



Only Connect

Response to MOPAC's Draft Policing and Crime Plan

1. What, if any, other objectives and goals would you add to the Mayor's objectives and goals?

Nil response.

2. What, if any, other things could be done to address police performance and resource issues?

Nil response.

3. Do you think the confidence in the Metropolitan Police needs to be improved? How do you think that could be done?

The trust in the MPS is possibly at an all time low given the significant and highly public investigations into corruption. This coupled with historic issues such as allegations of institutional racism have left the force in a challenging situation.

The public's confidence in the Police, along with other statutory agencies, is a key measure of both satisfaction and consent. It is necessary for the facilitation of effective crime reporting and detection, and a bi-product of professional and effective conduct of a police force.

More should be done on improving the root and branch professionalism and 'human touch' of police officers by making contact and placement in community settings a mandatory part of professional training and development. The risk is that beyond the neighbourhood policing model, there are too few opportunities for senior officers to ground themselves in the culture and expectations of the communities that they serve. This results in mistrust, miscommunication and poor outcomes.

On stop and search: the evidence of the effectiveness of stop and search in improving the sanction detection rate of crimes must be made publicly available to quell mistrust. Significant work should continue to go into the development of the quality of each of stop and search interactions, with the ability of the subjects to challenge this through formal complaints procedures being paramount.

4. The Mayor has prioritised keeping police officer numbers high rather than keeping underused buildings open. Do you feel that the focus should be on maintaining police numbers or police buildings? How else could budget savings be made?

Nil response.

5. What, if any, other things could be done to prevent crime?

The plan pays very scant attention to the different opportunities available to the Office for crime prevention activity. In particular, there is no detail on how the Office will conduct preventive activities with young people, especially those who are not yet coming to notice.

‘The Mayor must work with partners to prevent and tackle anti-social behaviour, crime and re-offending as well as protecting the vulnerable.’ It is difficult to disagree with this statement, however, the proposals do not enlist in any more than the role of ‘community safety and criminal justice’ in partnership with the police. We would argue that the role of communities and the voluntary sector is neglected.

This is underlined by the statement ‘empowering the public to support the police’: crimes are generated and experienced within communities first, with the police being significant professionals dealing with these issues, and so the consent and pull of communities is a pre-requisite for the police without which their job is not possible.

The target for reducing re-offending by young people leaving custody by 20% by 2016 may or may not be achievable and we would caution against binary targets for fear of creating perverse incentives. There has recently been speculation about the accuracy of police recorded crime statistics, so there is a risk that this plays into this skepticism.

The proposed £1m crime prevention fund to be created in 2014 by reforming MOPAC’s community engagement structures and recycling the savings is welcomed. It creates an opportunity for innovation since communities will be able to be involved directly in identifying and solving local problems. With that said, the prevention fund is balanced against the MPS budget of £4Bn, this is very insignificant. A more groundbreaking proposition could be to look at how savings from reducing crime through programmes can be re-circulated back to fund more prevention.

Education of young people in schools is an ever evolving and valid form of crime prevention. OC Impact, our schools programme has been proven to change attitudes towards anti-social behaviour among students who have taken part in it. Using qualified facilitators and trained ex-offenders, OC Impact aims to challenge attitudes about peer pressure, drugs, weapons, identity, difference and street culture and consequently can improve behaviour and learning.

6. What, if any, other things could be done to address justice and resettlement issues?

The argument for getting ex-offenders into work as a means for reducing offending is very attractive, however, the proposals give this issue very cursory exploration. While Job Centre Plus is the right partner, more needs to be done to understand how the training needs of offenders can be met systematically – to include job readiness – and beyond that, employers need to be lobbied to drop some of the prejudices and barriers associated with employing ex-offenders.

These barriers tend to be due to either ex-offenders’ criminal records or their lack of social skills. Therefore, job preparedness should be a mandatory component of

rehabilitation, developing softer skills. Our recently piloted Inspire programme, delivered in HMP Wormwood Scrubs, demonstrated the benefits of supporting prisoners in facilitation, presentation and public speaking, in some cases for the first time. Employers who have no experience of hiring ex-offenders are less likely to hire them and more likely to discriminate, whereas, employers who have experience have found that ex-offenders have a strong mindset and commitment.

The focus on evidence-based commissioning and payment by results is appropriate, but we would emphasise the need to intelligently explore further developments in what are relatively new concepts and methods, recognizing for instance that using binary reoffending rates as targets is not always appropriate.

7. What, if any, other key crime and safety issues that are important to you would you include?

Nil response.

8. Are there any other issues affecting you that have not been covered in the draft Police and Crime Plan?

The plan makes no mention of any non-statutory organizations other than Serco. This is a major omission of the work of individuals and charities who are supporting MOPAC's mission. There is an assumption that the statutory sector alone can work with communities. During 2012, the biggest concerns raised were anti-social behaviour; gangs; stop and search; and the relationship between young people and the police, but these are things that can be best dealt with through community responses, not statutory responses alone.

Safer School Officers need to be supported in their training and approach. Historically, they have been ill-used and ill-deployed with little science and purpose. There needs to be a better dialogue between police, educational establishments and service providers about the allocation of resources and the relative responsibilities in establishing safer school partnerships. Without this being structured and formalized, the Officers will not be used effectively.

Ambitions surrounding Payment by Results and Social Impact Bonds are right. However, it could be argued that the focus on statutory targets rather than actual human potential is limiting. Binary outcomes would not be welcomed as they are not necessarily ends in themselves. Only Connect has secured funding to conduct a feasibility study into the possibility for an area-based social investment vehicle in West London, which we will seek to discuss with MOPAC.

Finally, on the role of the voluntary sector, no mention is made of the Open Public Services agenda. If the voluntary or private sector can deliver the same services to the same level of accountability as local authorities, but at lower cost and with greater effectiveness, should this not be entertained in the way that MOPAC's funds are structured in the future? It might be that the public bodies have to lead, but could the bids be joint?