

More Trust, Less Crime, High Standards.

Commissioner Sir Mark Rowley speech on Tuesday 10th January, at the Institution of Technology and Engineering in London.

Welcome

Thank you for joining us today. I hope I haven't set myself up to fail by inviting you to this event not long before next Monday, annual peak 'glumness' day when we all apparently feel the most glum, due to January blues.

Luckily, my speech is one of overriding optimism. Today I am going to be talking about the future, not just of the Met, but of wider policing too. Yes the challenges, but also the opportunities, that policing faces.

In the last four months, we have started to build our plan to reform the Met, renewing policing by consent 200 years after its invention ensuring our crucial service is fit for our modern age.

I am delighted to welcome you, the Met's partners, colleagues and friends, to the Institution of Engineering and Technology and would like to extend our thanks to them for hosting our event today.

For the past 150 years this institution has been one step ahead – asking how do we solve the problems of tomorrow by revolutionising the tools and techniques of today. And so what better venue from which to look ahead and focus on the future.

Optimism

I am proud to have been in post as Commissioner of the largest police force in the UK and one of the most prestigious in the world for four months.

But it only feels like yesterday that I was in the hot seat in Westminster being interviewed by the Home Secretary and the Mayor early last summer.

When faced with the challenges of policing and the Met I was asked simply: Can this be done?

The answer was an unreserved yes. I was unwavering in my optimism. And I still am. This is thanks to the majority of brilliant men and women, the tens of thousands who go above and beyond, day in, day out across the Met. Policing has a unique competitive advantage: our people.

In the week I became Commissioner, following the death of Her Majesty the Queen, thousands of officers mobilised at short notice from across the country for one of the largest policing operations this country has seen. Just one example of the best of policing in action.

In the same week, you will have heard about the incredible courage shown by two Met officers when they challenged a man in possession of a knife near Leicester Square, and during attempts to detain him police received serious stab injuries. They put their lives on the line protecting the public and in turn had theirs saved by the brilliance of colleagues. The man was later charged with attempted murder.

The case for reform

In contrast, the case for reform at the Met is already well made. I do not need to dwell on this when Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services, Baroness Casey and others have been very clear.

A diagnosis of systemic failings has been laid bare. I have accepted all of their conclusions.

But I must also acknowledge the frustration our excellent people express to me and in our staff survey about how they feel held back from delivering the quality of policing they aspire to.

And as we all know, the job of policing is hugely challenging. While it is tempting to talk about the Met in binary terms, good or bad, it is not helpful. As Baroness Casey's interim report acknowledges, at the same time we have systemic failures,

the bravery and compassion shown by members of our workforce is there for us all to see every single day.

Today is about solutions and plans. We must change for our communities, and for our officers and staff who serve them.

Our context

Firstly, some context. We are by no means alone in being a public service struggling to do a lot with a finite amount of resource.

The Met is unique in UK policing. No other force has the challenges or the capabilities on the scale required to police London.

International comparisons are of course imperfect but our closest rival to be the world's greatest city, New York, has some relevance.

The inbox of the NYPD Commissioner is not dissimilar to my own. We share threats from organised crime, terrorism and violence. We protect around 9 million in our communities, plus tourists, landmarks and financial centres all on the world stage. However something that New York doesn't share, is the protection of ministers, embassies, Royals and the policing of protests that all come as part of London being a capital city.

Yet, discounting our national responsibilities such as CT, which the NYPD doesn't have, New York has 26% more officers and staff than the Met. That means for every 4 people the Met has, New York has 5. That would add up to some 11,000 more people at the Met.

Our own history is also instructive. When taking inflation and our growing population into account, to match in real terms the levels of funding seen per person on a par in 2010/2011. The Met would need a 27 per cent increase in funding, £878 million, just to match the spend 11 years ago.

Looking more widely, it is clear we are a country that has chosen not to invest more in our policing as, for example, other G7 countries do. Recent European comparisons showed that the average number of police officers and staff in all EU countries was 50% higher than it was just in England and Wales.

Now, of course, none of these comparisons are perfect. But in a world of rising expectations it shows clearly the size of the challenge ahead for us.

So for example, this is why I am determined to focus in on and tackle the blurred and bureaucratic distractions that get in the way of our core work. I have spoken publicly about the challenges we face supporting people with mental health, where the NHS is struggling. We are doing other agencies' work to the detriment of police work.

This is why I don't just talk about 'community crime fighting' - police and communities working together to build trust and tackling crime – but also 'precise community crime fighting'. Limited resources and big challenges require precision. I will return to this later.

The first four months

One of the best parts of my job is getting to meet people who inspire me. On New Years' Eve I was pleased to be able to congratulate 14 of our officers who were honoured by the King for their service in the New Year's list. Earlier in the day I was at Wembley and Hammersmith police stations where I was struck by the dedication of the officers I met.

Meeting officers who go that extra mile for their community makes it all the more important that they are set up to succeed – to keep London safe and that they are protected by those who know the value they bring.

It is clear that our context and challenges mean a turnaround is needed. Tweaking around the edges will not achieve the scale of reform that is required for London.

It is with this ambition in mind that the new leadership team, and others in this room, have started in earnest.

We said we would pull some immediate levers to take the first steps to bring change at the Met. I am proud of the start we have made.

We have arrested more than 2,500 of the city's key offenders, signalled our intent to go for those making an industry out of fraud and doubled our attendance at domestic burglaries, already attending almost 80% of burglaries of people's homes.

In setting our officers and staff up to succeed – we have already begun to supply them with what they have told us they need.

We are issuing every officer a mobile phone – 29,000 in all, enabling officers to better support victims. We are getting more fast response patrol cars on the streets and working to build a new Met Leadership Academy.

On discipline and standards – we have increased resource and capability for enforcing professional standards. We announced the proactive Anti-Corruption and Abuse Command and unveiled a groundbreaking hotline inviting the public to report corruption and abuse.

On improving our performance, we are focusing our resources on those challenges that only police officers can tackle.

Violence is rarely carried out in isolation – it is usually linked to other crime types: drugs, abuse or exploitation. So called 'county' lines drugs gangs exploit the vulnerable and use violence to intimidate and sexually exploit others. Since I took on the role of Commissioner, I am proud that we have arrested more than 130 people for county lines offences, dismantling their operation and taking a dozen firearms off the streets.

These arrests were part of a new project, known as Tenacity – targeting London's worst and most prolific offenders. It is under Tenacity that those two and a half thousand offenders, including over 150 for rape and over 170 for burglary, were arrested.

This is what I mean when I talk about 'less crime'. These offenders are responsible for causing fear and misery in our city and my officers will take them and their operations out of action and get them behind bars.

Above all we have been listening. To the workforce and also to those we serve.

I have taken time with many of you in this room, our partners in policing and a number of communities in Brixton, Hackney, Croydon and Ilford to name but a few.

I have been determined to have difficult conversations that need to be had about the change they want to see.

What can we build on?

I have been candid about our weaknesses. I am also candid about our strengths.

Scotland Yard has international prestige, world renowned for policing excellence. A reputation we are proud of.

As we approach our 200th anniversary, international colleagues continue to look on with envy at our uniquely British model of policing with minimum force and maximum consent.

The Met continues to deliver. And we do this shoulder to shoulder with the communities we serve.

One such example is our work on murder suppression, where the Met is delivering 'less crime'.

Last year, murders in London were down by 17%, with 111 deaths compared to 131 in 2021. This means 20 fewer families suffered the unimaginable grief of losing a loved one to violence than in 2021.

Importantly too, in 2022 we have seen the number of teenage murder victims halved in our city compared to 2021.

Taking a longer view, while the population of London continues to rise the murder rate has fallen by half from a record high in 2003 of 222 murders.

When we compare these rates with New York's - where the population is almost identical to London's at 8.7 million - we see that they suffered 433 murders last year compared to our 109.

This was a rate of 50 per million in 2022 compared to 12 per million in London.

Put another way, New Yorkers were four times more likely per capita to be murdered last year than Londoners were.

Last week I was in Ilford with the Mayor, visiting a boxing club funded by the council where police partner with communities diverting young people away from crime.

I have also spent time in Croydon where there were no murders of young people last year, after suffering five such killings in 2021. In part this is thanks to the strong partnerships we see between the police and the community.

Every murder is a tragedy, each one too many. It is the most serious of all crimes. We will never be complacent and we must continue to push on this progress.

And it is not just homicide where we are transforming our response. When it comes to serious sexual offences, including rape, we are targeting men who prey on women and children.

The figures are far from where we would like them to be but the number of rapists we bring to justice is increasing.

Recently, officers from South Area Predatory Offender Unit arrested a sex offender who had been released from prison. He was seen in the front garden of a family

house where a 13 year old girl was clearly visible and alone in the room. This fitted his offending profile of breaking into houses to sexually assault children. The swift actions of the officers, who saw him try and open the front door prevented harm coming to the child.

Stepping back now, I want to talk about how we have made a start to show a new way of policing London is possible.

Our Turnaround plan

In my first few months, I set out a vision for how a different way of policing London is possible. This is built around the mission of 'More Trust, Less Crime and High Standards' and delivering it through 'precise community crime fighting'.

As I said before, we have been listening to our communities, to our partners, such as the Home Office and City Hall. Our working draft of a plan reflects what we have heard so far.

In the next few days we will be publishing a working draft of this plan. I don't apologise for the urgency. We are cracking on.

We will be seeking feedback from communities, partners and stakeholders, and reflecting on new inputs such as Baroness Casey's final report in March. A further version of our plan will then be published before the new financial year starts in April.

Our plan has three parts:

1. A new performance framework with 20 headline measures that will be our focus as we deliver the mission of 'More Trust, Less Crime, High Standards'.
2. A focus on our values of integrity, professionalism, compassion, courage and respect

3. Nine reform priorities – the ways we will transform how we operate to deliver precise community crime fighting.

I am not going to detail these at length but it is important to give you a sense of some of what we are focusing on.

Expanding on three of these priorities:

First, we will have the strongest ever neighbourhood policing. Community policing is the Met's foundation – we are a local police service. To make our service to our communities as strong as possible requires visible policing in neighbourhoods and strong collaboration between police, communities and partners.

We know how much people value their local officers and PCSOs and we want to maximise the impact those relationships can have – but around three in four people don't even know how to contact their local teams right now. We will put that right.

We will overhaul the current neighbourhood policing model, becoming more visible, more engaged and more responsive to local crime and anti-social behaviour – precisely targeting priorities identified with local people. We will invest in more local officers and additional PCSOs to create stronger teams who really know what matters to their communities, reduce local crime, and can build strong, trusted, local partnerships to fix local problems.

Second, we will strengthen our work to protect children and to target men who perpetuate violence against women and children. Public protection is our work tackling those who predate on and exploit others and child protection, domestic abuse, stalking and harassment offences, missing persons and mental health. This is a highly complex area of crime where increased confidence to report has led to demand rising sharply in recent years.

A case study

I'll expand on our work closing in on tens of thousands of men who predate on women and children later on.

Too many men in our city use violence to instill fear, to exploit for sexual purposes or for financial gain. Too often their victims are women and children, often these men create such fear they can act with impunity – seeming to be untouchable.

Men like Daryl Rose.

Rose caused his victims such fear that even after they reported him to police, through his emotional and physical abuse they were intimidated into dropping charges. My officers, through diligent and assiduous policing investigated Rose over five years. Despite the hurdles in their way, they never gave up because they knew how important it was to get a man like Rose off our streets.

Just before Christmas, Rose was found guilty on all seven counts of rape and he was sentenced to eighteen years in prison.

Men like Rose don't commit one crime, sadly their offences are a grotesque campaign of violence, leaving victims and huge suffering in their wake. We have to stay one step ahead of these vile perpetrators, and we are using the latest technology to do so. I have appointed Professor Larry Sherman to work closely with technology companies to assess the data around those men who use violence to predate on women and children predicting their next move and preventing new victims from being created.

I will return to this critical subject later when I talk about 'precision'.

Third, taking an increasingly proactive approach to reducing crime. Getting upstream of crime, intercepting before it happens, is where we want to be whenever possible.

We will rebalance our policing effort to ensure resources are appropriately tasked to target offenders, locations and methodologies causing the greatest harm to Londoners and their communities. Making the most of new technology, we will get upstream of criminal networks.

Beyond these three areas, also within our reform priorities we will also build a leadership academy; innovate and become more efficient; provide a better service to victims and most critically – set up our frontline to succeed as they are our competitive advantage but too often feel ill-equipped and hamstrung by our blurred mission and burdened by bureaucracy.

Running through all these priorities is the concept of precision – becoming ever more data driven and evidence based in targeting our effort for greatest effect.

There is too much in the plan to detail it all here tonight but given the context of engineering and the centrality of precision to our success it is that lens I will look at our plans through that lens now.

Precision

Data and science has always informed my approach to policing. There are three fundamental reasons why we must be precise.

First, it is well established that crime doesn't fall evenly. Most crimes are committed by a small number of individuals, and a small number of victims and areas are the most impacted by crime. You can't use broad brush strokes to deal with crime when it is in fact concentrated.

Second, data and science give us a real opportunity. When I was working in the private sector before rejoining the Met, I saw first-hand the power of data at work in small tech companies. Where business recognises the power of data, policing should be no different.

Third, when resources are finite, we have to focus what we have to ensure the best possible use for the capabilities at our disposal. There are always choices to be made.

Being precise helps us to be targeted. To close in on those we know from intelligence are most likely to do harm to others.

We have started policing with greater precision. Three examples;

Example one – London lines

Shortly before Christmas, I visited a team using mobile phone data to target organised gangs who procure, deliver and sell drugs to Londoners.

Their criminal business drives street violence – the drug lines are run by men of violence.

This operation as well as others targeting dangerous and prolific offenders resulted in many arrests, removing drugs and weapons from the streets. Over 80% of those arrested have previous for weapons and violence – indeed one in ten have been arrested for murder previously.

It is one example of the kind of precision the Met is bringing to tackling crime and protecting the vulnerable.

Example two - predators

Similarly, we are cracking down on men who are violent predators. Our aim over this year is to adopt the counter terrorism and organised crime tactic of being led by intelligence and data and systematically targeting the most dangerous men who prey on women and children. We increasingly adopt these tactics already such as through our 'Stalking Threat Assessment Centre' but need to be more ambitious in bringing together the full list of predatory men in London – the tens of thousands convicted in recent years of domestic assault, rape, sexual assault, child sex offences, stalking, and harassment together with those on the sex offenders register. We will use the best modern data science and evidence based practice to identify the most dangerous hundred and then determinedly target them to protect women and children.

Frustratingly our data systems mean this is not a trivial exercise, but over the coming months we will bring the data together, apply the science, and then be able to be more precise, in protecting women and children, both across the Met and with our partners.

Example three – stop and search

My officers go where they are needed. It is a devastating truth that the communities where trust is lowest is where our intervention is needed most.

The Met gets a lot of scrutiny over stop and search – our critics say that most of our searches intercept no drugs or weapons.

We have countless examples of offenders being discovered to have dangerous weapons, tools for burglary or drugs on their person that have been uncovered by my officers being in the right place at the right time.

As a forthcoming global review of evidence for the Oxford Journal of Policing will report, stop and search in weapons crime hot spots can cut attempted murders in those small areas by 50% or more. Our challenge is to create better data to know the precise boundaries of these areas, so we can minimise proactive stops where they are not needed.

The bigger prize

I have set out how we have the chance to reform the Met, but there is a much bigger prize we must go after as a country. The changing nature of crime and communities demands it.

I've outlined practical examples of how the Met is delivering, but also how it needs to change. I'd like to spend the last few minutes looking at policing more widely.

Policing has not transformed at the pace that society has done over the past two decades – responsibility for that falls across police chiefs, regulators, policy makers, politicians, and others in the public sector.

Think of the vast scale of the societal change we have all witnessed in the last two decades. Yet policing has remained in relatively the same structures and state.

Now is the time for reforms to set policing up for the next 200 years. To my mind, there are a magnificent seven themes for wider police reform.

Our people. The challenges of today require core traditional skills but also some new ones. I cannot hire as detectives cyber-experts who cannot be deployed against a violent drunk. I don't have the reward levers that prioritise skills, values and delivery above length of service.

And yet we have seen it can be done. A model that our Deputy Commissioner Lynne Owens championed at the National Crime Agency, supported by the national pay review body.

This is a factor in attracting the right people with benefits that recognise the sacrifices officers make in the name of service, and match the dedication we ask them to show come hell or high water, given they cannot strike.

When a qualified constable is paid almost 14 per cent less than they were a decade ago, yet we still expect them to run towards danger, we need a new framework that rewards the best.

Renewing policing by consent. Across the world we see policing being questioned – we need a new model that works harder at connecting to and winning the consent of ever more diverse and demanding communities. This is long overdue.

Our technology. Our technology has not moved on at the pace of the rest of the world and is still insufficiently joined up across the country. We cannot let the criminals get ahead of us.

Our structures and governance. There are 43 forces in England and Wales, all of which operate largely independently and with differing regional collaborations.

Our partnerships. Beyond the challenges with mental health which I have previously mentioned, the impact of policing is intertwined with the wider criminal

justice system. Currently, layers of bureaucracy tie up our officers and stop them getting the best outcomes for victims. It takes officers many times the hours to get a simple case to charge as it did a couple of decades ago. Criminological research shows you impact most on offenders with swift and certain sanctions. Yet far too often, our system is slow and uncertain, by design—which undermines our efforts to prevent crime.

Changing threats. Fraud and cyber are stretching policing, other parts of government and the financial sector. This is one threat that needs those new people, structures and capabilities if we are to keep pace as we have done with counter terrorism and organised crime.

Financially. I have already hinted at a view that we are at least 30% under-invested in policing in England and Wales. Investing at scale in the current ways of working is not the answer but rather it should be tied to the types of reforms I am suggesting here.

So to conclude, we are taking our first steps on a journey of reform in the Met. I expect to be held accountable for how the transformation of London's police service evolves in the weeks, months and years ahead.

We have a practical plan for turning things around.

We have tens of thousands of hard-working men and women who I know will ensure the Met delivers More Trust, Less Crime, High Standards.

However, if we're to ensure the Met is set up for the next 200 years, there is much more profound reform needed beyond London.

I am excited about the future – there will undoubtedly be challenges to come, threats will continue to change, that is what makes the Met such a dynamic place to work.

And we are up to the task. The Met and our officers are at their best in the face of adversity.

But I believe you have all joined us here today because you know how much policing matters and that you are an important part of how we move forward.

I ask you all to reflect on the words of Theodore Roosevelt, who as well as being American President was also, if you didn't know, Commissioner of the New York Police Department, when he said: "In any moment of decision the best thing you can do is the right thing, the next best thing is the wrong thing, and the worst thing you can do is nothing."

Policing is fraught with difficulties. We cannot be held in a place of fear. We should all be optimistic, the future of policing is ours to shape.

Thank you.

ENDS