

Siobhan Coldwell  
Head of Strategy  
Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime  
10 Dean Farrar Street  
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6 March 2012

Dear Ms Coldwell

I am writing to you in response to the current consultation on the Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime's draft Police and Crime Plan for 2013-2017.

The Police Foundation is the only independent think tank focused entirely on developing knowledge and understanding of policing and challenging the police service and the government to improve policing for the benefit of the public. Founded in 1979, the Police Foundation promotes debate on policing and police reform, provides knowledge and insight into contemporary policing issues, and improves practice in policing and crime reduction through research, consultancy and training.

We welcome the opportunity to respond to this consultation, having already given evidence on the draft plan to the London Assembly's Police and Crime Committee. This Police and Crime Plan is an important opportunity to ensure that the Metropolitan Police makes the best use of limited, and diminishing, resources to provide the best possible service to the people of London over the next four years. With that in mind, we wish to raise three issues - the configuration of neighbourhood policing, the proposed targets, and police station closures.

Firstly, we are concerned about plans to reform neighbourhood policing, and in particular to significantly reduce the size of ward-specific Safer Neighbourhood Teams from a dedicated sergeant, two constables and three PCSOs to a named sergeant (who will not necessarily be dedicated solely to that ward), one constable and one PCSO. Given the size of many wards in London (more than a fifth have a population of more than 15,000) it is difficult to see how two police officers (one of whom may only be focusing on the ward part-time) and a PCSO could provide an effective neighbourhood team. A proper problem-solving approach would be impossible, it would be more difficult to address emerging problems before they worsen, and relationships

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with communities would suffer, affecting both public confidence and the gathering of community intelligence.

Together with the planned reduction in the number of PCSOs (who can play an important role in community engagement) from a peak of around 4,700 in 2009 to around 2,380 by 2016<sup>1</sup>, these reforms risk promoting response policing in place of neighbourhood policing. This would be a mistake, as evidence shows that effective neighbourhood policing, if properly implemented, can both reduce crime and antisocial behaviour and improve public confidence, two of the key aims of the draft Police and Crime Plan. The evaluation of the impact of the National Reassurance Policing Programme<sup>2</sup>, for example, found that overall it had a positive impact on crime, perceptions of crime and antisocial behaviour, feelings of safety and public confidence in the police. Subsequent research found that these gains could be sustained.<sup>3</sup>

The negative impact of these proposed changes could be mitigated, to a degree, if the additional neighbourhood officers, who will be available to work across their Local Police Area according to demand, are deployed consistently for significant periods of time to high-crime neighbourhoods (rather than being deployed on a short-term basis to address immediate crises). Given that evidence suggests that crime and antisocial behaviour is concentrated in small geographical areas, rather than distributed evenly, this could enable them to form larger neighbourhood teams in high crime areas that adopt a problem-solving approach to reduce crime. It would, however, still be difficult to integrate 'fixed' and 'floating' officers properly, limiting the capacity for effective teamwork.

Secondly, we are concerned that the target focused on crime reduction contained in the draft Police and Crime Plan fails to learn from past experiences, may create perverse incentives and could be counter-productive for the citizens of London. The draft Police and Crime Plan sets a target of a reduction of 20% in seven key crimes - burglary, vandalism, theft of, and theft from motor vehicles, violence with injury, robbery and theft from the person - alongside targets to improve confidence in the police by 20% and cut costs by 20%. It is, however, not clear how the seven targeted offences were selected, as they do not appear to correspond with the crime priorities

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<sup>1</sup> The latter figure was provided by Craig Mackey, Deputy Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police Service, in evidence to the London Assembly's Budget and Performance Committee on 9 January 2013 (see p.8: <http://www.london.gov.uk/moderngov/documents/b7507/Minutes%20-%20Appendix%201%20-%20Transcript%20Wedne.pdf?T=9>).

<sup>2</sup> Tuffin, R., Morris, J. and Poole, A. (2006) *An evaluation of the impact of the National Reassurance Policing Programme*, Home Office Research Study 296, London: Home Office.

<sup>3</sup> Quinton, P. and Morris, J. (2008) *Neighbourhood Policing: The Impact of Piloting and Early National Implementation*, Home Office Online Report 01/08, London: Home Office.

identified on page 9 of the draft plan. There may also be contradictions between the targets on crime reduction and community confidence that need to be addressed. For example, if confidence in the police increases, people may be more willing to report crime to the police, increasing the rate of recorded crime. While this would be beneficial overall, it would make it more difficult to achieve the crime reduction target.

Past experience has shown that targets can have other unintended consequences. One risk is that other crime types that are not among the seven targeted in the draft Police and Crime Plan will receive less attention from the police than they deserve. For example, domestic violence, and other forms of violence against women, may be deprioritised as attention moves to focus on reducing those crimes that will contribute to achieving the target. Similarly, the fact that antisocial behaviour is not, in itself, subject to a target (although it is mentioned in reference to the target on community confidence) may decrease police attention on this important issue, which is identified as a crime priority on page 9 of the draft plan.

There is also a risk that officer behaviour will change to try and enable them to meet the target by other means than a reduction in crime. For example, crimes may be inaccurately recorded to fall under a different crime type that is not subject to a target or may not be recorded at all.<sup>4</sup> This would not only distort the measurement of crime but could also damage victim satisfaction (which is already an issue in London<sup>5</sup>) and community confidence. Finally, the targets set here are for all of London rather than reflecting local priorities and concerns. Given the significant differences between areas across London, this may prevent the police from focusing on the types of crime that matter most to residents in each area.

With this in mind, we would endorse the targets in the plan to improve community confidence and cost reduction, but we think the Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime should consider replacing the crime reduction target with a victim satisfaction target. This would complement the community confidence target and ensure police activity also takes account of the need to address their fear of crime and provide them with support. If, as seems likely, the Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime is irrevocably committed to setting crime reduction targets, perhaps they could be set at a borough level, in conjunction with borough commanders, to reflect local concerns and

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<sup>4</sup> p.138-140: FitzGerald, M., Hough, M., Joseph, I. and Qureshi, T. (2002) *Policing for London*, Devon: Willan; p.19-20: Loveday, B. and Reid, A. (2003) *Going local: Who should run Britain's police?*, London: Policy Exchange; Patrick, R. (2009) *Performance management, gaming and police practice: A study of changing police behaviour in England and Wales during the era of New Public Management*, Birmingham: University of Birmingham.

<sup>5</sup> London Assembly Police and Crime Committee (2013) *Duty of care: Improving support for victims of crime*, London: Greater London Authority.

circumstances. This would help to avoid local priorities being superseded by centrally defined targets. They could be selected from a range developed centrally to ensure some consistency of approach and set in consultation with other local community safety stakeholders to secure their buy-in.

Finally, we support plans to restructure the police estate and close certain police stations, given the need to reduce costs and maintain officer numbers. Many police stations are not fit for purpose and are rarely used by the public, and are not therefore the best use of limited police resources. However, it is essential that this is not perceived to be the police 'abandoning' certain areas, so it is important that new ways are found to maintain a police presence. With this in mind, we would welcome efforts to identify opportunities to co-locate the police with other statutory services that have a public-facing remit. This is an efficient use of resources and may also have additional benefits in terms of facilitating effective partnership working. We also support the proposed pilot of police counters based in post offices. Alongside this, however, the police must ensure that they are flexible in ensuring that they are accessible for all victims of crime, and in particular victims of serious crime who may need additional support.

We recognise that the planned reduction in the Metropolitan Police Service's budget presents significant challenges and that some difficult choices will have to be made. We also recognise that a commitment to maintain police officer numbers at around 32,000 limits the flexibility that the Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime has in developing its plans. However, we would urge you to take the issues raised above into account when developing the final Police and Crime Plan for 2013-2017. If you would like to discuss any of the points raised in this letter in more detail please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'John Graham', written in a cursive style.

John Graham  
Director