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Home Affairs Committee

Police Reform

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Home Affairs Committee

The Home Affairs Committee is appointed by the House of Commons to examine the expenditure, administration and policy of the Home Office and its associated public bodies; and the administration and expenditure of the Attorney General's Office, the Treasury Solicitor's Department, the Crown Prosecution Service and the Serious Fraud Office (but excluding individual cases and appointments and advice given within government by Law Officers).

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Footnotes

In the footnotes of this Report, references to oral evidence are indicated by 'Q' followed by the question number. References to written evidence are indicated by the page number in 'Ev 12'. All evidence for this inquiry is printed in Volume II.

Contents

Report	<i>Page</i>
Summary	3
The Committee’s inquiry	7
Background to police reform	7
The first phase	7
The second phase	9
Police reform—general responses	11
Embedding a ‘performance culture’	13
The new mechanisms	13
What has been achieved so far?	16
Too many organisations?	21
Police training	25
The National Policing Plan and PSA targets	27
Accountability mechanisms	31
The existing arrangements	31
Proposals for increased accountability	32
Future of the 43-force structure	34
Police bureaucracy	36
Workforce modernisation	41
Reform of police pay, conditions and working practices	41
Diversity	43
Career breaks	47
‘Civilianisation’	48
Community Support Officers	49
Science and technology	52
Call handling	53
Use of DNA	54
Conclusions and recommendations	57
List of abbreviations and acronyms	63
Formal minutes	64
Witnesses	65
List of written evidence	66
Reports from the Home Affairs Committee since 2001	67

Summary

Three years on from the launch of the Government's police reform programme, we felt the time was right to take stock. Our inquiry is a 'snapshot' of the current state of police reform, assessing what has been achieved so far and where the process is heading.

Most of our witnesses agreed that the overall direction of the police reform programme has been the right one. However, the implementation of the reforms has varied in its effectiveness. A shift between the first and second phases of reform, from a 'centralising' to 'localist' approach, has been generally welcomed.

A focus on performance has been crucial to the reform agenda. We review the mechanisms by which the Government has sought to achieve this. We conclude that a performance culture has begun to embed itself in the police service. However, there is still scope for considerable improvement.

Some of the aspirations expressed when the reform process was launched have not yet been met—in particular, an improvement in the crime detection rate. We accept that this rate has a limited usefulness as an indicator of police effectiveness, because it does not distinguish between serious and minor crimes. Nonetheless, it is still a matter for concern that too few criminals are brought to justice. In the next phase of police reform more attention should be paid to improving the capacity of the police to detect crime. We emphasise the importance of the Government's target of increasing the sanction detection rate from 19% to at least 25% by 2008.

Overall it is right that the top priority should be crime reduction. The success of police reform will in large measure be judged by whether crime rates fall—and in particular by whether the new PSA target of a 15% fall by 2007–08 is met.

There is a confusing variety of bodies dealing with aspects of the police reform process, with unnecessary overlap between them. We accept the logic of the Government's proposal to create a Policing Improvement Agency, to rationalise many of these functions within a single body. However, we call for clarity about the role of the Agency and its relations with other organisations such as the Police Standards Unit. Responsibility for carrying out short-term interventions in underperforming forces should be separated from the long-term task of improving the overall skills base of the police service. We emphasise the importance of adequately resourcing the new Agency.

We discuss the funding of police training. The evidence suggests that training has recently been squeezed on budgetary grounds. This is likely to prove a false economy. We recommend that there should be no further cuts in the police training budget unless areas of obvious waste have been clearly identified. We also call on the Home Office and ACPO to investigate whether it is the case, as has been claimed, that training is disproportionately targeted at the higher ranks.

We welcome the simplification of priorities and greater emphasis on local decision-making in the most recent National Policing Plan and the new police-related PSA targets. We emphasise the need also for a real reduction in centrally determined targets that are set outside the PSA framework.

It is sensible to involve Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships in police target-setting. However, there are two dangers: that this may become a back-door way of setting local targets for the police, and that there is potential for confusing overlap between the roles of the CDRPs and of police authorities. The Home Office should invite HMIC to monitor the operation of local target-setting.

We support the principle of greater public involvement in local policing. The views of the public should inform decision-making but not dictate it, and the Home Office should avoid imposing an identical consultative structure on every area.

We consider the future of the present 43-force structure. There is little appetite within the police or the wider community for a major structural upheaval or large-scale force amalgamations. The sensible way forward is through development of a limited number of 'lead forces', who will develop specialist expertise and share this with neighbouring forces. The Home Office should issue clarification of funding and accountability mechanisms for proposed lead forces and an assessment of their implications for other forces.

There is a strong public desire, which we support, for more police officers to be returned to the beat. Good progress has been made in implementing some of the recommendations of the Bureaucracy Taskforce. The use of fixed-penalty tickets has played a significant part in freeing up police time. However, these gains have been at the margins. The real potential for saving police time and resources lies in introducing more effective information technology. There has been a long-standing failure to develop an integrated case and custody system. We recommend that the Home Office should supply us with regular progress reports on this project until it has been fully implemented.

The Government's definition of 'front-line policing' as including work on case files and report preparation skews the statistics and gives an exaggerated impression of success in returning police officers to street duties. We recommend that the definition of 'front-line policing' should be changed to exclude time spent dealing with paperwork indoors.

We comment on the Government's reforms of police pay, conditions and working practices. We congratulate the Home Office on its success in reducing high rates of ill-health retirement and sickness absence. We support the greater flexibility which Special Priority Payments will bring in the use of resources, but consider it too early to carry out a full assessment of their effects.

Despite recent increases in recruitment from minority ethnic groups, many police forces remain unrepresentative of their wider communities. The best way forward is through a combination of 'positive action' (promotional and outreach activities aimed at encouraging more members of minority groups to join the police) and prioritising in recruitment of certain abilities such as language skills and knowledge of cultural background, where this can be justified on a purely crime-fighting basis as relevant to policing needs in particular areas.

We believe that membership of the BNP and similar racist organisations is incompatible with being a police officer, and we look forward to this restriction being made legally

enforceable. Formal restrictions should be accompanied by a determined effort to root out unacceptable attitudes.

We have no reason to believe that there are any major problems with the current system of career breaks. However, we recommend that the Secretary of State's national policy on police career breaks should be amended to make it a requirement that all individual force policies should contain stipulations in respect of court commitments.

We support the Government's intention to merge the pay and conditions of police officers and staff. There should be a single police service pay spine up which individuals will progress according to their skills and expertise. The office of constable should be retained.

Community Support Officers have proved popular with the public in their role as high-visibility patrollers. They are most useful when they work in close liaison with police officers, and any extension of their powers which reduces their street presence would be counter-productive. Police forces and authorities should be given the flexibility to decide for themselves whether they wish to spend extra resources on CSOs or on other personnel or activities.

We support the Government's proposals to improve call-handling. At present it is often difficult for members of the public to contact the police. This is not acceptable. However, the Home Office must ensure that suitable training and staff resources are made available to ensure that the new systems are a success. We also welcome the proposed introduction of a single non-emergency number. The Home Office should address concerns about the need for appropriate back-up systems in its planning for the new number.

More rapid progress is needed in tackling unacceptable variation in the adoption of DNA technology by individual forces. As a precautionary measure, the Home Office should consider whether changes in practice are necessary to deal with the potential problem of multiple identities. We welcome the Forensic Integration Strategy, aimed at integrating all forms of forensic evidence by 2008.

The Committee's inquiry

1. Over four years have passed since the idea of police reform was first floated by the Government, at a conference at Lancaster House in October 2000.¹ Over three years have passed since the police reform programme was officially launched with a white paper, in December 2001.² We felt that the time was right to take stock. We have therefore carried out a short inquiry into the police reform programme. We have assessed what has been achieved so far, and where the process is heading. This has not been a comprehensive review of police reform, which is a complex and many-faceted subject, but an attempt at a 'snapshot' of the current state of affairs. We have necessarily been highly selective and have focussed on a small number of issues of particular concern.

2. During the inquiry we received 52 memoranda and held four oral evidence sessions. Our witnesses were the Association of Chief Police Officers, the Association of Police Authorities, the Chief Police Officers' Staff Association, Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary, the Metropolitan Police Service, the Police Federation, the Police Superintendents' Association, the Police Standards Unit at the Home Office and Ms Hazel Blears MP, Minister of State for Crime Reduction, Policing, Community Safety and Counter-Terrorism, accompanied by Mr Stephen Rimmer, Director of Policing Policy at the Home Office.

3. In November 2004, following the conclusion of our oral evidence programme, the Government issued a white paper on the future of the police.³ We invited our witnesses to comment on the white paper proposals, and their responses are printed with this report.⁴

Background to police reform

The first phase

4. The Government's police reform agenda was launched in December 2001 with a white paper, *Policing a New Century*.⁵ The white paper argued that despite a fall in overall levels of crime, extra funding for the police, and a reversal in the decline in police numbers, the police faced challenges including: levels of crime that were too high, fears about crime remaining high, the need to target persistent offenders, a marked decline in detection and conviction rates, police performance that was too variable, and the need to maintain the confidence of the public.

5. The white paper outlined "a radical programme for police reform" to tackle these problems. This included:

- Introducing an annual National Police Plan

1 The conference, convened by the then Home Secretary, Rt Hon Jack Straw MP, was held on 9 October 2000; it involved interested parties including ACPO, APA, PSA and the Police Federation.

2 See paragraph 4 below.

3 See paragraph 15 below.

4 Ev 203–59

5 Home Office, *Policing a New Century: A Blueprint for Reform* (Cm 5326)

- Setting up a Police Standards Unit “to identify and spread the most successful approaches”
- Improved training, leadership and professionalism, for instance by the establishment of a National Centre for Policing Excellence and a new national framework for police training, and by introducing appraisal for chief officers
- Powers for the Home Secretary to intervene to suspend a chief officer or to require improvement in performance
- Reform of police pay and conditions of service
- More effective support from technology and IT
- Making better use of police officers’ time and skills, and tackling unnecessary bureaucracy
- Use of Community Support Officers to carry out basic patrol functions
- Setting up an Independent Police Complaints Commission
- More effective working with other agencies.

6. The white paper was followed by a Police Reform Bill to authorise those parts of the agenda which required statutory authority. The Home Affairs Committee reported on the bill in May 2002.⁶ We gave the bill “a guarded welcome”. Our report focused on the most controversial elements in the bill. It endorsed the proposed Community Support Officers, but expressed reservations about the powers to be given to them.⁷ On the Home Secretary’s powers, the report stated that “We share the general concern that central interference in the running of individual forces is not desirable”; however, it welcomed the safeguards proposed by the Government and said that the powers should only be used as a last resort.⁸ On the proposed Police Standards Unit the report commented “We do not think the Home Office has made out a convincing case for a Police Standards Unit separate in the long term from Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabulary ... we believe it is inevitable and desirable that the Inspectorate and the Standards Unit should eventually merge”.⁹ The Committee also called for further measures to reduce the number of retirements on medical grounds, further reform of police disciplinary procedures, and for police officers to be covered by the Public Disclosure of Work Act which protects whistleblowers.¹⁰ The Police Reform Bill received Royal Assent in July 2002.

7. One development for which the Police Reform Act made provision was the annual publication of a National Policing Plan, to set out and keep regularly updated the Government’s strategic vision for policing. Three such plans have so far been published,

6 Second Report of Session 2001–02, *Police Reform Bill* (HC 612)

7 *Ibid.*, paras 65–68

8 *Ibid.*, para 17

9 *Ibid.*, para 23

10 *Ibid.*, paras 86, 40, 79

the most recent in November 2004.¹¹ In addition, each of the 43 police forces in England and Wales is also now required to produce a strategic three-year plan.

8. Many aspects of the reform agenda did not require legislation. In an attempt to embed a 'performance culture' within the police, a Police Standards Unit was set up within the Home Office, to identify and disseminate best practice and improve operational performance. In addition, a National Centre for Police Excellence has been created to promulgate more effective police training and development.

9. A 'National Intelligence Model' has been devised to provide well researched and analysed intelligence to senior managers. This is intended to form the basis for strategic decisions, tactical resourcing decisions about operational policing, and effective risk management. It aims to regulate the links between reactive, proactive and patrol work and those between local, regional and national priorities. The Model was developed by the National Criminal Intelligence Service (NCIS) and adopted by ACPO in 2000. The Home Office has announced that all forces have now reached the minimum standards for compliance with the Model.¹²

10. Another initiative has aimed at reducing police bureaucracy and unnecessary paperwork, and redeploying constables to the streets. The Government set up a Policing Bureaucracy Taskforce under the chairmanship of Sir David O'Dowd, former HM Chief Inspector of Constabulary. Sir David's report was published in September 2002.¹³ It contained 52 'change proposals'. In response the Government has set up a Policing Bureaucracy Implementation Steering Group, jointly chaired by the Home Office and ACPO.

11. A Police Science and Technology Strategy Group was set up in 2002 to encourage the effective deployment of science and new technology. Particular issues overseen by the group have included the increasing law-enforcement use of DNA, the use of biometric identification techniques, a new radio communication system for the police (Airwave), and more effective telephone call-handling systems, including the possible provision of a single non-emergency number.

The second phase

12. In November 2003 the Government published a green paper, *Policing: Building Safer Communities Together*. This was intended to launch a second phase of police reform. Its emphasis was on developing links between police and their communities, on increasing public reassurance as to police effectiveness, and on modernisation of pay and conditions. Comments were sought on issues grouped under four 'key areas', as set out in the box on the following page.

11 Home Office, *National Policing Plan 2005–08: Safer, Stronger Communities*

12 *National Policing Plan 2005–08*, para 2.11

13 *Policing Bureaucracy Taskforce: Change Proposals to Increase the Presence of Police in Communities*

November 2003 Green Paper—Key Areas for Consultation

Community engagement

- Empowering local people to engage with their local police
- Making police more visible and accessible
- Strengthening voluntary, community and business involvement in policing—especially through Special Constables, Neighbourhood Watch, a wider range of volunteers and local businesses

Accountability

- Strengthened accountability of police at neighbourhood level
- Enhancing leadership capacity and accountability of Basic Command Unit commanders
- Possible introduction of a single, three-digit non-emergency number for accessing local police service
- Developing a Community Advocate role
- Possible radical change to police authority membership and broader partnership arrangements

Operational effectiveness

- Possible structural change to police forces, replacing the current 43 forces with larger ‘strategic forces’, some of which would be ‘lead forces’ developing particular specialisms
- Possible changes to police powers

Service modernisation

- Rewarding good performance, and linking resources to performance
- Delivering a more unified, representative police service with a better skills mix
- Bringing forward a “transformational leadership agenda”.

13. In July 2004, HM Chief Inspector of Constabulary, Sir Keith Povey, published *Modernising the Police Service*, a thematic inspection of police workforce modernisation.¹⁴ A summary is given in paragraphs 156–57 below.

¹⁴ HM Inspectorate of Constabulary, *Modernising the Police Service: A Thematic Inspection of Workforce Modernisation—The Role, Management and Deployment of Police Staff in the Police Service of England and Wales*

14. In August 2004 the Home Office published a consultation paper, *Modernising Police Powers to Meet Community Needs*. We do not comment in this report on these specific proposals for an extension of police powers: they will receive parliamentary scrutiny through the consideration of the Serious Organised Crime and Police Bill currently before Parliament.

15. The results of the consultation on the November 2003 green paper were published in September 2004.¹⁵ On 9 November 2004, the Home Office published a further white paper announcing its decisions on which options would be taken forward as part of the second phase of police reform.¹⁶ It commented that “a drive to increase neighbourhood policing, ensure that the police service has a stronger customer focus and increase the visibility, accessibility and accountability of officers is at the heart of the proposals”.¹⁷ The main proposals in this latest white paper are:

- A neighbourhood policing fund will be created to support the development of dedicated neighbourhood policing teams
- Local communities will be given the power to ‘trigger’ action where their police force, local authority or other ‘community safety partners’ are not delivering
- The customer focus of the police service will be improved. New measures will include a national three-digit non-emergency telephone number, minimum standards for police call-handling, and more information for victims and the wider community.
- A National Policing Improvement Agency will be established to oversee the delivery of priorities outlined in the National Policing Plan.

Police reform—general responses

16. In the original 2001 white paper, the then Home Secretary, the Rt Hon David Blunkett MP, set out what he saw as the fundamental aims of the police reform programme:

“Our task is clear. We want to prevent, detect, apprehend and convict the perpetrators of crime. We need and will have a process that enables those undertaking the basic task of protecting our homes, our streets, and our persons, to do the job more effectively. Whether in dramatically slimming down bureaucracy and reassigning tasks in a way that frees up police officers to do their job more effectively, or in extending what we are calling the ‘police family’ to engage others in policing, or in adopting more modern techniques: we will bring about change.

15 Home Office, *Policing: Building Safer Communities Together—Summary of Consultation Responses*, published 9 September 2004. A briefer summary by the Home Office, submitted to the Committee in July 2004, is printed in Ev 111–14 (paras 105–20).

16 Home Office, *Building Communities, Beating Crime: A better police service for the 21st century* (Cm 6360)

17 Home Office press release 350/2004, *Neighbourhood Police Key To Building Communities And Beating Crime*, dated 9 November 2004

... In the end, it will not be the statistics on crime falling, or targets met for burglary or vehicle crime, but rather the difference felt in the neighbourhood and community itself which will be judge and jury of these reforms.”¹⁸

17. In advance of the publication of the Government’s latest white paper, we asked a selection of major stakeholders for their assessment of the success of police reform. Overall, the responses were favourable, though with some reservations over specific issues.

18. The Association of Police Authorities (APA) stated that it “strongly supports the principles underlying the Government’s police reform agenda, particularly the aims of making policing more responsive to the needs of local people, whilst at the same time driving up standards of performance across the country”. However, the APA expressed concern over the trend to centralisation which it saw as culminating in the original proposals for the Police Reform Act 2002, and called for this trend to be reversed. It described the Act as “a complex piece of legislation with far-reaching implications ... two years on some parts are working well and can be developed further; others need more time to bed in, whilst others have proved more difficult to operate in practice.”¹⁹

19. The Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) described itself as an “enthusiastic proponent of the police reform process”. ACPO stated that while it is too early to make a valid assessment of the impact even of the first wave of reform, some initiatives have had an early impact (for instance, the adoption of the National Intelligence Model), whereas others (such as the National Policing Plan, the National Centre for Policing Excellence, and the Police Standards Unit) “are not yet achieving the full effect that they were intended to achieve”.²⁰

20. ACPO argued that the second wave of reform “appears to have been introduced before proper evaluation of the first wave”. It called for data supplied by the National Intelligence Model to be used to govern priority-setting and resource distribution. It strongly supported the principle of local accountability—in particular that of the individual Chief Constable—and expressed anxiety lest the Government’s proposals “strengthen central controls at the expense of flexibility and local responsiveness”. ACPO would oppose “proposals that introduce highly complex and bureaucratic processes, with centralised target setting and complex lines of local funding”.²¹

21. The Police Superintendents’ Association (PSA) supported many of the initiatives within the reform programme. It called for radical structural change: the creation of a national police force deployed through a regional structure based on existing government regions.²²

22. Of our witnesses, the Police Federation (the staff association for over 95% of police officers) was the least enthusiastic about the reform programme. It argued that the reform process has been piecemeal and lacked a coherent vision: “the service is in effect journeying

18 Cm 5326, introduction, paras 6 and 11

19 Ev 120–21, 126 (paras 3, 9–12, 59)

20 Ev 145 (para 6)

21 Ev 145–46 (paras 7–12)

22 Ev 84 (section 12)

into the unknown without a route map”. It criticised the Government for insufficient consultation and stated that it “remains deeply unconvinced as to the effectiveness of many of the reforms of Police Reform Part One”. However, the Federation added that there is also “much to applaud”, and welcomed “a pronounced shift from the centralising tendencies that characterised Police Reform Part One to the ‘new localism’ of Police Reform Part Two—to all intents and purposes *reforming the reforms*”.²³

23. Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC) told us that “over the years [the Inspectorate] has fully supported the Government’s efforts to modernise the police service”, and described itself as “one of the key organisations driving improvements within policing”. HMIC concluded that:

“The legislative thrust of the Police Reform Act 2002 has been the driver of a significant programme of change within the police service. The pace of this change has been remarkable and, while some forces have yet to be persuaded of the direct benefits of some reform strands, ... positive achievements are clearly evident.”²⁴

HMIC added that during 2003 it had conducted an assessment of the implementation of the Police Reform Act 2002 and the wider reform programme. It had found that “forces had embraced reform as a major strategic change programme, with particular successes in areas of police and community support officer recruitment”.²⁵

24. Following publication of the white paper *Building Communities, Beating Crime* in November 2004, we sought comments on these latest proposals from our previous witnesses. We provide a brief summary of their responses in paragraphs 98 to 100 below. In general the responses supported the broad thrust of the proposals, though with a number of specific criticisms.

25. Most of our witnesses agreed that the overall direction of the police reform programme has been the right one. However, the implementation of the reforms has varied in its effectiveness, and this is the focus of our report. Insofar as our witnesses detected a shift between the first and second phases of reform, from a ‘centralising’ to a ‘localist’ approach, this shift was welcomed. In the remainder of this report we look, first, at the extent to which the reform agenda is actually driving improvements in police performance, and, second, at some of the specific elements which make up that agenda.

Embedding a ‘performance culture’

The new mechanisms

26. A focus on performance is crucial to the police reform agenda. The 2001 white paper announced that:

23 Ev 135–36, 143 (sections 2, 3 and 14)

24 Ev 160 (paras 2.1, 2.4)

25 Ev 160 (para 2.5)

“enabling the police to drive up standards to those of the best is at the heart of police reform. ... Standards vary surprisingly between forces and between Basic Command Units. To the public affected—to the victims of violence, burglary, vehicle theft or anti-social behaviour—this matters profoundly. ... We know the high standards which some police forces and BCUs attain. We must now make sure that these standards are promoted by all forces and their BCUs.”²⁶

27. The Government’s main tool for achieving this objective is the Police Standards Unit (PSU). This is an internal Unit in the Home Office, set up in July 2001. Its terms of reference are set out in the box on the following page.

28. The PSU has supervised the development of new methodologies for assessing police performance:

- the Policing Performance Assessment Framework (PPAF), which monitors policing performance across six areas or ‘domains’ (citizen focus; reducing crime; investigating crime; promoting public safety; providing assistance; and resource usage). PPAF focuses on outcomes rather than on who is responsible for delivery. It is claimed this will allow forces to be innovative in developing better ways of delivery. Work is continuing on drawing up revised PPAF measures for statutory introduction in April 2005.
- iQuanta is an internet-based police performance analysis tool, available online, with passport protection, to the Home Office, forces, Basic Command Units (BCUs) and police authorities. It provides real-time data on the performance of all forces and BCUs across the major crime types. This provides “stakeholders with a consistent language for considering police performance”, and allows forces and BCUs to compare themselves with their peers.
- baseline assessments are HMIC’s new assessment technology. They combine quantitative PPAF data with qualitative assessments of performance as part of a three-year planning and inspection process for each force. The first baseline assessments were published in June 2004. Revised assessments will be published later in 2004, and thereafter every autumn.²⁷

29. These assessments of police performance are considered by the Police Performance Steering Group which meets fortnightly, bringing together the major relevant stakeholders. Its aim is to reduce the ‘performance gap’ between the best and worst performing forces. Data from 2002–03 shows that a number of forces showed performance more than 10% worse than the average performance of comparable forces.

30. The Police Standards Unit targets individual underperforming forces for intervention. It is currently engaged with eight such forces: Avon & Somerset, Cambridgeshire, Cleveland, Greater Manchester, Humberside, Nottinghamshire, Northants and West Yorkshire.²⁸

26 Cm 5326, para 7.1

27 Ev 101–03 (paras 16–31)

28 Ev 104 (paras 45–47)

Police Standards Unit—Terms of Reference

The Standards Unit exists to deliver the Government's commitment to raise standards and improve operational performance in the police and in crime reduction generally in order to maintain and enhance public satisfaction with policing in their area. Its core objective will be to identify and disseminate best practice in the prevention, detection and apprehension of crime in all forces in order to reduce crime and disorder as well as the fear of crime.

The Unit will:

- a) Work with forces and BCUs to ensure the most effective use of intelligence, detection and successful prosecution procedures.
- b) Identify BCUs or forces performing below their best, based on HMIC reports, statistical information, or particular cases of concern.
- c) Engage directly with the BCU or force to establish the nature of the problems, the extent to which best practice may be lacking, and the remedial action required.
- d) Engage similarly with other local agencies to ensure their effective contribution, including through Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships, where it is apparent that this is the key to police success in tackling crime and disorder at force level and below.
- e) Identify where in exceptional circumstances combined cross cutting measures engaging other agencies are required to focus on and achieve early change within a specific geographic area or BCU boundary.
- f) Draw validated best practice from HMIC, National Police Training, the Crime Reduction College and other agencies, spread its use through local engagement, and identify for professional evaluation any new examples or techniques it comes across.
- g) Have a capacity to provide short term funding to support the remedial action it has identified and which could not otherwise be undertaken.
- h) Identify cases in which the Home Secretary should consider the use of powers under the Police Act 1996, the Local Government Act 1999, or other relevant legislation.
- i) Identify issues which raise policy, technical or legal questions for the Home Office to address.

31. The National Centre for Policing Excellence (NCPE) was set up in April 2003 as a national training and development resource for crime and operations. It also serves as the central repository for collecting and disseminating good practice within the police service. It produces codes of practice: the first, on the Police use of firearms, was issued in 2003; further codes, on the Police National Computer, the National Intelligence Model and the Serious Crime Analysis Section, have been drafted and are awaiting publication. Following publication of the Bichard report on lessons to be learned from the Soham murders, NCPE

is now also working on a code of practice on information management.²⁹ NCPE is operated by Centrex (the Central Police Training and Development Authority), which was established as a non-departmental public body in April 2002 (replacing National Police Training which had been part of the Home Office).³⁰

What has been achieved so far?

32. In July 2004, the Home Office told us that “a stronger focus on performance is now firmly embedding itself in the police service”.³¹ It states that “based upon the most recent data available, improvements have been made in all PPAF domains for which there is data available”. Domain 1 (reducing crime) shows particular improvement with a reduction in target crimes per 1,000 population of 12.7%. 40 of the 43 forces in England and Wales have reduced the levels of target crime in the most recent 12 months compared to the baseline year. There was a fall in the fear of crime of 3.5% in 2003 compared with the previous year.³² In addition, over 2003–04, the forces with which the Police Standards Unit was engaged reduced volume crime by 13.3%, which was twice the rate of the other forces in England and Wales.³³

33. However, recent crime statistics have shown a mixed picture. The figures for recorded crime for 2003–04 showed an increase of 1% on the previous year for all offences and an increase in violent crime of 12%. The British Crime Survey figures for the same period show a fall in overall crime of 5% and a fall in violent crime of 3%.

34. In September 2004 the Home Office published *Police Performance Monitoring 2003–04*, their latest annual review of police performance using PPAF data. The official summary of conclusions is set out in the box on the following page. As will be seen, all the measures chosen show improvement over the last year, apart from detection rates. The Minister of State responsible for policing, Ms Hazel Blears MP, commented:

“The overall picture of policing performance that emerges in this report is extremely encouraging. There have been substantial further reductions over the past year in the key target crimes of burglary, vehicle crime and robbery, the percentage of offences brought to justice has risen and there has been a significant decrease in the numbers of people who are worried about being the victims of crime. The report does, however, suggest areas for improvement, most notably in the percentage of crimes for which someone is charged, summonsed or receives a caution or other formal sanction, known as the ‘sanction detection’ rate.”³⁴

29 Ev 105 (paras 54–57)

30 Ev 87 (para 1)

31 Ev 101 (para 16)

32 Ev 103 (paras 32–36)

33 Ev 104 (paras 45–47)

34 Home Office, *Police Performance Monitoring 2003–04*, published on 22 September 2004, from the Forward

Changes in police performance: 2002/03 to 2003/04

	National 2002/03	National 2003/04	Change 2002/03 to 2003/04
Citizen focus			
Residents thinking police do an excellent or good job	47.9%	47.7%	Not statistically significant
Reducing crime			
Burglaries for every 1000 households	19.8	18.2	8.1% reduction
Vehicle crimes for every 1000 residents	18.6	16.9	8.9% reduction
Robberies for every 1000 residents	2.1	1.9	6.3% reduction
Investigating crime			
Percentage of offences brought to justice	18.2%	18.7%	0.5% point increase
Class A drugs supply offences brought to justice for every 10,000 residents	2.0	2.4	17.9% increase
Percentage of offences detected and sanctioned	19.1%	18.8%	0.3% point reduction
Promoting public safety			
Residents very worried about burglary	15%	13%	Statistically significant decrease
Residents highly worried about car crime	17%	15%	Statistically significant decrease
Residents perceiving disorder as high	21%	16%	Statistically significant decrease
Providing assistance			
Percentage of police officer time spent on frontline duties		63.6%	
Resource usage			
Sickness days lost for each officer each year	10.4	9.6	7.5% reduction
Sickness days lost for each civilian each year	11.7	10.9	7.0% reduction

35. Detection rates were identified as a problem when the police reform agenda was originally launched. Notwithstanding the reform initiatives since taken, the rates have continued to decline. The most recent bulletin of annual crime statistics describes the trend:

“In general, detection rates have been declining since 1980. In simple terms, the number of detections achieved has failed to keep pace with the rise in recorded crime over this period; or when crime numbers have fallen, the number of detections has

fallen more. Since 2001–02, the detection rate has remained broadly stable at around 23.5% of all crime.”³⁵

Changes in recording methods have had an impact on detection rates, but it is unclear whether the overall effect of the changes had been to increase or decrease the rates. The detection rate in 1988 was 35%. The annual percentages for detection rate for the past six years are as follows:³⁶

Area	1997-98	1998-99	1999-00	2000-01	2001-02	2002-03	2003-04
London Region	25	22	16	15	14	15	16
England & Wales (excluding London Region)	29	31	28	27	26	26	25
England and Wales	28	29	25	24	23	24	23

36. Most detections are recorded on the basis of a judicial sanction having been imposed. However, there is a smaller category of ‘administrative’ detections where an offence has been counted as ‘cleared up’ but no further action was taken, for various reasons including the death, illness or incapacity of the offender, his being under the age of criminal responsibility, or the police or CPS having decided that no useful purpose would be served by proceeding. Some police forces are now concentrating their monitoring of performance on ‘sanction’ detections.³⁷ The Government has committed itself to increasing the sanction detection rate. One of the “five key priorities” in the latest National Policing Plan is for the police to “take action with partners to increase sanction detection rates”.³⁸ The Plan—

“acknowledges that there is a strong link between the Public Service Agreement to bring 1.25 million offences to justice by 2007–08 [for which, see paragraph 85 below] and the necessity to improve sanction detection performance. In order to achieve the PSA target it is estimated that it will be necessary to achieve a sanction detection rate of at least 25% [increased from the present 19%].”³⁹

37. The President of ACPO, Mr Chris Fox, told us that it would be wrong to place undue emphasis on detection rates:

“Detections have not increased but the detections are part of a very complex mix and sometimes, to pursue a detection to the point of being able to write it off as a detection, when the individual is going to face a two year or three year sentence in any event for what has been detected, sometimes it is not seen as good use of time when we could be moving on. We have the offender, perhaps a prolific offender, we

35 Home Office Statistical Bulletin, *Crime in England and Wales, 2003–04* (July 2004), p 104

36 *Ibid.*, Table 7.02

37 *Ibid.*, p 104

38 NPP 2004, para 1.4

39 HC Deb, 21 December 2004, col 1545W; see also HC Deb, 15 November 2004, col 1131W.

have taken them out of circulation, there will be no further sanction by pursuing other evidential trails to prove a detection.”⁴⁰

38. He added that “in all, save detections, we can demonstrate an upward curve of performance. The British Crime Survey will show crime moving downwards in all directions in every category over quite a long period.”⁴¹ He claimed that “a very strong performance culture [is] being embedded in the Service”.⁴²

39. Giving evidence to us in October 2004, the Minister of State, Ms Blears, argued that the decline in detection rates was partly attributable to new recording methods which have led to more recording of low-level violent crime, “the pushing and shoving that sometimes goes on in a drunken encounter”. She pointed out that detection rates for serious crime are much higher:

“If you look at our detection rates for the most serious crimes like murder, then our detection rates are 92%. If you look at serious drug offences our detection rates are up there in the 80s. If you start to look at low-level crime, then our detection rates come way down because of the nature of the incident that has happened.”⁴³

40. ACPO subsequently submitted written evidence to us on detection rates. They argued that “an over-emphasis on this measure is ... misleading and has the potential to skew policing activity by encouraging effort on the more minor and simpler crimes, such as low-level shoplifting, rather than the more complex and serious crimes”. Nonetheless, they added, “the police service is committed to improve performance in this area but not as the sole measure of police effectiveness”.⁴⁴ They listed measures in hand to improve the ability of the police to detect crime: “the development of common minimum standards for investigation; enhancing the skills of detectives; improving forensic capabilities, making all officers more proficient in interviews of suspects and developing the Service’s line of process through the Crown Prosecution Service and courts”.⁴⁵ The Director of the Police Standards Unit, Mr Paul Evans, also said that he expected detection rates to improve, and to increase them to about 30% would be “not overly ambitious”.⁴⁶ Both Mr Evans and Sir Keith Povey, HM Chief Inspector of Constabulary, acknowledged that improving the police’s capacity to detect crime had not been a priority in the early days of police reform.⁴⁷ Sir Keith said that “part two of the reform programme ... will make forces to a great extent put more resources into and concentrate on the detection of crime as well as reduction”.⁴⁸

41. The Minister of State argued that a combination of police reform and increased resources was having an impact on crime statistics:

40 Q3

41 Q3

42 Q2

43 Q313

44 Ev 172 (para 1)

45 Ev 173 (para 2 (v))

46 Qq 186–88

47 Qq 183–85

48 Q183

“the increased performance of all the forces is really well reflected in the statistics from the British Crime Survey. If we look at that, from 1997 we have seen an overall fall in crime as recorded by BCS of 30%, we have seen a fall in burglary by 42%, which has a massive impact there; a fall in vehicle crime of 40%; a fall in violent crime by 26%; and a fall in robbery, where we had that huge spike of street crime, now down by 24% in the ten top street crime areas over the last couple of years, which shows the impact of targeted intelligence led hot spot policing and where the implementation of the National Intelligence Model that I talked about is actually feeding through into those target crimes.”⁴⁹

42. The Association of Police Authorities told us that that a performance culture is beginning to develop, but there is still much to do before it is embedded at all levels in the service. APA has a performance policy group which brings together lead members from authorities to share and disseminate good practice.⁵⁰ APA stated that the Police Standards Unit has “played an important role in helping inculcate a performance culture” through PPAF and iQuanta, and through promoting initiatives such as Automatic Number Plate Recognition. APA considered that NCPE has started to produce codes and guidance, “perhaps more slowly than expected”; when fully effective, NCPE will have a “significant impact”.⁵¹

43. Most of our other witnesses answered the question as to whether a performance culture is being embedded with a qualified “yes”. ACPO told us that the existence of the Police Standards Unit and the NCPE had contributed to “a more robust performance culture”, but argued that there was overlap and wasteful duplication between the two bodies (a subject we deal with in paragraphs 50 to 67 below).⁵² The PSA stated that there have been significant improvements in the inculcation of a performance culture, with many examples of sophisticated data collection and analysis designed to drive up performance. However, they criticised inconsistencies in approach to data collection between forces.⁵³

44. HM Chief Inspector of Prisons, Sir Keith Povey, strongly supported the view that a performance culture was being embedded. He told us that:

“The differences that have been made substantially are around the performance culture. ... There is an absolute acknowledgement by chief constables and police authorities that performance outcomes are the name of the game.”⁵⁴

45. In its written evidence, HMIC commented that:

“There is little doubt that a performance culture is developing within the police service, although the pace of change and degree to which such a culture is embedded within everyday operation is variable. The implementation of the National Intelligence Model, increased availability of up-to-date and comparative data and

49 Q311

50 Ev 122 (paras 22–26)

51 Ev 122 (paras 25–28)

52 Ev 147 (paras 28–33)

53 Ev 81 (section 5)

54 Q179

greater accountability through the HMIC inspection programme have all contributed towards improved performance and delivery of service.”⁵⁵

However, HMIC added that they were concerned that—

“embedding a performance culture is not given the same priority by some partner organisations. The lack of shared performance data and weak accountability mechanisms can create tensions when working in a multi-agency environment.”⁵⁶

46. The Police Federation expressed scepticism about the concept of a ‘performance culture’. They claimed that in practice this meant an over-emphasis on quantifiable targets leading to “straitjackets or additional bureaucracy imposed on police officers”.⁵⁷

47. The Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) told us that it is developing an “already strong performance culture”, reinforced by increased accountability through target-setting and PPAF performance indicators. However, the MPS stated that the work of embedding a performance culture had been hindered by obsolescent computer systems and a lack of urgency in developing such a culture in other organisations such as the courts system.⁵⁸

48. On the basis of the evidence submitted to us we conclude that a performance culture has begun to embed itself in the police service and that this is widely regarded as a valuable development. However, there is clearly still scope for considerable improvement. Some of the original aspirations expressed when the police reform process was launched have not yet been met—in particular, an improvement in the crime detection rate. We accept the argument that an overall detection rate which does not distinguish between serious crimes and minor ones has a limited usefulness as an indicator of police effectiveness. Nonetheless, it is still a matter for concern that too few criminals are brought to justice. We welcome the assurances of the Director of the Police Standards Unit that in the second phase of police reform more attention will be paid to improving the capacity of the police to detect crime. We emphasise the importance of the Government’s target of increasing the sanction detection rate from 19% to at least 25% by 2008.

49. Overall it is right that the top priority should be crime reduction. The success of police reform will in large measure be judged by whether crime rates fall—and in particular, in the short term, by whether the Government meets its new PSA target (announced in the Comprehensive Spending Review in July 2004) of a 15% reduction in crime by 2007–08.

Too many organisations?

50. One criticism raised by witnesses is that there is now a confusing variety of bodies charged with the oversight of various aspects of the police reform process, and that there is unnecessary overlap between these bodies.

55 Ev 164 (para 4.6)

56 Ev 164 (para 4.8)

57 Ev 137 (para 5.2)

58 Ev 152

51. In its 2002 report on the Police Reform Bill, the Home Affairs Committee expressed concern about the dangers of overlap between the work of PSU and that of HMIC, and stated that “it is inevitable, and desirable, that the Inspectorate and the Standards Unit should eventually merge”.⁵⁹

52. In its reply, the Government argued that—

“HM Inspectorate of Constabulary and the Police Standards Unit have separate and complementary roles. They will work together to identify where forces and Basic Command Units need support to improve their performance. However, HMIC will continue to report on performance across the whole service, alerting the PSU where it believes its support is needed to improve performance. PSU by contracts will focus on particular areas where BCUs and forces need help to improve performance.”⁶⁰

53. Giving oral evidence to the Committee in July 2003, the then Director of the PSU, Dr Kevin Bond, said that the unit had been brought into being as a separate entity from HMIC to “act as a catalyst” within the police service. When asked about the possibility of a future merger with HMIC, Dr Bond said “I am conscious of what you, as a Committee, have recommended and it makes sense”.⁶¹

54. However, the present Director of the PSU, Mr Paul Evans, giving evidence in October 2004, asked to comment on his predecessor’s remark, said:

“No, I disagree. The Standards Unit works out of the Home Office and the HMIC is independent. If you merge those units what you have in some ways is the independent Inspectorate is now evaluating some of the work of PSU, which is Home Office, so you create a conflict. I think there is something to be said for a totally independent HMIC. Once you start merging those it loses its independence out of necessity.”⁶²

55. HM Chief Inspector of Constabulary, Sir Keith Povey, then added:

“I would agree with that. Within the service there is clarity of vision on the role of HMIC and the role of PSU. I think where the complexity and confusion arises now is between the role of PSU and the role of the National Centre for Policing Excellence. I think there is more of an overlap there than there is between HMIC and PSU.”⁶³

56. ACPO told us that there is “considerable overlap and duplication of resources” between the Police Standards Unit, the National Centre for Policing Excellence, the central Home Office and ACPO itself, leading to inefficiencies and lack of co-ordination. ACPO supports the PSU’s targeted interventions but is “less content with the growing remit of PSU to orchestrate national campaigns and to work to identify the most effective operational tactics”. It argues that this function would be better performed by NCPE or ACPO itself.

59 Home Affairs Committee, Second Report of Session 2001–02, *Police Reform Bill*, HC 612, paras 18–23

60 Home Affairs Committee, First Special Report of Session 2001–02, *Police Reform Bill: Government Response to the Committee’s Second Report*, HC 1052, p 6

61 Home Affairs Committee, oral evidence on *The Work of the Police Standards Unit* taken on 8 July 2003, HC 963-i (Session 2002–03), Q16

62 Q194

63 Q195

ACPO also supports the establishment of a Police Improvement Agency, which would “help working police officers change their culture and practices to improve productivity and performance delivery”.⁶⁴

57. The Association of Police Authorities comment that the respective roles of the PSU and of HMIC are now better understood than used to be the case. However, they say that they “remain concerned about the level of monitoring, inspection and auditing which is currently undertaken and the number of those engaged in such roles centrally whether in PSU, the Home Office, HMIC, or the Audit Commission. There is undoubtedly scope to streamline and reduce radically the extent of such activity.”⁶⁵ APA supports the proposed National Improvement Agency, and argues that the work done by NCPE should be subsumed within the new agency.⁶⁶

58. The Police Federation claims that there is much overlap between the PSU, NCPE and HMIC; and yet “the overlapping remits can paradoxically create holes through which important work may fall”, for instance analysis of pan-service intelligence capability.⁶⁷

59. HMIC support in principle the establishment of a Police Improvement Agency, but argue that NCPE, Centrex and PSU should be subsumed within such an agency to avoid duplication of resources (but with HMIC itself remaining independent).⁶⁸

60. HMIC “strongly supported” the introduction of the NCPE. It argues that NCPE has a key role in developing national policing standards and thereby assisting the Inspectorate in its work. However, HMIC expresses concern that “resource and capacity issues mean that it will be some considerable time before there is an integrated suite of professional standards for the service. ... If the positive steps achieved through the introduction of the NCPE are not to be lost, appropriate levels of political support and funding need to be provided.”⁶⁹

61. The Chief Inspector of Constabulary, Sir Keith Povey, confirmed other witnesses’ views that the NCPE has not yet had much of an impact. He said that this was not the NCPE’s fault because—

“I do not think the NCPE, to be fair, have been given the political or financial impetus to achieve what is was originally intended they would achieve. I think one flaw was making NCPE a department of Centrex almost so they have suffered from the budget cuts that Centrex have suffered from, they have just not had the resources to achieve what they originally set out to achieve. They have created four codes of practice ... but I think they could have gone much further.”⁷⁰

62. The Minister of State, Hazel Blears MP, told us in October 2004 that:

64 Ev 147, 150 (paras 28–33, 58–61)

65 Ev 122 (paras 25–28)

66 Ev 123 (paras 29–32)

67 Ev 138 (7.1–4)

68 Ev 162 (paras 3.17–18)

69 Ev 161–62 (paras 3.14–17)

70 Q198

“We do have plans for the National Improvement Agency which we hope will bring together some of these organisations. That is still subject to discussions with ACPO and the APA. ... I have no intention of having the Improvement Agency and still having this myriad of different organisations.”⁷¹

63. This was confirmed as the Government’s policy in the November 2004 white paper. This stated that:

“A strong pre-requisite for the establishment of the Agency is the rationalisation of the landscape of national organisations. We propose to slim this landscape down considerably, around a new infrastructure of the Agency, the Police Standards Unit and the irreducible core of policing responsibilities which must rightly sit within the Home Office. The Agency’s introduction will clearly therefore mean significant change for Centrex, the Police Information Technology Organisation, and the National Centre for Policing Excellence, as well as the other parts of the Home Office concerned with policing. We also hope that many of ACPO’s policy making functions will also become enshrined within the new body, in line with the objectives which they outlined in their vision for the new Agency.

At the same time, the Government is clear that the inspection function and the monitoring and intensive support functions of the Police Standards Unit, will sit outside of the Agency.”⁷²

64. **There is a strong case for a rationalisation within a single body of many of the functions at present carried out by separate bodies connected with police reform. We accept the logic of the Government’s proposal to create a Policing Improvement Agency into which NCPE and other existing bodies will be wholly or partly subsumed. However, there must be clarity about the role of the Agency and its relations with other bodies. It is quite right that HMIC should remain separate and retain its vital independent scrutiny function. We note that the Government is also proposing that the Police Standards Unit should remain separate from the new Agency. It is not apparent from the white paper whether PSU will retain all its existing functions or whether some—for instance, guidance on practice and co-ordination of national campaigns—will transfer to the Agency. It is important that there should be a clear and logical differentiation of roles. In particular, responsibility for carrying out short-term interventions in underperforming forces should be separated from the long-term task of improving the overall skills base of the police service. If the two roles are combined, there is a danger that immediate priorities will take precedence over the long-term, year in, year out development of police skills and capacity nationwide.**

65. **We also note that in recent years there has been an increasing trend towards centrally directed operations; for instance, in relation to alcohol and drug abuse or anti-social behaviour. Hitherto these campaigns have been directed on an *ad hoc* basis by the PSU. It is not clear at present how this trend will develop or where future responsibility for such operations will lie.**

71 Qq 314–15

72 Cm 6360, paras 5.49–50

66. We therefore recommend that the Government should publish as soon as possible a more detailed elucidation of the proposed future division of responsibilities between the Agency and other bodies including the PSU, and that this should recognise the need to separate short-term from long-term interventions.

67. In the light of the criticism we have received that the NCPE has hitherto been hobbled by inadequate funding, we emphasise the importance of providing adequate resources for the new Agency.

Police training

68. The subject of police training is a large and complex one. Our predecessor Committee issued a lengthy report on this in 1999.⁷³ We do not propose to revisit those issues here, but will confine ourselves to commenting on one specific matter, that of funding.

69. The Police Superintendents Association, the Police Federation and the Association of Police Authorities all expressed concern about cuts in the funding of the police training body Centrex.⁷⁴ The Police Federation made a series of criticisms about training, alleging that training in some areas (such as PACE, stop and search and diversity) is insufficient and varies greatly between forces, that there is a paucity of refresher training for custody officers, and that other European countries give a higher priority to police training.⁷⁵ The Federation also argued that police training is disproportionately targeted at the higher ranks, and that “many senior officers have limited understanding of the training requirements of federated ranks”.⁷⁶

70. ACPO also criticised a lack of adequate funding for NCPE, and a lack of separation between the training function (Centrex) and the policy-making function (NCPE).⁷⁷

71. HMIC carried out a formal inspection of Centrex in early 2004 and found the organisation to be “inconsistently effective”. Centrex has responded with an action plan which is currently being considered by the Home Office and ACPO.⁷⁸

72. HM Chief Inspector of Constabulary, Sir Keith Povey, told us that the recent reduction in the probationer training programme from 15 to 12 weeks was “as a result of the budget cuts” and was driven by the Home Office, though he also said that the “the reduction was justifiable when you looked at some of the dross that was taken out of the curriculum”.⁷⁹

73 Home Affairs Committee, Fourth Report of Session 1998–99, *Police Training and Recruitment*, HC 81-I. The Government reply to the report was published in December 1999 as the Committee’s First Special Report of Session 1999–2000, HC 77.

74 Ev 82–83 (section 9); EV 139 (section 10); Ev 123 (para 38)

75 Ev 139 (section 10)

76 Ev 139 (para 10.3)

77 Ev 147 (paras 31–33)

78 Ev 166 (para 5.13)

79 Q231

73. The Minister of State, Hazel Blears, told us that:

“In terms of Centrex funding, they had funding last year of around about £90 million and they are down to £74.8 million this year. I have been quite heartened by the fact that they have been able to deliver on all the priorities that we have set them by achieving a whole range of efficiency savings in there. I acknowledge it has not been easy for them to do but they are still maintaining the vast majority of their programmes on a significantly reduced budget. I genuinely do not believe that the quality of what they are providing has suffered as a result of that. They have had to go through a reorganisation. They have had to look at every line of their budget and really press for productivity and efficiency out of that but they have managed to do it. So far I am reassured because this is not an area that I would want to see reduced.”⁸⁰

74. Ms Blears also countered criticism of the reduction of residential probationer training from 15 to 12 weeks:

“I do not accept for one moment that changes to the probationer system have actually damaged the initial training that is available because it was a proper analysis of what needed to be done at what point, and I think there was consensus that that could be done in a 12-week period rather than a 15 week period.”⁸¹

75. In spite of the Minister’s assurances, the evidence suggests that police training *has* recently been squeezed on budgetary grounds. Such budget-driven cuts are likely to prove a false economy. There is no substitute for continued in-service training which raises skills levels. We recommend that there should be no further cuts in the police training budget unless areas of obvious waste have been clearly identified.

76. We share the concern of the Police Federation that police training is disproportionately targeted at the higher ranks. We recommend that the Home Office and ACPO should investigate whether this is the case. It is important that the training needs of police officers at sergeant and inspector level should not be neglected.

80 Q320

81 Q321

The National Policing Plan and PSA targets

77. The 2001 white paper announced that the Government would introduce an annual National Policing Plan (NPP). This would be—

“[a] single place where the Government’s priorities, performance indicators and plans for new developments come together, [to give] police authorities and forces ... a clear sense of where the Government believes the police service should be going.”⁸²

78. The Police Reform Act 2002 requires the Government to lay before Parliament by the end of November each year a plan for the following three years. Three such plans have so far been published. In addition, each of the 43 police forces in England and Wales is required to produce its own strategic three-year plan.

79. The first NPP, issued in 2002, and to a lesser extent the second in 2003, were subjected to much criticism. APA told us that the two plans did not achieve the desired “strategic priority and focus”.⁸³ ACPO stated that they were “not yet an effective driver of performance, ... being too general with no prioritisation amongst far too many targets”.⁸⁴ Likewise, the Chief Inspector of Constabulary, Sir Keith Povey, told us that “there were so many priorities that what was a priority?”⁸⁵

80. The Police Superintendents’ Association stated that though they originally welcomed the concept of a national plan,

“in reality the plan became unwieldy in that it contained almost every policing activity and gave no indication as to their relative priorities. Consequently the document itself is large and involved and is almost universally ignored by the service.”⁸⁶

81. The PSA argued that the 2003 plan was actually no improvement in this respect on the 2002 plan, because although the number of priorities had decreased “each priority had acquired sub-priorities, the overall effect of which was no change”. This approach “fundamentally undermined any credibility that remained in the concept”. They called for a plan which “all staff can remember” and which is “short, written in plain English”.⁸⁷

82. The Police Federation claimed that the 2002 and 2003 NPPs gave “scant recognition to several core elements of policing”, in particular, ‘reassurance policing’ (i.e. a uniformed presence on the streets) and traffic policing. The Federation also criticised target-setting for being burdensome and creating false incentives, and disputed the Government’s claim to have introduced fewer but more relevant targets:

82 Cm 5326, para 7.21

83 Ev 120 (paras 5–6)

84 Ev 147 (paras 24–25)

85 Q239

86 Ev 80

87 Ibid.

“many central targets still merely spawn yet more targets at a local level, and our experience certainly does not support any such claim that a decrease in central diktats has filtered through and removed bureaucracy at the frontline”.⁸⁸

83. The third and most recent NPP was published in November 2004, following extensive consultation.⁸⁹ It “sets out the framework and context for policing in England and Wales for the next three years, to create a culture for policing which can tackle crime effectively at local, national and international levels”. It is intended to “inform local planning and help to ensure that all communities know what they should expect from their local police force”.⁹⁰

84. The 2004 NPP sets out five “key priorities”:

- reduce overall crime—including violent and drug related crime—in line with the Government’s Public Service Agreements (PSAs);
- provide a citizen-focused police service which responds to the needs of communities and individuals, especially victims and witnesses, and inspires confidence in the police, particularly among minority ethnic communities;
- take action with partners to increase detection rates and target prolific and other priority offenders;
- reduce people’s concerns about crime, anti-social behaviour and disorder; and
- combat serious and organised crime within and across police force boundaries.

In addition, work to reduce the threat from terrorism is described as “an overarching imperative for all forces”.⁹¹

85. The NPP was developed in the context of the police-related Public Spending Assessment (PSA) targets announced with the Comprehensive Spending Review in July 2004. The new and old PSA targets are set out in the box on the next page.

88 Ev 137 (section 4)

89 Home Office, *National Policing Plan 2005–08: Safer, Stronger Communities*

90 Home Office press release 366/2004, “Policing the Future”, issued on 24 November 2004

91 NPP 2004, paras 1.3–4

Old and new police-related PSA targets

The old PSA targets were:

- Target 1: “to reduce crime and the fear of crime; improve performance overall, including by reducing the gap between the highest crime Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership areas and the best comparable areas; and reduce:
 - vehicle crime by 30 % from 1998-99 to 2004;
 - domestic burglary by 25 % from 1998-99 to 2005;
 - robbery in the ten Street Crime Initiative areas by 14% from 1999–2000 to 2005; and maintain that level.”
- Target 2: “to improve the performance of all police forces, and significantly reduce the performance gap between the best and worst performing forces; and significantly increase the proportion of time spent on frontline duties.”
- Target 3: “Improve the delivery of justice by increasing the number of crimes for which an offender is brought to justice to 1.2 million by 2005–06; with an improvement in all CJS areas, a greater increase in the worst performing areas and a reduction in the proportion of ineffective trials.”

The new targets are:

- Target 1: “to reduce crime by 15%, and further in high crime areas, by 2007–08.”
- Target 2: “to reassure the public, reducing the fear of crime and anti-social behaviour, and building confidence in the Criminal Justice System without compromising fairness.”
- Target 3: “Improve the delivery of justice by increasing the number of crimes for which an offender is brought to justice to 1.25 million by 2007–08.”

In addition to these new targets, the Home Office has agreed the following new standard that “will be achieved and maintained”:

“to maintain improvements in police performance, as monitored by the Police Performance Assessment Framework, in order to deliver the outcomes expressed in the Home Office PSA. The links between the indicators in PPAF and the PSAs, and the performance improvement in these indicators implied by the PSAs, are set out and reported on in the National Policing Plan.”

86. Giving evidence to the Committee on 20 July, the Permanent Secretary at the Home Office, Mr John Gieve, said that:

“We changed the wording of what we call the fear of crime and confidence target where we bring together a perception target to refer to reassurance and to make clear that our job is to reassure the public and that is also the job of the police. That was very much a response to consultation with the police who for some time had been working on what they think of their reassurance strategy, so they wanted to make sure that those two things were brought together, our fear of crime target and their reassurance work. That is an example of where we listened to the consultation.”⁹²

87. In both the new PSA targets and the new NPP there is a shift towards fewer and simpler targets and priorities. There is also an emphasis on ‘localism’. The main changes in the NPP are (1) an increased emphasis on partnership between police and other bodies (local authorities, probation, prison service), and (2) a move towards giving police flexibility to achieve desired outcomes, rather than micro-managing from the centre. The main changes in the PSA targets are (1) they are less specific—individual targets on vehicle crime, burglary and robbery have been replaced with a target of reducing overall crime by 15%; and (2) the target of improving police performance, and reducing the gap between the best and worst performing forces, has been replaced by a ‘standard’ to “maintain improvements in performance”.

88. We welcome the simplification of priorities and greater emphasis on local decision-making in the most recent National Policing Plan. This is clearly an improvement on the two previous Plans. A similar simplification and streamlining of the police-related PSA targets is also welcome. In our report on Home Office Target-Setting 2004, published in February 2005, we give broad support to the Home Office’s decision to reduce the number and simplify the content of its targets. We comment that “it is right that national target-setting should be concerned with setting a strategic direction but not to micro-manage matters that are best left to local discretion”. We cite the new PSA target of a 15% reduction in overall crime as an example of a “realistic but stretching” quantitative target which can and should motivate towards better performance.⁹³

89. However, in that report we also comment that if the benefits of flexibility at local level are to be achieved, there is a need “for a real reduction in centrally determined targets that are set outside the PSA framework”.⁹⁴

90. One possible complication here is that targets at local level will henceforward be agreed not only between police forces and police authorities, but between forces and Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships (CDRPs), which comprise all the local authorities in a CDRP area, together with the police, police authority, fire authority and primary care trust. The Home Office points out that :

“clearly, of course, there does need to be alignment between targets agreed with CDRPs and those which forces agree with their police authorities. That is why we have stressed throughout the key importance of both force and authority representatives being part of the discussion process at CDRP level.”

92 Q27

93 Home Affairs Committee, Third Report of Session 2004–05, *Home Office Target-Setting 2004*, (HC 320), paras 37, 47, 52

94 *Ibid.*, para 37

The Home Office also envisages a role for regional Government Offices in monitoring this process and reporting back to central Government if they consider that agreement has not been reached on “appropriately stretching sets of targets”.⁹⁵

91. **We believe that it is sensible to involve CDRPs in police target-setting.** As the Home Office notes, this “reflects the Police Service’s view that they cannot on their own deliver the required reduction in crime. They depend on many other organisations and agencies to contribute as part of a joint and structured effort.”⁹⁶ **However, in practice setting targets for CDRPs has a direct impact on local police targets. There are two dangers: one is that this becomes a back-door way of setting local targets for the police, and the other is that there is potential for overlap and confusion between the role of the CDRP and that of police authorities in setting local targets. There is therefore a danger of a proliferation of local targets which might undo the benefits of simplification at national level. We recommend that, in addition to the oversight role exercised by regional Government Offices, the Home Office should invite HMIC to monitor the operation of local police target-setting and report on any problems and lessons to be learnt. Any review of target-setting should, of course, take into account the fact that some areas, particularly under-performing ones, may well require more detailed sets of targets than other areas.**

Accountability mechanisms

The existing arrangements

92. The current governance arrangement for policing in England and Wales is known as the ‘tripartite’ structure. This comprises three elements of equal authority:

- chief officers of police: the chief constables of the 43 police forces (or, in the case of the Metropolitan and City of London Police, the commissioners); they are by law responsible for the direction and control of their force
- police authorities: local bodies usually comprising 17 members (9 councillors, 3 magistrates and 5 independent members); they are responsible for ensuring there is an efficient and effective police force in their area, for appointing senior officers and for holding the chief officer and force to account for their delivery of services
- the Home Secretary: answerable to Parliament and the public for the provision of an efficient and effective police service nationwide; he sets the Government’s strategic priorities through the National Policing Plan, and determines the total level of grant for policing.

93. The geographical boundaries of the 43 police forces usually follow the divisions of the English counties or Welsh local authority areas. Each force has a headquarters (containing the chief constable’s office, central services, central CID, Special Branch, etc.), which co-ordinates the work of usually between three and ten Basic Command Units (BCUs). Each BCU covers the area of a town or district, is commanded by a superintendent or chief superintendent, and consists of several hundred police officers and staff. They will usually

95 Ev 260

96 Ibid.

have some specialist units such as a local CID. Each BCU is in turn divided into smaller sectors based around one or more police stations, usually under the leadership of an inspector.

Proposals for increased accountability

94. The Government cites Home Office research indicating “a general consensus” that “the public does not have a say in decisions about policing and that people want better communication, information and involvement”. The vast majority of people involved in the research had not even heard of police authorities.⁹⁷

95. The original 2001 white paper did not propose sweeping changes to local accountability mechanisms. However, in the November 2003 green paper and the July 2004 Strategic Plan, the Government places major emphasis on measures to increase accountability of the police at local, district (i.e. BCU) and force level. The Government added that “in no way will these changes damage the principle of the tripartite approach”.

96. In its November 2003 green paper the Government gave more details about possible changes to the system of police authorities. Options for consultation included:

- wholly elected police boards to replace the existing police authorities
- changing the membership arrangements of police authorities, to include a mix of councillors, magistrates, people nominated by BCUs or neighbourhood panels, co-opted members from the local community, and directly elected members; or
- a wider oversight arrangement with a range of agencies concerned with community safety being subject to scrutiny.

97. The November 2004 white paper contains a series of firm proposals for increasing local accountability. The main proposals are:

- a) There will be greater involvement between police and community at neighbourhood level. A neighbourhood policing fund will be created to support the development of dedicated neighbourhood policing teams, which will use community-based intelligence to tackle local crime.
- b) Each force will agree a Contract with its community.
- c) Local communities will be given the power to ‘trigger’ a response by the police and other responsible agencies to particular or persistent local problems of crime or anti-social behaviour.
- d) The customer focus of the police service will be improved. New measures will include a national three-digit non-emergency telephone number, minimum standards for police call-handling, and more information for victims and the wider community.
- e) There will be changes to the arrangements for membership of police authorities. There will no longer be a separate category of magistrate member. Appointments of

independent members will henceforward be judged against a competency-based framework of criteria. There will be criteria for diversity in respect of race, gender, age and skills. Chairs of police authorities will be subject to a competency-based selection process.

- f) The powers and duties of police authorities will be extended. Authorities will be required to take into account local policing priorities identified at Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership (CDRP) level, to oversee the relationship between CDRPs and neighbourhood bodies, to co-operate with neighbouring authorities to help tackle cross-border ('Level 2') crime, and to promote diversity. They will also conduct the chief constable's performance appraisal, in consultation with HMIC; and be able to request inspection by HMIC or intervention by the PSU if they feel this to be necessary.
- g) Police authorities, like police forces, will be subject to independent inspection.

98. We received written comments on the white paper proposals from several of our previous witnesses. The APA told us that they "strongly support the broad thrust of the Government's proposals" and the white paper's objectives of greater community involvement, creation of a responsive customer service culture, and workforce modernisation. However, the APA were critical of some aspects of the white paper, especially the proposed changes to the role and membership of police authorities.⁹⁸

99. Most of our other respondents also supported the thrust of the white paper proposals. Some concerns were expressed. For instance, the PSA criticised the white paper for failing to address what they see as the need for significant structural change: "we feel that the Government has missed an opportunity to radically reform the police, preferring to 'tinker round the edges'".⁹⁹ UNISON, the largest union representing staff in the police service, told us that the white paper set out "a very positive vision for workforce modernisation", but were worried that its implementation would be hampered by insufficient funding.¹⁰⁰ The Chief Police Officers' Staff Association (CPOSA) also supported the overall direction of the white paper, but were concerned that its proposals relating to neighbourhood policing "will raise public expectations without necessarily providing the means to deliver". CPOSA were critical of the proposals for performance appraisal of chief constables and for changes in accountability arrangements.¹⁰¹

100. HMIC sought clarification of the idea of Contracts between police forces and their communities. It commented, "more work is required to identify what form these Contracts will take, will they be at force or BCU level, who on behalf of the Community will agree the contract and in reference to the increasing multi-agency response what is the responsibility of the partners?"¹⁰² HMIC expressed some scepticism about the proposed mechanism for local communities to trigger a police response: they caution "against any proposals which introduce the use of stronger mechanisms of accountability for BCU Commanders who

98 Ev 222–23

99 Ev 212

100 Ev 217 (section 3)

101 Ev 242–45

102 Ev 204 (para 3.1)

are already held to account by their Chief Officers and a wide range of partners and stakeholders”.¹⁰³

101. Home Office research shows that there is widespread public ignorance of the existing police authorities, combined with a desire on the part of the public to be more involved in local policing. The Government should recognise this. We support the principle of greater public involvement. However, we wish to add three caveats:

- There is no clear evidence that public involvement *of itself* leads to better policing. Better communication between police and public should be a priority, but this does not mean that the public should determine operational priorities. The views of the public should *inform* decision-making but not *dictate* it.
- There is a limit to how far the limits of local involvement can be defined nationally. The Home Office should avoid imposing an identical consultative structure on every area. Much will depend on the quality of local police leadership.
- This reinforces the need for local flexibility in setting priorities. It is difficult for the police to engage in meaningful dialogue with their communities if their priorities are imposed on them from the centre.

Future of the 43-force structure

102. In its November 2003 green paper the Government stated that it “believes that the time is right to consider whether the present 43-force structure ... is the right one ... we welcome comments on how things might be structured differently”.¹⁰⁴ It floated the idea of larger, ‘strategic’ forces at a regional level, and of ‘lead’ forces which might develop particular specialisms (in the way that the Metropolitan Police now takes the lead in relation to counter-terrorism).¹⁰⁵ However, the Government insisted that it does not want change for change’s sake, and that structural changes must ensure that policing connects to “real people in their neighbourhoods”, rather than creating “remote and disconnected forces”.¹⁰⁶

103. The Government summarised for us the results of its consultation on this issue:

“the responses were mixed with some strongly in favour of restructuring, some strongly opposed and many offering a cautious welcome to the debate but noting that a lot more work was needed to gather evidence and look at issues such as greater collaboration. A clear message was that form should follow function. The majority of those who welcomed the debate ... acknowledged that restructuring should not be rushed into and that work was needed to define what capability and capacity a force needed and to assess whether existing forces meet the definition.”

103 Ev 205 (para 8.1)

104 *Policing: Building Safer Communities Together*, p 32

105 *Ibid.*, para 6.10

106 *Ibid.*, para 6.6

104. They added that “the Government has not yet come to any firm conclusions on the question of force structures”, but that HMIC had been commissioned to look at this issue and report by early 2005.¹⁰⁷

105. ACPO argued to us that “the case for restructuring has not yet been made; more work needs to be carried out to assess the possible business benefits (reduced costs, economies of scale, performance improvements, greater operational resilience, etc.) and the risks (cost of change, disruption of performance improvement, etc.)”.¹⁰⁸

106. The PSA called for a national police force deployed through a regional structure, which could be based on the existing government regions. It argued that although people feel “a deep and very genuine loyalty to their current forces, ... the existing structure of 43 autonomous entities aligned to boundaries which no longer reflect government structures in the regions, or the very local identities felt by individual communities has, we believe, outlived its usefulness”.¹⁰⁹ The PSA identifies as a particular problem the “clear gap in the way the current structure copes with Level 2 criminality [i.e. serious and organised crime]” crossing force boundaries—a problem also identified by HMIC.¹¹⁰

107. HMIC comment that “if England and Wales was a ‘greenfield’ site for policing then few doubt that it would be structured according to a more logical design. But this is not the case and HMIC does not underestimate the enormity of the task in hand. ... Structural change is almost always accompanied by distraction of effort and disruption—clearly, it should only be contemplated if it can be shown to deliver a step change in police performance.”¹¹¹

108. The then Deputy Commissioner (now Commissioner) of the Metropolitan Police, Sir Ian Blair, told us that some degree of structural change was probably necessary to deal with the problem of Level 2, cross-border criminality. He argued that small forces were ill equipped to deal with relatively rare events such as serious crime by organised gangs:

“If I can give you an example of that, if there is a shooting in a night club where we get a warning that somebody is going to be wiped out in such and such a night club, we have the ability to put armed surveillance behind people, we have the ability to undertake a whole series of operations. If that night club is outside London, and it easily can be, it becomes a much more difficult activity with which people are much less familiar.”¹¹²

Sir Ian thought the two options for dealing with this problem were either force amalgamations or, preferably, individual forces playing a ‘lead’ role with particular specialisms.¹¹³

107 Ev 113 (paras 114–15)

108 Ev 149 (para 51)

109 Ev 84 (section 12)

110 See Ev 113 (para 115).

111 Ev 162 (para 3.21)

112 Q138

113 Q139

109. We do not yet know the results of HMIC’s review of the force structure. However, there are indications that the Government is not, for the present at least, envisaging radical change. The Minister of State, Ms Blears, told us that “we are not interested in huge structural change for its own sake”.¹¹⁴ The white paper published in November 2004 stated that the Government’s preferred option is the development of ‘lead forces’:

“consideration will be given to the creation of dedicated teams across regions or groups of forces with the specific task of co-ordinating the effort against level two criminality in that region or area” and “consideration will be given to further development of arrangements for lead forces or specialisms ... such as hi-tech crime or online paedophilia”.¹¹⁵

110. From the evidence we have taken it is clear that there is little appetite within the police or within the wider community for a major structural upheaval or for large-scale force amalgamations. Final decisions on this must await publication of HMIC’s review of individual forces’ strategic capabilities, but at present it looks as though the sensible way forward is through the development of a limited number of ‘lead forces’, who will develop particular specialist expertise and share this with neighbouring forces.

111. However, further elucidation is needed of the way lead forces would operate. What would be the accountability arrangements? If lead forces were to report direct to Ministers on their specialist areas (in the same way that the Metropolitan Police is not answerable to its police authority on its counter-terrorism responsibilities, but directly to Ministers), would there be a danger of eroding the tripartite structure? What would be the funding arrangements? And could this proposal lead to a skills void in some smaller forces, with many experts in a particular specialism transferring to the lead force? We raised some of these questions with the Minister of State, Ms Blears. In response she told us that the Government had not yet reached decisions: “these are very important issues you raise that we would need to explore”.¹¹⁶ **We recommend that the Home Office should issue clarification of funding and accountability mechanisms for lead forces, and an assessment of their implications, beneficial and otherwise, for smaller, neighbouring forces.**

Police bureaucracy

112. According to the 2001 white paper, “the increase in police numbers will only result in a more visible police force if we deal with the bureaucracy and blockages which are keeping officers off the beat”.¹¹⁷

113. A Home Office commissioned study, *A Diary of a Police Officer*, found that officers were spending almost as much time in the police station as they were on the street. Only 17% of time was being spent on ‘reassurance patrols’, mostly in vehicles. Of the 43% of

114 Q339

115 Cm 6360, pp 141–42

116 Qq 344–45

117 Cm 5326, para 435

time spent in the station, 41% of this was spent on preparing prosecution files and paperwork.¹¹⁸

114. The report of Sir David O’Dowd’s Policing Bureaucracy Taskforce appeared in September 2002.¹¹⁹ The report made 52 recommendations. It claimed that these, if implemented, would lead to the following benefits:

- Incident response and resolution: the time equivalent of over 6,000 uniformed officers returned to patrols duties
- Crime recording and investigation: the time equivalent over 2,400 uniformed officers released for reinvestment in scene and near-scene crime inquiries
- Intelligence handling and effective patrolling: hypothecated fines revenue from fixed penalty notices will allow 2,000 additional uniformed officers on visible patrol and intercept duties
- Defendant management and the criminal justice system: the time equivalent of over 8,000 uniformed officers released, enabling a significantly increased control presence on the streets
- Management support: the time equivalent of over 900 uniformed officers returned to patrol duties.

115. In response to the report, the Government has set up a Policing Bureaucracy Implementation Steering Group, jointly chaired by the Home Office and ACPO, to carry out an action plan. To date, 27 of the 52 recommendations have been implemented, work is in progress on a further 21, and “it has been agreed collectively that four should not be taken forward nationally”.¹²⁰ Every force has a named officer to oversee the reduction of bureaucracy, and a National Bureaucracy Adviser liaises with individual forces.

116. In July 2004 the Home Office draw our attention to a number of achievements in the battle against bureaucracy, including:

- over 7,700 forms made obsolete nationwide;
- over 72,000 police officers and staff using Airwave radios to cut down on time spent returning to the station;
- around 20,000 fixed-penalty notices for disorder issued between April (when the national roll-out of the scheme was completed) and June 2004, each representing a file for court not having to be prepared;
- ten pilot projects testing new ways of using police staff, to free officers to go back on the beat; and

118 Government reply to the O’Dowd report, para 2

119 *Policing Bureaucracy Taskforce: Change Proposals to Increase the Presence of Police in Communities*

120 Ev 107 (para 81)

- efficiency gains of £25 million across 25 forces attributed by HMIC to implementation of Taskforce recommendations.¹²¹

117. In September 2004, the Home Secretary announced the introduction of a bureaucracy ‘gateway’, under which no new paperwork would be introduced to the police without first undergoing “a rigorous test to ensure it was absolutely necessary”.¹²² In the same month, the Home Office published force-by-force details of the percentage of police officer time spent on frontline duties, compiled from ‘activity-based costing’.¹²³ Nationwide the average was 63%. The worst performing force was Gwent with 54% and the best was Bedfordshire with 70%. The Minister of State, Ms Blears, told us that she believed that the nationwide average could be driven up to about 73% by cutting further bureaucracy, which would free the equivalent of a further 12,000 police officers for frontline duties.¹²⁴

118. The figures cited in the previous paragraph were based on a definition of ‘frontline policing’ which attracted criticism in the press for including the activity of “case file and report preparation on incidents” as well as more obviously frontline activities such as patrolling the streets, making enquiries, giving advice and warnings, and dealing with incidents.¹²⁵ The Minister of State, Ms Blears, was quoted as saying:

“she was satisfied it was correct to include hours spent on paperwork in the frontline statistics. She said that if paperwork was excluded, police would spend roughly 53 per cent of their time on frontline duties.

She said: ‘You can quibble with what the word frontline should include but [case preparation] is a core responsibility of the police service and if they get it right they get a result and they get a conviction.’”¹²⁶

119. The President of ACPO, Mr Chris Fox, said that there had been big successes in fighting bureaucracy, such as the introduction of electronic identification parades, and that “we have ... removed thousands of forms. ... Every force has gone through every cupboard and every system and weeded them out and thrown them away”. However, a “major stumbling block” in the way of reducing paperwork had been the failure to introduce an integrated electronic case and custody system.¹²⁷

120. The PSA described the response to O’Dowd as pragmatic and effective. It reported the view that bureaucracy is not now at the top of the list of issues persistently complained about by staff, and looked forward to further improvements when the police service was ‘joined up’ technologically with the rest of the Criminal Justice System.¹²⁸

121 Ev 107–08 (paras 81–84); with some figures updated from evidence given by the Minister of State on 26 October 2004, Q349

122 Home Office press notice 290/2004, dated 14 September 2004, “Turning the police service into a public service”

123 Home Office, *Police Performance Monitoring 2003–04*

124 Qq 350–51

125 For the definition of frontline policing, see *Police Performance Monitoring 2003–04*, Appendix D.

126 Daily Telegraph, 22 September 2004

127 Q48; see also Ev 148 (paras 35–38)

128 Ev 82 (section 8)

121. The Police Federation was much less sanguine, stating that “two years down the line we are yet to witness satisfactory progress on the frontline”. It called for greater investment in joined-up IT systems and hand-held equipment to allow officers to conduct their work more speedily; coupled with “a parallel change in ethos” to ensure that counter-bureaucracy measures are not sidelined.¹²⁹ The Chairman of the Police Federation, Ms Jan Berry, told us that though there had been some advances (for instance, use of fixed-penalty tickets), the best way of reducing unnecessary paperwork would be through use of new technology which was being introduced very slowly. She said that—

“One of the problems ... is that a lot of O’Dowd’s recommendations were reliant on integrated and co-ordinated information technology, which the service is still some way away from. ... I think we have been waiting for something like ten years ... for an integrated case and custody system. It is being slowly rolled out in some forces at the moment, but it is not robust enough to go across the whole country.”¹³⁰

She gave an example:

“If you get arrested in a certain force between five o’clock on a Friday night and nine o’clock on a Monday morning then you will go into the custody suite, you will have your name and details taken and then that will be put into a machine. Then somebody will write those details down and, at some stage in the process, they will go up three flights of stairs and download that into another computer that can tell the court that this person has been arrested and been charged. That is totally ridiculous.”¹³¹

122. The Mayor of London told us he welcomes the principles of the O’Dowd report and will monitor its implementation.¹³² The Metropolitan Police Service stated that they had allocated each of O’Dowd’s 51 recommendations an ACPO-level lead. Most of the recommendations have now been implemented.. Positive developments have included moves towards an integrated IT system using mobile data terminals, desktop computers and hand-held devices. However, the MPS also lists the following “key areas for improvement”:

- inefficient methods of recording crime
- poor understanding of the rules for detecting crime
- frustration and confusion with some aspects of the National Crime Recording Standard
- frustration with the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000
- inefficient custody and prisoner-handling procedures
- increasing bureaucracy re case preparation and file handling.¹³³

129 Ev 139 (section 9)

130 Q46

131 Q46

132 Ev 135 (para 8.1)

133 Ev 157

123. The then Deputy Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police, Sir Ian Blair, reinforced the point made by the Police Federation:

““But the key to this ... is about IT systems. One can do what one likes about getting rid of rarely used forms and that is okay, but while officers are still in a position where they have to put the same information into a series of discrete information systems, to take an example, a domestic violence call where the officer has to put in a crime report—that is one system—if the person is arrested he has to put the same details into the charge system, has to put a criminal intelligence report into a third system, if there are children in the home you have to put it into the Merlin system, which is about child protection, the Met realise it is going to take five years to bring these together. We are three years down that route. We are still two years off it. At the moment that you can just key the information in and it goes automatically across and populates these different screens, then the bureaucracy battle is won, and the same, I think, with the CPS. As soon as the CPS accept the electronic passage of information to them, then officers will be out on the street as fast as you can say "him".””¹³⁴

124. The Home Office told us that the National Strategy for Police Information Systems (NSPIS) Custody and Case Preparation software is being gradually introduced:

“Early versions ... are being used operationally and successfully by 12 Police Forces and by September 2004 (our latest figures) had handled more than 100,000 arrestees. A more advanced version, Version 4, that is needed by the larger metropolitan forces has passed Factory Acceptance Tests and is due to start operational pilots at the beginning of March 2005. It will then be made available to some 25 forces. Version 5, which will meet the needs of those forces who already have advanced sophisticated legacy systems, is planned for July 2005 and is on target for delivery then.”¹³⁵

125. There is a strong public desire, which we support, for more police officers to be returned to the beat. Good progress has been made in implementing some of the recommendations of the Bureaucracy Taskforce. In particular, the use of fixed-penalty tickets has played a significant part in freeing up police time.

126. However, these gains have been at the margins. There has been too little progress in introducing more effective information technology. It is here that the real potential lies for saving police time and resources. Sir Ian Blair and other witnesses drew attention to the long-standing failure to introduce an integrated case and custody system. There is an acute need for an integrated transmission system allowing the police, the courts and the CPS to communicate electronically with each other. Police officers and staff are entangled in paperwork because they do not have the IT systems they need and want. Redressing this deficiency should be a Home Office priority. We recommend that in its reply to this report the Home Office should supply a detailed strategy and timetable for the introduction of an integrated case and custody system, and should continue to supply us or our successor Committee in the next Parliament with annual progress reports on this project until it has been fully implemented.

134 Q143

135 Ev 262

127. We are also worried by the Minister’s definition of ‘front-line policing’ as including work in the police station on case files and report preparation. These tasks may be essential but they are not what most people would consider to be ‘street policing’. Their inclusion therefore skews the statistics and gives an exaggerated impression of the Government’s success in returning police officers to street duties. We recommend that the definition of ‘front-line policing’ should be changed to exclude time spent dealing with paperwork indoors.

Workforce modernisation

Reform of police pay, conditions and working practices

128. The 2001 white paper commented that “police employment regulations ... do not provide for the flexibility required of modern operational policing nor do they meet the needs of current employment patterns”.¹³⁶

129. The white paper highlighted problems including:

- Varying entry standards
- An insufficiently diverse service
- Police regulations that are “rigid, out of date and inflexible”
- Pay determined by length of service, irrespective of the demands of the post
- One third of all police retirements being on medical grounds (as high as 63% in one force)
- Pension arrangements give no incentive to stay in the service beyond 30 years
- Excessive time lost through sickness (average number of days lost per officer in 2000–01 was 12.2, compared to public sector average of 10.2 and private sector average of 7.2).¹³⁷

130. The 2003 green paper set out progress in tackling these problems:

- Pay and conditions: a “major package” is being introduced which includes introduction of competence-related pay, extra pay for more difficult posts, and measures to reduce dependence on overtime
- Health: “we are focusing on reducing sickness absence and ill health retirements and improving occupational health services”
- Diversity and equal opportunities: progress has been made but “there is still some way to go to reach the 7% national target for minority ethnic staff by 2009”

¹³⁶ Cm 5326, para 6.3

¹³⁷ Ibid., paras 6.3, 6.32, 6.61

- Civilianisation: Community Support Officers are increasingly being deployed [see separate section below] and the Police Reform Act 2002 provided new powers for police staff to act as detention or custody staff.¹³⁸

131. In July 2004 the Home Office gave us some further updating:

- Greater pay flexibilities have now been implemented. Over 75% of eligible officers receive competency related threshold payments (CRTPs)
- All forces now operate Special Priority Payment (SPP) schemes, and 40% of officers can receive the payments. However, the Home Office states that it is too early to evaluate the impact of SPPs on retention in frontline posts, and notes that they are regarded as divisive by the staff organisations and as inflexible by ACPO
- Proposals for a new police pensions scheme are on track for introduction from April 2006
- All but one police force have implemented national recruitment standards, a common application form and a standard assessment centre. Applications to join the police service are at “a very high level”
- National recruitment standards provide “a strong evidence base” from which to address issues raised in ‘The Secret Policeman’ (the BBC programme last year which exposed racist recruits in Greater Manchester police)
- Sickness absence has fallen from 12 days per officer and 12.6 days per support staff member in 2000–01 to 10.4 and 11.7 days respectively in 2002–03.¹³⁹

132. The November 2004 white paper set out further proposals on workforce modernisation. These included arrangements for more flexible working, introducing multiple points of entry to the service, removing the requirement that all officers serve specific periods at junior ranks before being promoted, and removing barriers to police staff becoming officers.¹⁴⁰

133. The issue of Special Priority Payments (SPPs) has been particularly controversial. HMIC stated in their memorandum that SPPs—

“introduced the notion of using pay as a lever both to attract people to unpopular or difficult work and to reward exceptional commitment. The concept has proved unpopular, however, and HMIC shares the view of others that they are divisive and are wrongly attributed to posts as opposed to people. There is clear disparity between forces on how the process is implemented, with little evidence at this stage to prove that the initial objectives have been achieved. HMIC supports the idea that chief constables should be able to reward top performers, but this requires a transparent

138 *Policing: Building Safer Communities Together*, paras 7.7, 7.11

139 Ev 109–10 (paras 88–99)

140 Cm 6360, pp 135–40

process that is intrinsically linked to personal development reviews (PDRs) and wider performance measures.”¹⁴¹

134. ACPO told us that they are in broad agreement with the principles of workforce modernisation.¹⁴² The Police Federation in their submission focused on the issue of civilianisation (see next section). The PSA stated that CRTPs and SPPs do not directly affect their members, but they commented that “there has been little uniformity in the processes by which the payments are authorised and therefore a bureaucracy has grown up around them”.¹⁴³

135. The Association of Police Authorities commented that “while SPPs have been controversial and many officers feel they are unfair, they have helped authorities to deal with recruitment and retention problems ... and reward officers in frontline, ‘24/7’ roles”. They argued that it is not clear that the aims of CRTPs, to help drive up performance, have been met in practice. They described the new approach to ill-health retirement as having been “very helpful in bringing down what were in some areas unacceptably high rates of ill-health retirement”. They noted that a number of forces are behind schedule in the target to reduce overtime by 15% over the three years to 2006–07.¹⁴⁴

136. We asked the Minister of State, Hazel Blears, to comment on HMIC’s assertion that Special Priority Payments are “divisive”. She replied that it was “very early days”, and that as the payments had only been introduced in December 2003, “it is a bit premature to decide that they are divisive”. She argued that in time they would embed themselves, and prove useful “in those posts where it has been difficult to recruit, and to make a public statement that these posts are tremendously well valued”. As a result of an initial assessment of the payments, which revealed that forces wanted to include more people in the SPP system, the threshold had been raised so that up to 40% of a force could qualify for the payments.¹⁴⁵

137. We congratulate the Home Office on its success in reducing high rates of ill-health retirement and sickness absence. We recognise that it is too early to carry out a full assessment of the effect of Special Priority Payments, which were introduced only just over 12 months ago. In general, we support the greater flexibility they will allow in the use of resources. However, we recommend that the Home Office should address criticisms of lack of uniformity in the process by which SPPs are authorised. In a year’s time it should conduct a full assessment of the operation of SPPs.

Diversity

138. In 1999 the then Home Secretary set targets for the recruitment, retention and progression of minority ethnic staff within the Home Office and its linked agencies and services. The target for the Police Service was that at least 7% of police officers and staff should be from a minority ethnic background by 2009. The latest figures on progress

141 Ev 165–66 (para 5.8)

142 Ev 148 (para 39)

143 Ev 83 (section 10)

144 Ev 124 (paras 39–44)

145 Q355

towards these targets were issued in January 2005. The Police Service has seen a rise in representation from 3% in 1999 to 4.3% in 2004.¹⁴⁶

139. Although the Home Office has presented this latest figures as only “narrowly missing the 2004 milestone target of 4.6%”,¹⁴⁷ there was scepticism amongst our witnesses as to whether the 2009 target of 7% was likely to be achieved, and general agreement that the Police Service was moving too slowly towards becoming more representative of the wider community. Dr Ali Dizaei, a Chief Superintendent in the Metropolitan Police, commented that:

“despite the gestures of good will which created the targets for recruitment, retention and progression for ethnic minority officers in 1999, the likelihood of the large metropolitan forces meeting those targets is virtually nil. For example, the target for the MPS is set at 26% for the year 2009, while the current representation of racial minorities in the force is 6.7%.”¹⁴⁸

The Chairman of the Police Federation, Ms Jan Berry, told us that “the Police Service does need to mirror the structure of society and at this moment it does not ... I do not believe ... that the Police Service has been as committed as it could be to achieving that”.¹⁴⁹

140. However, Ms Berry expressed doubts about the introduction of formal quotas for minority ethnic officers:

“Positive discrimination—or affirmative action, I think, is the American term—is, at this moment in time, unlawful in this country, so there would need to be a change in the law to actually provide for quotas. If there was a change in the law we would need to be satisfied, as a society, that this is the right sort of thing to do. I have spoken to black colleagues who have said to me they would not want to have joined a service through a quota system because, whether it is right or wrong, they perceive it would be perceived that they had got in at, somehow, a lower standard, and no matter what people said they would perceive that. As a woman in the service I had to face comments when I was promoted to sergeant that I only got there because I was a woman, and that is very, very undermining to the individual. So I think that people who come into the service want to believe they are getting there on their own merit.”¹⁵⁰

141. The Metropolitan Police Service told us that:

“the current targets for [black and minority ethnic] recruitment are unrealistic without changes which would allow the MPS the facility to hold places open for suitably qualified candidates from minority communities. Legislative change is probably required.”¹⁵¹

146 HC Deb, 19 January 2005, col 40–41WS; see also Home Office, *Race Equality—The Home Secretary’s Employment Targets: Milestone Report 2004* (January 2005).

147 HC Deb, 19 January 2005, col 41WS

148 Ev 198; see also Ev190–91

149 Q61

150 Q61

151 Ev 155

The Deputy Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police, Sir Ian Blair, said that although the MPS had some 2,000 candidates who had passed the selection process and were waiting to join the force, very few of them were from ethnic minorities. Given that it was a strategic requirement “for the Metropolitan Police to look like London, ... at this rate it will take us decades not years to achieve that, and I do not think that is acceptable”.¹⁵² He said that while there should be no lowering of standards:

“One of the things that we want to do is to hold open vacancies so that qualified minority candidates and women candidates can enter at a faster pace because they have not had to wait so long.”¹⁵³

He added that in its recruiting processes the MPS would also seek to prioritise certain skills such as knowledge of languages or of particular communities.¹⁵⁴

142. The National Black Police Association (NBPA) called for ‘affirmative action’. They define this as “the selection amongst equally and suitably qualified candidates to ensure trust and confidence in policing”.¹⁵⁵ However, they argue that there is widespread misunderstanding of the meaning of affirmative action, and they emphasise the need to prepare the service and manage perceptions of any change.

143. The NBPA appended to its memorandum a paper from Chief Superintendent Dr Ali Dizaei of the Metropolitan Police giving further details of how their proposed system of affirmative action might work. Dr Dizaei argued that the “selection among equally qualified candidates” model is best suited to public sector organisations, including the police:

“In this form of affirmative action, selection occurs when minority candidates (which include women) are chosen from a pool of equally qualified applicants. Here both white (male) and minority candidate achieve the high standards required for the post. Within that pool applicants are scored against a matrix of attributes necessary to reflect the community. Gender, race, ability to speak different languages are given ratings within the matrix. However, due to operational imperative and community needs the applicant who scores highest is selected first.”¹⁵⁶

144. Dr Dizaei proposes that “the affirmative action programme will not run indefinitely but operate until equilibrium is reached and then it will be disbanded. Thereafter, natural selection will take place.” He also rejected claims that “many black staff and women will lose self-esteem and be accused of getting their promotion or selection because of their colour or gender”, citing a 1995 opinion poll which asked employed ethnic minorities and white women whether they had ever felt others questioned their abilities because of affirmative action:

152 Q156

153 Q153

154 Q154

155 Ev 197

156 Ev 199

“Nearly 90% of respondents said no. This is understandable—after all, white men, who have traditionally benefited from preferential hiring, do not feel hampered by self-doubt or a loss in self-esteem!”¹⁵⁷

145. Addressing the NBPA’s annual conference, the Minister of State, Ms Hazel Blears, said: “We have got a whole range of views about these issues. We need to move forward together. What we don’t want is a situation where we have real division ... We have also got to explore whether we are using the current law to its full extent, before we change the law.”¹⁵⁸ Ms Blears told us that a majority of forces were on course to meet their targets for minority ethnic recruitment, but conceded that there was a particular problem with the Metropolitan Police.¹⁵⁹

146. The issue of positive discrimination is a very sensitive one. There is undoubtedly a problem which needs to be tackled. Despite recent increases in recruitment from minority ethnic groups, many police forces remain unrepresentative of their wider communities. This is particularly the case in London. Doing nothing is therefore not an option. Equally, it would be counter-productive to take action which led to a lowering of recruitment standards, or which created a widespread sense of unfairness on the part of white police officers. We believe that the best way forward is through a combination of:

- a) **increased effort put into ‘positive action’, that is, promotional and outreach activities aimed at encouraging more members of minority groups to apply to join the police;**
- b) **the prioritising in recruitment of certain abilities such as language skills and knowledge of cultural background, where relevant to policing needs in particular areas. A case can be made for doing this on a purely crime-fighting basis.**

We recommend that the Home Office should explore as a matter of urgency the extent to which proposal (b) above can be implemented without a change in the existing law, with a view to issuing guidance to individual forces on how best to modify their present recruitment practices. However, the position should be regularly reviewed by the Home Office, and if no significant progress has been made, then further action should be taken, including consideration of legislation to enable proposal (b) above to be implemented.

147. We also took evidence from the Minister of State on the Government’s proposal to ban membership of the British National Party on the part of police officers or staff. She told us that following a declaration by ACPO that membership of the BNP was inconsistent with being a police officer—

“the Government has now put forward to the Police Advisory Board, which makes amendments to employment regulations, a specific proposition which the Board has accepted, to have a regulation barring anyone with membership not only of the BNP but of similar organisations; so there is a fairly broad test in terms of inappropriate

¹⁵⁷ Ibid., p 3

¹⁵⁸ from news.bbc.co.uk, 15 September 2004

¹⁵⁹ Q368

and racist organisations. That is being put into regulations because it could clearly be challenged in the courts. This is now not just ACPO policy, it is something we are proposing to put on a legal basis.”¹⁶⁰

The Minister subsequently told us that the “similar organisations” she referred to would include Combat 18, the National Front and any other organisation “whose constitution, aims, objectives or pronouncements are incompatible with the general duty under the Race Relations (Amendment) Act to promote race equality”.¹⁶¹

148. We support the view of ACPO and the Government that membership of the BNP and similar racist organisations is incompatible with being a police officer, and look forward to this restriction being made legally enforceable. We believe that formal restrictions should be complemented by a determined effort to root out unacceptable attitudes.

Career breaks

149. Police officers can apply for unpaid career breaks of up to five years. In September 2004, a judge dismissed a dangerous driving case because a police officer who had been due to give evidence was on a career break in Spain and could not be contacted.¹⁶² Following adverse press coverage of this incident, we raised with our witnesses the question of whether the current arrangements for police career breaks are satisfactory.

150. The Minister of State, Ms Hazel Blears, told us that as at October 2004, 776 police officers were on career breaks. The vast majority of these were police constables, and only one was of the rank of chief superintendent or above. Ms Blears commented that “as far as I know, the system is working pretty well”, enabling police officers to acquire valuable outside experience. Chief constables were responsible for ensuring that officers on career breaks received appropriate refresher training and induction into new technology so that they were not disadvantaged on their return to police duties. They were also responsible for ensuring that such officers were available to give evidence in court as required and that their absence did not have a damaging effect on the operation of the force in general.¹⁶³

151. HM Chief Inspector of Constabulary, Sir Keith Povey, in a response seen and endorsed also by ACPO, told us that a national policy on police career breaks had been agreed by the Secretary of State in 2000. This aimed “to support personal needs of staff by providing an extended break from work and subsequent return, whilst maintaining effective operational capability”. The policy guidelines were “not prescriptive” but allowed individual forces the flexibility to make their own arrangements. Research indicated that individual force policies—

“are likely to include specific information in respect of criteria and eligibility for a career break and also court commitments. In some cases this includes an

160 Q366

161 Ev 200

162 from news.bbc.co.uk, 3 September 2004, “Missing PC scuppers driving trial”

163 Q372

undertaking by the individual concerned to advise of any known impending court commitments and to attend any court commitments as required.”¹⁶⁴

152. The Metropolitan Police gave us an example of such a requirement, from their formal career break policy:

“An undertaking must be obtained from the individual to attend any court commitments as required. It should be stressed that the costs incurred in such attendance will not be reimbursed. This is particularly important where foreign travel is being considered. All reasonable steps must be taken by the member of staff to ensure they are aware of all court commitments.”¹⁶⁵

153. ACPO, the PSA, the Police Federation, the APA and HMIC all felt that the current policy on career breaks was working well.¹⁶⁶ The PSA added a comment about the particular case which had excited media interest:

“From our understanding of the case referred to, it seems the problem lay more closely with the court listing procedure than with the police. It is our knowledge that the officer concerned had informed all about his absence from the Force and this information had been passed on to the listing officer.”¹⁶⁷

154. We have no reason to believe that there are any major problems with the current system of police career breaks or that a full-scale review is called for. A limited use of career breaks, subject to the overall demands of the service, helps to motivate and retain staff. However, we note that HMIC describes individual force policies as being “likely” to contain “specific information in respect of criteria and eligibility for a career break and also court commitments”, and that “*in some cases* [our emphasis] this includes an undertaking by the individual concerned to advise of any known impending court commitments and to attend any court commitments as required”. The implication is that some forces do *not* require officers on career breaks to give undertakings in respect of court commitments. We recommend that the Secretary of State’s national policy on police career breaks should be amended to make it a requirement that all individual force policies should contain stipulations in respect of court commitments following the model of the Metropolitan Police’s policy, which we cite in paragraph 152 above.

‘Civilianisation’

155. In the November 2003 green paper the Government stated that “we want to explore the scope for convergence between the pay and conditions for all police staff” and “to move towards common performance, management and development systems”.¹⁶⁸

156. In July 2004, HM Chief Inspector of Constabulary, Sir Keith Povey, published *Modernising the Police Service*, a thematic inspection of police workforce modernisation.¹⁶⁹

164 Ev 187; see also Ev 184–86

165 Ev 185–86

166 Ev 188, 186–87, 180–81, 190, 187

167 Ev 186

168 *Policing: Building Safer Communities Together*, para 7.09

The report addresses the implications of ‘civilianisation’ of the police—that is, replacing police officers with non-sworn police staff in specific roles—in the context of the wider reform agenda. It poses the key question as being, “how should the service and individual police forces determine and effectively manage the optimum mix of officers and police staff in order to deliver the increasingly complex services required of a modern police organisation?”¹⁷⁰

157. The report—

- advocates “a significant programme of change”
- argues that “for too long the service has dealt with officers and police staff in silos as if somehow they were not part of the same organisation. This is divisive”
- calls for a more integrated approach to civilianisation, with the Home Office playing a more pro-active role and significant changes to funding mechanisms
- questions the concept of the “omnicompetent officer” and recommends a more flexible approach to the delegation of police powers
- advocates “a fundamental review of concepts such as the single point of entry to the service, the 30-year police career and the current non-transferability of training, skills and qualifications”.

158. The Police Federation argue strongly in support of maintaining the present differences between the pay and conditions package of police officers and that of support staff.¹⁷¹ The Police Superintendents’ Association supports convergence in terms and conditions of police officers and staff, but believes that the office of constable should remain, arguing that in police forces across the world “there is a distinction between those members of that force who carry a power of arrest and those who do not”.¹⁷² The Association of Police Authorities comment that they “strongly support an integrated workforce without artificial divisions” and welcome the HMIC report.¹⁷³

159. We support the Government’s intention to merge the pay and conditions of police officers and staff. There should be a single police service pay spine up which individuals will progress according to their skills and experience. However, we recommend that the office of constable should be retained.

Community Support Officers

160. The Police Reform Act 2002 provided for the introduction of Police Community Support Officers (CSOs or PCSOs). The Home Office defines CSOs as—

169 HM Inspectorate of Constabulary, *Modernising the Police Service: A Thematic Inspection of Workforce Modernisation—The Role, Management and Deployment of Police Staff in the Police Service of England and Wales*

170 *Ibid.*, para 2.7

171 Ev 141–42 (paras 12.1–10)

172 Ev 83 (section 10)

173 Ev 124 (para 46)

“police authority employed staff who can perform a high visibility, patrolling role. They complement the work of police officers by focusing predominantly on lower level crime, disorder and anti-social behaviour, providing reassurance to the communities they serve.”¹⁷⁴

161. CSOs’ present powers include those of issuing fixed-penalty notices relating to anti-social behaviour, requesting a name and address, and detaining someone for up to 30 minutes pending the arrival of a constable. The Government has recently proposed that CSOs be given extra powers equivalent to those of police officers to direct traffic, to issue warnings to beggars, to enforce byelaws, and to search a detained person for weapons where the CSO has reasonable grounds to believe that the detainee might present a danger to himself or others.¹⁷⁵

162. The appointment of CSOs is optional for each force. Following pilots in 2002–03 in six forces, 38 forces have now appointed a total of over 3,800 CSOs. The Home Office describes them as “providing a visible, reassuring presence in communities—typically spending around 70% of their time on patrol”.¹⁷⁶

163. The Home Office Strategic Plan envisages recruitment of a further 20,000 CSOs by 2008. £50 million of new money is being provided to “kickstart” recruitment. The Permanent Secretary at the Home Office, giving evidence to us on 20 July 2004, said that “the exact criteria and rules” governing this funding “have yet to be devised”, and therefore it was not clear whether the money was ring-fenced for the appointment of CSOs, or would be available if forces chose to spend it in other ways.¹⁷⁷ The Home Office has stated that it intends to make provision for local communities to co-fund extra CSOs, if that is desired by local people or businesses. It has undertaken that “growth in CSO numbers will not be at the expense of police officer numbers”.¹⁷⁸

164. HMIC’s recommendations on workforce modernisation also have implications for the future use of CSOs.¹⁷⁹ HMIC’s overall assessment of CSOs is that they have been “highly successful”. However, HMIC draws attention to the uncertainty over their long-term funding.¹⁸⁰

165. The President of ACPO, Mr Chris Fox, told us that CSOs had been very successful when working in teams with police officers, in ‘high visibility’ situations in streets and neighbourhoods. He thought that in taking a decision on whether to extend CSOs’ powers, care should be taken not to change this role. As the ACPO submission put it, “additional training, more paperwork, court appearances, etc., would result in less ‘street’ time and defeat their reason for being”.¹⁸¹

174 Cm 6360, p 165

175 Home Office, *Policing: Modernising Police Powers to Meet Community Needs* (August 2004), section 4

176 Ev 111 (para 102)

177 HC (2004-05) 320, Qq 6-10

178 Ev 111 (para 103)

179 Ibid. (paras 100–04)

180 Ev 167 (para 5.21)

181 Ev 148 (para 42)

166. The Association of Police Authorities refers to the introduction of CSOs as “a success story”. “All the indications to date are that PCSOs are extremely popular with local communities.” They note that the need for forces to have police authority approval in order to receive ring-fenced funding means that in practice authorities have an input into most decisions to recruit CSOs. However, they also point out that no proper national evaluation of the impact of CSOs has yet been carried out. They argue that such an evaluation is necessary to establish the optimum deployment of CSOs, and see whether there is a difference in their effectiveness as between urban and rural areas. They say it is not clear how the figure of 20,000 extra CSOs was arrived at, and express the hope that future funding arrangements will provide flexibility for police authorities and chief offices to decide locally what the right mix of police officers, CSOs and other staff should be.¹⁸²

167. The Deputy Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police, Sir Ian Blair, said that CSOs had proved to be “deeply popular with the public”. He stressed the need for them to work as part of an integrated team with police officers. In the MPS 33% of CSOs had been recruited from black and minority ethnic groups and 30% were women; he concluded that CSOs were an effective way of rapidly increasing the representation of minority groups and women within the Police Service.¹⁸³

168. In contrast to our other witnesses, the Police Federation expressed deep scepticism about the value of CSOs. They referred to a “woeful lack of analysis as to [CSOs’] effectiveness to date”. They acknowledged that surveys showed the public welcome—

“the reintroduction of ‘bygone’ community-based policing. But basing the wholesale introduction of PCSOs solely on the public’s desire to see a return of a uniformed presence on the streets is disingenuous and spurious: the public welcome its apparent return precisely due to the decline in community policing. Statements of public affirmation therefore in no way constitute a legitimate justification to introduce more PCSOs prior to the conclusion of independent analysis as to their effectiveness.”¹⁸⁴

169. The Chairman of the Federation, Ms Jan Berry, told us that “there is a level of confusion by police officers as to what PCSOs are doing and by the public as to what the powers and real role of a PCSO is”.¹⁸⁵ The General Secretary, Mr Clint Elliott, added: “there is a point, I think, and we are not far away from that point, when PCSOs are actually, in everything but name, police officers, but are actually cheaper, less well trained and less well selected police officers. That has got to be of concern to the public.”¹⁸⁶

170. The Police Federation subsequently sent us a summary of findings from a series of focus groups containing police officers drawn from seven forces. The main findings were that the “vast majority” of officers did not believe CSOs had been given sufficient training, and thought it essential they should wear a uniform that was clearly distinct from that of police officers; while some officers expressed “heavy dissatisfaction” at the practice of CSOs

182 Ev 125 (paras 50–52)

183 Qq 172–73

184 Ev 140 (paras 11.7–8)

185 Q65

186 Q67

getting involved in confrontational situations that they were not trained to handle. The Police Federation reports that, overall, “there was a split as to whether police officers approved or disapproved of CSOs”.¹⁸⁷

171. Responding to the criticism that the decision to expand the numbers of CSOs had been taken before proper evaluation of their effectiveness had been carried out, the Minister of State, Ms Hazel Blears, told us that—

“In fact, we have had 27 local evaluations of their impact in the forces where they were initially recruited. That has shown us overwhelmingly that they are popular with the public, and also that they are having a significant impact on reassurance and the job they were initially designed to do, which was being out there and a visible uniformed presence patrolling the streets.”¹⁸⁸

The Home Office has supplied us with a summary of the results of these local evaluations.¹⁸⁹

172. It is clear that Community Support Officers have proved popular with the public in their role as high-visibility patrollers. The Government’s proposed expansion in CSO numbers was supported by most of our witnesses, though not by the Police Federation which represents uniformed officers. Several witnesses made the point that CSOs are most useful when they work in close liaison with police officers, and that any extension of their powers which reduced their street presence would be counter-productive. We agree with this assessment. We also think it is desirable that individual police forces and police authorities should be given the flexibility to decide for themselves whether they wish to spend extra resources on CSOs or on other personnel or activities. We recommend that the arrangements drawn up by the Home Office for the proposed neighbourhood policing fund should make allowance for such flexibility, allowing local communities to take decisions in the light of local priorities.

Science and technology

173. A Police Science and Technology Strategy Group was created in July 2002 to bring together key stakeholders including the Home Office, ACPO, the Forensic Science Service, the Police Information Technology Organisation, police authorities, industry and academia. Two Police Science and Technology Strategy reports have been issued; the most recent, in May 2004, covers the period 2004–09. In financial year 2002–03, a total of £224 million was spent on national police-related science and technology projects (out of £9 billion in total for policing).¹⁹⁰ Police use of science and technology is a vast topic. In the context of the present report we confine ourselves to briefly summarising developments in respect of two specific issues.

187 Ev 178–79

188 Q374

189 HC (2004-05) 320, Ev 43-44

190 Home Office, *Police Science and Technology Strategy 2004–09* (May 2004), p 25

Call handling

174. Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary drew attention in its written evidence to police call-handling as an area of current weakness, with relatively few forces possessing a high-calibre facility. HMIC is about to undertake a thematic inspection of the end-to-end call handling process.¹⁹¹

175. In September 2004, the Home Secretary unveiled what he called a 'copper's contract', aimed at improving call-handling:

“The ‘copper’s contract’ between the Home Office and ACPO will set national minimum standards which cover:

- making it easier for the public to contact the police through call handling systems designed for the task;
- clearer information to the public about how to get in touch;
- how the police should deal with the initial call, make sure they give the caller realistic information about what will happen next and what should be done to follow-up each call with the person who made it; and
- how to measure feedback from the public about the service they have received.

These objectives will be aided by the establishment of a national non-emergency number to complement 999.”¹⁹²

176. The Minister of State, Ms Blears, commented that:

“A lot of dissatisfaction of the public depends on that very first encounter when they contact the police; and if that is a bad experience, that translates into what they feel about the police as a whole. ... All those issues around call handling go to the heart of what people really want out of their police service.”¹⁹³

177. The Government's proposals were subsequently embodied in the November 2004 white paper.¹⁹⁴ A number of our witnesses commented on these. UNISON told us that it supported the development of call handling standards, but “these will not succeed unless the manifest HR/industrial relations problems that beset this sector of the service are first tackled. Our call handler members complain of under-staffing, poor training, ineffective resource management and health and safety problems with stress.”¹⁹⁵ The APA said that they recognised the importance of good call-handling to the public and would be engaging with HMIC during their thematic inspection.¹⁹⁶

191 Ev 168 (para 6.6)

192 Home Office press notice 290/2004, dated 14 September 2004, “Turning the police service into a public service”

193 Q380

194 Cm 6360, para 3.41

195 Ev 218 (para 4.5)

196 Ev 228

178. The PSA expressed disappointment at “the seeming lack of progress” towards introducing a single non-emergency number. They comment that:

“The inexorable growth in telephony traffic being experienced by every police force and the lack of capacity to deal with such high volumes of calls is creating a situation where the public are becoming increasingly critical of the inability of the police to answer their telephone queries quickly and efficiently. We see the single non-emergency number as a vital way in dealing with this demand and allowing more urgent, police related calls being dealt with as a priority.”¹⁹⁷

The APA, on the other hand, urged caution against introducing the new number too hastily:

“There is no point facilitating contact with the police if the back-up systems are not there, so it is crucial that, before any new system is put in place, forces have in place suitable systems to be able to cope with the expected demand.”¹⁹⁸

179. We support the Government’s proposals to improve call-handling. At present it is often difficult for members of the public to contact the police. This is not acceptable. However, the Home Office must ensure that suitable training and staff resources are made available to ensure that the new systems are a success.

180. We also welcome the proposed introduction of a single non-emergency number. We note the concern of the APA that appropriate back-up systems should be in place before the new number becomes available. We recommend that the Home Office should address these concerns in its planning for the new number.

Use of DNA

181. In 1999 the Prime Minister announced a programme to expand the National DNA Database. The aim was to enable the police to take a DNA sample from all current known active offenders by April 2004. In the four years from April 2000, the DNA Expansion Programme provided £183 million to police forces. At the end of March 2004, the Database held 2.5 million DNA profiles taken from suspect offenders, which the Home Office describes as being “the great majority of known active UK offenders”.¹⁹⁹

182. In 2002–03 there were nearly 50,000 ‘offender-to-scene’ matches, and over 21,000 ‘DNA detections’ (detected crimes in which a DNA match is available), an increase of 145% over the figure for 1999–2000. DNA matches have had an impact on detection rates:

- while the overall detection rate for all crime is 24%, this rises to 38% where DNA has been successfully recovered from a crime scene; and

197 Ev 213

198 Ev 227

199 Home Office, *Police Science and Technology Strategy 2004–09* (May 2004), pp 13–14

- the detection rate for domestic burglary rises from 14% to 48% where crime-scene DNA is put on the database.²⁰⁰

183. The number of profiles on the Database is projected to increase to 370,000 in 2007. This takes account of likely extra growth attributable to the new power (in the Criminal Justice Act 2003) to take DNA samples immediately after arrest.²⁰¹

184. The Home Office told us that:

“the UK is currently the world leader in the law enforcement use of DNA, having a database which not only holds the largest number of DNA profiles in absolute numbers, but which also represents by far the largest proportion of the population.”²⁰²

185. At present, DNA, fingerprints and other scientific process are used independently. The Home Office Forensic Integration Strategy is intended to achieve full integration of all forms of forensic evidence by March 2008. It is claimed that “such integration will raise the level of detections in a highly cost-effective manner” and will be a “step-change” in the use of forensic science.²⁰³

186. Two reports from HMIC—*Under the Microscope* (July 2000) and *Under the Microscope Refocused* (June 2002)—criticised the effectiveness of police use of DNA. The 2002 report found that though good progress had been made in some areas, police processes and management were still proving too slow to adapt to the possibilities being opened up by DNA technology.

187. The report stated that: “concern has been expressed from a number of quarters that inept interview techniques and the inappropriate disclosure of evidence to defence representatives prior to interviews may be one explanation for a high number of legitimate access outcomes”. The report also concluded that “many forces still have a great deal of difficulty in managing the process of turning identifications into detections, and this is rooted in a paucity of quality performance information”.

188. The report found that there was also an emerging problem with multiple identities appearing on the National DNA Database, i.e. the same individual’s DNA linked to several names. The report called for greater checking to limit the recording of DNA under several alias, false or misspelt names.

189. It was reported in the press in September 2004 that Professor Sir Alec Jeffreys, of the Department of Genetics at Leicester University, had called for police DNA databases to hold more information to lessen the chances of a false positive.²⁰⁴

190. We raised Sir Alec’s reported criticisms of police use of DNA with the Director of Forensic Services in the Metropolitan Police, Mr Gary Pugh. In response Mr Pugh commented that:

200 Ibid.

201 Ibid.

202 Ev 105 (para 58)

203 Ibid. (para 60)

204 The Guardian, 9 September 2004, “DNA fingerprinting ‘no longer foolproof’: pioneer of progress calls for upgrade”

“I think Sir Alec Jeffreys was referring to the fact that we do not actually analyse the whole DNA molecule, we use a method in the UK and world-wide which looks at different sites of the molecule. Therefore, if you like, from a scientific perspective it is possible that the DNA profile for one individual could be the same as another. That is a remote possibility given that the statistics involve around one in a billion in terms of the likelihood of that. The safeguards around that, I think, are through the fact that the DNA profiling method in the UK is thoroughly tested in the courts, and in fact there is considerable guidance about how it is to be used and how that information is put before juries. In addition to that, we have a custodial role for the National DNA Database which not only ACPO and the Home Office participate in but the Human Genetics Commission as well. So I think there is significant oversight on the use of DNA profiling, and certainly from my professional perspective public confidence in DNA is key to its continued usage.”

191. The President of ACPO, Mr Chris Fox, told us:

“On the DNA front, ... I think we have made a lot of progress. We do have some problems where we have duplicate samples. That might sound like inefficiency but, in essence, what it means is that criminals tell lies and when we arrest them they give us different names and details and we take another sample because on our record system they are recorded in their other name. So we then have two of the same samples with different names and it takes a little while to unscramble that. There is that confusion. Our scenes-of-crime staff and our frontline officers are getting much sharper about where to look ... for a successful identification. This is a good story and it is producing not just the high-profile hits that we see but day-to-day hits on all sorts of incidents, from street assaults to burglaries.”²⁰⁵

192. There is great potential for increasing the effective use of DNA by the police. As HMIC has demonstrated, there remains unacceptable variation in the adoption of DNA technology by individual forces. The Home Office and ACPO should push for more rapid progress on the part of under-performing forces.

193. We note the concerns expressed by Sir Alec Jeffreys in relation to police use of DNA and recommend that, as a precautionary measure, the Home Office should consider whether changes in practice are necessary to deal with the potential problem of multiple identities. The Home Office should report to us the conclusions of this review.

194. We welcome the Forensic Integration Strategy, aimed at integrating all forms of forensic evidence by 2008. We recommend that in its reply to this report the Home Office should supply us with an update on progress in implementing the Strategy.

Conclusions and recommendations

1. Most of our witnesses agreed that the overall direction of the police reform programme has been the right one. However, the implementation of the reforms has varied in its effectiveness, and this is the focus of our report. Insofar as our witnesses detected a shift between the first and second phases of reform, from a ‘centralising’ to a ‘localist’ approach, this shift was welcomed. In the remainder of this report we look, first, at the extent to which the reform agenda is actually driving improvements in police performance, and, second, at some of the specific elements which make up that agenda. (Paragraph 25)
2. On the basis of the evidence submitted to us we conclude that a performance culture has begun to embed itself in the police service and that this is widely regarded as a valuable development. However, there is clearly still scope for considerable improvement. Some of the original aspirations expressed when the police reform process was launched have not yet been met—in particular, an improvement in the crime detection rate. We accept the argument that an overall detection rate which does not distinguish between serious crimes and minor ones has a limited usefulness as an indicator of police effectiveness. Nonetheless, it is still a matter for concern that too few criminals are brought to justice. We welcome the assurances of the Director of the Police Standards Unit that in the second phase of police reform more attention will be paid to improving the capacity of the police to detect crime. We emphasise the importance of the Government’s target of increasing the sanction detection rate from 19% to at least 25% by 2008. (Paragraph 48)
3. Overall it is right that the top priority should be crime reduction. The success of police reform will in large measure be judged by whether crime rates fall—and in particular, in the short term, by whether the Government meets its new PSA target (announced in the Comprehensive Spending Review in July 2004) of a 15% reduction in crime by 2007–08. (Paragraph 49)
4. There is a strong case for a rationalisation within a single body of many of the functions at present carried out by separate bodies connected with police reform. We accept the logic of the Government’s proposal to create a Policing Improvement Agency into which NCPE and other existing bodies will be wholly or partly subsumed. However, there must be clarity about the role of the Agency and its relations with other bodies. It is quite right that HMIC should remain separate and retain its vital independent scrutiny function. We note that the Government is also proposing that the Police Standards Unit should remain separate from the new Agency. It is not apparent from the white paper whether PSU will retain all its existing functions or whether some—for instance, guidance on practice and co-ordination of national campaigns—will transfer to the Agency. It is important that there should be a clear and logical differentiation of roles. In particular, responsibility for carrying out short-term interventions in underperforming forces should be separated from the long-term task of improving the overall skills base of the police service. If the two roles are combined, there is a danger that immediate priorities will

take precedence over the long-term, year in, year out development of police skills and capacity nationwide. (Paragraph 64)

5. We note that in recent years there has been an increasing trend towards centrally directed operations; for instance, in relation to alcohol and drug abuse or anti-social behaviour. Hitherto these campaigns have been directed on an *ad hoc* basis by the PSU. It is not clear at present how this trend will develop or where future responsibility for such operations will lie. (Paragraph 65)
6. We recommend that the Government should publish as soon as possible a more detailed elucidation of the proposed future division of responsibilities between the Agency and other bodies including the PSU, and that this should recognise the need to separate short-term from long-term interventions. (Paragraph 66)
7. In the light of the criticism we have received that the NCPE *has* hitherto been hobbled by inadequate funding, we emphasise the importance of providing adequate resources for the new Agency. (Paragraph 67)
8. In spite of the Minister's assurances, the evidence suggests that police training *has* recently been squeezed on budgetary grounds. Such budget-driven cuts are likely to prove a false economy. There is no substitute for continued in-service training which raises skills levels. We recommend that there should be no further cuts in the police training budget unless areas of obvious waste have been clearly identified. (Paragraph 75)
9. We share the concern of the Police Federation that police training is disproportionately targeted at the higher ranks. We recommend that the Home Office and ACPO should investigate whether this is the case. It is important that the training needs of police officers at sergeant and inspector level should not be neglected. (Paragraph 76)
10. We welcome the simplification of priorities and greater emphasis on local decision-making in the most recent National Policing Plan. This is clearly an improvement on the two previous Plans. A similar simplification and streamlining of the police-related PSA targets is also welcome. In our report on Home Office Target-Setting 2004, published in February 2005, we give broad support to the Home Office's decision to reduce the number and simplify the content of its targets. We comment that "it is right that national target-setting should be concerned with setting a strategic direction but not to micro-manage matters that are best left to local discretion". We cite the new PSA target of a 15% reduction in overall crime as an example of a "realistic but stretching" quantitative target which can and should motivate towards better performance. (Paragraph 88)
11. However, in that report we also comment that if the benefits of flexibility at local level are to be achieved, there is a need "for a real reduction in centrally determined targets that are set outside the PSA framework". (Paragraph 89)
12. We believe that it is sensible to involve CDRPs in police target-setting...However, in practice setting targets for CDRPs has a direct impact on local police targets. There are two dangers: one is that this becomes a back-door way of setting local targets for

the police, and the other is that there is potential for overlap and confusion between the role of the CDRP and that of police authorities in setting local targets. There is therefore a danger of a proliferation of local targets which might undo the benefits of simplification at national level. We recommend that, in addition to the oversight role exercised by regional Government Offices, the Home Office should invite HMIC to monitor the operation of local police target-setting and report on any problems and lessons to be learnt. Any review of target-setting should, of course, take into account the fact that some areas, particularly under-performing ones, may well require more detailed sets of targets than other areas. (Paragraph 91)

13. Home Office research shows that there is widespread public ignorance of the existing police authorities, combined with a desire on the part of the public to be more involved in local policing. The Government should recognise this. We support the principle of greater public involvement. However, we wish to add three caveats:
 - There is no clear evidence that public involvement *of itself* leads to better policing. Better communication between police and public should be a priority, but this does not mean that the public should determine operational priorities. The views of the public should *inform* decision-making but not *dictate* it.
 - There is a limit to how far the limits of local involvement can be defined nationally. The Home Office should avoid imposing an identical consultative structure on every area. Much will depend on the quality of local police leadership.
 - This reinforces the need for local flexibility in setting priorities. It is difficult for the police to engage in meaningful dialogue with their communities if their priorities are imposed on them from the centre. (Paragraph 101)
14. From the evidence we have taken it is clear that there is little appetite within the police or within the wider community for a major structural upheaval or for large-scale force amalgamations. Final decisions on this must await publication of HMIC's review of individual forces' strategic capabilities, but at present it looks as though the sensible way forward is through the development of a limited number of 'lead forces', who will develop particular specialist expertise and share this with neighbouring forces. However, further elucidation is needed of the way lead forces would operate....We recommend that the Home Office should issue clarification of funding and accountability mechanisms for lead forces, and an assessment of their implications, beneficial and otherwise, for smaller, neighbouring forces. (Paragraphs 110 and 111)
15. There is a strong public desire, which we support, for more police officers to be returned to the beat. Good progress has been made in implementing some of the recommendations of the Bureaucracy Taskforce. In particular, the use of fixed-penalty tickets has played a significant part in freeing up police time. (Paragraph 125)
16. However, these gains have been at the margins. There has been too little progress in introducing more effective information technology. It is here that the real potential lies for saving police time and resources. Sir Ian Blair and other witnesses drew

attention to the long-standing failure to introduce an integrated case and custody system. There is an acute need for an integrated transmission system allowing the police, the courts and the CPS to communicate electronically with each other. Police officers and staff are entangled in paperwork because they do not have the IT systems they need and want. Redressing this deficiency should be a Home Office priority. We recommend that in its reply to this report the Home Office should supply a detailed strategy and timetable for the introduction of an integrated case and custody system, and should continue to supply us or our successor Committee in the next Parliament with annual progress reports on this project until it has been fully implemented. (Paragraph 126)

17. We are also worried by the Minister's definition of 'front-line policing' as including work in the police station on case files and report preparation. These tasks may be essential but they are not what most people would consider to be 'street policing'. Their inclusion therefore skews the statistics and gives an exaggerated impression of the Government's success in returning police officers to street duties. We recommend that the definition of 'front-line policing' should be changed to exclude time spent dealing with paperwork indoors. (Paragraph 127)
18. We congratulate the Home Office on its success in reducing high rates of ill-health retirement and sickness absence. We recognise that it is too early to carry out a full assessment of the effect of Special Priority Payments, which were introduced only just over 12 months ago. In general, we support the greater flexibility they will allow in the use of resources. However, we recommend that the Home Office should address criticisms of lack of uniformity in the process by which SPPs are authorised. In a year's time it should conduct a full assessment of the operation of SPPs. (Paragraph 137)
19. The issue of positive discrimination is a very sensitive one. There is undoubtedly a problem which needs to be tackled. Despite recent increases in recruitment from minority ethnic groups, many police forces remain unrepresentative of their wider communities. This is particularly the case in London. Doing nothing is therefore not an option. Equally, it would be counter-productive to take action which led to a lowering of recruitment standards, or which created a widespread sense of unfairness on the part of white police officers. We believe that the best way forward is through a combination of :
 - (a) increased effort put into 'positive action', that is, promotional and outreach activities aimed at encouraging more members of minority groups to apply to join the police;
 - (b) the prioritising in recruitment of certain abilities such as language skills and knowledge of cultural background, where relevant to policing needs in particular areas. A case can be made for doing this on a purely crime-fighting basis. (Paragraph 146)
20. We recommend that the Home Office should explore as a matter of urgency the extent to which proposal (b) above can be implemented without a change in the existing law, with a view to issuing guidance to individual forces on how best to

modify their present recruitment practices. However, the position should be regularly reviewed by the Home Office, and if no significant progress has been made, then further action should be taken, including consideration of legislation to enable proposal (b) above to be implemented. (Paragraph 146)

21. We support the view of ACPO and the Government that membership of the BNP and similar racist organisations is incompatible with being a police officer, and look forward to this restriction being made legally enforceable. We believe that formal restrictions should be complemented by a determined effort to root out unacceptable attitudes. (Paragraph 148)
22. We have no reason to believe that there are any major problems with the current system of police career breaks or that a full-scale review is called for. A limited use of career breaks, subject to the overall demands of the service, helps to motivate and retain staff. However, we note that HMIC describes individual force policies as being “likely” to contain “specific information in respect of criteria and eligibility for a career break and also court commitments”, and that “*in some cases* [our emphasis] this includes an undertaking by the individual concerned to advise of any known impending court commitments and to attend any court commitments as required”. The implication is that some forces do *not* require officers on career breaks to give undertakings in respect of court commitments. We recommend that the Secretary of State’s national policy on police career breaks should be amended to make it a requirement that all individual force policies should contain stipulations in respect of court commitments following the model of the Metropolitan Police’s policy, which we cite in paragraph 152 above. (Paragraph 154)
23. We support the Government’s intention to merge the pay and conditions of police officers and staff. There should be a single police service pay spine up which individuals will progress according to their skills and experience. However, we recommend that the office of constable should be retained. (Paragraph 159)
24. It is clear that Community Support Officers have proved popular with the public in their role as high-visibility patrollers. The Government’s proposed expansion in CSO numbers was supported by most of our witnesses, though not by the Police Federation which represents uniformed officers. Several witnesses made the point that CSOs are most useful when they work in close liaison with police officers, and that any extension of their powers which reduced their street presence would be counter-productive. We agree with this assessment. We also think it is desirable that individual police forces and police authorities should be given the flexibility to decide for themselves whether they wish to spend extra resources on CSOs or on other personnel or activities. We recommend that the arrangements drawn up by the Home Office for the proposed neighbourhood policing fund should make allowance for such flexibility, allowing local communities to take decisions in the light of local priorities. (Paragraph 172)
25. We support the Government’s proposals to improve call-handling. At present it is often difficult for members of the public to contact the police. This is not acceptable. However, the Home Office must ensure that suitable training and staff resources are made available to ensure that the new systems are a success. (Paragraph 179)

26. We also welcome the proposed introduction of a single non-emergency number. We note the concern of the APA that appropriate back-up systems should be in place before the new number becomes available. We recommend that the Home Office should address these concerns in its planning for the new number. (Paragraph 180)
27. There is great potential for increasing the effective use of DNA by the police. As HMIC has demonstrated, there remains unacceptable variation in the adoption of DNA technology by individual forces. The Home Office and ACPO should push for more rapid progress on the part of under-performing forces. (Paragraph 192)
28. We note the concerns expressed by Sir Alec Jeffreys in relation to police use of DNA and recommend that, as a precautionary measure, the Home Office should consider whether changes in practice are necessary to deal with the potential problem of multiple identities. The Home Office should report to us the conclusions of this review. (Paragraph 193)
29. We welcome the Forensic Integration Strategy, aimed at integrating all forms of forensic evidence by 2008. We recommend that in its reply to this report the Home Office should supply us with an update on progress in implementing the Strategy. (Paragraph 194)

List of abbreviations and acronyms

ACPO	Association of Chief Police Officers
APA	Association of Police Authorities
BCU	Basic Command Unit
CSO	Community Support Officer (same as PCSO)
CRTP	Competence Related Threshold Payment
CDRP	Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership
FSS	Forensic Science Service
HMCIC	Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Constabulary
HMIC	Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary
HMIs	Her Majesty's Inspectors of Constabulary
MPA	Metropolitan Police Authority
MPS	Metropolitan Police Service
NCPE	National Centre for Policing Excellence
NCIS	National Criminal Intelligence Service
NIM	National Intelligence Model
NPP	National Policing Plan
OCU	Operational Command Unit
PCSO	Police Community Support Officer (same as CSO)
PITO	Police Information Technology Organisation
PPAF	Police Performance Assessment Framework
PPSG	Police Performance Steering Group
PSA	Police Superintendents' Association <i>or</i> Public Service Agreement
PSU	Police Standards Unit
SPP	Special Priority Payment

Formal minutes

Tuesday 22 February 2005

Members present:

Mr John Denham, in the Chair

Janet Anderson	Bob Russell
Mrs Claire Curtis-Thomas	Mr Marsha Singh
Mrs Janet Dean	Mr John Taylor
Mr Damian Green	David Winnick

The Committee deliberated.

Draft Report (Police Reform), proposed by the Chairman, brought up and read.

Ordered, That the Chairman's draft Report be read a second time, paragraph by paragraph.

Paragraphs 1 to 194 read and agreed to.

Summary agreed to.

Resolved, That the Report be the Fourth Report of the Committee to the House.

Ordered, That the Chairman do make the Report to the House.

Ordered, That the provisions of Standing Order No. 134 (select committees (reports)) be applied to the Report.

Ordered, That the Appendices to the Minutes of Evidence taken before the Committee be reported to the House.

* * *

[Adjourned till Tuesday 1 March at 1.50 pm.]

Witnesses (page numbers refer to Volume II)

Wednesday 8 September 2004

Page

Mr Chris Fox, President, and **Mr Guy Gardener**, Head of Policy, Association of Chief Police Officers, **Dr Timothy Brain**, Chairman, Chief Police Officers' Staff Association, **Ms Jan Berry**, Chairman, and **Mr Clint Elliott**, General Secretary, Police Federation, and **Mr Rick Naylor**, President, Police Superintendents Association.

Ev 1

Tuesday 14 September 2004

Baroness Henig of Lancaster, Chairman, and **Lord Harris of Haringey**, Member of Executive, and **Ms Fionnuala Gill**, Executive Director Association of Police Authorities, and **Sir Ian Blair**, Deputy commissioner and **Mr Gary Pugh**, Director of Forensic Services, Metropolitan Police Service.

Ev 20

Tuesday 12 October 2004

Sir Keith Povey, HM Chief Inspector of Constabulary, and **Mr Paul Evans**, Director, Police Standards Unit, Home Office.

Ev 38

Tuesday 26 October 2004

Ms Hazel Blears MP, Minister of State, and **Mr Stephen Rimmer**, Director of Policing Policy, Home Office

Ev 57

List of written evidence (page numbers refer to Volume II)

	<i>Page</i>
Association of Chief Police Officers of England, Wales and Northern Ireland	Ev 144, Ev 172, Ev 188, Ev 256
Association of Police Authorities	Ev 120, Ev 158, Ev 188, Ev 222
British Transport Police	Ev 77
Centrex	Ev 89, Ev 214
Chief Police Officers Staff Association	Ev 144, Ev 242
Childrens Society	Ev 241
Grant, David - Police Constable	Ev 117
Hertfordshire Police Authority	Ev 98, Ev 245
HM Inspectorate of Constabulary	Ev 159, Ev 187, Ev 203
Home Office	Ev 99, Ev 200, Ev 260, Ev 262
Independent Police Complaints Commission	Ev 246
Ionann Management Consultants Limited	Ev 87
Liberty	Ev 169
Detective Chief Inspector David Loftus	Ev 77
Mayor of London	Ev 132
Merseyside Police Authority	Ev 115
Metropolitan Police Service	Ev 150, Ev 184, Ev 194, Ev 215
National Black Police Association	Ev 197
New Leaf Education	Ev 197, Ev 202
Norfolk Police Authority	Ev 78
Nottinghamshire Police Authority	Ev 84, Ev 219
O2 Airwave Service	Ev 175
Police Federation of England and Wales	Ev 135, Ev 178, Ev 255
Police Superintendents' Association of England and Wales	Ev 80, Ev 186, Ev 212
QinetiQ	Ev 95
Keith Rotheram	Ev 176
Unison Police Staff	Ev 217

Reports from the Home Affairs Committee since 2001

The following reports have been produced by the Committee since the start of the 2001 Parliament. Government Responses to the Committee's reports are published as Special Reports from the Committee or as Command Papers by the Government. The reference number of the Government's response to each Report is printed in brackets after the HC printing number.

Session 2004–05

First Report	Rehabilitation of Prisoners	HC 193
Second Report	Work of the Committee in 2004	HC 280
Third Report	Home Office Target-Setting 2004	HC 320

Session 2003–04

First Report	Asylum and Immigration (Treatment of Claimants, etc.) Bill	HC 109 (<i>Cm 6132</i>)
Second Report	Asylum Applications	HC 218 (<i>Cm 6166</i>)
Third Report	The Work of the Home Affairs Committee in 2003	HC 345
Fourth Report	Identity Cards	HC 130 (<i>Cm 6359</i>)
Fifth Report	Draft Sentencing Guidelines 1 and 2	HC 1207 (<i>HC 371</i>)

Session 2002–03

First Report	Extradition Bill	HC 138 (<i>HC 475</i>)
Second Report	Criminal Justice Bill	HC 83 (<i>Cm 5787</i>)
Third Report	The Work of the Home Affairs Committee in 2002	HC 336
Fourth Report	Asylum Removals	HC 654 (<i>HC 1006</i>)
Fifth Report	Sexual Offences Bill	HC 639 (<i>Cm 5986</i>)

Session 2001–02

First Report	The Anti-Terrorism, Crime and Security Bill 2001	HC 351
Second Report	Police Reform Bill	HC 612 (<i>HC 1052</i>)
Third Report	The Government's Drugs Policy, Is it Working?	HC 318 (<i>Cm 5573</i>)
Fourth Report	The Conduct of Investigations into Past Cases of Abuse in Children's Homes	HC 836 (<i>Cm 5799</i>)