

## Summary and conclusions

The Met has faced significant challenges over the last ten years. Many of these have been beyond their control. These include austerity, changes in crime patterns, greater non-crime demand and a regulatory system that makes it difficult to get rid of people who corrupt the Met's integrity. The Crown Prosecution Service and the courts are also under acute pressure. This impacts the effectiveness of the Met, and makes the criminal justice system overall much less effective.

Significant societal shifts are rightly making us less tolerant of crimes such as domestic abuse, rape and child abuse as well as discrimination. Public expectations on policing are therefore greater.

London too is always changing. Its population is expanding, and is swelled by thousands of commuters daily and millions of visitors each year. It is more diverse in terms of nationalities, ethnic and faith groups, and sexuality than other UK cities. The majority of the population are not from White British ethnic backgrounds, one in five do not have English as their main language, and London has greater extremes of wealth and poverty than other parts of the UK.

In contrast, Met officers are 82% White and 71% male, and the majority do not live in the city they police. As such, the Met does not look like the majority of Londoners.

Traditional volume crime (such as burglary and theft) has declined, while low volume but more serious offences such as violence against the person, and sexual offences have significantly increased from 17% of all crimes in 2012-13 to 31% in 2022-23. Such cases take longer to investigate and resolve. Domestic abuse-related crimes have doubled over ten years to nearly 100,000 a year and the number of reported rape cases have increased fourfold. But the number of officers investigating them has not increased at the same rate. This places more demand on police detective services in particular, while there is a national shortage of detectives.

Like other public services, austerity has profoundly affected the Met. In real-terms, the Review has calculated that the Met now has £0.7 billion less than at the start of the previous decade, meaning its budget is 18% smaller. This is enough to employ more than 9,600 extra Police Constables at full cost. It has lost 21% of its civilian staff and two thirds of its Special Constables while the number of Police Community Support Officers has halved. Between 2010 and 2022 it closed 126 police stations. Specialist units and functions have been prioritised, including through ring-fenced Government funding.

Together, this has eroded frontline policing, weakening the strongest day-to-day point of connection with Londoners, as well as impacting the Met's reactive

capabilities, its response levels, and its response to male violence perpetrated against women and children.

The model of policing by consent, pioneered in London and admired and copied around the world, requires the Met to both earn and maintain public trust in everything it does. However, there is declining public confidence and trust in the institution. Public trust has fallen from a high point of 89% in 2016 to a low of 66% in March 2022. Public confidence in the Met to do a good job locally has fallen from high points of 70% in 2016 and 2017 to a low of 45% in March 2022.

People from Black and mixed ethnic groups have lower trust and confidence in the Met, scoring 10 to 20% lower than average on trust and 5 to 10% lower on confidence, although declining scores among White Londoners mean that gap is closing.

Among those who responded to surveys undertaken for the Review, three quarters of Met employees and two in five Londoners think the Met's external reputation is poor. Black Londoners are even more likely to say its reputation is poor.

A series of scandals involving the Met and the Met's response – playing them down, denial, obfuscation, and digging in to defend officers without seeming to understand their wider significance – combined with this loss of trust, are strong indicators of fundamental problems.

In September 2022, the appointment of a new Commissioner and Deputy Commissioner with a commitment to reform marked a new, positive beginning for the Met.

This Review, commissioned in the wake of the scandals that have rocked policing nationally, has sought to examine the Met's culture and standards. We have not undertaken an inspection of the Met's overall performance, efficiency and effectiveness although we have looked at some aspects of this.

Our approach has been to talk to officers, staff and others, and review and analyse information, data, systems and operational performance for their relevance to the Met's culture and standards. We considered how the Met's culture affects its central purpose to keep Londoners safe, how it inspires trust and confidence, and how it upholds the British model of policing by consent.

Our conclusions are set out below.

## **1. There are systemic and fundamental problems in how the Met is run**

The size of the Met makes it challenging to operate and also to change. The problem, however, is not its size but its inadequate management. The Met is run as a set of disconnected and competing moving parts, lacking clear systems, goals or strategies. It runs on a series of uncoordinated and short-lived initiatives, long on activity but short on action.

There is no workforce plan, no strategic assessment of the needs and skills of the organisation, and demand modelling is outdated. Recruitment and vetting systems are poor and fail to guard against those who seek power in order to abuse it. There has been no central record of training, so officers may well be in roles which they are not trained for.

The management of people is poor. The Met's processes do not effectively root out bad officers, help to tackle mediocre officers, or truly support and develop good officers. Some of this is down to national systems (including misconduct processes, under-performance regulations, and the national promotion framework). But the Met doesn't actively intervene to make these work better for its people, and its own policies, practices and culture serve to exacerbate the problem.

We witnessed clear signs of high stress and pressure among officers due to the nature of their work dealing with very stressful and upsetting situations, working with traumatised, vulnerable and dangerous people and facing daily abuse from the public. Frontline officers working on Response and Public Protection Teams were not being properly assisted with psychological support to protect their mental health or prevent desensitisation towards victims and the public.

Sergeants and Inspectors are expected to manage very large numbers of constables and junior staff as a core feature of their work, without the time and the tools to do so. Under current Met systems it is easier for them to ignore poor performing officers or let those with conduct issues get away with bad behaviour. In an organisation where people are its principal asset, the vital role of Human Resources has been outsourced and is too distant from local policing needs.

Since publication of the Macpherson report in 1999, the Met has remained largely White and largely male. If recruitment continues on its current trajectory, it will take at least another thirty years, until 2053, to reach gender balance. It will take even longer, until 2061, to reach 46% Black, Asian and ethnic minority representation – what is needed to be representative of London today, let alone the even more diverse city it will be in nearly 40 years' time.

The Police Uplift Programme has been a missed opportunity to improve the diversity and skills base of its workforce. There is no plan B. This isn't about being 'woke' or having politically correct quotas. It means the Met is missing out on the talent it desperately needs to improve its effectiveness. It is also damaging community confidence, by failing to create a force that looks like the city it polices. This is creating a negative spiral in which some communities continue to have negative experiences at the hands of the police, trust them less, and are less likely to join.

## **2. The Met has not managed the integrity of its own police service**

This Met is tasked with upholding law and order and keeping citizens safe. But it has failed over time to ensure the integrity of its officers and therefore of the organisation. Despite the obvious signals of major failure – with heinous crimes perpetrated by serving Met officers – it did not stop to question its processes.

Policing will attract those who wish to abuse the powers conferred by a warrant card. The Met has not taken this fact seriously. Its vetting processes are not vigilant in identifying clear warning signs such as previous indecent exposure or domestic abuse from applicant officers. Transferees from other forces are trusted to be good enough. Periodic re-vetting has been perfunctory, and self-declarations are relied upon. The Met does not make ethical standards as clear as it could, and it has no systems in place to ensure staff and officers adhere to them, nor clear consequences if they do not.

Concerns raised through the misconduct or complaints process are not well recorded and are more likely to be dismissed than acted upon. Patterns of behaviour and escalating incidents which are the hallmarks of predatory behaviour are not identified. Instead, time and time again, those complaining are not believed or supported. They are treated badly, or face counter-claims from those they have accused. Behaviour which in most other organisations would lead to instant dismissal or serious disciplinary action – particularly amongst those who work routinely with vulnerable people – is too often addressed through 'management action' or 'reflective practice'.

In the absence of vigilance towards those who intend to abuse the office of constable, predatory and unacceptable behaviour has been allowed to flourish. There are too many places for people to hide. The integrity of the organisation remains vulnerable to threat.

### 3. The Met's new leadership represent a welcome change of tone and approach. However, deep seated cultures need to be tackled in order for change to be sustained

When he became Commissioner in 1972, over 50 years ago, Sir Robert Mark said he had 'never experienced...blindness, arrogance and prejudice on anything like the scale accepted as routine in the Met'. The Met is a very different organisation today. But we have found those cultures alive and well. We want to be crystal clear that we are not saying everyone within the organisation behaves in these ways, but that these are the prevailing and default cultures: 'the way we do things'. Worryingly, some of the worst cultures, behaviours and practices have been found in specialist firearms units, where standards and accountability should be at their absolute highest.

***Too much hubris and too little humility:*** The organisation has a 'we know best' attitude. It dismisses external views and criticisms, and adopts the attitude that no one outside the Met can understand the special nature and unique demands of their work. This hubris has become a serious weakness. It stops them hearing and understanding other views, including those of Londoners, and prevents them bringing in external help, co-opting experts and stakeholders to provide support and challenge.

***Defensiveness and denial:*** The Met does not easily accept criticism nor 'own' its failures. It does not embrace or learn from its mistakes. Instead, it starts from a position that nothing wrong has occurred. It looks for, and latches onto, small flaws in any criticism, only accepting reluctantly that any wrong-doing has occurred after incontrovertible evidence has been produced.

One of the saddest aspects of this culture of denial is that many of the issues highlighted in this report – systemic racial bias in the misconduct system, poor child protection services, not recognising predatory behaviour, the dire state of property storage – have been known about, reported on and investigated before. But the Met's culture, combined with its poor management, has meant that these issues have not been sufficiently addressed. This has allowed wrongdoing to persist.

***Speaking up is not welcome:*** Keeping your head down, looking the other way, and telling people – especially senior officers – what they want to hear is the way things are done in the Met. The culture of not speaking up has become so ingrained that even when senior officers actively seek candid views, there is a reluctance to speak up. Disciplined services such as policing might be more prone to such behaviours. This makes it all the more important that those who do speak up are supported, protected, and their contribution is valued. But those who speak up in the Met learn the hard way that there are adverse consequences for themselves, for their careers, and for their teams. Systems support wrongdoers. Complainants are not believed.

Staff Associations and Independent Advisory Groups feel ignored. A bullying culture underpins all this. Racist, misogynist, homophobic and other discriminatory acts are tolerated, ignored, or dismissed as ‘banter’.

**Optimism bias:** Following any issue, there is a strong tendency to look for a positive spin, which allows the organisation to move on. They seek to put it in the past and blame individual ‘bad apples’, rather than pausing for genuine reflection on systemic issues. The Met talks up future actions as if they were already implemented. This tendency is most clearly noticeable in a tick box approach to critical reports, inspections, inquiries and other forms of scrutiny where bigger picture issues are broken down into individual actions. Problems with culture and attitudes cannot be addressed by developing a new policy, changing the rules or developing a new process.

**‘Initiative-itis’:** Instead of focusing on getting the basics right, short term projects and campaigns have been launched from HQ without seeing them through, considering their impact or engaging the organisation in embedding enduring systemic change. This particularly wears down officers on the frontline. They experience slogans and spreadsheet returns instead of a single, clear and widely understood strategy for improvement. This is exacerbated by poor management within the organisation.

**Elitism: putting frontline policing at the back of the queue:** The Met has allowed an imbalance to grow between well-resourced specialist units and a denuded frontline. It has also allowed the distance between New Scotland Yard and frontline policing teams to widen. Londoners see and rely on frontline officers the most day to day, but these officers feel demoralised and let down by their leaders.

#### **4. Londoners have been put last**

The frontline has been deprioritised. A reorganisation moved 32 borough-based police commands to 12 units with some covering up to four boroughs. There are now much weaker connections to long established communities. Democratic borough structures and Londoners have become a step further removed from their police service.

Local policing has been fractured by the loss of skilled civilian staff, especially crime analysts and support staff. Officers who should be on the streets of London are left to backfill some of these roles. There is less knowledge of local crime patterns and Response teams are responding to ever increasing demands on their service. The result is longer response times.

London no longer has a functioning neighbourhood policing service. Far from being ring-fenced as promised in the reorganisation, it has become a resource for

backfilling other services like Response. The number of PCSOs has been drastically reduced.

Those running BCUs do not have authority over their patch and are not responsible or accountable for the actions of specialist teams like the Violent Crime Task Force and the TSG.

## **5. London's women and children have been left even further behind**

The de-prioritisation and de-specialisation of public protection has put women and children at greater risk than necessary.

Despite some outstanding, experienced senior officers, an overworked, inexperienced workforce polices child protection, rape and serious sexual offences. They lack the infrastructure and specialism which the Sapphire specialist command benefited from. Instead of access to fast-track forensic services, officers have to contend with over-stuffed, dilapidated or broken fridges and freezers containing evidence including the rape kits of victims, and endure long waits for test results.

It is more than six years since the 2016 HMIC report into child protection was described as “the most severely critical that HMIC has published about any force, on any subject, ever.” But the Met's child protection service continues to have major inadequacies.

The Met's VAWG strategy rings hollow since its claim to be prioritising 'serious violence' has really not included the crimes that most affect women and girls. Those investigating domestic abuse are also under considerable pressures, with unmanageable caseloads and poor support for victims. This has increased the disconnection from Londoners.

## **6. The Met lacks accountability and transparency**

The Met is a £4 billion public institution. Therefore, it should be transparent and accountable for the services it provides and the resources it uses, while maintaining operational responsibility for policing decisions. Yet all too often, it has been unaccountable to the public and their representatives.

The structures of governance and scrutiny are relatively weak. HMICFRS are an inspectorate not a regulator and can only really comment on what they find. They have limited levers to drive improvement. The 'engage' phase is a reflection of the Inspectorate's significant concerns about the force, but it holds no real consequences for the Met. Their internal audit processes are not valued by the organisation as a process of assurance and early warning.

The Met have in the past avoided scrutiny, holding MOPAC at arms-length, and not sharing information and data. MOPAC in turn have not been able to provide the strategic oversight function that the Met needs. Holding the Met to account has become more tactical. More robust and strategic oversight, based on support, challenge and mutual respect for their respective roles, is needed.

Within each BCU, some the size of a county police force, it is very surprising and concerning that local policing lacks the level of local accountability which would be found in a constabulary across the rest of England and Wales. Londoners are further and further from their policing service.

The Met needs to increase its accountability to Londoners, by being more transparent with the public, with local authorities and MPs, by explaining their decisions and the reasons for them, and by acting with greater candour.

The checks and balances provided by robust scrutiny, governance and accountability are vital for public bodies, perhaps especially the police with their duties towards and powers over the public. However, at a point where the Met requires major reform, it is even more important that those who have responsibility for oversight and inspection support it to change.

## **7. Discrimination is tolerated, not dealt with and has become baked into the system**

We have found widespread bullying, particularly of those with protected characteristics. 22% of staff and officers experienced bullying. There is a profound culture across the Met that incentivises people to look, act and sound the same, and a resistance to difference.

33% of those with a long-standing illness, disability or infirmity have experienced bullying. Claims for disability discrimination is the most frequent claim type brought against the Met. But there is no willingness to learn from these cases.

There is deep seated homophobia within the Met, as shown by the fact that almost one in five lesbian, gay and bisexual Met employees have personally experienced homophobia and 30% of LGBTQ+ employees have said they had been bullied. Trust, confidence and fairness scores among LGBTQ+ Londoners have fallen significantly.

Female officers and staff routinely face sexism and misogyny. The Met has not protected its female employees or members of the public from police perpetrators of domestic abuse, nor those who abuse their position for sexual purposes. Despite the Met saying violence against women and girls is a priority, it has been treated



differently from 'serious violence'. In practice, this has meant it has not been taken as seriously in terms of resourcing and prioritisation.

There are people in the Met with racist attitudes, and Black, Asian and ethnic minority officers and staff are more likely to experience racism, discrimination and bullying at their hands. Discrimination is often ignored, and complaints are likely to be turned against Black, Asian and ethnic minority officers. Many do not think it is worth reporting. Black officers are 81% more likely to be in the misconduct system than their White counterparts. The organisation has failed to significantly improve the recruitment and retention of Black officers at all levels. This is particularly true of Black and ethnic minority women.

Meanwhile Black Londoners in particular remain over-policed. They are more likely to be stopped and searched, handcuffed, batoned and Tasered, are over-represented in many serious crimes, and when they are victims of crime, they are less satisfied with the service they receive than other Londoners. There is now generational mistrust of the police among Black Londoners. Stop and search is currently deployed by the Met at the cost of legitimacy, trust and, therefore, consent.

We have found institutional racism, misogyny and homophobia in the Met. In coming to this conclusion, we have applied four tests. We believe these can be applied in respect of homophobia, misogyny and racism but we have applied them in respect of racism below.

1. Clearly not everyone in the Met is racist, but there are racists and people with racist attitudes within the organisation
2. Black and ethnic minority officers and staff experience racism at work and it is routinely ignored, dismissed, or not spoken about. Many do not think it is worth reporting
3. Racism and racial bias are reinforced within Met systems
4. The Met under-protects and over-polices Black Londoners

Tackling discrimination is a legal and operational imperative for the Met. It needs to acknowledge the extent to which racism, misogyny and homophobia are present within its organisational processes and systems in order to move forward.

## **8. The Met is in danger of losing its way – consent is broken**

The Met's key values, the College of Policing's Code of Ethics and the Peelian principles all provide clear standards and direction for how the organisation should operate and how it should police London. However, these values and principles have not been front and centre of the Met's strategic or operational approach either internally or externally. It has been disfigured by austerity and the decisions that were made during that period, alongside changes in the crime mix and societal

expectations. The Met has been losing its way and the worst aspects of its culture have impeded its ability to recognise this.

The Met has become less effective and is less trusted. Public confidence has dipped below 50%. Fewer Londoners agree that the Met treats everyone fairly, and the proportion of people believing that the Met does a good job for London has also fallen.

Public attitudes and the findings of this Review are also evidence that the Met has become unanchored from the principles of policing by consent. Consent is not passive but relies on the police operating with transparency, to be willing to explain their decisions and their reasons for it.