

Policing for the Future
Written Evidence by the National Police Chiefs' Council

This submission to the Home Affairs Select Committee on “Policing for the future” is made by the National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC).

The NPCC, established in 2015 and chaired by Chief Constable Sara Thornton CBE QPM, is the body responsible for coordinating operational policing at national level in England and Wales. It works closely with organisations including the College of Policing, National Crime Agency (NCA) and Association of Police and Crime Commissioners (APCC).

As part of the process of writing this submission, the NPCC invited feedback from the 43 Home Office police forces and its chief officer leads. It also draws on the Policing Vision 2025.¹

Executive Summary

- Crime is changing. ‘Hidden’ crimes are coming to the fore, ‘old’ crimes are being committed in new ways and truly ‘new’ crimes will continue to emerge.
- In order to keep up both government and law enforcement must improve their ability to horizon scan, predict trends and respond quickly and appropriately.
- Other demands on policing are varied and significant. They need to be measured in an accurate and consistent way to support planning for the future. Policing does not exist in isolation: what happens to our public sector partners also affects us.
- Communities are becoming more diverse and more mobile, requiring in turn a more sophisticated response. Our population is both growing and ageing while modern technology underpins daily life.
- With finite resources, the police are seeking to manage ‘low-harm’ offending more efficiently while shifting our focus towards complex ‘high-harm’ crimes. This is a positive development and needs to be communicated.
- There will always be a place for smart local policing: not because it is nice to have but because it is effective. All staff need digital skills and the right technology for the job.
- The workforce of the future must better reflect its communities. Police officers and staff should be recognised as professionals and work in flatter structures using a solid evidence base. Officers and staff would benefit from a greater degree of autonomy.

¹ <http://www.npcc.police.uk/documents/Policing%20Vision.pdf>



- Policing is a public service first and foremost. However, the way we do business can and must improve, starting with a more collective and joined-up approach to ICT.
- Criminals do not heed lines on a map so nor should we. We are reviewing which operational capabilities are best shared and also looking to strengthen accountability.
- The service must move from a 'blame' culture to one which values questioning, learning and improvement.

“Current and future crime trends”

1. The world in which the police operate is changing at an ever faster rate. Previously 'hidden' crimes - like child sexual abuse (CSA), domestic abuse, so-called honour-based abuse (HBA), forced marriage and modern slavery - are now **better understood** and **more often reported**. Many of these reports are non-recent and such crimes are not limited to physical violence: they can involve mental, emotional or financial abuse which has the potential to cause as much, or greater, harm to victims. For example, two years ago the Government passed legislation which formally acknowledged the impact of “coercive or controlling behaviour” in intimate or family relationships. The latest assessment shows over 200 live modern slavery operations across UK policing.

2. Other 'traditional' crimes from harassment through to terrorism are **facilitated** by new technology and globalisation. The internet has enabled fraud to be committed on an industrial scale whereas urban gangs are now trading illegal drugs through the dark web or expanding into rural areas via dedicated mobile phone numbers. Officers are arresting 400 offenders and safeguarding 500 children a month in relation to indecent images of children alone. Crime is shifting from public to private and remote spaces where law enforcement can find it hard to follow.

3. Unlike the above, cyber-dependent crimes - such as hacking, malware and denial of service (DoS) attacks - were not possible before computers and other forms of communications information technology. Research shows that levels of reporting are extremely low and they present police forces and their partners with unique challenges. We must also be prepared for '**new**' crimes in their truest sense: those not yet committed or even thought of. For example, what does the future hold for artificial intelligence, virtual reality, 3D printing and genetic engineering? All pose risks as well as opportunities.

“Other operational demands”

4. A significant proportion of police work is generated by **demand not directly linked to crime**. On top of maintaining public order and assisting in the response to major events and natural disasters, officers will frequently deal with missing people, self-harm, suicide, sudden deaths and alcohol and drug dependency, and there is evidence some of these pressures are rising. In 2015 the College of Policing estimated that 84 per cent of control room calls related to 'non-crime' incidents.² It is vital that we take action to measure this type of demand in a more comprehensive and consistent way. Many forces have highlighted to us the danger of 'service-drift' as other agencies, particularly health and social care, see their funding and capacity reduced.

² <http://www.college.police.uk/News/College-news/Pages/First-analysis-of-national-demand.aspx>

“Waiting for an ambulance has led to cases where the police transport an injured person to hospital or keep a mentally unwell person in custody for several hours because there is no available health based place of safety.” - NPCC Performance Management Coordination Committee

5. Crime is changing because our **communities** are changing. As well as becoming increasingly mobile and diverse they are also ageing, with consequences for adult vulnerability and adult neglect, and growing³. People are doing more and more online. Here behaviour is not just relocated but actually changes, complicated by things like distance, anonymity and echo-chambers. To say we have a digital world and a physical world is naive: the two already overlap in a myriad of ways.

“As the patrol walks down your street, your child may be being groomed online.”
- Chief Constable Simon Cole QPM

“Public expectations”

6. The trends outlined here are leading to a necessary shift in police focus away from more visible, low-harm crimes and towards **less visible** but **high-harm** ones often involving members of society at their most vulnerable. These offences also tend, by their nature, to be complex, multi-agency and resource intensive - in terms of time and skills - to investigate and prevent.

7. Everyone has a right to feel safe and be protected. Despite reduced budgets we must inquire into the failings of yesterday while policing today and, at the same time, looking forward to tomorrow.

8. If reform is to succeed then we must have an honest **conversation** with the public about what is changing and why. We must also listen carefully to make sure that, during a time of upheaval, we don't lose sight of our end goal. This will require the support of Police and Crime Commissioners - who help represent the police to the public and the public to the police - as well as an **inspection** regime geared towards victims and not just traditional but imperfect measures of effectiveness such as arrest and charge rates.

“Reforms which may be necessary”

9. The British model of policing, with its tangible link between officers and their communities, is envied across the world and for good reason. There will always be a place for **local policing**. But a symbolic gesture is something we can ill afford: policing at the local level must adapt and stay on the front foot. Safety and welfare demand a ‘whole place’ approach - with different agencies coming seamlessly together to assess and protect the vulnerable - and not a ‘single service’ mentality. The best response will never be better than preventing harm before it happens, and always less efficient, so we must get upstream of demand. That means finding out what is causing the problem, using evidence to identify solutions, sharing learning, taking action early and investing in preventing reoffending.

“Our frontline presence within neighbourhoods, together with our more covert investigative work, means we are uniquely placed to act as a bridge between local communities - where extremists and terrorists try to recruit and influence - and our national and international security partners.”
- National Counter Terrorism Policing

10. **Digital policing** must support rather than replace local policing. It cannot be the preserve of a few when most crimes, including ‘traditional’ crimes, involve the internet or technology in some way. Our

³ <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/populationandmigration/populationestimates>

aim is to embed digital skills and technology across the current and future police workforce: officers, staff and volunteers. As with the physical world, there are risks and challenges around how information is handled and stored, and these will need to be carefully thought through and mitigated.

“By 2025 digital policing will make it easier and more consistent for the public to make digital contact, improve our use of digital intelligence and evidence and ensure we can transfer all material in a digital format to the criminal justice system.” - Policing Vision 2025

11. Policing is built on its people. Over 80 per cent of total force budgets are spent on human resources and officers regularly put their own safety on the line to protect others. We must return that investment by investing in and developing them as professionals. An overview of the joint **Workforce Futures** programme is set out below:

- **Attract:** we will recruit differently, providing different entry routes at different levels, enabling us to attract a more varied workforce with a different mix of backgrounds, skills, experience and aspirations.
- **Develop:** career progression will be focused on skill development and contribution. Lateral progression will be valued and advanced practitioners will be recognised for high levels of technical expertise in their chosen career path.
- **Reward:** our reward and recognition mechanisms will be modernised to suit the needs of a flexible workforce. Police leaders will be able to reward their staff for their expertise and the contribution they make.
- **Exit/Re-entry:** we want policing to be a job for life but recognise it does not have to be. We will support staff to take ownership of their career and develop new skills including through secondments and bring them back into policing. We aim to create an alumni network to maintain our connection with those who do leave and look for mechanisms for them to continue to play a role in supporting policing.

12. If we cannot compete with the private sector for certain skills then we must think about how we work with the private and other sectors to harness them.

13. Two chief constables, Chief Constable Ian Hopkins QPM and Chief Constable Gareth Wilson, are leading work on behalf on the NPCC to ensure that difference and diversity are always valued and sought. They are supported by the College of Policing, which is halfway through a programme to improve the recruitment, retention and development of black and minority ethnic (BME) officers and staff.⁴ It has also published advice on the use of lawful positive action, disseminated research findings on unconscious bias and begun to pilot a reverse mentoring programme with chief officers in six forces.

14. There is still too much unnecessary duplication and too many unnecessary walls within and around policing. Going forward, the way we do **business** must improve, starting with ICT, which can be a powerful enabler but also a formidable obstacle to progress. The NPCC and forces are working with the Police ICT Company to develop common standards, processes and platforms. We will also promote interoperability and deliver savings by undertaking more shared procurement.

⁴ <http://www.college.police.uk/What-we-do/Support/Equality/pages/BME.aspx>

“Policing is a brown-field site with forces at different stages of digital maturity and with varying contractual constraints.” - NPCC Information Management Coordination Committee

15. The threat from terrorism, cybercrime and organised crime will continue to grow and risk outpacing a traditional force structure designed in the 1960s. We are therefore looking at how **specialist operational capabilities** - like major investigations and armed policing - are best delivered. There continues to be more joint working at regional level, which provides a strong platform on which chief constables and Police and Crime Commissioners can build. If done right it will save money, free up resources and increase flexibility without sacrificing capability.

“It’s time for a sharing economy in policing.” - Chief Constable Sara Thornton CBE QPM

16. Failure often arises when whole systems fail. It rarely comes down to one individual. There will of course be times when discipline and tough sanctions are appropriate; however, staff should feel safe to talk openly and honestly about their mistakes. As soon as possible we must move from a ‘blame’ **culture** to one based on trust which values questioning, learning and improvement.

“We are afraid that to deviate from tried and tested practices will lead to failure when in fact to continue without progression will lead to failure as the rest of the world is moving on.”
- Derbyshire Constabulary

“Funding levels, efficiency and cost-effectiveness”

17. According to figures from the National Audit Office (NAO), from 2010/11 to 2015/16 the central government **funding** for police in England and Wales fell by £2.2 billion or 22 per cent in real terms. Chief officers welcome the commitment, first made in the Spending Review and Autumn Statement 2015, to protect overall police spending in real terms until 2019/20. This was conditional on Police and Commissioners being able to raise additional funding through local council tax bills (precept): the central Home Office Police Grant itself was reduced slightly but much less than expected. We also support a new funding formula as the current one is no longer fair or appropriate. However, the central government funding cannot be seen in isolation, given that local variations are driven much more by historical precept variations. Any review must be comprehensive and take both elements into account.

18. The Police Transformation Fund is designed to help the police transform their services. As such, the criteria for bids must clearly incentivise projects that will deliver transformational rather than incremental change and spending in preparation for the future not spending for now.

19. While it is tempting to focus on being efficient, particularly given the current financial backdrop, it is important to remember that efficiency without effectiveness has little value, and effectiveness without efficiency is not much better.

“International best practice”

20. Before turning to international best practice we must first look closer to home and make sure we are replicating excellence and communicating learning within the UK. However, the NPCC is aware of examples the Committee may want to consider, including the Dutch approach to local policing.

ANNEX 1

Feedback from National Counter-Terrorism Policing

Terrorism is not only a key threat to national security but, fundamentally, a serious criminal offence that causes great harm to the public and can divide and destabilise communities. Over the next five years, the scale, volume and complexity of the terrorist threat may increase and it may become harder to predict trends.

Fighting terrorism with our communities

Our counter-terrorism investigations rely increasingly on local police officers working within communities with trust and confidence. Working with the public and partners is vital in helping us identify dangerous individuals and those vulnerable to radicalisation. Our frontline presence within neighbourhoods, together with our more covert investigative work done jointly with our security partners, means we are uniquely placed to act as a bridge between local communities (where extremists and terrorists try to recruit and influence) and our national and international security partners. Over the last 5 years we have fully integrated our response with MI5 so that we now conduct the highest priority investigations together to support national security. At the same time our ability to work locally with partners is critical to safeguarding the vulnerable and disrupting those who wish to radicalise others. We rely on the principle that all police officers are counter-terrorism officers and implement this through our strong, local policing relationships with communities as well as individuals.

Future technology challenges

Recent investigations have shown that terrorist groups and extremists are exploiting technology to develop new ways to communicate, radicalise and plan attacks within the UK. Challenges include: increased volumes of data, encryption of data, use of social media, biometric security, cloud storage and peer-to-peer communication. Counter-terrorism policing needs to not only 'catch up' with new technology but also to 'keep up' with digital degradation and ensure an agile response to the way technology is exploited by terrorist groups in future. We need to become more efficient and identify effective ways of handling digital data - and introducing technological improvements to the ways counter-terrorism policing can access, exploit, analyse and present data to support terrorist investigations and operations.

In summary, the most central issues ahead for counter-terrorism policing will include:

- Enhancing the relationship between counter-terrorism specialists and local neighbourhood police and communities.
- Ensuring our technical capabilities keep pace.
- Sustaining and growing our international reach and strong link to law enforcement partners in key countries.