is ultimately responsible for decisions. This makes it difficult to drive change from the centre or achieve much-needed savings.

The 2021 introduction of a set of **‘National Crime and Policing Measures’** were an attempt to fill this vacuum and help focus effort on key national priorities. The measures require forces to take collective action to prevent and reduce specific types of crime and were intended to complement local priorities set out in PCCs’ Police and Crime Plans. These priorities were to be kept under review with further crime types potentially added:

- Reduce murder and other homicides
- Reduce serious violence
- Disrupt drugs supply and county lines
- Reduce neighbourhood crime
- Tackle cyber crime
- Improve satisfaction among victims – with a particular focus on victims of domestic abuse

These priorities must have regard to the **Strategic Policing Requirement (SPR)**, which sets out what are believed to be the major national threats at the current time, and the appropriate national policing capabilities to counter those threats. Forces must consider the SPR. The seven existing identified national threats are:

- Terrorism
- Serious and organised crime
- A national cyber event
- Child sexual abuse
- Public disorder
- Civil emergencies
- Violence against women and girls

Force Management Statements

The work of the police inspectorate (HMICFRS) is informed by Force Management Statements, which are annual self-assessments prepared by chief constables. These statements include:

- **Future Demand:** Projected demand the force expects to face.
- **Workforce and Asset Condition:** Evaluation of the performance, condition, composition, capacity, capability, serviceability, and security of supply of the force’s workforce and assets.

- **Improvement Plans:** Strategies for enhancing the workforce, policies, practices, and other assets to meet future demand.
- **Impact Assessment:** Expected effects of proposed changes and the residual risk of service failure.
- **Financial Forecast:** Anticipated budget to support these initiatives.
- Force Management Statements help identify areas of significant risk and resilience within a force's operations, guiding the focus and depth of HMICFRS inspections.

Appendix 3

Police Funding

Funding Process:

Funding for police forces in England and Wales is the responsibility of the Police and Crime Commissioner (or equivalent), who are responsible for setting the police budget based on local priorities.

Overall approximately **two-thirds** of Police and Crime Commissioners' (PCCs) budgets come from **central Government grants**. The level of this is set through **multi-year Spending Reviews** and confirmed annually in the police funding settlement. Details are laid out in the **Police Grant Report**, which contains grant funding allocations for the following year. The last Spending Review in 2021 provided funding until 2024/25, but uncertainty remains beyond next April this year.

The remaining third (**approx. 34%**) overall of a police force's budget comes directly from local tax payers through the **council tax precept**. However actual amounts vary significantly by area - from approximately 18% in Northumbria to 55% in Surrey, leaving some forces much more exposed to fluctuations in the central Government grant, and to the impact of austerity cuts. Police and Crime Commissioners also raise funds through: charging for special police services, such as the policing of festivals and other events to recover costs; the provision of services such as training; and income from donations and sponsorship.

Government sets an annual **precept referendum threshold**, which is the maximum amount PCCs can increase the council tax precept by each year. For 2025/26, the precept can be raised by up to £14. Headline Government funding announcements are based on a presumption all PCCs will impose the maximum increase.

The wider policing structure, which includes the Independent Office for Police Conduct (IOPC), His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) and the National Crime Agency (NCA) are partly funded from the police funding settlement. Funding for national policing priorities, including serious violence and Counter Terrorism, is funded separately.

Recent Funding Levels:

In 2024/25:

Total police funding, including precept, reached **£18.4bn** (a £842.9m rise).

- Government funding to PCCs rose by £0.6bn to **£10.7bn**.
- £1bn was allocated for national policing priorities (via "**top slicing**"), e.g. for tech programmes, fraud, and serious violence.
- Capital funding increased to **£128.7m**, with no direct funding for individual forces.
- Uplift funding for additional officers reached **£425m**, with grants contingent on maintaining headcount targets.

Next Year's Funding Outlook:

Government funding is expected to rise by **£0.5bn** in 2025/26, but concerns persist about pay awards and inflation.

Forces warn of a **£331m shortfall** to meet wage costs, raising fears of cuts to officer numbers.

The **Met Police** faces a £450m shortfall, potentially impacting 2,300 officers. Other forces (e.g., Essex, Suffolk) report similar concerns.

Key Challenges:

- Early retirement in **police pension schemes** adds financial strain.
- **Top slicing** for specific programmes is controversial.
- Treasury will compensate forces for upcoming **NIC increases**.
- Forces are calling for funding formula reform and relaxation of penalties tied to officer numbers.
- Rising costs, pay pressures and potential cuts pose significant challenges.

Appendix 4

Forensics

The police service employs a number of forensic services to enable it to appropriately process a wide range of crime scenes. External agencies (such as Home Office pathologists) may also assist.

The specific circumstances that a **crime scene investigator (CSI)** encounters at a crime scene dictate the approach. For example, the forensic approach to a *volume* crime scene varies from that of a major crime scene, although the processes implemented are largely similar. Investigating a crime scene and forensic analysis using specialist procedures and techniques can provide evidence to:

- prove that a crime has been committed
- exclude a suspect from a scene
- link a suspect with a scene
- establish the identity of a victim, suspect or witness
- corroborate or disprove witness accounts
- interpret the scene in relation to movements within the scene and sequences of events
- link crime scene to crime scene and provide intelligence on crime patterns

In serious or major cases, a formal strategy for the forensic response is compiled by a forensic manager in consultation with, and agreed by, the senior investigating officer.

The Forensic Science Regulator (FSR) ensures the provision of forensic science services across the criminal justice system is subject to an appropriate regime of scientific quality standards. For both physical forensics – such as toxicology, drugs, DNA and biology analysis - and digital services – such as mobile phone data analyses - all suppliers should comply with the **FSR Code of Practice**.

Most suppliers have the required accreditation, or are working towards gaining it over an agreed timescale, with quality strictly monitored. Achieving accreditation demonstrates compliance with the Code of Practice, but non-compliance does not mean the forensic work is not reliable. Where work is conducted that is considered to be non-compliant, this is declared into the Criminal Justice System and the evidence can still be presented to the court. Since 2020, the **Forensic Capability Network (FCN)** (based with Dorset Police and currently funded by the NPCC) has existed to help forces achieve accreditation for in-house services. The FCN also provides national oversight, monitoring and management of the commercial forensics marketplace.

The physical forensics marketplace has an approximate value of £85m and comprises of a relatively small number of suppliers. It has been subject to an on-going period of instability, and continues to be closely monitored and managed at a national level. Meanwhile the **digital marketplace** has an approximate value of £15m, with a number of providers of varying sizes: although there are approximately 27 providers covering both mainstream and niche digital services, the majority of the national spend is with about 4 suppliers. However, approximately 80% of digital forensic services are

now provided in-house, with forces required to use the market for digital forensic related software and tools.

The Forensic Capability Network is responsible for collating and analysing an agreed set of **Digital Forensics KPIs**, including the status of backlogs, resourcing levels and operating models. With costs rising and technology rapidly progressing, a review was recently carried out to determine how policing can optimise its performance in the marketplace. Its main conclusion was around the need for policing to speak with one-voice, and for single, nationally agreed procurements, with a recommendation for convergence towards that aim to start immediately.

A number of **regional collaborations** already exist for procuring forensic services from the external market. These can provide good local solutions. However, if they diverge from the national position, they can be hugely disruptive to the market and the ability of suppliers to meet multiple requirements.

Appendix 5

Police Ranks

Metropolitan Police	City of London Police	UK Police Forces
Commissioner	Commissioner	-
Deputy Commissioner	-	-
Assistant Commissioner	-	Chief Constable
Deputy Assistant Commissioner	Assistant Commissioner	Deputy Chief Constable
Commander	Commander	Assistance Chief Constable
Chief Superintendent	Chief Superintendent	Chief Superintendent
Superintendent	Superintendent	Superintendent
Chief Inspector	Chief Inspector	Chief Inspector
Inspector	Inspector	Inspector
Sergeant	Sergeant	Sergeant
Constable	Constable	Constable