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Going equipped

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Editorial

Chief Superintendent Katy Barrow-Grint ♦ Thames Valley Police

Welcome to the fourth issue of Going equipped. I am so pleased to see how the publication has developed and grown over the last two years. Written by policing for policing, it only works because police officers and staff across the country – in all roles and ranks – are taking the opportunity to write and review articles. Thank you to everyone who has contributed so far, and if you have an idea for an article or would like to join our team of reviewers, please do get in touch at [**Goingequipped@college.police.uk**](mailto:Goingequipped@college.police.uk)

This issue is as wide-ranging as ever. Have you heard about The Onion Router? If not, take a look at five things about the dark net. Do you want to know what it's like to work in Prevent, as a negotiator or as a dog handler? Then there are first-hand accounts that will allow you to explore those worlds.

We have two long reads in this issue: one is on the risk perception of frontline operational officers, while the other looks at barriers to improving rape investigation and prosecution. This is a timely article, as all forces have recently produced their



Violence Against Women and Girls action plans. The research highlights a number of issues, from investigation to prosecution, that need to be considered moving forward. This is a must-read for all those engaged in this important work

Another article shares an innovative idea that reflects on trust and confidence in policing, suggesting that a complete cultural debrief takes place if an officer is dismissed, particularly if the

disciplinary activity relates to misogyny and sexism. We also hear about using forensic markers to protect victims of domestic abuse. Creative ideas like these are exactly what we need to encourage and share as a service, in order to move forward and continually improve, which is a key aim of Going equipped.

Among the other fantastic articles are an excellent book review of

‘County Lines’ by Jason Farrell, a fascinating practice note on decoding gang-related drill music and a close look at the role of positive action in policing. I hope that you find each of these articles interesting and informative. My thanks go to everyone who has contributed to this issue and to the College of Policing team, who work tirelessly to bring together such terrific content for us to read!



PRACTICE NOTE

Decoding online music and glorification of gang-related serious violence

Police Constable Michael Railton ♦ Metropolitan Police Service



Since 2019, I have been working on Project Alpha – a proof of concept by the National Police Chiefs’ Council (NPCC), Home Office and Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) – which relates to the manipulation of online content by gang-affected youth. As the lead on Online Harm Referrals, I’m responsible for finding and assessing content that is uploaded across the online space (which includes social media, music sharing and gaming platforms). We are looking for anything that breaches the community guidelines or user agreements, glorifies gang mentality and is linked to a specific crime

(including inciting, goading, bullying and revelling in the serious injury, death or murder of another).

A key element of my role is the development of an MPS catalogue of gang-related music (Operation Domain). This is commonly referred to as drill, though a distinction needs to be made here. Drill is unapologetically raw and descriptively violent, but gang-related drill music personalises lyrics and may also use symbolism, which can be linked to offences and could fuel violent gang-related animosity. The catalogue documents lyrics, such as those below, which are linked to serious violence offences.

You can talk on the net [internet],
I don't mind it
Should have been dead but you
pulled through fighting

Blue tape [police crime scene],
it was done by me
I put A [the late Ahmad Torfi]
in the A and E
It's not that deep [serious]
'Cause all he wanted was some
mac and cheese
Had to school these fucking
neeks [weak nerds]
Drip or drown [bleed or seriously
bleed]
On sight, it's fucking peak
[a negative situation]
I don't know why they talk on me
[badmouth me]

Lyrics about a **knife attack in
New Cross, London, which resulted
in a grievous bodily harm with
intent conviction**

When we test the waps [firearms]
We test dem at paigons' drums
[rivals' homes]
Home invasions, son

Lyrics used as evidence in a trial of a
**break-in and attempted murder in
Enfield, London**

Using analysis of music content, I
have examined how policing can use
online platforms as a tool to assess
tension indicators between two rival

youths or gangs. I have proactively
responded to an increase of tit-for-
tat acts of serious violence, by using
intelligence to secure dedicated
resources for the nights when I
identified that a rival gang incursion
was highly likely. On numerous
occasions, these interventions have
prevented serious injury.

Having decoded the hyper-local
context of the lyrics, hand gestures
and symbolism of the visual content
used by aspiring rappers, we have
identified threats and proactively
intervened to prevent escalation
of violence. For example, in 2016,
by acting on this intelligence-led
policing and using CCTV for live
monitoring, I was alerted to three
individuals making their way to a
youth club armed with a variety
of edged weapons. My colleagues
on the ground intercepted them,
resulting in one arrest and the
recovery of a knife. The arrestee was
an aspiring rapper from a rival area
who had released numerous music
videos that taunted the area he was
subsequently arrested in.

Our work also involves making
easily digestible and informative
referrals to contacts across all
the major social media platforms,
national radio stations and music
companies, requesting removal of
material linked to serious violence.
Last year, this resulted in over 600
pieces of online material being
referred and removed. In addition,



I have been called to court as an expert witness specialising in urban street gangs, including gang recruitment, exploitation, affiliation, motivation for specific crimes and interpretation of key evidence.

The Metropolitan Police designed training programme, Project Insight, was launched in 2021 to identify and train MPS personnel who have expertise in urban street gangs and slang. Critical to the success of this project is raising awareness of these issues with the parents and guardians of those identified in music videos and social media posts. Parents are often unaware of the risk that their children are putting themselves in. Young people can be naive to the fact that their appearance in gang-related music and social media posts can identify them as 'legitimate targets' in the eyes of the rival gang.

Taking a holistic approach, we all have responsibility for developing our understanding of this niche youth sub-culture. Education is a two-way street and can only be achieved using honest dialogue. I strive to reach as many young people as I can and speak openly about the risks of creating, sharing and consuming such music and social media, as well as the importance of discussing its impact on serious violence. The best places to engage with young people are the settings in which they are most comfortable. We need to explain the true risks of involvement in gang-affiliated music and videos, so that young people can make well-informed and conscious decisions.

This article was peer reviewed by
Police Constable Gareth Evans,
West Midlands Police.

LONG READ

Barriers to implementing the 2015 Joint CPS and Police Rape Action Plan

**Dr Carolyn Lovell, Forensic Capability Network (FCN) ♦
National Police Chiefs' Council**

Introduction

I have worked in Forensic Investigation for over 27 years. During that time, I have supported victims through forensic medical examinations, deployed to scenes of serious sexual offences, held responsibility for the forensic service we deliver to victims of sexual offences, and ensured that forensic standards are followed. I have observed – and been part of – significant change programmes, and I have witnessed many governmental reforms and policies associated with improving our services to victims of rape and serious sexual offences. Yet the effort taken in trying to solve these crimes is not borne out in the conviction rate. Although the police and wider criminal justice system (CJS) maintain a critical focus on rape and serious sexual offences, it has long been considered one of the most under-reported and challenging problems facing the CJS (Taylor and Gassner, 2010).

This led me to question just how effectively reforms are

implemented to ensure that new practices are truly embedded. At the time of commencing my professional doctorate, the 2015 Joint CPS and Police Rape Action Plan had been published. This provided guidance and toolkits to support investigators from the crime scene through to court. I wanted to understand how well this action plan had been implemented and why the investigation of rape remains an issue.

There has been extensive and valuable research centring on the complainant's experiences, but fewer studies have focused on the police response and fewer still on the relationship between the two. As an 'insider', this presented a real opportunity for me to understand, and shine a light on, the policing perspective on rape investigation.

Literature review

The evolution of policy and practice in relation to rape has spanned over 40 years. In 1982, a controversial BBC documentary, 'A complaint of rape', unveiled officers' responses to rape as unsympathetic and



insensitive. Since then, a plethora of legal, policy and practice reforms have followed, which have led to the full recognition of violence against women in law and policy. However, problems with victim satisfaction, high attrition rates and low conviction rates still remain. A study undertaken in New Zealand, which examined 35 years of reform, recognised the good intentions of reform but argued that alone they are not the answer and may be ‘merely tinkering’ (McDonald, 2012). While reviews and reforms have presented opportunities to deliver change and improvements, few offer any real insight as to how these changes will be implemented and subsequently monitored. There remains a lack of evaluative

research about the policing effort and, as such, it is difficult to determine whether the policies are incorrect or if failures result from implementation or a resistance to change (Brown, 2011).

The notion that problems could be linked to failure of implementation resonates with this research study, rather than issues with the policies. Changes in policy and practice are delivered in a variety of ways, such as via ad hoc training events, focused training on key roles and perhaps an over-reliance on email. It is questionable whether information reaches the right personnel. Such approaches often rely on individuals to read and understand, then change their individual practice. Against the

backdrop of austerity measures, policing has also been subject to considerable organisational changes, and any reform or policy related to rape investigation is one of many. If we are to understand the issues, we need to identify whether the police actions have been operationalised effectively.

The study

This exploratory study aimed to explore and understand the impact and implementation of the 2015 action plan from a policing perspective, including its failure to deliver many of the intended improvements. Secondly, it aimed to gain an understanding of officers' knowledge, experience and implementation of the plan. The objectives for this research study were:

- What are the current challenges experienced when investigating these offences, and how do these policy initiatives translate from senior roles into practice?
- Where in the organisation had these initiatives actually been implemented?
- What external factors are influencing the desired change from happening?

Methodology

To develop an understanding of the reality of the barriers to improving rape investigation outcomes, the study adopted a predominantly qualitative approach, using semi-structured interviews and a survey.

The study comprised two phases. The first phase involved a small selective sample of senior police officers (N=8) within one average-sized police force, completing an exploratory review to understand and explain the reality of how business is done through their operational lens. These were officers of chief inspector rank, from both uniform and investigations roles. Concentrating on a small sample size in phase one supported the aim to glean information about the 2015 action plan. These officers were chosen as they are the leaders responsible for implementing organisational change in policy and practice, and should have operational and strategic experience relevant to the investigation of rape. Semi-structured interviews were determined as the most relevant research instrument, supporting the delivery of deeper insights and first-hand experiences. The 2015 action plan was used as a cue for the interview template because it presented a 'crime scene to court' approach and delivered a structured format for the questions. Ten individuals responded to the initial

request for interviewees and eight progressed through to interview. These were completed between 2016 and early 2017.

The second phase, which was completed between 12 and 18 months later than phase one, examined the broader policing response to rape. This included a further four interviews with the CPS, a sexual offence examiner, a forensic submissions manager and a senior police investigator from the Specialist Rape Investigation Team. A web-based online survey was also circulated across all police ranks and staff in both specialist and investigation teams, CPS and the Sexual Referral Centre (SARC). The action plan was used as a framework for the survey, with questions formulated from the guidance.

Results

Phase one: Senior officers

The senior officers interviewed in phase one had all worked for the police force for over 10 years, with roles across response and investigation. In general, participants felt that significant improvements had been made within the police force regarding victim care. However, barriers to delivering a better service for victims were raised, including:

- increasing pressures associated with officer capacity and demand linked to austerity measures
- organisational culture
- lack of quality standards within investigations
- opposing practices between the CPS, police and judiciary
- lack of training, which placed challenges on the implementation of new processes and structures

Half of the participants from phase one were not aware of the 2015 action plan, stating that 'it wasn't publicised enough' and that plans had to be about 'what do I need to know in my role and deliver'. Officers not working directly in investigations dismissed the need to read it. The role of the specialist trained officer was praised. However, challenges included personal capacity to deliver and review cases, as well as a feeling of becoming desensitised to the crimes. Interviewees also identified that their caseloads were high and that officers were supporting victims across many aspects of their life and were 'getting too involved', a point that McMillan (2015) has previously highlighted. Other issues acknowledged included the weight of third-party material and lack of capacity to complete reviews, with reliance on CPS to bounce a case back when issues were identified. Myths and stereotypes, as addressed

- officer knowledge of the 2015 action plan (and the tools available to improve investigations)

by the guidance in the action plan, were highlighted by police officers as a real issue within the court room. Police concerns included a perception that the jury were unlikely to understand the complexity of some of the issues presented in the court room, resulting in real injustices for the victim. The participants felt that the courts require an expert to discuss consent. While it could be argued that this should be the judge, participants felt the court process required a different approach. An example provided by a participant stated:

‘I sat in court and even I was confused, which was worrying, [I thought that] the 12 jury members would not get this, I am sure they would all be thinking the victim would not be that drunk.’

Officers placed a strong priority on vulnerability. Their responses overwhelmingly supported the belief that the police force had changed, with an emphasis focused on the victim and their needs being paramount. However, a ‘corporate culture’ was also referred to, with a suggestion that stereotypes still existed and that although the police force had an outwardly professional culture, officers’ perceptions had not changed entirely. One participant stated:

‘It is not in our heads, stereotyping still exists, you get the chat in the office later, but it is not like it used to be decades ago.’

Another participant felt:

‘It was really difficult to eradicate, sterilise the view, things happen. That is not police culture – it is there in the community and society. We all ask, “Why did that person put themselves in that position?” If you think that as a police officer, you know the jury will.’

Over half of officers had no specific training in rape investigation. Although guidance existed, they didn’t have time to access this due to workload.

Phase two: Specialist rape and investigation teams

Phase two was completed between 12 and 18 months later, with the majority of the respondents (N=60) of the survey from the specialist rape and investigation teams (78%). The other respondents were from CPS, forensic services or sexual assault referral centres. While 61% of the phase two participants stated that they were aware of the 2015 action plan (which could be due to the majority of respondents coming from specialist investigations), only 35% felt it had

been implemented well. There were clear differences from the interviews in phase one, with the responses from both the interviews and survey placing emphasis on the quality of investigations and organisational culture, as opposed to organisational change. However, operational demand, officer capacity and training were all themes that continued to resonate with participants, who noted increasing challenges, including a total review of all cases following the 2017 R v Allan case. As pointed out by a participant:

‘[This review] has affected the police force’s performance as all cases were held back to support CPS in order to get back on top of work. This has continued to increase the length of investigations and ultimately had a real knock-on effect to the victim’s journey.’

Conclusion

The 2015 action plan is comparable with its 2002 predecessor, with a continued focus on delivering investigative guidance for police investigators and prosecutors, assuring quality and investigative review, and emphasising the treatment of victims. The findings from this research found that gaps remained with the implementation and delivery of the 2015 action plan

within the study police force.

Participants noted that the strength of the communication of messages from the action plan had been mixed. Comments focused on an over-reliance on emails as a method of circulating information. Specific investigative-focused audiences had been targeted via training events, but it was noted that there was often a focus on depending on key individuals to drive changes. This approach led to pockets of improvements in specific areas, rather than overall change. In general, officers may not consider key victim engagement points as per the action plan and toolkit.

If training is focused on key specialist roles, some individuals within policing may go undeveloped for years with unchanged views, depending on their career paths. Frontline response managers were quick to dismiss the relevance of the action plan, even though they may be required to preserve and obtain early forensic evidence, and to regularly engage with vulnerable individuals.

There was no formal audit of the implementation to assess the touch points of the action plan, or the police officer and staff roles that this could have an impact on. As such, not all areas of training were reviewed, updated and monitored, leading to pockets of improvements rather than a whole-system change. There still remains an over-reliance

on 'years in post' as a gauge of knowledge and expertise, rather than objective evidence of competency. Many officers had not received the training required to perform their role or reflect the changes borne out of the reforms. Research has identified that rape and serious sexual assault require specialist units with officers with specific skills, knowledge and experience, who are more likely to achieve the best outcomes for the victims (McDonald, 2012; Rumney, 2001; McMillan, 2015; Stern and others, 2010).

The research identified a willingness and drive for continued improvement. However, in reality, the impact of austerity and an increase in reporting have hindered efforts to deliver a consistent approach. In essence, the 2015 action plan repeats much of its predecessors, with great intentions not borne out in practice on the ground. A further Joint CPS and Police Rape Action Plan was initiated in 2020 and the murder of Sarah Everard in March 2021 has placed a new focus on violence against women and girls (VAWG), with a continued commitment for change. The interplay of public concern, political attention and media coverage in driving these issues is complex, and it is likely that these will shape people's views of the levels of quality service they receive from the police (Higgins, 2020). Police organisations tend to build

on reforms and policies over time, against a backdrop of a generational evolution of culture. The history of the reforms should inform the future, but these issues still reside for victims of this crime.

The research undertaken here was a snapshot in time in one police force. These issues are unlikely to be unique but further research is required to generalise the findings to police practice across the UK. It is also worth noting that this is a focused insight into the research completed for this study, with broader aspects discussed within the thesis itself.

Recommendations

- 1 Review the relationship and cultural differences between the police and the CPS, and develop a common goal for service delivery.
- 2 Use case reviews, feedback loops and hot debriefs to support wider learning and development across the CJS, as per the recommendation of the 2015 action plan.
- 3 Address the organisational culture in policing to fully embed changes required, taking into account different policing roles and their contact points with the victim, with the development of a central managed coordinated approach.

4 Training delivery needs to reflect individual roles being undertaken, with specific regular programmes of activity associated with the complexities that surround these investigations.

There are a number of areas requiring further research relating to rape myths, training, leadership and organisational change, and to explore whether officers hold biases towards certain types of investigation, such as acquaintance rape.

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This article was peer reviewed by Detective Constable Claire Phillips, Surrey Police.

What I learned from...

My first negotiator deployment

Sergeant Ben Hanson ♦ South Yorkshire Police

These are my reflections on my first crisis negotiation. I joined the Hostage and Crisis Negotiator Cadre in May 2021, having completed my national course.

An acute crisis incident occurred in which the subject, a young woman, was sitting on the edge of the top floor of a 19-storey car park. I joined a colleague (Negotiator 1), who had been with me on my national course. This was our first full-on crisis deployment and, as I arrived, I had a good idea of how he might be feeling. Looking up at the car park, I could see how high it was. I'm not great with heights. I could feel the fear rising as the adrenaline coursed through me, but I just had to suck it up and get on with it. Once I got to the top, my training kicked in. I knew the risk was extremely high, as the subject was regularly moving, as if to jump. Her welfare was of paramount importance, and so we intervened regularly to distract her from jumping.

She was virtually silent throughout the fifteen hours of negotiation. We stood just out of arm's reach on the right side of the barrier. Time passed both incredibly slowly and yet incredibly fast. Maintaining our



focus was remarkably easy because of the level of risk in front of us. The subject would take out her phone on occasion or pause to roll a cigarette. Even this would make my stomach churn, as she tended to lean over the edge and almost drop things. Her lack of engagement hugely increased the risk and therefore inflated the value of any disclosures she made. This information enabled us to identify a family member, who was critical in resolving the incident.

I was aware of the importance of keeping Negotiator 1 functioning

at his best and took some of the burden from him by directly managing some of the interventions when the subject went to jump. She kept either leaning forward as if to roll off the ledge or, more alarmingly, thrust her hips forward as if to slide off. My assistance allowed Negotiator 1 to maintain rapport and manage his emotions.

After seven hours, Negotiator 1 and I withdrew, and two new negotiators took over for a further seven-hour period before reaching a safe resolution.

The biggest learning points for me were the value of having high-quality training and the trust you can have for the team around you, because you know that you have all been trained to the same level. Our national course was challenging, but this deployment justified the standard to which we were held and the work that we both put in.

This article was peer reviewed by Sergeant Adam Wells, Hertfordshire Constabulary.



Shift in the life of... A dog handler

Police Constable Holly Van Bergen ♦ Merseyside Police

I have a four-year-old German Shepherd called Annie and a 12-month-old Spaniel puppy called Jack. Annie is a licensed general-purpose dog and firearms support dog. Jack is not licensed to work yet – he starts his rummage training in spring 2022.

A day shift for me begins at 4.50am. After I get ready, I'm straight out to my dogs to take them on their first walk. Then it's into the car and off to work at the Operational Command Centre in Speke, Merseyside. We start at 7am but get there for around 6.30am, so that the dogs can have their morning feed and I can load the police vehicle up with all the kit we will need for the day. I have to check that all the dangerous dog equipment in my vehicle is working correctly (electric shields, fire extinguishers, dog sticks), because the last thing you need when you're dealing with a dangerous dog is to realise that the equipment is faulty just as you're trying to use it! I also need to make sure that my own equipment is ready to use: water and bowls, a dog-specific first aid kit, Annie's tracking harness and my



ballistic kit, in case we're deployed to a firearms job. On top of this, I have to make sure that I'm in full uniform and kitted up with both my radios, so that we're ready to go at 7am sharp if a job comes in.

We have a briefing with our sergeant at 7am. We're deployed to jobs from the control room but can also self-deploy if we hear a job on the radio that a dog could assist with. At quiet moments, I head out to get a bit of training done with my dogs. We have protected training days throughout the year, but it's also each handler's responsibility to maintain the dogs' skills and abilities. Jack is yet to start his formal training but comes out with Annie, so that he gets used to the working day, as well as the sounds and movement of the car. When we

get some downtime, he loves to play with Annie.

After another walk and some training, we get out on patrol. We may be directed by our sergeant towards a particular area, based on the daily intelligence briefing or operational control strategy. Otherwise, we can patrol anywhere within the force footprint.

The sarge shouts up on our back-to-back dog radio and asks us to attend a report of three pit bulls fighting in the street. Ideally, we should have two handlers per one dog, but often there are only three of us on duty on a day shift, so we have to work well as a team and think outside the box. We manage to safely contain the dogs using our dangerous dog kit and tactics. The dogs are seized on suspicion of being banned breeds and the owner is dealt with. Thankfully, no one has been injured.

Next up is an elderly female with dementia, who has walked out of her care home. I make my way to the location as quickly as possible and set Annie up to begin tracking the woman from where she was last seen walking into some woods. It has rained recently and it's cool, so the conditions are good for Annie to pick up the scent. She begins to track and picks up the scent, only for us to hear that the woman has been found nearby by a family member. This confirms that Annie

was right and was hot on her heels – always trust your dog!

Then it's another walk and lunch for me – if there's time. I overhear of a nearby burglary where the offender has made off. By the time I arrive, the offender has been detained but there is some outstanding stolen property. Annie conducts a property search and locates the items hidden in a bush, so the male can be dealt with fully for the offences he has committed. And Annie gets rewarded with her ball!

Shortly after, another job comes in. A man has just violently attacked his ex-partner and is walking away from the address. I am only around the corner. Driving down the road, I see him and tell him to stay where he is. He takes one look at Annie and knows this is a fight he won't win. He is arrested for serious assault – another good job for Annie!

By now it's about 4pm and time for another dog walk, unless another job comes in. I return to the station for about 4.30pm to feed the dogs and clean the vehicle. 5pm is home time. Normally, there's just enough time for a gym workout and dinner before a final dog walk at about 9pm, to make sure that they're comfortable and settled before they're put to bed outside in their kennel.

This article was peer reviewed by Special Constable Ben Manning, Wiltshire Police.

PRACTICE NOTE

Using forensic marking to protect victims of domestic abuse

Detective Superintendent Lee Berry ♦ West Yorkshire Police

The use of forensic marking to deter crime and help convict perpetrators is not new to policing. When implemented correctly, we have seen that initiatives using forensic marking to target serious acquisitive crime have seen reductions in reported crime, as well as increased satisfaction and confidence in the communities protected. But what about using this approach to protect victims of domestic abuse (DA)?

The principles should be the same:

- target-harden the victim
- ensure that the perpetrator is aware through warnings
- educate officers and staff that are working in that area of the initiative

Using these principles, I tested whether using focused forensic marking – for example, on door handles or car doors – could help protect DA victims by deterring perpetrators. I sought advice from local authority DA leads and from a survivor of DA, then shaped the approach based on their views and experiences. I created a pilot that allowed an incremental approach to protecting victims, through creating a ‘safe space’ by deterring perpetrators



of DA. Although not a central element of the initiative, it can be used to reinforce bail conditions, Domestic Violence Protection Notices/Orders and other court orders. This approach also strengthens protective measures and presents opportunities for introducing evidence-led prosecutions, by linking a perpetrator to a location or person.

The level of protection offered to victims varies, based on risk and perpetrator behaviour. To ensure consistency and proportionality, a detective inspector authority is required for each level of protection. If the risk of further victimisation is assessed as ‘low’, a forensic home protection kit can be used to help reassure the victim. The kit includes stickers that are displayed in windows to clearly state that the property is

protected by forensic marking. In addition to this, items are marked within the property with a unique forensic solution to help prevent theft or prove ownership at a later date.

If the risk assessment considers that there is the likelihood of revictimisation, additional protective measures include the following.

- The issuing of a handheld forensic spray. This spray can be carried by the victim around their property or while out in public. The canister sprays a directional forensic solution with a coverage of up to 10m in distance.
- Forensic greases can also be used to mark door handles or window frames. If touched by the perpetrator, they will then be forensically linked to where the grease was deployed.
- Finally, where the risk of repeat victimisation is high, and where potential harm caused is assessed as high, a domestic abuse spray system can be used. This unit is a multifunctional forensic spray unit that also activates a panic alarm to the police communications centre and sounds a loud audible alarm.

With each tactic used, the perpetrator must be warned that the victim is protected. However, the messaging must be clear enough to deter, without informing the perpetrator exactly how the victim is protected.

Initial small-scale findings in West

Yorkshire with 33 victims surveyed has shown that after protection:

- 87% would recommend to others
- 81% state it has had a positive impact on them
- 67% state no further perpetrator contact
- 65% report more confidence in the police
- 64% report feeling safer
- 55% state that satisfaction in police has increased
- 50% state they trust the police more

Victim's comments have included:

- 'It has allowed me to go back to work.'
- 'I would have been scared to leave the house without it.'
- 'It's given me peace of mind.'

South Yorkshire and Staffordshire Police have replicated similar survey results after piloting this initiative. This approach has also been reinforced with a recent conviction for a breach of a non-molestation order after a perpetrator was forensically marked by the victim.

You can watch an overview of the [**Domestic Violence SmartWater Initiative**](#) on the YouTube channel of South Yorkshire Police's Violence Reduction Unit.

This article was peer reviewed by Inspector Sharath Ranjan, Hampshire Constabulary.

Q&A – Prevent officer



Police Constable Claire Doyle
◆ City of London Police



Sergeant Andy Webb
◆ Greater Manchester Police

PC Claire Doyle, who was new to her role as a City of London Prevent officer during the pandemic, asked Sergeant Andy Webb some questions about his time spent as a Prevent officer in Greater Manchester Police.

Tell us about your policing career...

I joined Greater Manchester Police in 2009, having previously been a prisoner custody officer within the court system and, before that, a baker. My first seven years were on Response in the Trafford district. In 2016, I realised my ambition and joined counter terrorism (CT) policing as part of Prevent, a government-led multi-agency programme that aims to safeguard vulnerable people from being drawn into terrorism. Counter terrorism

has always interested me, and so the opportunity to develop my knowledge on the subject and to work within this field was a real driver behind me pursuing a role in CT policing.

Best thing about Prevent...

It embraces the key principles of neighbourhood policing, by working within the community and alongside partner agencies to safeguard the vulnerable within society and to reduce demand on policing.

Response to criticism of Prevent...

It's there to stop people being drawn into radicalisation and terrorism – why wouldn't we, as the police, want to work with partners to have a preventative role in that? I have seen first-hand through my colleagues' experience, as well as my own, that the strategy can have benefits when appropriate referrals are made and when opportunities to intervene are taken.

Tip for new Prevent officers...

Research the ideologies and develop an understanding of the context and political landscape in which they lie. This will assist with building an intelligence picture around the referral you are working with. It will also help when engaging in discussions with your subject.

Best breakthrough moment in Prevent...

A referral where a young man had threatened to target a university campus if Brexit wasn't implemented to reduce immigration. A meeting with his mother revealed his vulnerability to suggestion from the news and her view that he wouldn't commit offences. After engaging with Prevent, which included me and an intervention provider carefully challenging his beliefs, he moderated his views and accepted that his perspective on immigrants was misplaced.

Biggest challenge as a police

officer... Having only been in Prevent for around six months, I worked through the aftermath of the tragic Manchester Arena attack, taking on a variety of roles within CT policing in the days after the attack. I then reverted back to Prevent in order to deal with the massive increase in demand we faced, as terrorism sat at the forefront of everybody's mind.

Fastest skill developed while

working in Prevent... Public speaking about Prevent and other aspects of CT policing.

Best advice given to me when I

started as a Prevent officer... Being patient in my approach. Coming into the role straight from frontline policing, I was used to having to deal with things very quickly, so the more strategic approach taken in Prevent and having to learn a very different way of working took time to get comfortable with.

Intelligence gathering tip for

response officers... Understanding symbolism – and misused symbolism. Context is important. A good example is use of Thor's hammer, Mjölnir. This is an established and legitimate Heathen/Pagan symbol but when combined with other information, such as certain numbers, it may indicate far-right extremism.

Benefits of Prevent for frontline officers...

I always informed the relevant neighbourhood beat inspector whenever I had a case. This supported the front line on their beat, in terms of understanding an element of risk or vulnerability that they may have otherwise not known about until something had happened.

Impact of COVID-19 on Prevent...

A reduced ability to physically link in with the people referred into Prevent. This makes it hard to visit people who would normally have regular support. Referrals dropped most noticeably from the education sector because of home schooling. We now have to consider the potential for new ideologies to become embedded because of people being confined at home, in some cases with nothing but the internet for company.

Things to watch out for in 2022...

The pandemic has thrown up a number of challenges for Prevent. For example, we have seen an increased use of the term 'conspiracy theorist' and we have to question whether an interest in conspiracy theories is an indicator that someone is an extremist. Wider questions about holding controversial opinions and where these sit within the sphere of radicalisation have come to the fore.

I would describe myself as never having set out in life to become a police officer, and yet after the best part of 15 years in the job, I could not imagine myself doing anything else.

This article was peer reviewed by Police Constable John McCanney, Cumbria Constabulary.

LONG READ

Perception of operational risk

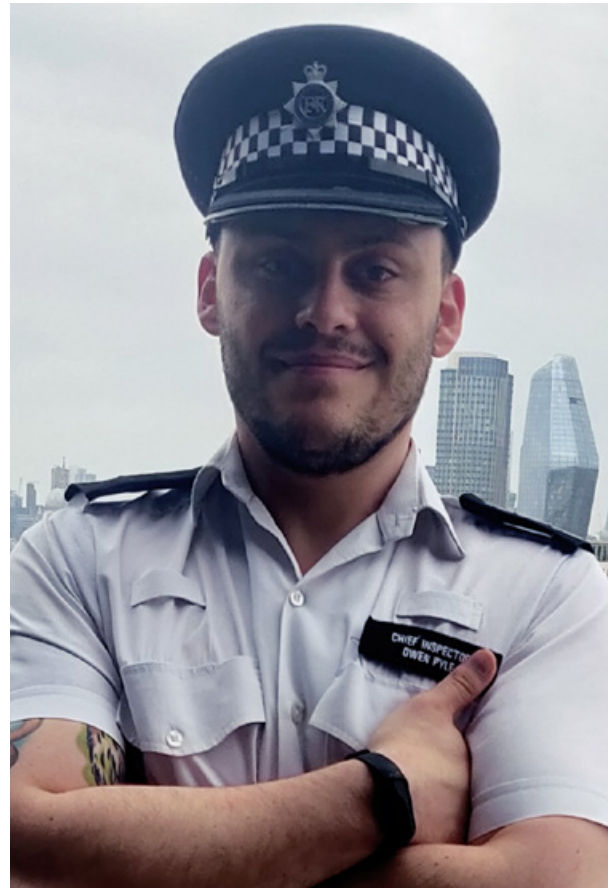
Chief Inspector Owen Pyle ♦ Metropolitan Police Service

Introduction

Since joining the Met in 2012, I have been fortunate enough to have spent much of my career in neighbourhood policing, an area that I'm passionate about. I've seen that some communities often aren't comfortable with how we police them, and that police decision-making – even at a single incident – can have a huge impact on their trust in us. After being among the first responders to the 2019 London Bridge terror attack, I became interested in how officers make fast-time operational decisions.

The way in which police officers make decisions has its roots in how they perceive risk, be it in what is presented to them at the incident they are dealing with or their wider attitude towards it. This is relevant at every stage of a policing encounter, from first interaction through to the conclusion of a case at court. Where risk is well managed, it often goes unnoticed. However, on those occasions where things go wrong, or are perceived to have gone wrong, it is usual that criticism from some quarters follows.

After the murder of George Floyd, there is now more scrutiny than ever on decision-making within the



police. I believed that if I could better understand the influences on how police officers judged risk, this could go some way to influencing how they deal with operational incidents. My research was not focused on criticising officers' decision-making, but rather on the ways that they came to their decisions. This could contribute to achieving a more professional police service, as well as improving trust and confidence among communities.

Literature review

While there is a wealth of literature on risk perception generally and in industries such as aviation and medicine, there is little academic research that considers how the theories apply to policing. This is surprising, given the uniqueness of how police officers deal with risk.

There is no universally agreed definition but risk is generally considered to be how people see the probability and magnitude of harm (Bodemer and Gaissmaier, 2015). It can be assessed formally – for example, through statistics and data – or more intuitively. However, Sjöberg (2000) found that even evidence-based risk assessments are influenced by subjective aspects.

Risk differs from hazards, which are situations where a specific set of circumstances could lead to harm (Pigeon and others, 1992). However, knowledge of hazards does influence how people perceive and assess risk.

People's risk perception does not develop in isolation, it reflects the social context in which an individual exists. Renn (1990) found that this was influenced by 'heuristics'. These are mental strategies that people use as a basic form of risk assessment to make judgements on how to deal with a hazard.

There are two main heuristics or mental shortcuts that may underpin judgements. The first is affect, where people rely on experienced feelings

of what they think is good and bad in order to guide how they judge decisions on risk (Slovic and Peters, 2006). Where someone cannot translate an element of risk into an 'affective frame of reference', they may not consider it important. Relying too much on affect can therefore have an impact on the rational judgement of a risk, meaning that someone may over-prioritise something unimportant, especially if they are familiar with it.

The second heuristic is availability, which is where people consider the likelihood of something happening based on their ability to recall similar instances from their memory. Availability is broader than just personal experience and can be influenced by hearing about incidents from others, the prominence of an event in the media or even watching a realistic film.

Police officers often have to make risky decisions with incomplete information and only moments to consider their options. I therefore proposed that officers would be likely to make use of heuristics to assess hazards, drawing on what they were familiar with in order to prioritise the riskiest situation.

Numerous studies in this field have found that social trust is one of the most important factors in influencing risk perception. This is where individuals relinquish responsibility for managing physical risk to others



The survey aimed to identify the hazards in operational policing that officers feared the most

and instead take on a ‘social risk’ that the ‘other’ will handle it properly (Cvetkovich and Lofstedt, 2013). There is inevitably a power imbalance, as one person relies on another to make important decisions for them.

Literature (Frewer, 1999; Slovic, 1997) suggests that public trust in risk managers is in decline. Instead of having confidence in formal risk experts, people are now more likely to look within their own trusted groups for risk information. This may distort their perceptions of risk and is something that has been seen throughout the COVID-19 pandemic.

Policing is a specialised profession. Previous research has found that police officers are often sceptical and do not tend to indiscriminately trust others’ perceptions of risk (Sykes and Brent, 1983). I proposed that the general decline in trust would be replicated in the Met, and that officer perception of risk would be influenced more by their own experiences and their peers than by senior leaders.

The study

Using a mixed methods approach, I designed a survey consisting of a series of open and closed questions that measured officer attitudes and perceptions to risk. I sought to establish the key influences on officer perception of risk and the role played by trust and heuristics.

The survey aimed to identify the hazards in operational policing that officers feared the most. It then asked them to consider how likely they felt that they, as well as their colleagues and officers more generally, would face these hazards. To test the impact of heuristics, the survey then explored officer experience versus exposure to these hazards. Finally, respondents were asked how well they felt that a variety of sources – including colleagues, supervisors and senior managers – managed operational risk.

I predominantly captured quantitative data using a series of scales, which allowed me to measure attitudes. Some questions provided free-text boxes allowing officers to explain their responses. This provided context to the quantitative data generated from the closed questions.

My research was conducted in the Met among uniformed officers with recent operational policing experience. I defined this as having worked on public-facing duties in the preceding 18 months.

I made use of non-probability sampling technique – particularly



Of the participants, 91% listed being assaulted as one of their top three operational risks

‘volunteer sampling’ – to get responses from a broad range of backgrounds, including varying lengths of service. Officers that fit the criteria were speculatively sent an online survey link and asked to complete it. In total, 117 officers, predominantly from emergency response teams, took part. The survey was completely anonymous and did not seek to gather identifiable data, therefore allowing officers to answer honestly.

Results

Of the participants, 91% listed being assaulted as one of their top three operational risks. Although the research was undertaken during the second national lockdown, very few respondents were concerned about the risk of COVID-19 infection. This may have been influenced by the fact that almost a third of officers had no familiarity with transmission of communicable disease as a hazard. This reinforces the theory that the availability of a hazard has

an influence on risk judgements (Kahneman and Tversky, 1972).

This may also have been affected by the fact that most respondents would have worked with COVID-19 as a threat for over a year, so they may have been accustomed to its impact at the point of completing the survey.

Very few respondents knew an officer who had died on duty, and most had only been exposed to this through media coverage. However, respondents significantly overestimated how frequently death on duty occurs, guessing that 10 officers died a year when the average is actually less than one. The death of a serving officer is a national news event, enhancing its memorability. This supports findings from Slovic (1980) that people view memorable hazards as more common, regardless of their likelihood.

In all, 15% of respondents had been threatened with a firearm – or knew someone who had been threatened with one – but more than 60% feared this happening. Firearms incidents are rare and most officers don’t respond to them, instead hearing about them second-hand from others. As officers have predominantly negative qualities to draw on, the unlikely hazard of a firearms threat becomes more feared than it should and is therefore mentally over-prioritised (Keller and others, 2006).



Every officer except one trusted their colleagues to provide them with good-quality risk information. They were also more likely to trust briefings on risk from direct line managers rather than senior leaders. When asked how well they felt senior officers managed risk, only 14% of respondents thought they did it badly, whereas 40% were simply uncertain. A consistent theme was that frontline officers considered themselves and their peers better at managing operational risk than senior leaders, as they were exposed to it every day.

Conclusion

My research found that even though police officers experience risk differently, existing theories on risk tend to apply.

Officers were most fearful of unfamiliar or unlikely hazards, such as firearms. They were habituated to common hazards, such as minor assaults, and didn't worry about them even when they expected them to happen. This is probably caused by the affect heuristic.

I also found that police officer response to risk was guided by emotions and experience, rather

than by evidence. This meant that their perceptions of risk were often distorted and inaccurate.

Interestingly, although the global trend suggests a decline in trust in risk managers, my study suggested that this doesn't apply in the Met. Officers are more likely to trust their colleagues and often lack confidence in senior risk management, but this stems from the perceived gap between how managers and the operational front line perceive risk, rather than active distrust.

Recommendations

I identified three key recommendations for police services to consider.

- 1 Senior leaders need to get better at communicating to frontline officers about what they do to manage operational risk. This will overcome a lack of knowledge among officers and reduce their scepticism in the credibility of senior pronouncements on risk.
- 2 Guidance on how to manage risk should be reviewed regularly in consultation with operational officers, to make sure that it is relevant, reflects their experiences and addresses those hazards that may be

less frequent and therefore underestimated.

- 3 Forces should be aware that operational officers are likely to become complacent about low-level violence towards them. Officer safety training should be developed with this in mind, and should focus on awareness and prevention of assaults.

Although this study focused on the Met, these recommendations are likely to be of interest to senior leaders and risk managers in any UK police force. The findings reaffirm the established theories of risk perception, as well as how people use their own knowledge and experience to make decisions in difficult situations.

Despite its importance, there is a lack of research on how police officers in the UK perceive risk, making my research somewhat unique. This study has established a good foundation for further work in this area – for example, whether approaches differ in a small rural force or among detectives dealing with incidents at a different stage.

Understanding how police officers perceive risk and then managing this effectively is critical for UK policing. A failure by forces to do this will have a significant impact on trust and confidence, particularly among those communities that are already

hesitant to engage with the police.

There will never be a universally agreed 'correct' perception of any risk, as it is simply too subjective. However, giving officers the tools to make informed decisions to overcome a reliance on the anecdotal, as well as training them to consider the rationale that underlies their decision-making, will go some way to standardising this and will bring benefits for policing.

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This article was peer reviewed by Inspector James Purdie, Leicestershire Police.

Spotlight on a role

Positive Action Lead

Police Constable Sandra Smith ♦ Bedfordshire Police

I had a long career before policing, working as a senior manager in retail. As a Black, gay woman with a hidden disability, I've always been passionate about supporting a diverse workforce. Working in environments that were not diverse, I changed the way that we recruited staff from hard-to-reach communities to better represent our customer base. Little did I know that at the time, I was taking steps to promote positive action.

I've spent the past five years in policing. I started as a PCSO in Hertfordshire and realised very soon that I was engaging with diversity and making a real difference in the community I served. My interest soon turned to creating various support networks within the force, and I worked hard to make a difference and bring people together. This fuelled my interest in positive action, and I became a mentor.

I then became a police constable and recently transferred to



Bedfordshire Police as the Positive Action Strategic Lead. For me, positive action begins with recognising that we are not all the same. We live in a world full of diversity, and we need to be actively inclusive to ensure that doors are opened for people from all minority groups within our force.

Positive action gives everyone the same chance to join the police, stay and thrive. It isn't about numbers or box ticking, and it's not about lowering standards or giving some people a leg up. It's about finding, supporting and holding on to the right people for the job, regardless of their background.

Our goal is to work together to create a fair and more effective force. That's better for us as individuals, better for us as a team and better for the people we serve. Having a greater balance helps us to forge and maintain good relationships with our communities. This is achieved through attending local churches, mosques and youth clubs, public speaking through radio and online chats, and building relationships with community leaders while getting a better understanding of their needs.

I support recruitment by attending the online recruitment and information evenings targeted at Black, Asian and minority ethnic candidates. I am also a mentor, and will support candidates one on one throughout their process and journey. I use social media to share the work I do and the events I am going to be at, which raises the profile of positive action and increases interest from prospective candidates.

The role of a positive action lead is not just about recruitment,

it is about the culture of the organisation and how we develop, progress and retain our staff. This, in turn, will build a stronger, more representative workforce that is ready to serve our communities. You don't need any specific skills to promote positive action. You just need to be passionate about equality and recognising difference, and you need to have the drive to want to bring about change.

There are plenty of training opportunities that are easily accessible to support anyone interested in positive action, including diversity and inclusion, equality and ethics, race, religion, sex and sexuality. So, whether you want to offer support occasionally or make it a full-time job, you just need to commit to being inclusive, treating everyone as an individual and respecting their differences.

Everyone should be on a level playing field before, during and after joining the police. Positive action helps us achieve this and it is everyone's responsibility to 'be you' and to 'be inclusive'. Positive action has to be the responsibility of all. It has to be the thread that runs right the way through the organisation.

This article was peer reviewed
by Detective Constable Jaspreet
Athwal, Nottinghamshire Police.

Five things about...

The dark net

Alexander Hudson, Dark Web Intelligence Unit ♦ NCA

1 There is a common belief that the dark net is a complex, secretive environment that involves encryption and hackers, where child abusers and drug dealers can work anonymously with little chance of getting caught. But using the dark net is actually no more complicated than using apps on your phone.

2 When most people talk about the dark net, they usually mean Tor (short for The Onion Router). Tor supports multiple dark net forums and markets, including Silk Road, the first dark net market. To access the dark net, all you need

to do is go to torproject.org and download the Tor browser. That's it. Instead of sites ending with .com or .org, you are now connecting to sites that end in .onion. Many high-profile organisations have dark net sites, including BBC News and Facebook.

3 The legitimate use of Tor is to help those challenged by repressive regimes to communicate and reach the outside world. Unfortunately, this means that it can also be used by criminals in order to maintain anonymity. The use of privacy technology aids both sides.



4 There is no 'Google' for Tor. Some search engines exist, such as Ahmia, but generally you have to be given the link in order to find something useful. The dark net's combination of encryption, support for privacy and ease of use creates a simple environment for criminals to exploit.

5 There are still a few things you can do to identify dark net users, especially when it comes to the buying and selling of controlled substances.

- A Tor user will have the Tor Browser Bundle loaded onto their laptop or PC (or will use the mobile version, Orbot). Subscriber checks against routers will show consistent connections to Tor.
- Drugs are supplied on a 'little and often' basis through the post.
- Supply can be made to a neighbour's house, another family member or mailboxes. A drop address isn't necessarily the criminals' home.
- A Tor user who is committing criminal transactions will use cryptocurrencies, such as Bitcoin.

For support and advice on dark net investigations, contact your Regional Dark Net Operational Team (RDOT) within your respective Regional Organised Crime Unit, who are part of the UK Dark Web Intelligence, Collection and Exploitation (DICE) network. This is a collaboration of specialists across the National Crime Agency (NCA) and regional policing that tackles the sale of illicit commodities on the dark web.

This article was peer reviewed by Detective Sergeant Ben Cadd, Thames Valley Police.

MY IDEA

To encourage speaking out

Inspector Jade Hewitt ♦ Thames Valley Police

Following a police officer's recent dismissal for sexual assault, I began thinking about whether there would have been red flags throughout his length of service, and whether these could have – or should have – been identified by his colleagues. This led me to reflect on my own experiences about behaviours and attitudes that I have witnessed and sometimes dismissed as 'banter', but maybe should have challenged.

Having never worked in professional standards, I presumed that cultural debriefs and learning opportunities would form part of the process following on from a dismissal of an officer, but this isn't the case. My idea is to create a 'post-dismissal cultural debrief' to engage colleagues following the dismissal of an officer. The debrief would facilitate people to confidently and confidentially reflect and identify missed red flags, such as sexualised behaviour and language, recounting sexual experience in the crew room, inappropriate nicknames, unwanted hugs and comments on appearance.

My idea is to offer anonymity in terms of any feedback, to



encourage candour and learning for the organisation and participants. A debrief would only take place once any appeal or criminal proceedings are concluded. A report would be created and shared with senior management of the local policing area, providing suggestions for improvement around culture and embedding the Code of Ethics. These suggestions may include coaching and mentoring, support networks or development programmes to improve confidence and ability to challenge behaviour.

Culturally, there's a lack of confidence in the reporting of inappropriate behaviour. Reluctance to speak out is felt both by victims and by others, who may hear or see things that they don't agree with or that make them feel uncomfortable. There is a tendency to minimise, excuse and avoid dealing with issues. Individuals are often fearful that raising an issue might have a negative impact on them – for example, by ostracising them from their team, affecting their chances of career advancement or causing them to be labelled as a troublemaker.

There is learning to be drawn from asking the person's colleagues whether there were signs that

something was amiss before the incident reached the level of misconduct. Language is important. There is no such thing as 'casual' prejudice of any sort. After all, one definition of misogyny is 'a dislike of, contempt for, or ingrained prejudice against women'. By defining this as 'casual', it minimises the intention and impact on the individual or group. Misogyny in policing can never be casual and we need to empower our staff to challenge these behaviours.

This article was peer reviewed by Carolyn Rigby, Lancashire Constabulary.



BOOK REVIEW

County lines by Jason Farrell

**Temporary Detective Sergeant Maya Alayli-White ♦
British Transport Police**

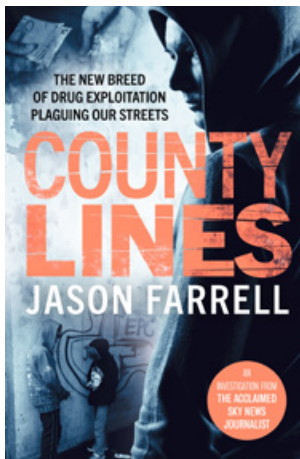
In his book, 'County lines', investigative journalist Jason Farrell explores every aspect of a county lines operation, giving the reader an informative look into an ever-growing criminal underworld. After starting off with an accidental find of traces of illicit drugs in shrimps, Farrell examines the full scale of this national crisis in detail through the eyes of those involved. Putting himself at great risk, he shares his inner dialogue while standing in the face of considerable danger. Any serving police officer will be familiar with the issues covered. These include the victims of county lines, the mechanisms of a typical operation and the national impact of this crime type.

The book is divided over 15 chapters, each of which focuses on a different aspect, and it is written in a way that will appeal to both professional and non-professional audiences. The characters introduced throughout offer an idea of the challenges that each faced. From Linda, the mummy mule, all the way to Handsome, the hitman and gun runner, each person's account has an angle that could resonate with others: the lack of belonging, the need to protect your child, systematic abuse,



and other family and societal failings. Every reader is likely to relate to – or may have personally seen – some of the small details included, reaffirming that county lines is a national crisis that affects everyone.

'County lines' is written in an engaging manner and is difficult to put down. We learn that some of the operating methods adopted by the kingpins in the drug-dealing world are surprisingly sophisticated and would not look out of place in any other 'market'. More effective business models quickly take over from less effective local ones, which has prompted the rapid expansion of the county lines model over time. Another theme explored is the shift in gang culture. The account given by Cody



– in Chapter 3, ‘The Dealer’ – describes an old-school type of respect or code of conduct, which has now been replaced with a more profit-driven

ruthlessness. The change described is startling and chilling. This was reaffirmed in Chapter 8 (‘The Scoreboard’, the name of a warped point-scoring system for attacking certain areas of the body), which details the tragic murder of Tavis Spencer-Aitkens, who was stabbed to death just moments from his home.

Chapter 14 (‘The Cuckoo’) details the experience of Clair and her son Adrian, who was a victim of cuckooing. What was startling was the brazen nature of the process. I naively believed that the phenomenon would take place slowly, over time, with the vulnerable person being befriended and groomed. What was described was the complete opposite, with the dealers forcing their way into the flat.

I found Chapter 10 (‘The Psychologist’) the most informative, as it highlighted the critical need for a multi-faceted approach to the county lines phenomenon. Dr Carlotta Raby, an expert in her field, created the Gang Affiliation Risk Assessment (GARM), a common-sense approach based on 15

screening questions to identify those children at risk of criminal exploitation (p 189). The book also highlights the cyclical nature of offending, with some of the rescued child victims sadly returning to being involved in county lines operations. One interesting insight was that although boys were considered to be most at risk of criminal exploitation, one in six children referred to the National Referral Mechanism were girls.

The concluding chapter, Chapter 15 (‘The Solution’), was frustrating in its lack of answers, though this is through no fault of the writer. Despite possible solutions being put forward, including progressive pupil referral units and emergency measures in established hotspots, I was left with an overwhelming sense that the title of the chapter was optimistic.

Overall, the book invoked a sense of sadness for all of the people whose stories it captured. A number of them stayed with me, in particular that of Lucy, who described a series of tragic events that led her on the path to drug running for a gang. The calculated nature of the dealer’s power over her was truly frightening. I would recommend this engaging and insightful book to anyone in policing and, more broadly, anyone with an interest in crime.

This article was peer reviewed by Police Constable Jack Jeffries, Metropolitan Police Service.

With thanks to

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