

Feedback for MOPAC consultation on Draft Police and Crime Plan 2013-2016

From Netpol (Network for Police Monitoring)

1. The Network for Police Monitoring (Netpol) is a network of organisations with an interest in monitoring or observing policing. This includes those based within a set community, such as the Newham Monitoring Project, and those that work directly with protest, such as the Green and Black Cross, who train and support legal observers. Netpol acts as a focus for campaigns relating to aspects of policing that are viewed as excessive or oppressive.
2. Netpol considers that important issues in policing have not been addressed in the draft Police and Crime Plan for 2013-2016. We believe that the level of public trust in the Metropolitan Police, especially amongst disadvantaged communities, is not high. The consultation expressly invites comments in relation to improving confidence in the MPS, yet does not seek to address many of the issues that have undermined public trust in the police in recent years. The draft plan makes no mention of the need to address discrimination or the disproportionate targeting of certain sectors of the population, nor does it make any mention of human rights or proportionality in the policing of protest.
3. As the police force for the capital city of the UK, the public have particular expectations of the MPS. The police and crime plan points out on page 12 that the MPS deals with 4000 public events per year, including football matches and protests. This brings a large number of people into contact with the police – for many it will be their only interaction. The behaviour of the MPS on such events will have a significant effect on public perception and confidence in the police. It is therefore surprising that this aspect of the work of the MPS appears to be given relatively little emphasis in the police and crime plan.
4. All public order policing strategies and tactics used by the MPS should be proportionate and lawful, and it is the responsibility of the MPS to ensure that this is so. It is of paramount importance that MOPAC outlines its plans to facilitate complaints by the public about direction and control issues in relation to public order policing. Direction and control complaints do not come under the remit of the IPCC, placing a heavier duty on oversight bodies including MOPAC, to deal effectively and transparently with such complaints, not least because they can indicate systemic problems or the misuse of authority at senior levels. Current mechanisms are weak, unclear and appear to have little regulation. This gap in the system must be addressed by MOPAC.
5. Excessive policing of public order situations undermines public trust and confidence in the MPS, as well as incurring unnecessary expense. The arrest of 182 cyclists for taking part in a procession in East London during the Olympics signalled an extreme readiness of the police to curtail freedom of movement and individual liberties. As well as human rights

implications, the decision to contain, arrest, detain and bail so many people had significant resource and spending implications, especially considering only nine people were prosecuted. It is highly questionable whether such large monetary costs were justified by the policing necessity.

6. We note that the police and crime plan recommends measures to be taken in order to prevent serious public disorder, as was seen during the August 2011 riots. This included ensuring resilience at Borough level. It is the responsibility of MOPAC to ensure that strict protocols and robust monitoring is in place to ensure that increasing capacity does not undermine compliance with the law, or with the fundamental principles on the use of force, as laid out by the HMIC in their report 'Adapting to Protest'. We recommend that MOPAC monitors the delivery of public order training in the MPS, in order to raise public confidence that every officer who may be deployed in disorder fully understands their personal responsibility in relation to the use of force.
7. Further MOPAC should ensure that the strategy and tactics used by the MPS during public order situations do not aggravate or provoke violent encounters by raising an expectation amongst officers that force will be necessary, as appeared to be the case during the G20 and other recent demonstrations. MOPAC should also give consideration to whether avoiding the use of provocative policing strategies (such as the use of 'kettling' or containment, or section 60 CJPOA powers for stop and search) could reduce the build-up of tensions and prevent disorder.
8. We note that the police and crime plan also includes measures to monitor social tensions and social media. While the police have a duty to prevent and detect crime, MOPAC also has a wider responsibility to protect the individual from unnecessary interference or intrusion by law enforcement bodies. Engagement with communities can have positive outcomes, but tactics such as community mapping and the data mining of social media may disproportionately or unnecessarily intrude into the private lives of members of the public. We would urge MOPAC to exercise caution in extending police surveillance strategies.
9. Our concern extends to the increased use of other surveillance devices such as facial recognition, mobile fingerprinting and advanced analytics (data mining). Technology driven strategies may extend policing beyond the realms for which there is public consent, and may also incur costs which are not justified by policing requirements. We recommend that MOPAC put mechanisms in place to measure the effectiveness of technology spending, the overall resource implications and the resulting risks to privacy. We suggest that MOPAC should also ensure that spending on new technologies remains within specified parameters, and that procurement processes are transparent and accountable.