



# In Harm's Way: Protect Our Police

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# Executive Summary

Police officers are our first line of protection in London and perform an outstanding job every day, protecting both us and our city. However, violent crime has increased, such as assault, which is up 15 per cent since 2015/16<sup>1</sup>, and in turn, so has violence and attacks against police officers. Assaults on police officers have increased by a staggering 81.9 per cent.<sup>2</sup> This is an unacceptable increase and should not be part of the job. The Chairman of the Metropolitan Police Federation, Ken Marsh, said, “We don’t come to work to get assaulted”.<sup>3</sup> There are simple and easy methods to reduce the risk to the police and we owe it to our officers to put their protection at the forefront of what we do.

There are new and emerging trends, such as the filming of interactions between the police and the public, where videos can be clipped and manufactured to portray the police in a negative light. This could sour community relations and can potentially cause reprisals.

Police officers are not only at risk from physical harm, but also psychological harm. Between August 2014 and July 2017, there was a total of 2,329 instances of police officer sickness due to stress, anxiety and depression-related illnesses.<sup>4</sup> It is vital that modern services are available to help police officers in their times of need; services that are tailored to them rather than a one-size-fits-all model.

The following recommendations aim to help resolve these problems and help keep police officers safer whilst at work. This report calls on the Mayor to do the following:

**Recommendation one:** Allow the Metropolitan Police Federation an annual slot at the London Assembly Police and Crime Committee to discuss issues faced by their members and ways in which these problems can be alleviated.

**Recommendation two:** The Metropolitan Police Service should introduce an automatic comment section for the Metropolitan Police Federation on policy/decision documents, similar to the ‘Diversity Implications’ section, on many public sector decision records. This will allow those who view or scrutinise a policy to know the opinions of the police federation (thus the rank and file).

**Recommendation three:** The Metropolitan Police Service should review the policy of single crewing, which puts police officers at risk and can cause issues when making arrests.

**Recommendation four:** The Metropolitan Police Service should allow all police officers (including probationers) to carry tasers if they want them, whose fitness levels are over the standard 5.4 beep test score.

**Recommendation five:** The Metropolitan Police Communication’s Team, on a case by case basis, using set criteria, should rebut online videos of alleged assaults by police officers showing partial footage that has been cut to show them in a negative way, by publishing the full body worn video footage when it will not impact on an investigation. This will balance the information going out and help to prevent hostilities towards the police.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.met.police.uk/sd/stats-and-data/met/crime-data-dashboard/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.london.gov.uk/questions/2018/5446>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.itv.com/news/london/2018-11-20/public-should-only-help-police-with-suspects-if-safe-to-do-so-says-senior-police-chief/>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.london.gov.uk/questions/2017/3126>

**Recommendation six:** Write to the Government and ask them to:

- Speed up the investigations of police officers by the Independent Office for Police Conduct, which currently can take significant amounts of time, cause undue worry to officers and put their career on hold;
- Place a time limit on investigations similar to what is in place for bail conditions, where a senior professional will have to sign off an extension with good reason;
- Increase the case-to-answer test threshold;
- Change the law so that people who bite or spit at officers are required to give a blood sample if infection is suspected.

**Recommendation seven:** The Metropolitan Police Service should trial the use of a counsellor messaging service as an option to complement existing mental health services for police officers.

## Introduction

During a conversation with a police officer, I was told that one of his most surreal experiences of the job was the first time he stepped out in public in uniform and almost everyone stared at him – eventually he got used to this. Police officers are authoritative figures in our community and work incredibly hard to keep us safe. We should remember that first and foremost they are human, the same as the rest of us, and they deserve to feel safe and secure whilst at work. Therefore, I am writing this report on how we can help those who help us - how we can and should protect the protectors.

This report will build on the existing Police Federation of England and Wales ‘Protect the Protectors’ campaign which seeks to safeguard the physical and mental wellbeing of police officers. The aims of the campaign are tougher sentences for those who assault police officers and other emergency service workers, in addition to ensuring officers have the right protective tools and equipment and, in the case of police drivers, are not unfairly prosecuted when responding or pursuing in a police vehicle.<sup>5</sup>

The campaign has had successes with legislative changes such as the doubling of jail time for those who assault emergency workers<sup>6</sup> and a consultation has taken place on the protections for police officers when undertaking pursuits.<sup>7</sup> This report will build on this by looking at what additional things can be done in London – complementing the work that has already taken place rather than replicating it.

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<sup>5</sup> <http://www.polfed.org/campaigning/3635.aspx>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/jail-time-to-double-for-assaulting-an-emergency-worker>

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/police-pursuits>

# Assaults on Police Officers

Police officers are required to respond to a range of situations, often involving violent individuals, which can often put their own safety at risk.

Chart 1 shows that, over the past three years, there has been a general uptrend in assaults on Met police officers.

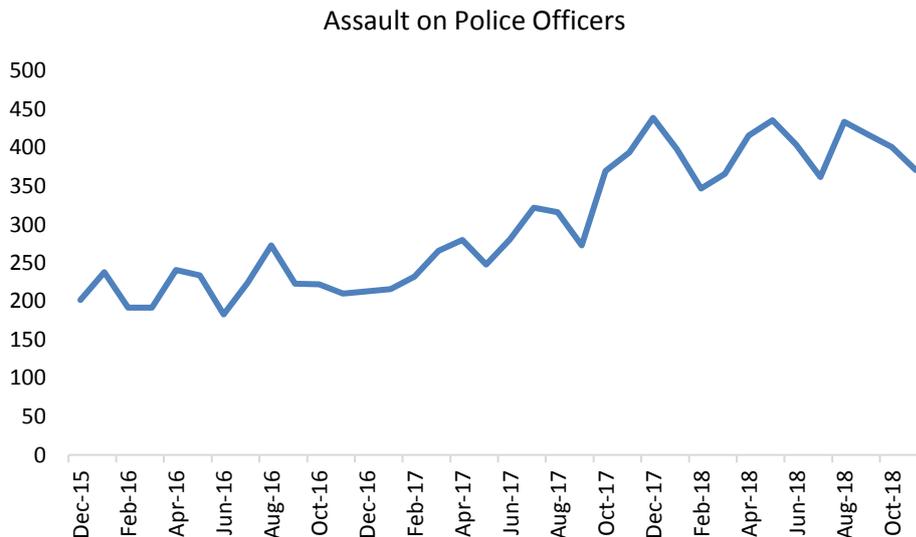


Chart 1<sup>8</sup>

When shown as annual data, we can see that this represents 10,836 assaults on officers over three years, with the number of attacks increasing from 2,634 in Dec 15 to Nov 16, to 4791 in Dec 17 to Nov 18. This is an increase of 81.9 per cent.

<b>Dec15 - Nov16</b>	<b>2634</b>
<b>Dec16 - Nov 17</b>	<b>3411</b>
<b>Dec 17 - Nov 18</b>	<b>4791</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>10836</b>

Chart 2<sup>9</sup>

In part, this will be down to better recording as the police introduced extra recording sub-categories in April 2017, these are:

- Assaults Occasioning Actual Bodily Harm on a Constable;
- Cause GBH with intent on Constable to resist/prevent arrest;
- Wounding Amounting to GBH or Inflicting GBH (Inflicting Bodily Harm with or Without Weapon) on a Constable;
- Wounding with intent to do GBH on Constable.

There was a further category of ‘assault or assault by beating of a constable’ introduced in November 2018.

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.london.gov.uk/questions/2018/5446>

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.london.gov.uk/questions/2018/5446>

Even with better recording we know that the level of violence in London has increased and police officers will often be at the forefront of this. Homicide (Murder) alone has increased from 109 in 2016 to 135 in 2018 – an increase of 23.9 per cent.<sup>10</sup>

Chart 3, below, shows the increases in London of some violent and violence related crimes.

Crime Type	Feb 15 - Jan 16	Feb 18 - Jan 19	Change from 15/16
Common Assault	62837	72056	14.7%
Assault with Injury	48858	51298	5.0%
Wounding/GBH	23852	24987	4.8%
Knife Crime	9932	14656	47.6%
Knife Crime with Injury	3718	4359	17.2%
Gun Crime	1863	2400	28.8%
Gun Crime Lethal Barrelled Discharge	288	421	46.2%
All Violence Against the Person Offences	223187	259828	16.4%

Chart 3<sup>11</sup>

Metropolitan Police Federation Chair, Ken Marsh said, “Officers should not expect to be assaulted at work”.<sup>12</sup> Faced with this violence, it is imperative that the views of front line officers are represented at the highest levels. We have seen that this can produce results when this is done well, for example the recent roll-out of spit guards in the Metropolitan Police Service.

In June 2018, having been aware that a pilot took place for the use of spit guards by the Metropolitan Police Service, I asked the Mayor for the outcome of the pilot and got a response informing me that the spit guards would only be used in custody suites, meaning they would not be available to front line police officers.<sup>13</sup>

Pressure was immediately placed on the Mayor through media channels, getting prominent coverage in the national media such as The Times.<sup>14</sup>

Following this, working closely with the Metropolitan Police Federation, we exerted pressure to change this decision. A motion was successfully passed at the London Assembly with cross-party support calling for their immediate roll-out to front line police officers.<sup>15</sup>

“This Assembly calls on the Mayor to make clear to Metropolitan Police Commissioner, Cressida Dick CBE QPM, that she would have his full support in piloting and consulting communities on the full use of spit guards, supported by training and guidelines as to their proportionate use - to ensure the safety of police officers, as in line with the majority of other forces in England and Wales.”

On 13<sup>rd</sup> September 2018<sup>16</sup>, the Metropolitan Police Federation announced that they were undertaking a survey of their members on spit guards. Published on 23<sup>rd</sup> October 2018, it showed overwhelming support for spit guards amongst rank and file police officers<sup>17</sup>:

<sup>10</sup> Email from Met Police on 6<sup>th</sup> February 2019

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.met.police.uk/sd/stats-and-data/met/crime-data-dashboard/> and <https://www.london.gov.uk/what-we-do/mayors-office-policing-and-crime-mopac/data-and-statistics/weapon-enabled-crime-dashboard>

<sup>12</sup> London Beat Met Police Fed Magazine, Issue 3, Winter 2018/19, page 6

<sup>13</sup> <https://www.london.gov.uk/questions/2018/1384>

<sup>14</sup> <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/met-chief-cressida-dick-snubs-rank-and-file-by-banning-use-of-spit-guards-b9rzzz2q5>

<sup>15</sup> <https://www.london.gov.uk/press-releases/assembly/assembly-urges-spit-guards>

<sup>16</sup> <https://www.nwemail.co.uk/news/national/16849868.met-police-officers-to-be-asked-their-views-on-spit-guards/>

<sup>17</sup> London Beat Magazine Winter 2018/19 Pages 6 and 7 <http://online.pubhtml5.com/ncsw/sysh/>

1. Have you been spat at on duty in the past 2 years?  
  
Yes – 42.08%  
No – 57.92%
  
2. Have you been bitten on duty in the past 2 years?  
  
Yes – 10.15%  
No – 89.85%
  
3. If you replied yes to either of the last two questions, did you report these incidents to the force?  
  
Yes – 57.75%  
No – 42.25%
  
4. Following appropriate training, would you want to carry a Spit Guard on duty?  
  
Yes – 92.32%  
No – 3.49%  
Don't know – 4.19%
  
5. Following appropriate training, should all Metropolitan Police Officers be issued with Spit Guards?  
  
Yes – 94.89%  
No – 5.11%

Meanwhile, spit guards are allowed by both the City of London Police and British Transport Police on the streets of London – this includes joint operations with the Metropolitan Police Service.

Following extensive media coverage and pressure exerted from the London Assembly, the Metropolitan Police Federation and the Home Secretary<sup>18</sup>, the decision was made on 7<sup>th</sup> February 2019 to roll out spit guards to all front-line police officers within the force.<sup>19</sup>

The risks of spitting and biting to police officers is very real and should not be dismissed as a minor hazard. Police officers who are victims of biting and spitting must often undergo tests to ensure they have not contracted any diseases, the treatments are not pleasant and can make the recipient very ill. Below is an example of a police officer who was bitten, forcing him to take anti-viral medication that often results in unpleasant side-effects.

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<sup>18</sup> <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/edition/news/sajid-javid-promises-support-for-stop-and-search-amid-rising-knife-and-gun-violence-police-federation-home-secretary-zd6kd0dwc>

<sup>19</sup> <https://www.standard.co.uk/news/crime/frontline-police-to-use-spit-guards-despite-criticism-in-urn-by-met-a4060121.html>

### **Case Study**

**Heathrow Airport based PC Nigel Goodenough was savagely bitten after he approached a woman who was sleeping rough in the terminal.**

She became very aggressive and as the officer attempted to restrain her, she lunged forward and bit his leg as hard as she could. PC Goodenough, who has been punched and kicked many times in his 16-year career, said the bite was a first, "It's not something you can prepare for," he said.

The woman refused to give a blood sample to rule out the risk that she may have a communicable disease, so the officer was put on a course of anti-viral drugs for 28 days that made him violently ill.

PC Goodenough said: "I felt so awful taking the drugs that I literally don't know how I would have managed to take them for the full 28-day course had she not consented to giving a sample eventually - which meant I could stop taking them after four days. It could have meant missing six weeks of work.

"It also had a very bad effect on my wife living with the unknown during that period and seeing what effects the drugs were having on me."

PC Goodenough thinks the law needs to be changed so that people who bite or spit at officers are required to give a blood sample if infection is suspected.

20

Without that initial written question, the spit guard issue may not have become prominent and the decision may not have been reversed. It is therefore important going forward that these decisions are open and transparent. There needs to be better engagement with the Metropolitan Police Federation when piloting new protective equipment for police officers. It may be useful to introduce an automatic comment section for the Metropolitan Police Federation, similar to the 'Diversity Implications' section, on many public sector decision records. This also allows those who view or scrutinise a policy to know what the opinions of the Police Federation and frontline officers are.

It is also important that there is some degree of public scrutiny when it comes the protection of police officers. The spit guards campaign showed how a policy can change due to the scrutiny process, but there needs to be a more reliable way of ascertaining what the issues are, rather than relying on chance that the right question will be asked. It could be that the Metropolitan Police Federation are given an annual slot at the London Assembly Police and Crime Committee to discuss issues faced by their members. It will allow Assembly Members to stay informed and can give them the opportunity to follow up on issues with senior police officers and politicians when they appear before the Committee at future meetings.

## **Use of Force**

The use of force by officers is a risk to their own safety. In fact, a police officer is more likely to get injured while using force than the subject.<sup>21</sup> Using force is not a decision that officers take lightly and while their actions can get labelled excessive, it can be imperative to both the officers' and the public's safety that a suspect is restrained and pacified quickly.

In October 2018, a video went viral of a man being detained by six police officers who also used CS-spray. This video started part way through the incident and did not show the beginning. In the

<sup>20</sup> <http://polfed.org/campaigning/3994.aspx>

<sup>21</sup> <https://www.met.police.uk/sd/stats-and-data/met/use-of-force-dashboard/>

statement issued by the Metropolitan Police Service, it was stated that body worn video was used, he refused to follow instructions and resisted police efforts to restrain him for the search, and that approved techniques were used to place him in handcuffs.<sup>22</sup>

Between April 2017 and February 2018, 8,159 injuries were reported by police officers when using force against a suspect, of which 127 were severe. In total, there were 180,795 use of force incidents over the same period, meaning police officers are injured in 4.5 per cent of occasions where the tactic is used, or a one in 22 chance.<sup>23</sup>

The use of force can vary and includes tactics such as ‘compliant handcuffing’ and ‘tactical communication’ which together make up a significant proportion of the total uses of force. Chart 4, above, shows a London breakdown of the tactics used as part of ‘use of force’, there will be occasion where multiple tactics are used.

Tactic Grouping	Tactic	Tactic total	Grouping total
Compliant tactic	Compliant handcuffing	86,459	138,245
	Tactical communication	51,786	
Force presented but not used	Firearm aimed	2,463	16,627
	Baton drawn	2,262	
	Irritant spray - CS drawn	996	
	Dog deployed	420	
	AEP aimed	18	
	CED (taser) red-dotted	5,870	
	CED (taser) drawn	3,238	
	CED (taser) aimed	1,308	
	CED (taser) arced	52	
Force used	Pressure points, strikes	44,910	98,178
	Non-compliant handcuffing	43,479	
	Other/improvised	6,505	
	Spit guard	1,230	
	Baton used	922	
	Irritant spray - CS used	559	
	Shield	346	
	Dog bite	187	
	Not recorded	40	
Restraint	Ground restraint	23,816	35,203
	Limb/body restraints	11,387	
Taser or firearm used	Firearm fired	10	1,064
	AEP fired	1	
	CED (taser) fired	978	
	CED (taser) angle drive stun	44	
	CED (taser) drive stun	31	
<b>Total</b>		<b>289,317</b>	

<sup>24</sup> Chart 4: Data from April 2017 to February 2019 – Represents entire date range

<sup>22</sup> <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/crime/police-arrest-black-man-london-video-kamar-hewitt-harlesden-excessive-force-suspect-stop-search-a8571761.html>

<sup>23</sup> <https://www.met.police.uk/sd/stats-and-data/met/use-of-force-dashboard/>

<sup>24</sup> <https://www.met.police.uk/sd/stats-and-data/met/use-of-force-dashboard/>

Some of the 'use of force' tactics may require a struggle with the suspect, increasing the likelihood that the police officer may get injured. This can be especially difficult if a police officer is on their own, commonly known as single crewing.

Scrapping single crewing does not mean officers on patrol have to stand next to each other all the time; their presence can be expanded by patrolling in the same area such as opposite sides of the street, but they will be in a position to assist each other if needed. This may also help them to be deemed more approachable as some people find it easier to speak to a single officer than multiple.

Another issue is the use and availability of tasers, a device designed to incapacitate individuals. Tasers were only used on 1,035 occasions according to the data in Chart 4, representing only a tiny proportion of 'use of force' tactics.

The Police Federation of England and Wales has been campaigning for the roll-out of tasers to all front-line officers, stating:

"We strongly support the wider roll-out of taser to all frontline officers should they wish to be equipped with it. Taser is an extremely effective means of dealing with the many dangerous situations that officers often face on the streets and is a less lethal option than more conventional firearms. In 80% of cases where Taser is drawn, it is not fired as the deterrent is enough, which helps protect communities as well as protecting officers from assaults."<sup>25</sup>

If simply drawing a taser can de-escalate a potentially violent confrontation 80 per cent of the time, it will make police officers safer when carrying out duties, and in the other 20 per cent of times when a taser is fired, then the suspect will find it more difficult to resist arrest once it has been used.

Police officers support access to tasers for those who want them. In January 2017, a survey of members showed that 82 per cent those who responded, believe that Tasers should be issued to more frontline officers, this is up 8% since 2014. In particular, members wanted more availability of Tasers for those in roles within neighbourhood policing (86%), roads policing (86%) and response (82%).<sup>26</sup>

Policing by consent is the key principle of UK law enforcement and there is clear support amongst the public with 71 per cent considering it acceptable for police officers to carry Tasers when on patrol.<sup>27</sup>

The Metropolitan Police announced in 2017 that it was increasing the number of Taser trained officers by 6,500.<sup>28</sup> There are, however, some barriers to all police officers being able to carry one. Police officers are required to pass a Multi Stage Shuttle Run (MSSR) to be fit for duty, this is also known as the Beep Test. The standard pass mark is 5.4, however, the pass mark for an operational officer to qualify for the taser training course is 6.3.<sup>29</sup>

Last year the National Police Chief's Council amended their guidance to allow probationer constables (in their first two years of service) to be trained in the use of Taser. Despite this, probationers in the Metropolitan Police are not allowed to be trained in the use of Tasers.<sup>30</sup>

Allowing all police officers (including probationers) who want them and are over the standard Beep Test fitness level should be a priority for the Metropolitan Police Service. This can be funded from the Metropolitan Police Service Transformation Budget which is designed for initiatives such as this.

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<sup>25</sup> <http://polfed.org/fedatwork/3857.aspx>

<sup>26</sup> <http://polfed.org/fedatwork/3857.aspx>

<sup>27</sup> <http://polfed.org/fedatwork/3857.aspx>

<sup>28</sup> <https://www.london.gov.uk/questions/2017/3016>

<sup>29</sup> <https://www.london.gov.uk/questions/2018/2681>

<sup>30</sup> <https://www.london.gov.uk/questions/2018/0875>

If savings need to be made, the 'Colour Personality Test' funded from this budget should be scrapped. So far £10 million has been spent<sup>31</sup> and is 90 per cent complete. This means another £1.1 million has yet to be spent on the remaining 10 per cent.<sup>32</sup>

## Fake News

Information is powerful and can shape our opinions and conclusions on the world around us. These conclusions can differ depending on how the information is presented. With the rise of smart phones, interactions between the police and the public are often filmed, particularly incidents involving the use of force. Videos of incidents can be edited to show only the police officers using force against a suspect, making it look as if they are being excessive as there is no context. When the full footage is shown, the police officers can be responding to an act of violence and resisting arrest. At a policing event last year, the Chief Constable of Avon and Somerset, Andy Marsh QPM, showed a video posted online of a police officer using force, it looked as if the officer was being excessive. He then showed the full footage, which featured the suspect using violence before the police officer acted.

These edited videos present a risk to police officers; they can add to the myth of police brutality and the unnecessary targeting of certain communities. This can increase hostility towards the police and put those officers in the videos at risk of being identified and targeted.

The former Mayor of London introduced Body Worn Video for the Metropolitan Police Service<sup>33</sup>, a method for police officers to film interactions with the public. One of the reasons for its introduction was to provide greater transparency of policing, improve the investigation of complaints and help protect Londoners and police officers<sup>34</sup> When an incident occurs, the full footage is available to the police to check exactly what happened. To lessen the extent that inaccurate information is spread online, the Metropolitan Police Communication's Team could release the full footage to show the full extent of an incident, providing of course it does not interfere with an investigation.

This will need to be carefully considered. Guidance exists on sharing with the media, and it could be considered that self-publication in an age of digital communications is now a form of media. It states that communications offices "must make each decision on a case-by-case basis" on the release of images and video to the media<sup>35</sup> A risk adverse approach should be taken, and the Metropolitan Police should consider creating their own guidance on the issue, possibly including:

- Obscuring faces, even when they have already been made public, to ensure privacy rules are not broken;
- Only be done when the original publicly released footage is causing community relation issues and is causing damage to the reputation of policing or police officers;
- Avoid releasing the footage when somebody in a vulnerable position is involved, such as sex workers.

<sup>31</sup> <https://www.london.gov.uk/questions/2018/3402>

<sup>32</sup> <https://www.london.gov.uk/questions/2019/4211>

<sup>33</sup> <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-london-32991516>

<sup>34</sup> <http://www.met.police.uk/bww/reasonsforuse.html>

<sup>35</sup> <https://www.app.college.police.uk/app-content/engagement-and-communication/media-relations/#images-footage>

# Police Complaints and the IOPC

Police officers face scrutiny for their actions and it is right that they do so. There are, however, two issues here. Firstly, the length of investigations, and secondly, the validity of cases going to misconduct hearings.

The Independent Office for Police Conduct (IOPC), formally the Independent Police Complaints Commission (IPCC), often takes years to investigate police officers accused of misconduct, with an average of 233 working days to resolve cases.<sup>36</sup> There are only 261 working days in a year. This is quite obviously distressing for the police officer, especially if they are placed on restricted duties, suspended, or lose promotional opportunities.

In the Metropolitan Police, from 2016 to 2018, 788 police were placed on restricted duties while under investigation, this represents about 2.6 per cent of all police officers<sup>37</sup> – removing resources from front line policing and limiting their ability to fight crime. Some officers who want to leave the service are prevented from doing so. Over the same period, five police officers who wanted to leave, spent a total of 1634 days suspended.<sup>38</sup> Regardless of the outcome of investigations, this is not good for the officers or the public as they are still being paid while not on duty but have their lives on hold.

The government has already acknowledged that long investigations are an issue and cause unnecessary distress to people with its change to bail conditions. Previously it was easier to place individuals on bail for an extended period of time. The government changed this by introducing a 28-day limit on pre-charge bail. Under the measures, it is still possible for police officers to secure an extension beyond the initial 28-day bail period where it is appropriate and necessary. One extension of up to 3 months can be authorised by a senior police officer at superintendent level or above. In exceptional circumstances, where the police need to keep an individual on bail for longer, they will have to apply to a magistrate for a further extension.<sup>39</sup>

The other issue main issue around IOPC investigations, is the success rate, out of 48 police misconduct cases there were just five dismissals. The IOPC even admits that the case-to-answer test is low – this is leading to police officers being placed on restricted duties or suspended based on little or flimsy evidence.<sup>40</sup> The Police Federation of England and Wales has called for reform in January 2019. Phil Matthews, the conduct lead, said “the legal test used by the IOPC to determine if a misconduct case should go ahead needed reforming”.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> <http://glospolfed.org.uk/news/77539/federation-chair-introduce-time-limit-on-how-long-officers-can-be-under-ipoc-investigation/>

<sup>37</sup> <https://www.london.gov.uk/questions/2019/4183>

<sup>38</sup> <https://www.london.gov.uk/questions/2019/4183>

<sup>39</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/28-day-pre-charge-bail-limit-comes-into-force>

<sup>40</sup> <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/48-police-misconduct-cases-lead-to-just-five-dismissals-8pwzjf06g>

<sup>41</sup> <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-46891002>

### Case Study: PC Joe Harrington

A Met PC, who was confined to his desk more than five years after being acquitted of assault, has finally been exonerated – after nearly seven years.

PC Joe Harrington's life was 'effectively put on hold' while under investigation by the police watchdog, after restraining a teenager in custody during the 2011 London riots. The 15-year-old then accused him of assault and the then Independent Police Complaints Commission (IPCC) were called in. His case was finally dismissed at a misconduct hearing in June 2018, with the panel citing 'Unreasonable Delay' as the reason.

The case was taken to trial where the jury took less than 20 minutes to acquit him. Despite this, the then IPCC decided to continue an investigation and PC Harrington was put on restricted duties and banned from leaving the police station for five years.

PC Harrington said: "I spent the five years since my acquittal in a seemingly endless cycle of being investigated and re-investigated, confined to a desk in the station. I was barred from any contact with the public at work, couldn't be promoted, leave the service or move roles.

"The IPCC were unhappy with my acquittal and told the press that they would recommend to the Met that I be sacked. Twice they went to the High Court to overturn reports that they had written, so they could have another stab at it.

"The effect on my private life was horrendous because this investigation was always hanging over me. I have been with my partner Kelly for 14 years and we have a beautiful six-year-old daughter but we had no stability in our home life; Kelly was eight months' pregnant when this originally happened but we felt we could not get married with this hanging over us.

"For a long time there was the fear that I might go to prison, then it was the fear that we might be left with a single income."

42

The unacceptable delay in the above case is not the only problem here. This PC faced due process in court and was found innocent, yet the IPCC continued to pursue him through other channels

The Police Federation has expressed concerns about the investigators. There have been calls for the IOPC investigators to have the appropriate experience.<sup>43</sup>

Much of a police officer's job involves risk and can involve force if it means keeping others safe. If a police officer hesitates because they are concerned about lengthy and punitive IOPC investigations based on little evidence, they or other people could get hurt. The following suggestions may help in this area:

- Speed up the investigations of police officers by the Independent Office for Police Conduct, which currently can take significant amounts of time, cause undue worry to officers, their families and put their career on hold;
- Place a time limit on investigations similar to what is in place for bail conditions, where a senior professional will have to sign off an extension with good reason;
- Increase the case-to-answer test threshold.

<sup>42</sup> <http://www.polfed.org/newsroom/6357.aspx>

<sup>43</sup> <https://polfed.org/Surrey/news/2018/iopc-investigators-need-the-right-experience/>

# Police Wellbeing

Between August 2014 and July 2017 there were a total of 2,329 instances of police officer sickness due to stress, anxiety and depression-related illnesses. This represents approximately eight per cent of total police officer numbers.<sup>44</sup>

The Metropolitan Police Service provides a counselling service for police officers and staff. Individuals may refer themselves for counselling or be referred by their line manager. In a typical month there are approximately 70 self-referrals and a similar number of management referrals for counselling; the majority of these can be assumed to be seeking assistance with mental health issues.<sup>45</sup> This equates to approximately 1680 per annum.

Overall, mental health issues represent about 30 per cent of demand for all occupational health services.<sup>46</sup> There is a working assumption within the Metropolitan Police Service that there will be a rise in demand for mental health support as stresses on the workforce increase, busier shifts, rises in violence, and a greater need for police to intervene where other services historically offered support but are no longer able to do so.<sup>47</sup> These factors will likely create increases in both physical and psychological service demand.

In the Metropolitan Police Service's Force Management Statement, an annual self-assessment of their organisation, they recognise the importance of staff wellbeing and have devoted a whole section to it, citing the following aims<sup>48</sup>:

- To protect the psychological wellbeing of officers and staff affected by traumatic exposures during the course of their duties in order to ensure ongoing physical, psychological, and emotional fitness for the task.
- To meet the organisational duty of care towards the workforce under statute.
- To minimise sickness absence due to physical, and psychological ill health and its subsequent impact on operational performance.
- To ensure the MPS has a legally defensible approach to health and wellbeing risks in the workplace.
- To manage the confidence and engagement of officers and staff.

Sometimes issues arise, and people will fall through the cracks, and when they do, it is important that action is taken swiftly. Recently the Mail on Sunday ran a headline 'Britain's first homeless policeman', regarding a warranted police officer on long-term sick leave due to post-traumatic stress disorder as a result of military service, he is now living homeless on the streets of London.<sup>49</sup>

I immediately wrote to the Commissioner and got a prompt response, informing me that she has asked a Chief Superintendent to review the welfare support provided to the officer and has promised that I will receive a further update regarding the support that is being provided.

The Metropolitan Police Service has identified that, as new people come into their workforce ("Millennials" generation), expectations change, such as a desire for faster evolution and bespoke

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<sup>44</sup> <https://www.london.gov.uk/questions/2017/3126>

<sup>45</sup> <https://www.london.gov.uk/questions/2018/5445>

<sup>46</sup> <https://www.met.police.uk/SysSiteAssets/media/downloads/met/about-us/met-force-management-statement-2018.pdf>

<sup>47</sup> <https://www.met.police.uk/SysSiteAssets/media/downloads/met/about-us/met-force-management-statement-2018.pdf>

<sup>48</sup> <https://www.met.police.uk/SysSiteAssets/media/downloads/met/about-us/met-force-management-statement-2018.pdf> page 113

<sup>49</sup> <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-6737959/Homeless-police-officer-veteran-shows-important-helpline-heroes.html>

services which fit individual needs.<sup>50</sup> Distinct generations within the workforce will feature more dominantly as a result of recruitment trends. Generational diversity within the workforce is likely to bring increased vitality. However, increases in mobile and flexible working to support work/life balance for some will mean the link to support networks are more tenuous than for others.<sup>51</sup>

One of the big trends, especially among younger generations is communications. Many people entering the workforce now will have grown up using mobile phones and social media. Facebook was founded in 2004<sup>52</sup>, meaning an 18-year-old entering the workforce today was just three years old when it launched, and is unlikely to remember a time before its existence. A poll by Ikea found that 68 percent of respondents prefer communicating with other people online rather than face-to-face.<sup>53</sup>

This could explain why many young people are turning to counselling apps to cope with mental health issues, they like the instant form of communication for when need arises rather than waiting for a traditional appointment.<sup>54</sup>

The Metropolitan Police Service could easily adapt for this new trend with little or no cost. They already have the counsellors in place and they could pilot a service that makes them accessible through messaging services. For example, such services are already available in the private sector.<sup>55</sup>

## Conclusion

Police officers are often the first into danger and face risks, both physically and psychologically, but this does not have to always be the case. There are a number of actions and policies that can be implemented to help them keep safe when carrying out their duties.

Increased help and a better working environment for police officers will help improve the service to the public. This is because there will be fewer sick days and the Metropolitan Police Service will be able to retain officers who otherwise might choose to leave.

There is also a duty of care for those officers facing risk every day on the streets on London, not only from the leadership of the Metropolitan Police Service, but also from politicians such as the Mayor and even those who hold him to account like me.

The below recommendations will help achieve this and we call on the Mayor to undertake the following:

**Recommendation one:** Allow the Metropolitan Police Federation an annual slot at the London Assembly Police and Crime Committee to discuss issues faced by their members and ways in which these problems can be alleviated.

**Recommendation two:** The Metropolitan Police Service should introduce an automatic comment section for the Metropolitan Police Federation on policy/decision documents, similar to the 'Diversity Implications' section, on many public sector decision records. This will allow those who view or scrutinise a policy to know the opinions of the police federation (thus the rank and file).

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<sup>50</sup> <https://www.met.police.uk/SysSiteAssets/media/downloads/met/about-us/met-force-management-statement-2018.pdf> page 112

<sup>51</sup> <https://www.met.police.uk/SysSiteAssets/media/downloads/met/about-us/met-force-management-statement-2018.pdf> page 112

<sup>52</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2007/jul/25/media.newmedia>

<sup>53</sup> <http://www.strumconsulting.com/strummings/the-decline-of-face-to-face-communication/#.XlvBuil7S70>

<sup>54</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2018/nov/21/uk-teenagers-turn-to-mobile-apps-to-help-with-mental-ill-health>

<sup>55</sup> <https://www.betterhelp.com/about/>

**Recommendation three:** The Metropolitan Police Service should review the policy of single crewing, which puts police officers at risk and can cause issues when making arrests.

**Recommendation four:** The Metropolitan Police Service should allow all police officers (including probationers) to carry tasers if they want them, whose fitness levels are over the standard 5.4 beep test score.

**Recommendation five:** The Metropolitan Police Communication's Team, on a case by case basis, using set criteria, should rebut online videos of alleged assaults by police officers showing partial footage that has been cut to show them in a negative way, by publishing the full body worn video footage when it will not impact on an investigation. This will balance the information going out and help to prevent hostilities towards the police.

**Recommendation six:** Write to the Government and ask them to:

- Speed up the investigations of police officers by the Independent Office for Police Conduct, which currently can take significant amounts of time, cause undue worry to officers and put their career on hold;
- Place a time limit on investigations similar to what is in place for bail conditions, where a senior professional will have to sign off an extension with good reason;
- Increase the case-to-answer test threshold;
- Change the law so that people who bite or spit at officers are required to give a blood sample if infection is suspected.

**Recommendation seven:** The Metropolitan Police Service should trial the use of a counsellor messaging service as an option to complement existing mental health services for police officers.



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