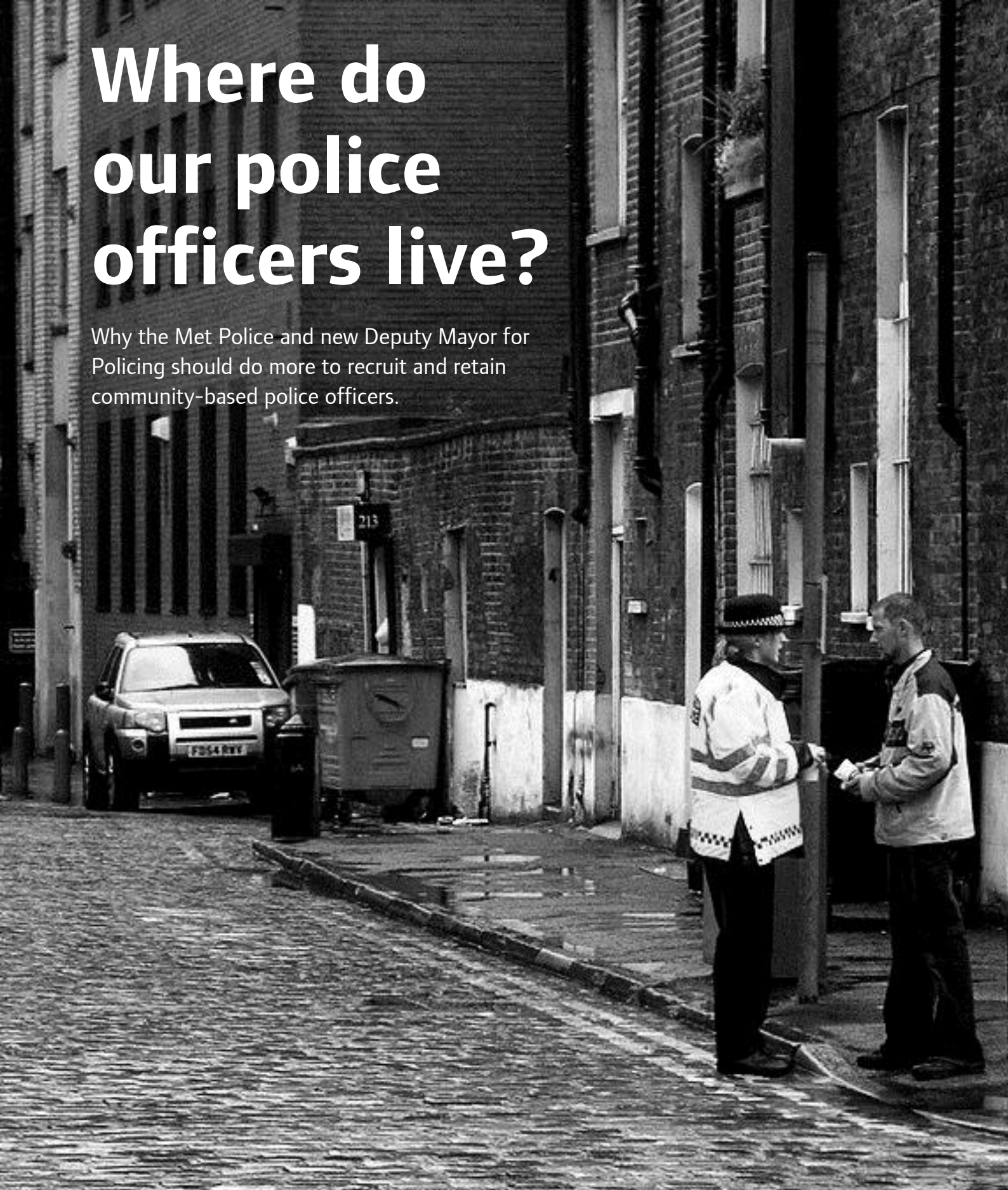


# Where do our police officers live?

Why the Met Police and new Deputy Mayor for Policing should do more to recruit and retain community-based police officers.



A briefing by Sian Berry  
Green Party Member of the London Assembly  
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## Where do our borough police live?

In May 2016, I obtained data showing where London's borough police officers live. It shows that almost half of them – 49 per cent – live outside London.

In 2013, the Met recognised that the number of officers based outside London was something they needed to change but the lack of progress since then concerns me.

I think that the service to Londoners provided by the Metropolitan Police Service – and our community's confidence in that service – would be improved if more borough police officers were drawn from and lived within the areas they serve.



You can see the breakdown of data I received about non-London-based officers working in each borough in the map below.<sup>1</sup>

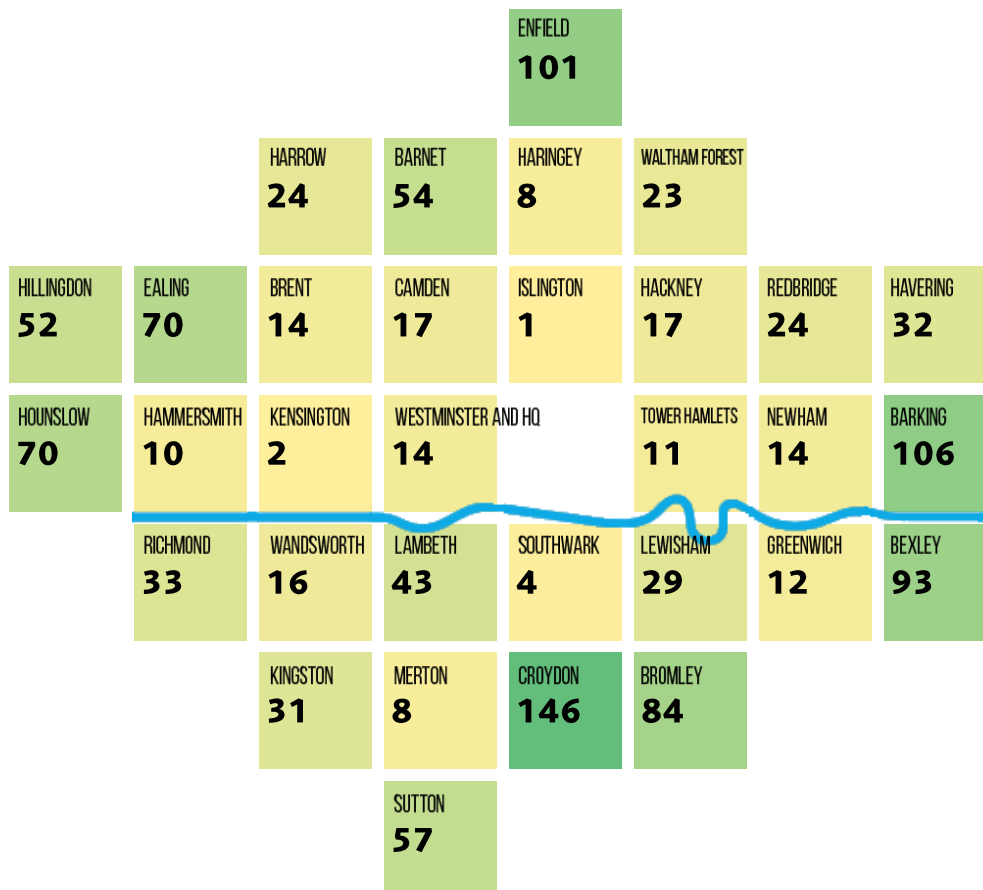
### Percentage of borough officers living outside London



The proportion of officers living outside London is particularly high in a number of outer London boroughs. It is lowest in the inner south London boroughs of Lambeth, Southwark and Lewisham.

The data I asked for also included how many officers live in the borough they work in. The results are shown in the map below.

## Number of officers living in the borough where they are based



In many inner London boroughs only a tiny number of officers actually live amongst the communities they serve every day. For example, there is just one officer living and working in Islington, two in Kensington and Chelsea and four in Southwark.

## Why has there been no increase in London-based officers?

In 2013, the Met recognised that the number of officers based outside London was something they needed to change. The Met has introduced several measures to tackle this including:

- a London residency requirement was introduced in August 2014 where all new recruits must have lived in London for at least 3 of the last 6 years. It does not affect serving officers or those transferring from other UK forces.
- removing the specific commuting travel allowance in August 2013 for new recruits

Despite these initiatives, little progress has been made. My predecessor Jenny Jones AM, obtained similar data in November 2014 and October 2015. The comparison between years is shown in the table below.<sup>23</sup>

	<b>No. living in borough</b>	<b>No. living in London</b>	<b>Total officers</b>	<b>% living in borough</b>	<b>% living in London</b>
<b>2014</b>	1,208	8,769	18,400	6.6%	48%
<b>2015</b>	1,262	8,896	18,179	6.9%	49%
<b>2016</b>	1,220	8,927	18,043	6.8%	49%

The reasons for this lack of progress are unclear. They may include the high cost of living in London, which is an increasing problem for many public servants. There are now very few boroughs which are affordable to a first year PC. In most, the average rent is over 50 per cent of take home pay.<sup>4</sup>

However, this doesn't explain all the differences between the number of police living in their boroughs or outside London. Other factors are clearly behind this. These could be addressed by changes in police recruitment practices, policies and culture.

## **What should happen next?**

I believe that London needs more police who represent and understand the communities they serve, particularly those working as borough officers. Mayor Sadiq Khan's manifesto similarly promises to:<sup>5</sup> "Promote a police force that looks like the communities it is charged with keeping safe, with the aim of having a Met that is as diverse as London's population."

**I recommend the Met Commissioner and new Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime to revisit the issue of where our police live. This should form part of their strategy to recruit more woman and ethnic minorities. They should make more effective plans to recruit from within London. They should also do more to support and incentivise officers to stay in London when their family circumstances and housing needs change.**

**Police officers need to have a real understanding of London's diverse boroughs and communities. We have to recruit and retain more officers who don't just look like the people they serve but who come from and live in our communities.**

## What do you think?

Please contact me to share your views and solutions.

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This report sets out my views as an individual Assembly Member and not the agreed view of the entire Assembly

## References

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<sup>1</sup> [http://questions.london.gov.uk/QuestionSearch/searchclient/questions/question\\_287640](http://questions.london.gov.uk/QuestionSearch/searchclient/questions/question_287640)

<sup>2</sup> [http://questions.london.gov.uk/QuestionSearch/searchclient/questions/question\\_278435](http://questions.london.gov.uk/QuestionSearch/searchclient/questions/question_278435)

<sup>3</sup> [http://questions.london.gov.uk/QuestionSearch/searchclient/questions/question\\_283592](http://questions.london.gov.uk/QuestionSearch/searchclient/questions/question_283592)

<sup>4</sup> Comparison with private rented market statistics on average rents from Valuation Officer Agency  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/private-rental-market-summary-statistics-england-2014-15>

<sup>5</sup> [http://www.sadiq.london/a\\_manifesto\\_for\\_all\\_londoners](http://www.sadiq.london/a_manifesto_for_all_londoners)

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