Response to Home Affairs Select Committee Inquiry - Policing for the future: changing demands and new challenges, from Dame Vera Baird QC – PCC for Northumbria

Please find below the response in respect of the issues identified in your terms of reference.

1. **Reforms which may be necessary to ensure the police service has the ongoing capacity and capability to fulfil its primary task of ensuring public safety, in the face of new and evolving threats and challenges**

The policing landscape is complex, with many formal and informal relationships. There is significant energy invested throughout the wider policing family; this energy can be harnessed by better working towards common aims and priorities.

There is a requirement for clearer governance and accountability arrangements at a local, cross-force and national level; particularly as collaboration increases. The question has to be posed as to whether the national 43 force structure best meets the future requirements of policing?

There is undoubtedly a role for the College of Policing in professionalising the approach to policing. Authorised Professional Practice continues to be issued; however, sharing of best practice and innovation remains limited. The need for the police service to develop a greater evidence base is critical to future reform.

The realignment of inspectorate bodies would further support the ambition to achieve better working towards common aims and priorities.

The capacity and capability issue is linked to demand – demand shape in policing has been difficult for us to manage. We respond to call for service. We could still go further in terms of a mixed economy workforce. We need to maximise use of collaboration with public sector but also private sector. Joint targets across the CJ would have benefits in that common shared objectives. With vulnerability in mind better join up between Police, Health and LA is essential to avoid the demand failure in each organisation.

Collaboration between regional forces should be re-visited with emphasis on shared resourcing estates, finance, training etc. It provides greater flexibility and access to resources based on demand and threat. Technology needs to be considered as a national priority given the threat to security from the likes of DAESH, cyber-attack, modern day slavery etc. which could affect not only local problems but critical infrastructure with emphasis on shared intelligence and response. To date information sharing processes across forces and partners are inadequate in relation

to the current threats faced and are in need of a radical overall to bring up to date and although forces are looking at this individually consideration should be given to single shared platforms.

   2. **Current and future crime trends and their implications for policing in England and Wales, including emerging or growing categories of crime (such as online crime and child sexual abuse) and under-reported types of crime**

The demand around CSE, MDS and cyber related offences is still emerging. The harder we look the more we will find. There will be latent demand around historic abuse which will continue. The Care act will throw up additional demand resulting from the current crisis in adult social care.

The government needs to look seriously at ensuring proper funding is in place. Cyber-crime often comes in from abroad and is not unique to one force area, it needs a properly resourced team delivering objectives formulated by Chief Constables from all forces. The public often feel that cyber-crime is dealt with ineffectively as the demands on Action Fraud mean that they do not give the victim a detailed service, victims of cyber-crime often feel let down.

Forces across England and Wales all have different levels of ICT, with some being more advanced than others. Due to government cuts over many years, technology can often be the resource that is cut back when looking to protect neighbourhood policing. As cyber criminals continue to evolve, it is important that all police forces have the tools and skills to tackle such crimes. Developing partnerships with industry experts and universities need to be promoted proactively with adequate funding provided – this should not be top-sliced from police budgets.

Trust in the system needs to be increased to encourage under-reporting. Reporting crime needs to be easy, as technology evolves, and we need to drive forward work to ensure that there is an option to report crime on-line and the courts need to look at how such matters are dealt with when they reach them.

Victims give a variety of reason for not reporting crime to the police, many believing that the crime was not important enough or that the police would not or could not help. Violent crime with younger people is at times dealt with away from the police, it may be dealt with by reporting it to another official or school staff, violent crimes that happen in the home or work can go unreported due to fear of reprisal or getting the offender in trouble. Rather than looking at an increase in reported crimes as a negative, the Home Office should welcome the work that police officers and PCCs have undertaken to ensure confidence. Here in Northumbria, one of the my priorities is community confidence, we have worked hard to ensure neighbourhood policing teams are accessible, that officers know the communities they serve and this helps build trust and confidence to report crimes.

3. **The extent to which the police are sufficiently equipped to deal with these changing patterns of crime and other operational demands, such as mental health crisis work, and where gaps in capacity and capability are likely to lie**

There has been a significant increase in child sexual exploitation, safeguarding and domestic abuse concerns. These areas of high harm tend to be complex in nature and require significant resources and specialist skills.

Offences, such as human trafficking, modern day slavery, as well as cyber-crime, all pose significant challenges to policing, whereby victims are less likely to report offences. Levels of under reporting reduce the understanding of the threat and vulnerabilities of these offences. This makes it more challenging to develop appropriate plans and strategies to mitigate this offending.

As people do more and more online, the threat of cyber-crime increases. These demands require alternative policing approaches, with different capabilities. At present, it is considered there is a skills gap to deal with this emerging demand. The question is posed as to whether the current approach has been sufficiently effective in up-skilling the workforce nationally?

The police service needs to continue to develop a proactive understanding of community needs to keep people safe, particularly with communities becoming more diverse. There remains a need to invest in proactive preventative activity, rather than reacting to it once it occurs. Adult Social care and early help are obvious. There is gaps emerging in Cyber expertise but also expertise with investigators, MIR capacity.

Cuts to local government budgets have put more burden on the police. There has been a marked increase in mental health service support, the work that CSPs have undertaken has in part been lost over a number of years and cutbacks to YOT have also had a detrimental effect.

Policing has traditionally been conducted in isolation, setting its own terms and priorities, with such restrictions on funding policing needs to not only consider collaborative approaches with partners such as the fire service but a more integrated approach with all public sector partners to develop more integrated multi-agency response to community problems. Although this approach is being developed through MASH type approach it could evolve into something more holistic with executive management, senior managers and operational staff from all LSCB partnership conducting business from one head office with shared aims and priorities, management, technology, estates, finance conducted on a day to day basis.

4. **The relationship between public expectations of the police, including desired visibility and perceived priorities, and the operational realities of policing within the current financial context**

Policing can no longer be delivered through traditional methods. The challenge to policing is to focus on preventing, protecting, pursuing offenders and preparing for such new and emerging threats. The requirement to get ahead of such demand through effective safeguarding, intervention and problem solving is critical. Reducing the likelihood of such criminality will not only protect communities and keep them safe, but it will also enable shrinking resources to deal with increasing policing demand.

The public regularly mention that they don't see police officers in their community – expectations of officers on the beat continues to remain and neighbourhood policing is an important part of modern policing and in Northumbria, the PCC and Chief Constable are working hard to protect this service. In Northumbria we have introduced "resolution without deployment, reducing the need for an officer to attend all crimes whilst ensuring the vulnerable receive the right level of service."

Neighbourhood policing has historically focused attention on increased visibility /patrols in response to more traditional acquisitive crime types which could be seen and affect communities, this has not changed for a number of years however, crime types have changed whilst our vision of neighbourhood policing has not. A significant amount of crime is now committed on-line; Sexual Exploitation, Cyber Stalking and Harassment, Sexting, Cyber dependent crime, Fraud etc. are out of view.
Policing remains traditional with the concept of the 'bobby on the beat' and this has not changed since the days of Robert Peel yet our policing demands are very much 21st century with a significant on-line community presence, policing therefore needs to change its mind-set and move away from more traditional aspects of foot-patrol to an increased on-line forum.

5. **Police funding levels, efficiency and cost-effectiveness, including the role of Police & Crime Commissioners (PCCs) in driving innovation and reform**

Policing, as other public services, has experienced significant funding cuts in recent years. Northumbria Police has lost 20% of its central government funding since 2011. Due to the complexities of police funding this has had a disproportionate impact; Northumbria Police has one of the lowest council tax precepts nationally and although increases have now been allowed it will be many years before this can be balanced with such revenue attracted by other forces.

Other agencies must work alongside forces to tackle the policing demand. Over half of calls for service relate to public safety and welfare and therefore attract partnership responsibility. The additional challenges police forces face, as other public sector organisations retract from the services that assist in managing such demand due to their own funding cuts, cannot be understated.

Adopting a place-based approach to tackle community issues requiring commitment from a range of agencies and partners organisations will ensure local policing is aligned and integrated with other local service providers.

The police transformation fund has provided additional financial support to develop innovation within policing. It is important that a strong evidence base from this investment is obtained and learning is shared across the service.

The funding formula is ill advised and perhaps not shaped by true reflective factors which should look at demand and complexity. Opportunities still exist for shared service with other public services.

Medium term funding. PCCs would welcome three year funding packages to allow for effective medium term planning and ensuring existing services are in place and can be sustained.

6. **The role of digital technology in policing, including take-up, risks and barriers to use**

There is a need for greater standardisation in relation to digital technology. Currently, forces are developing different responses to digital investigation and intelligence. The progress with digital solutions within the Criminal Justice System is haphazard, and procurement is both time consuming and inefficient. It is acknowledged there are national programmes, but progress is slow – to the point that forces are progressing solutions independently.

Improvements in technology are fundamental to address some of the challenges facing policing. There is no national police standard ICT operating platform, which is a huge barrier to the sharing of information and intelligence. This is also a significant challenge to effective collaboration, not only with other forces, but other partnership agencies.

Mobile technology and improved methods of communication would help to reduce bureaucracy, as well as improve service provision, how they are accessed and the levels of transparency.

There is heavy capital costs associated with developing really effective systems. The Government could fund a 'one system' approach to Police, Health and social care.

The difficulties with collaboration are well covered, but what also creates issues within digital is a lack of national guidance in respect of capability requirements. What individual forces are 'building' is a complete mix within the digital investigation & intelligence (DII) world, the progress with regard to digital CJS is haphazard, and procurement is not only time consuming but in-efficient. I know we have national programmes but the progress is often slow – to the point that forces have just had to 'crack on'