Policy People

Justine Curran QPM

in conversation with
the Serco Institute

October 2020

"There are two huge challenges for police leadership now: how do you lead in a digital world, and how do you retain your independent, authentic voice."

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Policy People is a series of interviews with key figures across the international public service landscape, produced by the Serco Institute, a global think tank.

This volumn focuses on Justine Curran who, during a thirty-year police career, served in England and Scotland, and in every rank from Constable to Chief Constable. Now retired from uniformed service, she speaks openly about the leadership and resourcing of public services, and offers fascinating insights into the place of technology, equality, training, data, politics, and multi-agency working in twenty-first century policing. Interviewed in the middle of the 2020 Covid-19 pandemic, Curran also considers the nature of crisis policing, recalling her experience leading counter-terrorism and public order operations.

With personal and professional reflections on the changing face of community policing over the past three decades, from an experienced senior police leader, this volume offers great riches for other officers, public servants, policy-makers, and anyone interested in the role of uniformed services in the United Kingdom today.

The interviewee's answers reflect her thoughts alone, at the time of writing.

Justine Curran QPM

Justine Curran was a police officer for almost three decades, serving in every rank from Constable to Chief Constable. She headed forces in both England and Scotland, as Chief Constable first of Tayside (2010-13) and then Humberside (2013-17).

Born in Sheffield and raised in Lancashire, Justine studied Classics at Hull University before joining the police in 1989. She served in Greater Manchester and Merseyside for twenty years, and rose rapidly through the ranks, reaching Chief Inspector within a decade of joining. As an Assistant Chief Constable from 2007, she was responsible for counter-terrorism in North-West England. In 2013, Justine was awarded the Queen's Police Medal.

Married with two children, Justine lives in the Scottish Borders.

Photograph of Justine Curran © provided by interviewee

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ON THE NATURE OF POLICING

Justine, you served in the police for almost thirty years before retiring in 2017. How did the service you left differ from the service you joined?

Fundamentally, the heart and core of it was always the same. For me, policing is a people-based business centred on a relationship with communities. Those communities change – society changes, people change – but that remained the heart of what we do. What changed massively was the degree to which it moved from a people-based service, to one based on systems, processes and structures. That would probably be reflected in many organisations over that period of time.

I remember speaking to someone who said the culture of policing used to be very invisible. Before 'command and control', before radios, cops would go out for eight or ten hours, perhaps seeing a supervisor once in that time. They would just be expected to be community problem-solvers, without massive intrusion. Now, everything is recorded, everything has to be justified, and everything has to fit within a systematic approach. That's a significant change. I used to tell new officers that we would give them more systems and processes than they would ever need or want, but that the most important thing was how they cared for and interacted with people. Cops mustn't lose that. In that regard, change meant losing some of your freedom and discretion to assess and determine things.

When I joined, you'd go to a job, staying for perhaps two hours, and the report back would simply be 'No offences, advice given'. That was it. Now, everything has to be categorised, with procedures followed to the letter. It's part of a much wider drive across the modern world to collect data, to categorise everything. Sometimes that's helpful – when you're trying to work out the productivity of your organisation, for example, or assess future resource requirements – but it's also very restrictive because it reduces your flexibility, your discretion, and your ability to be an on-the-hoof problem-solver within your community. Everything became 'a something', and had to follow a set procedure, which certainly wasn't the case when I joined.

It sounds as if you might be a little nostalgic for the old way of doing things.

I don't want to sound like a retired old fart, but I am, yes. I completely understand the drive for professionalisation: policing is a highly-skilled, complex, risk-laden role, and there is a drive to get that recognised in a way that any profession would want. The problem with that is that you start to narrow everything down, excluding those who are just extremely good with people, and who are natural, common-sense problem-solvers.

In the past, people could argue that things weren't dealt with properly by today's standards, but cops solved problems in a way which was acceptable at the time – and it helped communities to improve. So my nostalgia is because I feel that, the more you restrict and codify, the less you leave the space you sometimes need to deal with human beings and human problems.

There was a BBC series recently, called Cops Like Us, where a long-serving Staffordshire officer commented that a police officer is "actually just someone to help you".[1] Is that a fair description of what the job should be?

At the heart of it, yes. Some will get frustrated with that, because some of that help is trying to stop troubled people doing bad things. Fundamentally, though, it is about helping. When I worked in Manchester, we had people ringing 999 because they couldn't get through to vote on Strictly Come Dancing. Eighty people rang about a storyline on Coronation Street that they thought was racist. Frustrating though that might be, it tells you that, when people have problems and need someone to help them, they ring the police.

Police officers are part of communities, and our job is to help communities be the best they can be. It's like the lady with the scales at Weightwatchers. If you weren't going to see her, you might cheat; you might do something you shouldn't. The policing element acts as helping you be the best you can be.

Mike Barton, a fellow ex-Chief Constable, has said that policing is "dead straightforward", citing approachability, kindness, ruthlessness, and visibility as key factors.[2] Do you agree with him, in terms of the qualities an officer needs?

Mike always had a way of cutting through to what the essence of things was! I would agree. Kindness is quite a broad one: it's that

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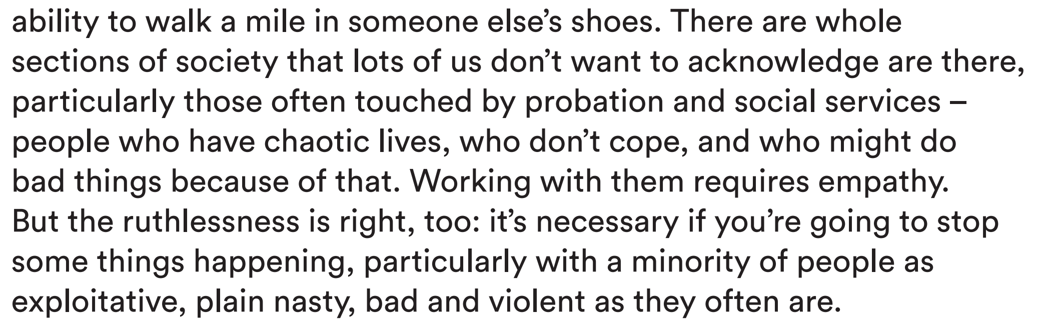
[1] Cops Like Us was broadcast on BBC2 during March 2020. It followed officers in Staffordshire Police, and specifically in Stoke-on-Trent, and offered their perspectives on the present and future nature of policing.

[2] Mike Barton was Chief Constable of Durham Constabulary from 2012 to 2019, having previously been Deputy and Assistant Chief Constable there. He made this comment about the nature of policing on BBC's Question Time, on 23rd January 2020.



ability to walk a mile in someone else's shoes. There are whole sections of society that lots of us don't want to acknowledge are there, particularly those often touched by probation and social services – people who have chaotic lives, who don't cope, and who might do bad things because of that. Working with them requires empathy. But the ruthlessness is right, too: it's necessary if you're going to stop some things happening, particularly with a minority of people as exploitative, plain nasty, bad and violent as they often are.

There's a sense, in what you're saying, of the police being a 'catch-all' public service, perhaps less defined than some other emergency or uniformed services. Has policing gone too far in being everything to everyone, or is that the purpose of the job?

In my view, that's what it has always been. Think back to the iconic Dixon of Dock Green figure: that's what it is.[3]

Geography really makes a difference, as emphasised by the Canada shooting yesterday.[4] If you are an RCMP officer in a remote place – or a cop in a similar location here – you have a much broader role.[5] You can't say, 'No, I only do these tasks'. The expectation on the Isle of Skye will be completely different to the centre of Birmingham or London. The hard bit about it, for both governments and organisational leaders, is that those expectations adjust and change all the time.

I used to describe policing as being like the grout around all the tiles of public service. Police often receive issues which don't belong with the force, but because people don't know how to navigate public services, or don't know what they need (or might not want the bit they actually need), the police role is to support and signpost. It is similar for paramedics, I think. Part of what they do is being an emergency doctor, saving lives at the scene, but the other part is actually dealing with those people who are struggling, live chaotic lives, are drug or alcohol users. A huge amount of their calls will be the same thing: trying to solve social, societal problems. People keep calling because they're just not coping.

You've touched there on the differences of geography and environment, which are hugely important in public policy. You served in several contrasting places – urban North-West England, rural Scotland, and finally a large region on the East Coast. How did the challenges of policing differ between these areas?

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[3] Dixon of Dock Green was a BBC television programme, which ran from 1955 to 1976. It starred Jack Warner as a London police officer.

[4] Twenty-two people were killed, and three others injured, by gunman Gabriel Wortman, in a series of attacks in Nova Scotia over 18th and 19th April 2020. Wortman was shot and killed by Canadian police, having himself dressed as a police officer, and driven a replicate police car, during part of his attack.

[5] Royal Canadian Mounted Police

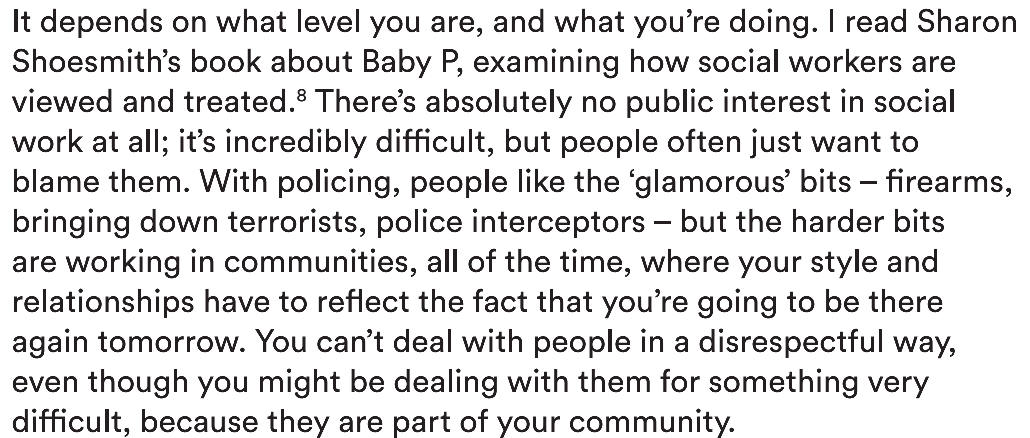
This is interesting. A huge amount of my early career was in Manchester and Merseyside: big urban forces with quite challenging serious and organised crime, levels of violence, deprivation, and so on. In those areas it's always easier to overlay acute services on top of the local, community aspect. That gets harder in more rural areas, so officers need to become more multi-skilled. One of the things that really struck me, when I moved from Manchester to Tayside, was that people had several jobs. I had been used to a big organisation where roles were defined. In Tayside, staff might have multiple roles, in order to ensure all functions were fulfilled.

I was amazed by the things we responded to in Tayside, but a colleague laughed and said I should see what they do in Hamish Macbeth country![6] Public service becomes more scarce; you're a smaller team so you tend to be a closer one, with more services coming together, and you have to do a lot more. The boundaries are much more blurred. Fundamentally, though, these are also starkly different communities, which require different styles of policing. I remember going to Tayside and wanting to hang someone out to dry because he had a shotgun in his car – but my team said, "He's a gamekeeper! It's a big part of what we do up here." It was very different to someone with a gun in their car in Moss Side.[7] Policing shifts and changes to help different communities do different things.

That becomes harder still when you need to overlay specialisms. When I first moved to Scotland, the Northern Police Force covered Inverness and upwards: their officers were all trained to be firearms officers. The level of specialism wasn't the same as you might have had in Liverpool and Manchester – but, in a large rural area, getting a firearms team would otherwise have meant waiting hours and hours. In big holiday areas, population levels fluctuate hugely throughout the year: how do you resource that? You have to adapt, to do things differently. What's really interesting is that, if you've always done the same type of policing in the same kind of places, it's really hard to appreciate those differences, and the very different approaches which are required.

From Moss Side to Tayside must definitely be the title of your memoirs when you write them. If you asked a member of the public which was the more exciting area to police, I suspect many people would say the former – but it sounds a little like you disagree with that.

[6] Hamish Macbeth is a fictional detective, created by M.C. Beaton. The novels (and subsequent television series) are set in Sutherland, in the Scottish Highlands.
[7] Moss Side is a area within Manchester, historically both socioeconomically deprived, and with high levels of crime. Since the 1990s, it has however experienced significant regeneration.



It depends on what level you are, and what you're doing. I read Sharon Shoesmith's book about Baby P, examining how social workers are viewed and treated.[8] There's absolutely no public interest in social work at all; it's incredibly difficult, but people often just want to blame them. With policing, people like the 'glamorous' bits – firearms, bringing down terrorists, police interceptors – but the harder bits are working in communities, all of the time, where your style and relationships have to reflect the fact that you're going to be there again tomorrow. You can't deal with people in a disrespectful way, even though you might be dealing with them for something very difficult, because they are part of your community.

For me, I really learnt to think about and respect the challenges and difficulties of providing this kind of service in remote areas. It's not as exciting in the action-packed sense, but it's equally challenging and hugely rich in terms of the impact you can have. I used to live in Auchterarder, and the community police officer had grown up there – his dad was the gardener at Gleneagles – before joining the Met.[9] He worked in Soho, and then he came back to Scotland to be a community officer. He always said it was harder doing the latter, because you're part of that community – you've got to try and use your power of influence, communication, persuasion, rather than zooming around in a car with blue lights on, biff-bang-powing everything.

The current pandemic is of course an unprecedented challenge for public services.[10] If you were a Chief Constable today, what would you see as the principal concerns in the police response to Covid-19, and how would you lead those?

One of the most significant challenges, obviously, is how to keep your organisation's wheels turning, how you protect your own people, and how they interact with other public services to agree the key priorities. But you also have a key role in sustaining what normality is. If you think about it, the criminal justice system represents the boundaries of society. We have set this boundary; police are there to make sure it is maintained. That's what makes us feel settled: we understand the boundary, we know where it is, and we know when somebody crosses it. That might vary slightly in different places, but it's a big part of people being able to be calm – to feel that, even if everything isn't quite as we want it, it is settled and structured.

The state suddenly becomes huge in a time like this, because it needs

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[8] Sharon Shoesmith was Director of Children's Services for the London Borough of Haringey in 2007, when Baby Peter Connelly (initially known publicly as Baby P) died at the hands of his mother, her boyfriend, and the boyfriend's brother. The case led to a major national child protection review, led by Lord Laming, who is interviewed in Policy People Volume 1. Shoesmith subsequently wrote a book, Learning from Baby P: the politics of blame, fear and denial (London: Jessica Kingsley, 2016).

[9] Metropolitan Police Service, which covers all of London's thirty-two boroughs (though not the City of London, which has its own force). Gleneagles is a hotel in Auchterarder, which has hosted a number of high-profile events including the 2005 G8 summit.

[10] At the time of this interview (April 2020), the UK – and much of the globe – was in the midst of the Covid-19 pandemic.

to; then, of course, you get the argument that it doesn't shrink as much as it should do afterwards. Police officers are a very visible part of the state, and their role should be about providing reassurance. It has fascinated me how we seem to be becoming a nation of clipes.[11] West Midlands Police have reported that half of their daily calls have been about coronavirus breaches.[12] I think I would find that difficult; for me, reassurance would involve saying 'this is the boundary, keep the boundary', but not encouraging that sort of excessive tell-taling. Long-term, that will disturb communities and create more discord than it solves.

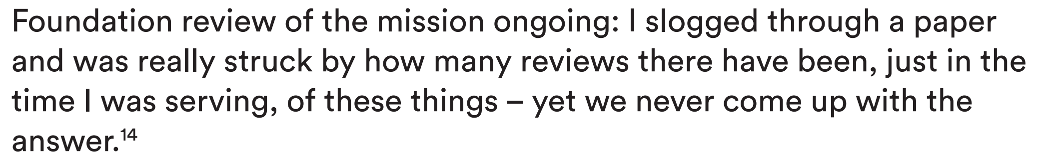
The police are walking a very delicate line, and having to deal with those elements of society who are not complying, rather than the 96% of us who are. How do you send your messages of reassurance and calm to the compliers, and deal in a balanced way with those who are not, who may of course be those who simply never will? For me, that would be about balance, and working with partner agencies to make sure you were focussing on things that would help that community, in that particular moment. Again, that will be very different around the country. I was interested to see the doctor protesting outside Downing Street yesterday, and I thought it was brilliant that the Met didn't go anywhere near her: that would have been such an own goal![13] You have to make judgments that send the right message, without overreacting.

And when this climate changes – when the pandemic is over – what do you see as the principal challenges facing the police in coming years, and what reforms would best enable officers to tackle those head-on?

That's a big question. Central is the balance between moving forward with the necessary modernisation and efficiency, but keeping the vital element of being humans helping other humans, solving their problems, too. Even digital crimes are being perpetrated by people, and their impact is still felt by people. You just have to develop a different set of skills to do the investigative side of it.

As society changes culturally, it's interesting to think about how you bring together people with the right skills, and give them the right training. If you understand what success is, you understand what your part in success is, you have the skills to do it, and you are empowered to do it, that's all you need. It sounds really simple, but it is difficult to achieve and maintain within a shifting environment. There's a Police

[11] Scots word meaning 'tell-tale'
[12] See https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/apr/18/police-call-for-end-to-lockdown-shaming-as-a-weapon-in-feuds
[13] Dr Meenal Viz staged a lone protest outside Downing Street, in April 2020, centred on concerns about the lack of personal protective equipment during the Covid-19 pandemic. See https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/doctor-takes-ppe-protest-to-downing-street-zc6s6wl09



Foundation review of the mission ongoing: I slogged through a paper and was really struck by how many reviews there have been, just in the time I was serving, of these things – yet we never come up with the answer.[14]

The challenge for police leaders is to chart a course, empower and upskill people to deliver it in a digitally-savvy and ever-changing world, and avoid getting caught up in the political aims and objectives which you have to navigate to ensure necessary levels of funding. I think that's quite hard! Relatedly, there is the challenge of capturing the information required to develop business cases for resourcing. The complexity of that has changed massively. To deal with a missing person now is very different from thirty years ago: it takes a lot more time, a lot more people, and a lot more skill. Senior officers need to make the case, and navigate the politics, for adequate resourcing of that hugely-increased challenge.

[14] Described by the Police Foundation as a "far-reaching independent review, the first of its kind for many years", the Strategic Review of Policing in England and Wales is being chaired by Sir Michael Barber, and is expected to report in June 2021. See http://www.police-foundation.org.uk/project/strategic-review-of-policing/

ON POLICE RESOURCES

The BBC series we discussed before exposed some significant deficiencies in staffing levels and the quality of force facilities – buildings, for example.[15] Is that unique to Staffordshire Police, or do you recognise those issues from having served in three other forces?

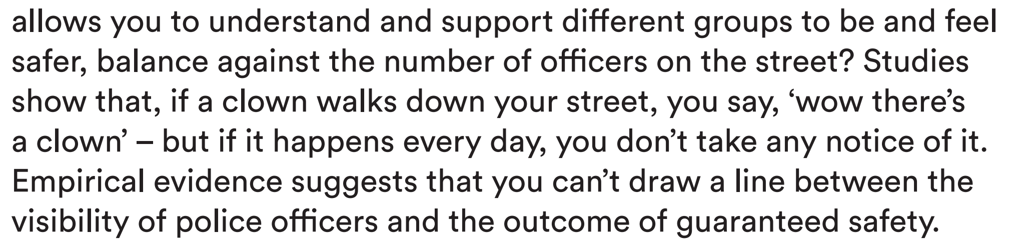
It's an issue right across the board. Nobody wants to take the time to dig into the impact of austerity. There was an item on TV about policing the coronavirus restrictions, featuring a Cumbria traffic officer. My husband nearly fell off his chair because they had a 12-plate car.[16] That's really symptomatic of the challenge: being able to maintain decent vehicles, efficient IT and modern buildings, is very difficult to do because, in policing, 97% of your budget is staff. If your budget gets cut, therefore, you're immediately into staffing, so finding the money for infrastructure becomes even tougher. It's incredibly difficult, from an organisational perspective, to get the balance between people and the resources that those people need.

Police forces should be working with partners to develop smarter, more efficient solutions, but they can't, because – again – they haven't got the resources. It is hugely difficult and, over time, things start to erode; you haven't got what you thought you had, because you haven't invested in infrastructure, while simultaneously losing people. Police Scotland was created in 2013 and they still have many of the eight legacy force systems that are not able to talk to each other.[17] It's a massive issue: you can't invest to keep things going, never mind to modernise. Becoming more carbon-neutral, for example, is unachievable without investment. Additionally, the removal of local authority involvement in the governance of policing has made police funding in England much more problematic, because it's no longer part of what local government is trying to achieve.

The political debate is dominated by police officer numbers. Does a larger workforce guarantee that we're all safer, which presumably is the end-goal that really matters?

The truth lies somewhere between the two. Digital communication is critical – but how does investing in a really good system, one which

[15] Cops Like Us, BBC, March 2020
[16] Car registered in 2012
[17] Police Scotland, officially the Police Service of Scotland, was formed in 2013 by merging eight regional forces. One of those, Tayside, was Curran's first post as Chief Constable.



allows you to understand and support different groups to be and feel safer, balance against the number of officers on the street? Studies show that, if a clown walks down your street, you say, ‘wow there’s a clown’ – but if it happens every day, you don’t take any notice of it. Empirical evidence suggests that you can’t draw a line between the visibility of police officers and the outcome of guaranteed safety.

It sounds bad, but we’re a generation of people with such short attention spans that we don’t want to do the detail on anything. Policing is hard to define, hard to measure, but nobody wants to have a difficult conversation about that. They would prefer to say that there are more officers, or fewer officers – one’s good and one’s bad, and you end up sucked into those meaningless political timescales. Austerity turned the tap off; when that happens, you can’t just turn it back on and bring everything back, because it takes years to build up what you had before. The political element means you can always say, ‘aha, but that’s what people voted for’, and that doesn’t necessarily help.

It’s the NASA problem.[18] Investment in space exploration is never seen as a good thing, because it always outlasts any political term. Policing is about feel and wellbeing, a sense of things going alright around here, which is really hard to put your finger on: you can’t easily define it and measure it in absolute terms.

Are police forces recruiting the right people, with the right skills? How can the service continue to attract the best – particularly given the breadth of challenge in fighting twenty-first century crime?

This is interesting because, as policing changed significantly, we drove for professionalisation and wanted far more officers with degrees in England and Wales. That has been quite contentious, and I can see why. In some ways it looks aspirational, stops other professions looking down on a force where you could easily join without a degree, and it might help to bring in a different kind of ability. Many more entrants have degrees now than when I joined, and I’m not saying it is a bad thing, but it could put off others who would be very good cops: brilliant, people-based problem-solvers. A relative of mine is in Police Scotland and is currently working with someone who has joined but can’t yet be trained because of Coronavirus. Instead, they’re

[18] National Aeronautics and Space Administration (USA)

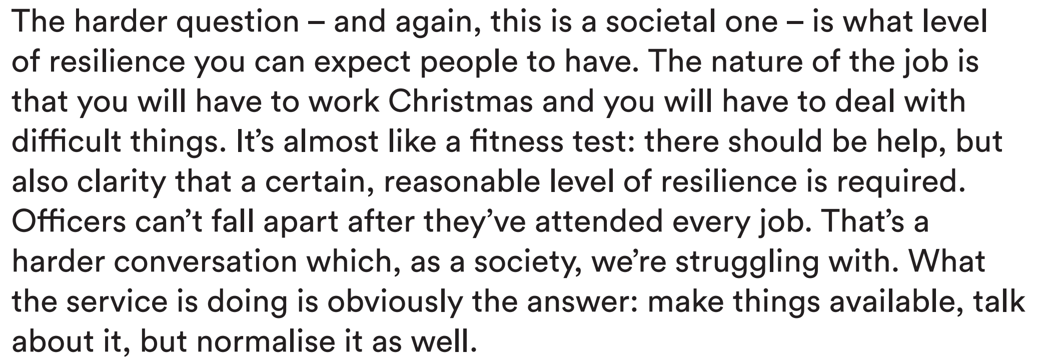
putting him with experienced officers to gain some experience and provide visible presence. He's come out of the Royal Marines after nineteen years, including tours in Afghanistan. How can you quantify that against a degree in English? Policing is such a broad church and, ideally, you want a mix of people. I would always say that, if you have good communication skills and emotional intelligence, then you will be successful as a police officer. Without those, you could be the brightest person in the world, but you're going to struggle.

How do you attract people to a life of public service? When I joined the police, it was a job for life: people signed up for that, but for young people today, it's a different kettle of fish, as with many careers. It is quite difficult to bring people in who then leave after a few years, because building up skills and experiences is such a big part of the job. I remember speaking to the fire chief in my last job; he had two new joiners who were shocked that they might have to work on New Year's Eve and Christmas Day. We have to get the right messages across as society changes, including about job expectations, and to get the right mix of skills and backgrounds. It is quite hard, and I'm not sure we're getting it quite right.

What about the wellbeing of those people once they're in? Obviously, policing can be a stressful business, and the National Police Wellbeing Service has been set up, following research suggesting that there was neither time nor support for officers' physical and mental health needs.[19] Has that changed things? Do we have officers who are fit for work?

It's improved massively, but that's true of society, I think. I joined in the late 1980s, and it was very much the school of 'mouth shut, ears open'. You learnt that way: you got on with stuff, and when difficult things happened you talked as a team – or maybe you didn't. Sometimes there was just the expectation that you would just get on with things. Now, there's much more understanding that organisations have to adapt and to put things in place for people – and also to challenge the culture. The job can take a lot from you, and that is something that builds up over time. I think the police service has improved massively in how it recognises and responds to that – talks about it, puts things in place enabling people to manage difficult situations. The NPWS initiative is brilliant in that regard.

[19] See https://www.college.police.uk/What-we-do/Support/Health-safety/Pages/Wellbeing.aspx



The harder question – and again, this is a societal one – is what level of resilience you can expect people to have. The nature of the job is that you will have to work Christmas and you will have to deal with difficult things. It's almost like a fitness test: there should be help, but also clarity that a certain, reasonable level of resilience is required. Officers can't fall apart after they've attended every job. That's a harder conversation which, as a society, we're struggling with. What the service is doing is obviously the answer: make things available, talk about it, but normalise it as well.

When I used to lead big public order events, I always did the briefing myself: it's your chance to set the tone. In those challenging situations, I'd always say that, if an officer had an issue with something, we would talk about it afterwards, but at the time they would need to do what they were told. In those situations, you can't say, 'hang on, how does everybody feel?'. That's the challenge: how you promote positive health, but also expect a certain degree of resilience and discipline, necessary to the job at hand.

Technology has clearly provided great opportunities for the police, but also for criminals. What have been the principal challenges in preventing and tackling cyber-crime, and does the police service have the necessary human and technological resources to do so?

The biggest challenge in preventing that element of crime is getting us all to think about it! I remember seeing a very powerful video which took you into a house where everything was left lying about. It was trying to get young people to appreciate that, digitally, they are doing the same thing. You wouldn't leave your bank card on a table in the middle of a restaurant; you wouldn't leave your front door open when you went out; you wouldn't walk down a dark street late at night – and it's that kind of mentality. Getting people to think about security online is the hardest thing in terms of prevention – we tend to feel very relaxed – and especially raising awareness amongst young people. I make myself sound really old, but it is such a part of how they spend their life and interact with the world. It also requires investment, like buying locks and an alarm for your house. There's a lot of work to do on that.

At its root, though, cyber-crime is still people being bad to people – only the mechanism is new. You could have a fabulous cop, a wonderful, empathetic communicator, but who doesn't do technology

– and that's the hard part. You need the right skills within the organisation, which again goes back to resources and investment.

The specialist side can be very, very difficult. Being an undercover officer online, in an area like child abuse, is very challenging. You really do need specialists, but you also need to build the confidence and skills of your generalist group of officers, so that it doesn't put them off being able to do policing in the digital arena. If a cop thinks that analysing a device is going to take dozens of years and levels of approval, it will put them off and they won't feel empowered to carry out that investigation. Leaders have to help officers to understand it's the same process of evidence-gathering, but within a digital environment. Again, that's easier with some people, depending on how they've lived their life, what age they are, and what they've been exposed to. I didn't have a mobile phone until I was an Inspector, or e-mail until I was a Chief Inspector: with older officers, you could argue it could be harder, though of course some are brilliant with it.

It's almost like a microcosm of policing as a whole: you've got to build the skills and the confidence of your generalist officers; you've got to invest in the specialist staff and skills to do the much more complex side of it; and you've got to have the technology. The police could be a lot better at working with technology companies, which have people with planet-sized brains who could sit with officers and help them. In the age of austerity that investment has been very, very difficult, and public servants tend to be nervous of partnerships with private sector companies: they think it means signing up to twenty-year contracts and difficult problems. What's needed is somebody who walks alongside you, adapting techniques and gathering evidence in the digital space. Policing needs to embrace the challenge of entering more such partnerships, not being frightened of them, to help develop tech that's user-friendly rather than five years out-of-date.

ON POLICING, POLICY AND POLITICS

In many areas of public service, people talk of a disconnect between policy and practice. Is this true of policing, and, if it is, how could it be remedied?

It is true to an extent. Nowadays, the police service has policy and process coming out of its ears, and people can get lost in all of that. Police culture prefers very simple, straightforward terms: you can't communicate in very managerial, policy-laden ways. I used to think, how do I get the message across to Billy on B Group? What is it that's going to motivate Billy on B Group to think this new policy is really important and relevant?

Domestic abuse and vulnerability have probably been the biggest challenges in recent years. It's not that they weren't taken seriously, but it was hard to get across the policy changes that were required in dealing with them. When I joined, people talked about how cops would mete out 'local justice' when dealing with domestic abuse, rather than take matters through the courts. That obviously changed and the policy became more interventionist: that was quite right, but how do you get that across to people?

Policy can be boring, so making it interesting is often the first challenge. The second part is making it real for people. As a police leader (but in other public services, too), you're removed from the action – it's easy to say 'this is the policy', but it's very different for a call-handler or officer talking directly to someone, trying to assess the situation and establish what policy to apply. Making those judgments is a very complex thing to do. Usually, the policy doesn't actually help a practitioner confronted with the reality, unless it's very well-thought-through. As a result, you do get that disconnect: people think it's enough to write it down, rather than consider how it will work in practice.

Universal Credit is a good, recent example.[20] You can see how, written down on paper as a policy, it looks like a really sensible idea: more effective use of money for government, fewer interactions for people, and so on and so forth. In reality, because it deals with a lot of people who've got very dysfunctional lifestyles, it often doesn't really work. Policy people don't spend enough time asking practitioners about making things work on the ground.

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[20] Introduced in the Welfare Reform Act 2012 and operational from 2013, Universal Credit was designed to simplify the UK benefits landscape, by combining and refining multiple benefits including the Jobseeker's Allowance, Child Tax Credit and Working Tax Credit, Housing Benefit, and others. The programme has experienced significant problems, delays, cost increases, and criticisms.

You've touched there on a solution: ensuring that policy-makers interact with front-line practitioners, and engage them in the design of policy, rather than just the delivery. Does that happen in policing, in your experience?

Policy-makers do try and do it: it's obviously crazy not to involve practitioners. The hard thing is creating policy that's usable at the front-line, but also creates change and progress where those are needed. It requires both sides to move, to find that middle way. That takes time and trial – and often things need to be done yesterday! It also involves risk, which people don't like. Borrowing with pride is important, too, and is a frustration in policing. In England and Wales, there are 43 forces. The National Police Chiefs Council tries to lead in developing policy, but the fragmentation of organisation can often mean that you are constantly reinventing, rather than borrowing from other people.[21] The police service needs to trial better, involve more practitioners, find middle ground, and then roll out across all the different forces. Sometimes that happens, but they could be better at it.

Has the leadership of policing become more or less political during your career?

Vastly, vastly more political. I'm not being naïve – it was never apolitical – but it's much more than it used to be. There are two huge challenges for police leadership now: how do you lead in a digital world, and how do you retain your independent, authentic voice.

In England and Wales we now have Police and Crime Commissioners [PCCs] who are, by nature, politicians.[22] Some are independent, but most have an affiliation to a political party, so police leaders get drawn into that. If your PCC is in the party of the current government, there is a great deal of pressure not to be critical of Home Office policy, cuts, funding – whereas if your PCC is from an opposition party, the reverse is true. Because they are new players on the blocks, and they are politicians, media and publicity are PCCs' life-blood; it draws the Police organisation, and particularly the leaders, into a lot more conversations that just wouldn't have happened in the past.

In Scotland, there's a national force which is very close to national government. The creation of Police Scotland was an SNP policy:[23] they introduced it but there has been a struggle to maintain effective

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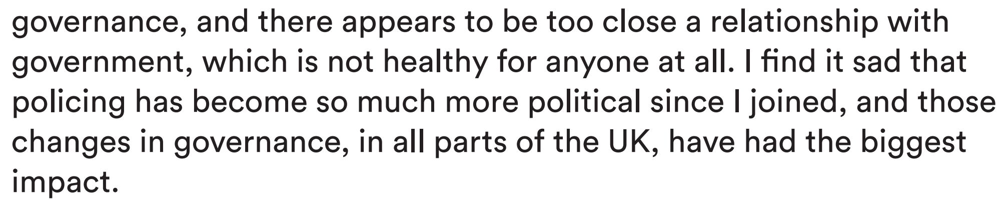
[21] The NPCC, which replaced the Association of Chief Police Officers in 2015, describes itself as "bring[ing] police forces in the UK together to help policing coordinate operations, reform, improve and provide value for money." (https://www.npcc.police.uk/)

[22] Replacing local Police Authorities, the first Police and Crime Commissioners were elected in 2012. A commitment to reforming Police Authorities had been made in the Conservative and Liberal Democrat manifestos in 2010; following that year's General Election, the two parties formed a coalition government and introduced the PCC role in their Coalition Agreement, as a "directly elected individual, who will be subject to strict checks and balances by locally elected representatives" (https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/78977/coalition_programme_for_government.pdf).

[23] Scottish National Party, which has been the devolved government of Scotland since 2007 (either as a minority or majority).



governance, and there appears to be too close a relationship with government, which is not healthy for anyone at all. I find it sad that policing has become so much more political since I joined, and those changes in governance, in all parts of the UK, have had the biggest impact.

You had a fairly high-profile disagreement with your Police & Crime Commissioner towards the end of your time as Chief Constable of Humberside, and you've subsequently spoken out regarding the lack of "checks and balances" for PCCs.[24]

Unfortunately, I think there are a number of issues with the PCC concept. That's not to do with a personal agenda, but with the fact that it was introduced as an American-style system, and there isn't any real interest it from communities here. Look at the turnout for PCC elections.[25] It was designed because police governance processes were felt to be anonymous, but it has not resulted in any significant increase in the level of engagement and interest. Also, it creates confusion. During this latest crisis, we've seen various PCCs on the media talking about 'we': 'we are going to do this, we are going to do that'. Who's 'we'? PCCs are not members of police forces. Headlines often refer to 'police chiefs', but they actually mean the PCC.

It's positive that PCCs are linked to a specific locality, but negative that they're separate to local authorities [LAs]. The old Police Authorities had LAs embedded within them, which meant that Police leaders were much more connected, and had very joined-up plans: we were working together to help LAs achieve their aspirations for an area. PCCs are separate people, who bring their own plans. They are another player on the board, and not necessarily adding value. I think that, where you have the PCC function as part of the local mayoral system, it works better because you've got that connection back to the LA's agenda.

The other problem is that, by the nature of it, the PCC role is about one individual, their agendas and their vagaries, so it lacks the breadth and depth that Police Authorities used to have. It has very few real checks and balances. (Police Authorities and Crime Panels, which are meant to provide this, have generally been acknowledged to be weak.) For me, this is almost the worst thing. It can actually create quite a distorted environment for police chiefs to navigate that puts them personally at risk whilst striving to maintain the independence of the Police.

[24] Curran took early retirement in 2017, and subsequently spoke out regarding the circumstances of her departure, and the role of PCC Keith Hunter. See https://www.yorkshirepost.co.uk/news/crime/it-was-too-easy-police-tsar-oust-me-says-ex-humberside-chief-constable-840945

[25] Elections for PCCs took place, for 40 of the 43 police forces in England and Wales, on 5th May 2016. Average turnout was between 23% and 26%, which was an increase from 2012, where the national average was 15%. For comparison, turnout in UK General Elections since 2000 has been between 59% and 69%.

There's perhaps a democratic challenge at the heart of this. People understandably want more voice, but turnout suggests that PCCs aren't the vehicle they want. How can the police really hear from, and respond to, voters – not in terms of front-line provision, but at a strategic level?

You need to do that in a locality: that's where people are, and where issues matters to them. The problem is that people are rarely aware of all the requirements and would never say, 'I want you to prepare for a global pandemic' or 'I want you to be able to deal with a major terrorist attack': there's all that business that people are never going to ask the police about, but just expect them to do. Similarly, local priorities are not necessarily the things that government might be driving.

I remember, a few years ago, North Wales ran an online tool, when those were quite new, called 'Balance Your Bobbies'.[26] You could go and pick your priorities for local police spending. If you picked too many, this picture of an old-fashioned, big, rotund, cartoon copper used to go red and fall over, because you were asking too much for the resource that was available. It had the benefit of giving people an opportunity to say what mattered, what was important to them. The danger comes when communities say one thing and services do another; that's when you get that slight disconnect. Then, of course, some of the communities with the most needs – and who need the most time and resource, from police and other services – are the ones who say the least. There's a real challenge there: how to get a decent conversation with those deprived communities, where the inequalities are the most extreme, about what shared ambition should be for that place.

This is why I've always favoured outcomes-based approaches, across public services, where you're all part of a team with a vision for a location. If government, local or central, has a plan with the outcomes being sought, each individual service can identify its role in achieving the shared aims. An example might be improving mental health in older adults, to prevent hospital admission. The police bit of that might be making people feel confident to go out and socialise, which has a massive impact on people's mental health. How to get communities involved in deciding what those outcomes should be can be more difficult. But for me, it should always start in a locality because it's ultimately always about what it feels like to live and work around there.

[26] The scheme ran, to considerable acclaim, in 2009. See https://www.dailypost.co.uk/news/local-news/north-wales-police-balance-your-2773325.

How important, in achieving that, is officers' understanding of the community they serve?

Policing is a relationship. Like any relationship, it is always improved if you have people with that kind of local understanding. You absolutely don't have to originally come from somewhere, but you need to be there long enough to establish an understanding of the issues that can affect that community. The more diverse those communities are, the harder that can be, and the culture sometimes can work against that; people don't necessarily want to be open with policing, depending on the cultural norms. It's about being embedded. If you're a dash-in-and-dash-out service, you're never really going to understand how that place can improve and achieve its ambitions.

Police Scotland was created during your tenure as Chief Constable of Tayside. What did and do you see as the principal merits and drawbacks of the new model, and how might English forces learn from it?

For me, this embodies a conundrum that is constantly wrestled with: how you get the most efficient models – which is obviously fewer small units with their own command levels, with the power of a big organisation and the resources and abilities to do all sorts of special things – but keeping something locally connected. I was always incredibly impressed with the quality of policing in Scotland. They didn't have to bring back neighbourhood policing as a policy, like in England, because they never stopped doing it: it has always been a very, very community-embedded model.

The SNP's policy was, I think, about trying to make it more efficient and effective, which is why they looked at the national model. Because Scotland is the way it is, you get high concentrations of people in the central belt – Edinburgh, Glasgow – and then not very many in lots of other bits of the geography! Maybe the SNP felt a national organisation would be a better and fairer way of responding to that.

I understand the government's frustration, both in England and Wales and in Scotland, about differences between forces. Procurement is a great example: there are many different systems, bought from different places, and there is a great failure of forces to collaborate as effectively as they could have in areas like IT. That doesn't mean, though, that the answer is to shove it all together. Seven years in, Police Scotland still has many of its separate legacy IT systems.

There's a danger, also, that a national organisation distances itself from local authorities, with whom forces would previously have had a very strong relationship. When I was in Tayside, I used to meet with the chief executives of the three local authorities, the fire chief, and health leaders, to talk about budgets for the year, who was invested in what, and how it all connected. There was a sense of place, of trying to resource and set ambitions for an area which, in the initial stages of Police Scotland, was certainly lost. Suddenly, we had a monolithic organisation with incredibly challenging geography. It was seen as a withdrawal, and I'm not sure the sense of working with local communities has really returned yet; although the Police Authority tries to meet in different places around the country, it's not the same as having those established relationships. It seems to work slightly better in London, even though there are so many local authorities: the geography means they're much more connected because they're closer together.

The last Chair of the Police Authority, Susan Deacon, stated in her resignation letter that the governance model was fundamentally flawed, and called for a separation between politics and policing. I think a number of people would share that view, and feel that the new system, despite its best intentions, can be slow and bureaucratic, and has struggled to join itself up fully.[27] It doesn't seem to be as easy as perhaps they thought it was going to be. The money saved was never a big enough prize to do what they've done: in Scotland, more is spent on free prescriptions than on policing.[28] A better solution would have been a halfway house, with regional connections to communities, but offering efficiencies and economies of scale.

How involved were Chief Constables in making the change?

Obviously, there were various workshops, but it was a political decision led by Kenny MacAskill, the then Justice Minister.[29] There were opportunities to try and put forward different views, but at heart it was a government decision.

[27] Susan Deacon CBE resigned as Chair of the Scottish Police Authority on 4th December 2019, in a letter which can be read at http://www.spa.police.uk/news/2019/600763/.

[28] Prescriptions in Scotland have been free-of-charge since April 2011. In 2017-18, the cost of that policy was £1.3bn (https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-44937793). The budget approved by the Scottish Police Authority for the same year was £1.059bn (http://www.spa.police.uk/news/437924/391056/).

[29] Kenny MacAskill was a Member of the Scottish Parliament (MSP), in the Scottish National Party, from 1999 to 2016, and Cabinet Secretary for Justice from 2007 to 2014. He was subsequently elected as Member of Parliament for East Lothian in 2019.

ON LEADERSHIP, GENDER AND TELEVISION

You've talked about a sense of 'holistic public service', with police and other organisations in a wider tapestry of community support, and I wonder what potential you see for joint development of leaders across the public sector landscape.

This is a massive, missed opportunity. Imagine an outcome-based plan, with all public services working towards government-led outcomes, delivered by leaders being developed together, sharing values and training – how strong a team would that be? How much more joined-up would that feel than with separate leadership training?

When I was Chief Constable of Tayside, there was a forum called Scottish Leaders led strongly by Peter Housden, the then Permanent Secretary.[30] There were events that brought everybody together; we looked at the agendas and the issues, and how that might develop into a structured leadership programme, perhaps taking public servants from middle to senior leadership roles. There also used to be a place-based initiative called Common Purpose, which brought people together from all sorts of different organisations – public and private sector – for a course that ran across the year.[31] I took part when I was a Chief Inspector in Manchester. We explored different issues, and looked at how we could work together to develop them and ourselves. I'm sure some localities still do things like this – Wales seems to be, for example – but more could be done. Such a scheme couldn't ever cater for all the different specialist functions. There's obviously a whole side of police training for operational command, for example, but at heart public servants share a set of values and skills. Joint leadership training would emphasise that, and provide a language and framework to build on. It would also be much more efficient, and would build and strengthen relationships. There are incredible opportunities.

You were a Chief Inspector within a decade of joining the police, and a Chief Officer only about seven years after that. What did your leadership training look like, or was it primarily on the job?

It was probably a mixture of both. I joined the service under the

[30] Sir Peter Housden KCB was Permanent Secretary of the Scottish Government (its senior official) from 2010 to 2015, having previously been Permanent Secretary at the Department for Communities and Local Government.
[31] Common Purpose has developed into "a not-for-profit organization that develops leaders who can cross boundaries"; see https://commonpurpose.org/uk/.

Graduate Entry Scheme, when there were obviously far fewer graduates joining the police. The idea was that it fast-tracked you through to Inspector, where people tended to get stuck. The structure of the training and development that went with it was probably a little bit hit-and-miss – there was some academic content, taught as a national cohort, but most of it was on the job. I really benefited from that – I was pushed to places where they really tested my mettle – but I worked in some busy, urban, scary places where experience was thrown at you on an hourly basis! There will be areas where that's harder to achieve, and that's the challenge facing such schemes going forward.

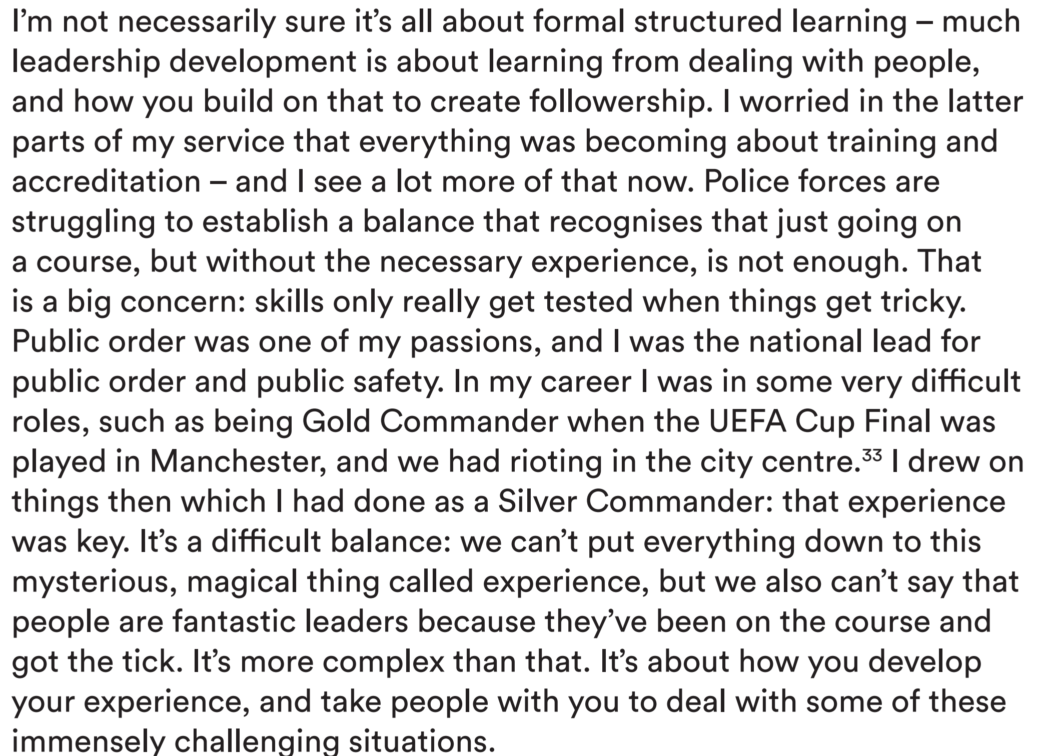
I experienced a lot of cultural resistance: there was no lower form of human life in policing, when I joined, than a female graduate entrant. It was called the 'Special Course' before I joined, and people used to say, 'What's so special about you?' The answer was, at that stage, not much! Because you're doing everything faster, you're always on a vertical learning curve. I became a Sergeant before I had three years of police service, which at that time was really unusual, and brought with it its own set of challenges. I wonder now how I got through it, but it was a great experience.

I used to describe the graduate scheme as bringing your natural skill-set to the point in the organisation where it really can start to make a difference. As a Constable, I worked hard but I wasn't fantastic. As a Sergeant, it was always a big challenge. It was when I got to be a Chief Inspector and Superintendent that I began to think I could actually do this – that I had something to bring to the party. That was where my natural skill-set became more relevant and more effective.

That's a fascinating reflection, really, on the nature of leadership itself. It suggests that leadership was innate within you, rather than something developed through your career. It isn't binary, of course, but I wonder if you might reflect further on that.

I often think about this. General Schwarzkopf said, "Leadership is a potent combination of strategy and character. But if you must be without one, be without the strategy."[32] The trouble with that is you can kid yourself into thinking you've got to be Alexander the Great or Winston Churchill. The reality is very much that you need a mixture of courage, plans and people focus.

[32] General Norman Schwarzkopf, Jr (1934-2012) was a US military leader. This quotation is attributed to him, though disputed.



I'm not necessarily sure it's all about formal structured learning – much leadership development is about learning from dealing with people, and how you build on that to create followership. I worried in the latter parts of my service that everything was becoming about training and accreditation – and I see a lot more of that now. Police forces are struggling to establish a balance that recognises that just going on a course, but without the necessary experience, is not enough. That is a big concern: skills only really get tested when things get tricky. Public order was one of my passions, and I was the national lead for public order and public safety. In my career I was in some very difficult roles, such as being Gold Commander when the UEFA Cup Final was played in Manchester, and we had rioting in the city centre.[33] I drew on things then which I had done as a Silver Commander: that experience was key. It's a difficult balance: we can't put everything down to this mysterious, magical thing called experience, but we also can't say that people are fantastic leaders because they've been on the course and got the tick. It's more complex than that. It's about how you develop your experience, and take people with you to deal with some of these immensely challenging situations.

You mentioned the 'f-word' earlier, and I wonder if we might talk about gender in policing. Despite year-on-year increases over the last decade, still only 30% of police officers are female, and 27% of Chief Officers.[34] What are your reflections on this, and your experiences of serving as a female officer in every rank from Constable to Chief Constable – which is still quite rare?

That's difficult; it's almost a life question! The first thing to say is that things have improved vastly since I joined in the late 1980s. That, of course, reflects wider change in society. When I joined, female officers couldn't wear trousers during the day unless it was really inclement weather. You tell that to Constables now and they look at you like you're 1,000 years old: how could you do this job without wearing trousers?! We were issued with handbags when we joined. When I was a Constable, and the Strangways Riot happened, all the blokes were taken off the night shifts, to go and sit in vans around the outside of Strangways [Prison], and two females were left policing the whole sub-division.[35] So there was this odd institutional sexism: looking after us, but not really! That was just part of how it was then.

[33] The UEFA Cup Final was played in Manchester on 14th May 2008. Ensuing riots led to the arrest of 39 fans, and the injury of several police officers. The Gold-Silver-Bronze model is used by the police for "the resolution of both spontaneous incidents and planned operations" (https://www.app.college.police.uk/app-content/operations/command-and-control/command-structures/).

[34] Home Office, Police Workforce, England and Wales, 31 March 2019, available at https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/831726/police-workforce-mar19-hosb1119.pdf. 'Chief Officers' refers to those police officers above Chief Superintendent rank.

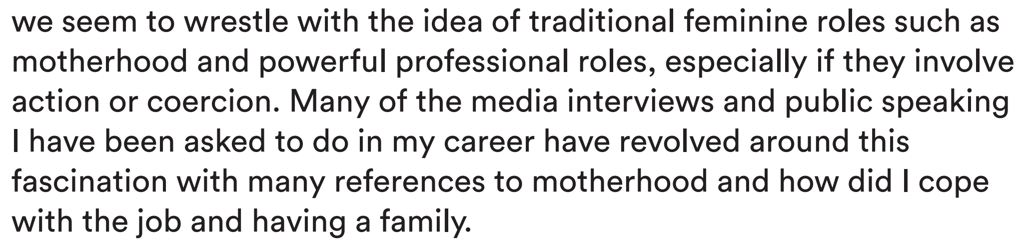
[35] Beginning on 1st April 1990, the Strangways Riot lasted twenty-five days. The longest prison riot in British history, it resulted in the death of one prisoner, and in dozens of injured officers and prisoners. The resultant Woolf Report recommended significant changes to the prison system.

I did what was then called the ‘Policewomen’s Course’, which was actually about sexual offences. We were sent on it so that, if the force received reports of sexual offences, women could be sent to deal with it. You can see how we’ve massively moved on from that: there are no specific roles for male or female. Despite that, though, you still get these interesting pockets of more men or more women. I was in charge of the Operational Support Unit in Merseyside, where we had all the toys: the helicopter, firearms, mounted, dogs… We had far more women in the mounted department, and virtually no women in the firearms department. However much the organisation says there are no barriers, you will still come across some of these things sometimes – it’s just a reflection of some elements of human nature. I would die in a ditch to fight for people to have equal access to roles, but I also accept the reality that not that many women might want to fill them. You can’t make everybody the same. All you can do is try and make the opportunities equal.

Culturally, I think we’ve come an awfully long way. People have more understanding of appropriate workplace behaviour – but you can still get discrimination and harassment. I have always been open about this: the last time that I was sexually harassed, I was a Superintendent. It doesn’t stop just because you get higher up in the ranks, but the service is much better at setting clear standards and responding effectively when they are not met.

The other issue about policewomen then, and which is probably still an issue, was not recruiting but retaining them. The average length of service for women when I joined was about seven years. That obviously has an impact on higher ranks and specialisms, because more people have left. A lot of that is the balance of trying to work with caring commitments and having children, which can become very challenging. The service still needs to consider how to improve that retention: a lot of investment, skills and experience is being lost otherwise.

Leadership remains challenging, too. Police culture still leans towards that masculine, militaristic, command-and-control type of leader. Whether conscious or unconscious, those leadership images and roles are still a barrier: some people will think if you’re not overt, directive, commanding, you’re not showing good leadership. Then, of course, women who are more like that are criticised for it, because there are different expectations that go around gender. It’s complex. There has been and remains a long fascination with women and power. Culturally



we seem to wrestle with the idea of traditional feminine roles such as motherhood and powerful professional roles, especially if they involve action or coercion. Many of the media interviews and public speaking I have been asked to do in my career have revolved around this fascination with many references to motherhood and how did I cope with the job and having a family.

As I said, it is improving in the service, but not particularly at the highest levels. It is currently masked a little by the brilliant fact that we've got a female Commissioner, with a few senior women in her team, and Lynne Owens leading the National Crime Agency, but actually if you discount the Met and the NCA, you'd see quite a poor picture, and one that hasn't improved massively in the last ten years.[36] It doesn't just affect women: the whole nature of the PCC system and the insecurity around fixed-term contracts have had an impact on people coming forward, but it does seem to have particularly impacted upon female advancement to, and retention at, Chief Constable.

There seems to have been an explosion of television programmes about the police – drama series, but also 'fly on the wall' documentaries, one of which recently featured a male Chief Constable in tears at the thought of forthcoming cuts to his force.[37] Do you watch those? What do you think they've done in terms of the image of policing, and recruitment to it?

I do watch them! Like anybody, I get sucked in. The fly on the wall stuff is harder. The nature of leadership requires a real balance between being the role and being the person. I always think about the Pope: if he turned up in jeans and a t-shirt and asked how you were hanging, we'd be a bit thrown. In a leadership role, you need to be human and authentic, and to accentuate those elements of being a leader that people will connect with, and that will resonate. But if the humanity overtakes everything else, do you dilute some of your message? If you're all about emotion and vulnerability, are the bad guys out there going to be really scared of the police? You need an element of ruthlessness in what you put across through these programmes.

There's a scene in The West Wing where the fictional President asks a very old friend to use his title, rather than his name – not from vanity, but to remind him of the job he's there to do.[38]

[36] Dame Cressida Dick DBE QPM has been Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police Service since 2017, the first female officer to hold this post. One Assistant Commissioner of the Met is female. Lynne Owens CBE QPM, previously Chief Constable of Surrey, has been Director-General of the National Crime Agency since 2016. At the time of writing (May 2020), there were five female Chief Constables, excluding Dame Cressida and Ms Owens. The Daily Telegraph reported, in June 2019, that there was a peak of ten in 2014 (see https://www.telegraph.co.uk/politics/2019/07/18/quarter-police-forces-have-just-one-fewer-women-top-ranks-figures/).

[37] Cops Like Us, BBC, March 2020

[38] The West Wing is a US television series, centred on fictional President Josiah Bartlet and his senior staff, which aired from 1999 to 2006. The episode in question is S1 E14, 'Take This Sabbath Day'.

That's it. Leaders, particularly in police, can't project total humanity and total vulnerability. You need some of that, but you also need those elements of ruthlessness, focus, drive, determination, commitment; you need people to be aware that there's an organisation of people whose job it is to find you and get you, if that needs to happen. Increased exposure can be a double-edged sword, particularly as society changes. It's good to talk and to be open, but wearing the uniform is a projection of the power given to you by the state and, whilst you need to wield that in a very human way, you are nonetheless that arm of the state. It's a very difficult balance to get right.

ON MULTI-AGENCY WORKING

What role does joined-up working play in tackling the most significant issues facing the police today – for example, knife and drugs crime, and particularly with young people? Are police forces sufficiently linked up to educational and social services, and are the mechanisms in place for that sufficient?

The links are there, but they could always be better. Some of that's about taking a long-term view. It's very sexy, really, to think you can steam in, save the world, steam out again, but it doesn't happen like that.

Years ago they set up the Violence Reduction Unit in Scotland, and got into some really deep issues about the growth of gangs, and the violence associated with young males especially.[39] An example was used where a young man murdered somebody but, as you look back through his life, you realise it actually started before he was born with foetal alcohol syndrome. It was quite daunting, sitting there and seeing how all those things in this young man's life led to this point where he commits murder. As public services, how do you join up to try and prevent that becoming inevitable, and to put in interventions? The VRU used to look at the issue of male role models. The things that teenage boys wrestle with can create behaviours that link to violence, because they don't know any other way of dealing with them.

Lots more could and should be done, but the police are great drivers and innovators. At multi-agency meetings, the cops are often the ones asking who's doing what, taking away and executing actions, whereas cultures in other agencies can be a little slower, and perhaps more policy-focussed. It's great to have cops involved, but those connections to other key points of intervention are vital – health visitors, social workers, teachers – if we're going to see longer-term results. Of course, these things are also hard to measure, and require investment.

Again, this is all about geography, because if you don't have local connections it's quite hard to tackle these problems in an abstract way. Case conferences and referrals play a big part, but the dialogue needs to be constant. Troubled Families was a great initiative, because

[39] The Violence Reduction Unit was established in 2005. See http://www.svru.co.uk/about-us/

you had multiple agencies talking about the same family: you were all directing interventions, all trying to achieve the same outcomes.

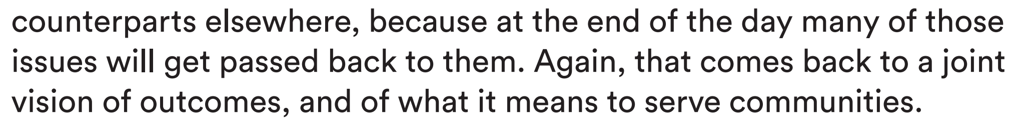
Without joined-up working, you're not necessarily going to get in the mire, or fail an inspection, but real positive outcomes will be harder to achieve. For me, there should be a drive for a better framework around that outcome-driven work, recognised and supported by government. All these agencies are driven by the same values but can end up working in separate directions: policies, structures and inspections need to line up to focus on what's important, and on measuring the outcomes.[40]

We began these interviews by talking about the nature of policing. Is there a danger, given the changes and cuts to many statutory services, that policing is increasingly dealing with matters beyond its remit?

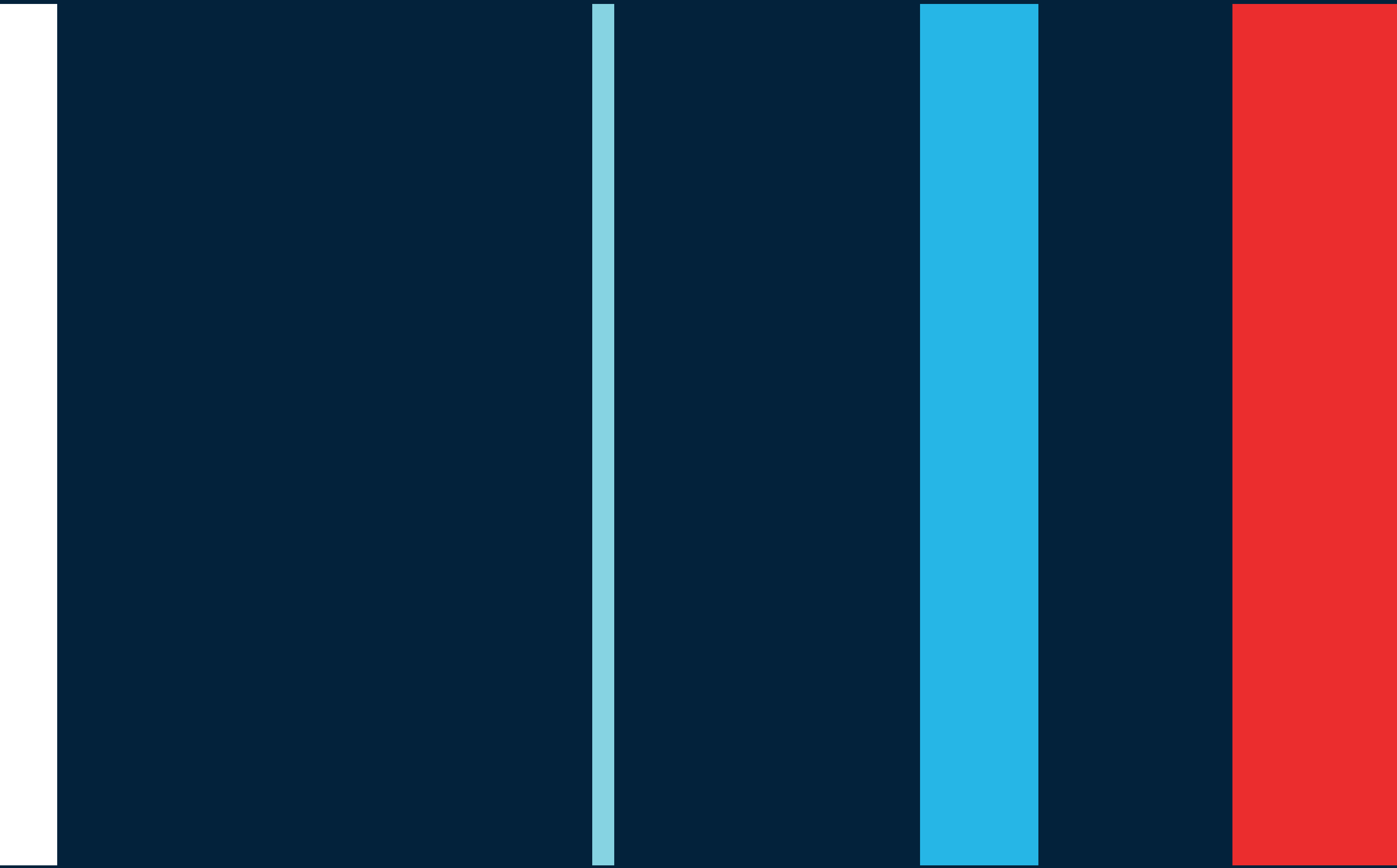
A little bit. There's no doubt that austerity, particularly, has had that impact: where other services have had to be cut, or have become less available, the result is more dramatic or emergency outcomes. The ambulance service has picked some of this up too, for example getting calls because mental health services haven't been effective. You could describe policing as the slop bucket at the bottom, catching all the stuff that seeps through the gaps. Communities expect officers to respond to something that's happening in front of them, even though actually it might be as a result of a long-term, ongoing issue. At the same time, of course, the role is assisting communities to improve and be the best they can, so officers *will* respond – because it matters to the people they're serving. The difficulty is, when resources get reduced, how you decide where to focus. If you always work on the basis of risk, you will constantly be responding to the latest thing, fearful that it will escalate otherwise. It's hard, because there is obviously always more demand than there is resource.

Multi-agency working is critical in prevention, and in making sure services aren't simply dumping on each other! We used to laugh about Friday Afternoon Syndrome. As soon as it was Friday afternoon, and the answer machines were put on at social services, noise abatement, environmental health, and so on, all their calls started coming into the police control room. A 24/7, 365-day-a-year service will always catch some of those issues which are really for other agencies. The balance for police leaders is having difficult conversations with your

[40] Troubled Families was established by then Prime Minister David Cameron in 2011, initially under the leadership of Louise Casey, previously the UK's Victims' Commissioner.



counterparts elsewhere, because at the end of the day many of those issues will get passed back to them. Again, that comes back to a joint vision of outcomes, and of what it means to serve communities.



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