



House of Commons  
Home Affairs Committee

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# **Policing Large Scale Disorder: Lessons from the disturbances of August 2011**

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**Sixteenth Report of Session 2010–12**

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**Sixteenth Report of Session 2010–12**

*Volume I: Report, together with formal  
minutes*

*Ordered by the House of Commons  
to be printed 15 December 2011*

## The Home Affairs Committee

The Home Affairs Committee is appointed by the House of Commons to examine the expenditure, administration, and policy of the Home Office and its associated public bodies.

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Nicola Blackwood MP (*Conservative, Oxford West and Abingdon*)  
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Mr David Winnick MP (*Labour, Walsall North*)

The following members were also members of the committee during the parliament.

Mr Aidan Burley MP (*Conservative, Cannock Chase*)  
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### Powers

The Committee is one of the departmental select committees, the powers of which are set out in House of Commons Standing Orders, principally in SO No 152. These are available on the Internet via [www.parliament.uk](http://www.parliament.uk).

### Publication

The Reports and evidence of the Committee are published by The Stationery Office by Order of the House. All publications of the Committee (including press notices) are on the Internet at [www.parliament.uk/homeaffairscom](http://www.parliament.uk/homeaffairscom).

### Committee staff

The current staff of the Committee are Tom Healey (Clerk), Joanna Dodd (Second Clerk), Sarah Petit (Committee Specialist), Eleanor Scarnell (Inquiry Manager), Darren Hackett (Senior Committee Assistant), Sheryl Dinsdale (Committee Assistant), Victoria Butt (Committee Assistant), John Graddon (Committee Support Officer) and Alex Paterson (Select Committee Media Officer).

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# 1 Introduction

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1. The disorder that took place in various towns and cities across England in August 2011 was unprecedented in the modern era because of the number of different incidents taking place in different locations over the same period of time. The disorder began in Tottenham, in the London Borough of Haringey, on the evening of Saturday 6 August, following a protest about the death of Mark Duggan, who had been shot dead by a police officer on Thursday 4 August. Over the course of the evening of Saturday 6 August, and again during Sunday 7 August, disorder occurred in other areas of London. Further disturbances took place in London on Monday 8 August, when the disorder began to spread to other towns and cities, including Birmingham and Bristol. On Tuesday 9 August, the disturbances continued, spreading to cities including Reading, Wolverhampton and Manchester.

2. During the disturbances, businesses, homes and vehicles were set alight, shops were looted, the emergency services and television crews were attacked and five members of the public were killed: Trevor Ellis was shot in Croydon on Monday 8 August, and Richard Mannington Bowes was attacked in Ealing on the same evening and subsequently died of his injuries; Haroon Jahan, Shahzad Ali and Abdul Musavir were run over in Birmingham on the evening of Tuesday 9 August.

3. It is important to analyse and understand why riots did not happen in some cities. Indeed, this is every bit as important as understanding why riots and looting did happen in other locations. For example, in Cardiff, which is a capital city but shares many characteristics with major English cities, there were only isolated attempts to mimic the riots in England. These variations need to be probed to discover whether there were characteristics in common.

4. The disturbances were different experiences in different cities. Chief Constable Chris Sims of West Midlands Police referred to “mass looting” and “an armed crowd.”<sup>1</sup> On the other hand, Chief Constable Julia Hodson of Nottinghamshire Police told us “There was no looting in Nottinghamshire.”<sup>2</sup> Assistant Chief Constable Paul Broadbent of Nottinghamshire Police, clarified this by adding: “There were two shops broken into and property was stolen.”<sup>3</sup> These differences are borne out by figures released by the Home Office showing the total number of recorded crimes related to the public disorder between 6 and 11 August by offence category and police force area. The figures show that in Nottinghamshire, 79% of recorded incidents were associated with criminal damage and only 9% with acquisitive crime. However, in the West Midlands, 41% were associated with criminal damage and 49% with acquisitive crime. Nottinghamshire also had a much lower number of recorded crimes overall than the West Midlands: 34 compared with 495.<sup>4</sup>

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1 Q 404

2 Q 480

3 Q 481

4 Home Office, *An Overview of Recorded Crimes and Arrests Resulting From Disorder Events in August 2011*, October 2011, p. 25

5. For those who were caught up in the disturbances they were upsetting and in some cases very frightening experiences. The Reverend Paul Perkin, who gave evidence about what he witnessed in the Clapham Junction area of Battersea in London on the evening of 8 August, said that it was a “surreal” occurrence and, “it was like being on a different planet almost, not just in a different country.”<sup>5</sup> However, he also described something akin to “a carnival atmosphere...a very, very hyped-up intense celebration”.<sup>6</sup> In other parts of London, the experience was different again. We heard evidence from Niche Mpala Mufwankolo, whose pub, the Pride of Tottenham, was broken into and looted, and who was chased by the thieves and had to climb down a drainpipe from the upstairs of the building to escape, an experience he described as “terrifying”.<sup>7</sup>

6. Given the exceptional nature of the disturbances, it is not surprising that they have already given rise to a number of inquiries. In addition to local studies by police authorities and forces, and local authorities, some of which have already been published, there are several national pieces of work. These include the review of police tactics and training by Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabulary; the Communities and Victims Panel, which is being led by Darra Singh and is investigating the experiences of people in communities affected by the disorder; the Reading the Riots study, which is being led jointly by the London School of Economics and *The Guardian* and which is examining the causes and consequences of the riots by conducting interviews with those involved; and the work by the Runnymede Trust, which is holding a series of roundtable discussions in local communities about the disturbances. In addition, Louise Casey, the former Victims Commissioner, has been appointed by the Prime Minister as head of a new Troubled Families Team, which will work with some of the communities affected by the disturbances.

7. We took evidence from those involved with these national studies. Our aim is to focus on those aspects of the disturbances where we can add most value: principally the police response, the costs of policing the disorder, and the role of social media, all of which we examine in the context of wider public policy. We consider the causes of the disorder in so far as they offer lessons to reduce the likelihood of similar disturbances occurring again. The terms of reference for this inquiry are included in the Appendix.

8. We launched our inquiry on 11 August 2011, the day the House of Commons was recalled to debate the riots. We received 47 pieces of written evidence and, over the course of eight evidence sessions, we took oral evidence from 49 people, including people who had been affected by the disorder, senior police officers, the Home Secretary, the Secretary of State for Justice, and the Mayor of London. We also visited Croydon in South London, where we listened to the views of local business-owners, residents, and police officers, and Feltham Young Offenders Institution, where we spoke to a group of 16 and 17-year-olds who had been convicted of offences related to the disorder. We are most grateful to everyone who contributed to the inquiry, and particularly to the victims for recounting what were often painful and personal experiences to us.

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5 Q 323

6 Q 326

7 Q 259



## 2 Searching for the causes

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9. It is vital to note that, although all these events are grouped together in the public mind as the “August riots”, they were different phenomena in different cities and even in different parts of the same city, making it difficult to draw generalised conclusions. It is as important to understand why disorder did not take place in some cities as it is to understand why it did in others. There were major variations between cities and between different boroughs and localities in London. Nobody has yet given an adequate explanation of these differences, and to provide a dependable and evidence-based narrative it will be essential (a) to make a careful comparison of relationships between the police and the community in each area and also (b) to compare the differences in the relationships between the police and others, including local authorities, the NHS, civil society, the fire service and so on. There are a number of inquiries that may help to provide some answers. Only then can the difference in outcomes be analysed and related back to local circumstances, such as police attitudes, the methodology in the local crime reduction partnerships, and other partnerships, social factors and so on. There is no short cut.

### The death of Mark Duggan

10. The Metropolitan Police called the Independent Police Complaints Commission at 7.20 pm on Thursday 4 August to inform them of the death of Mark Duggan, a 29 year-old local man.<sup>8</sup> The Independent Police Complaints Commission automatically investigates all fatal shootings by police officers. The investigation is ongoing, but some facts are known. Mark Duggan was a passenger in a minicab, which was stopped by officers from the Metropolitan Police at approximately 6.15 pm on 4 August. The Independent Police Complaints Commission issued an update on 9 August that stated that what happened next was the subject of its independent investigation, but that “two shots were fired by one CO19 firearms officer” and “a non-police-issue handgun was recovered from the scene.”<sup>9</sup> It was subsequently announced that the gun could have been used in an earlier alleged assault, and that the Commission was to investigate the steps taken by Metropolitan Police officers in relation to the investigation of this alleged assault and “to what extent, if any, the conduct of this investigation may have impacted on the supply of the firearm found at the scene of the shooting of Mark Duggan.”<sup>10</sup>

11. The Home Secretary, the Rt Hon Theresa May MP, said that she would be “very cautious” about making a direct link between the shooting of Mark Duggan and the ensuing disorder.<sup>11</sup> The Rt Hon David Lammy, the Member of Parliament for Tottenham, stated:

Clearly, the death of Mark Duggan is significant in relation to Tottenham. This Committee will understand that the death of any individual, but a young, black man

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8 Ev 161

9 IPCC Press Release, “Update on Mark Duggan investigation including details of ballistics tests”, 9 August 2011

10 IPCC Press Release, “IPCC investigates MPS handling of alleged assault involving firearm”, 18 November 2011

11 Q 220

in open air, on a busy Thursday evening in Tottenham, was of tremendous concern. Sadly, Tottenham has a history—Joy Gardner, Cynthia Jarrett, Roger Sylvester—of deaths, in police custody particularly, that have been difficult events and indeed have led to other unrest.<sup>12</sup>

12. There are two factors that exacerbated what was already a potentially tense situation; both relate to communication. Firstly, initial press reports suggested that one of the two shots was fired at, rather than by, the police. However, on 12 August, the Independent Police Complaints Commission issued a statement to say that “any reference to an exchange of shots was not correct”. In the same statement, the Commission stated that, although none of its printed statements had referred to an exchange of shots, “it seems possible that we may have verbally led journalists to believe that shots were exchanged as this was consistent with early information we received that an officer had been shot and taken to hospital.”<sup>13</sup> Deborah Glass, Deputy Chair of the Independent Police Complaints Commission, explained in more detail what happened:

One of our staff made a mistake in the very early hours following the incident, and when we realised we had made that mistake the following week we admitted it and we apologised...The information that was known, and there was very little, was that there had been an armed operation; that a member of the public had been fatally shot; and that a police officer had been wounded and taken to hospital. There was an inference that was drawn from that and I don't believe we were the only ones who drew that inference, but it was wrong.<sup>14</sup>

13. We have no reason to believe that the issuing of incorrect information was anything other than a genuine mistake by a member of staff, but its effect was nonetheless unfortunate. The National Black Police Association and World of Hope, an organisation that provides support services for young people in Lewisham, Southwark, Greenwich and Lambeth, both noted the potential negative impact of poor communication on public confidence.<sup>15</sup> Any perception that the Commission is not indeed independent, although it may be unfounded, is damaging. Len Jackson, the Interim Chair of the Independent Police Complaints Commission, said: “If we don't sit in the middle as a completely independent organisation in the search for the truth then we are not doing our job.”<sup>16</sup>

14. Secondly, there is the issue of communication between the Metropolitan Police and Mark Duggan's family. Several witnesses, including David Lammy and Liberty, raised concerns about communication with the Duggan family.<sup>17</sup> Stafford Scott, a community worker on the Broadwater Farm estate in Tottenham in the 1980s—and who was originally one of three members of the Community Reference Group working with the Independent Police Complaints Commission in relation to the Mark Duggan investigation, but who

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12 Q 253

13 IPCC Press Notice, “Release of information in early stages of Mark Duggan inquiry”, 12 August 2011

14 Q 180

15 Ev w5 and Ev w22

16 Q 193

17 Q 279, Ev w36

resigned because he was dissatisfied with the way in which the Commission's investigation was being conducted—commented:

It's usual practice when someone is killed that their personal details are not made public until the next of kin has been informed. Mark Duggan's family saw in headlines that he had been killed as a result of a "terrifying shoot-out". Why such a difference in treatment? I was one of those who went to Tottenham police station on Saturday, with members of his family, to get an official acknowledgement that Mark had been killed.<sup>18</sup>

The then Acting Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police, Tim Godwin, stated: "There was some confusion in terms of who was going to tell Mr Duggan's family and that we deeply regret."<sup>19</sup>

15. Len Jackson has confirmed that, "as a result of a complaint from the Duggan family, we [the Independent Police Complaints Commission] are independently investigating the contact between the Metropolitan Police Service and members of Mr Duggan's family in the early hours/days after the shooting."<sup>20</sup> This inquiry is separate from the inquiry into Mark Duggan's death. We await the outcome of both inquiries with interest. The Commission informs us that the inquiry into Mark Duggan's death is expected to take four to six months, and that the inquiry into contact with the family may be completed sooner.

**16. The death of Mark Duggan was a significant factor in the disorder that took place in Tottenham. In the event of a fatal shooting of a member of the public by a police officer, it is essential that the force concerned communicates swiftly with the victim's family. There is no excuse for confusion about whose role this should be: a family liaison officer should be dispatched immediately by the force in question. Until this has happened, no substantive public comment should be made, and the name of the deceased should not be released. Guidance on family liaison in the event of a death after police contact is provided in a National Policing Improvement Agency manual from 2008. The Agency should update this guidance to make it clear what information local police are responsible for communicating to the family and the community, and what should be left to the Independent Police Complaints Commission. The initial communication should be followed by regular communication between the Independent Police Complaints Commission and the victim's family. It is also essential that the Commission and the local police communicate accurately with the press and the public. There should be a protocol in place to ensure that staff at the Commission are clear about what information can be publicly confirmed, particularly in the very early stages of an investigation.**

**17. We note in passing our continuing dissatisfaction that the Independent Police Complaints Commission still does not have a permanent Chair, more than 18 months since Nick Hardwick's move to become Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Prisons was announced. We are concerned that this lack of leadership is affecting the work of the**

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18 Ev w71

19 Q 78

20 Supplementary written evidence from the IPCC.

**Commission. We call on the Government to fill this vacancy as a matter of urgency and to put in place arrangements to ensure that long gaps of this sort are avoided in relation to public appointments.**

### What the statistics tell us

18. When we asked the Home Secretary why she thought the disorder occurred, she replied:

I think there are a number of issues here that we can only properly assess when we have a proper analysis of the people who were involved in the riots ... But I am absolutely clear that what underlay it was criminality.<sup>21</sup>

The Ministry of Justice has published two statistical bulletins that provide information about the 1,984 people who appeared before the courts by midday on 12 October for offences relating to the public disorder of 6 to 9 August. The Ministry points out that there are a number of limitations with its data, including the fact that the group of people brought before the courts is only a subset of all the people who took part in the disorder, that some of the people brought before the courts will have their charges dropped or be acquitted, and that there are new cases relating to the disorder being brought before the courts daily. Like the Home Secretary, we believe that a proper analysis of the people who were involved in the disorder is an important element of understanding its causes. We welcome the publication of the data by the Ministry of Justice, while acknowledging the data's limitations and the need for further detailed analysis.

19. Some of the data have been broken down by region of the country and others are national data. We welcomed the assurance from the Secretary of State for Justice, the Rt Hon Kenneth Clarke MP, that his Department would “try to produce local figures.”<sup>22</sup> The Ministry of Justice subsequently provided us with local figures for the number of adults and juveniles with a previous caution or conviction among the people arrested and charged with riot-related offences, and comparable figures for all indictable offences in these local areas over a 12-month period.<sup>23</sup> **Given that the disorder had a significantly different character in different areas of the country, we recommend that all data produced by the Government in relation to the disorder should ultimately be broken down to a district level, and that an explanation be given if this is not possible.**

20. The national data show that 76% of those who appeared before the courts for offences related to the disorder had a previous caution or conviction. This breaks down to 80% of adults and 62% of juveniles. The Ministry of Justice also noted that 71% of adult males brought before the courts for the disorder had a previous conviction, compared with 28% of males aged 18 to 52 in the population as a whole. Care must be taken when drawing inferences from these figures, given the limitations outlined above, and the fact that those with previous criminal records are likely to be the easiest perpetrators to identify. The then Acting Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police, Tim Godwin, acknowledged: “the ones

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21 Q 208

22 Q 690

23 See supplementary written evidence from the Ministry of Justice.

that you know are going to be arrested first.”<sup>24</sup> We note the relatively high proportion of those who appeared before the courts who had a previous caution or conviction. More work must be done to explore this aspect of the data. The young people we spoke to at Feltham Young Offenders Institution, the majority of whom told us that they did not have previous criminal records, spoke of being caught up in the heat of the moment. Some of them said that they had initially gone along as spectators and then simply joined in. Clearly a feeling existed that desirable consumer goods could easily be made available by looting—“free stuff” as some described it. Several people suggested that the widespread disorder started when people saw that the police had “lost control” in Tottenham. **There was a substantial element of opportunistic criminality to the disorder that took place in August 2011, and of copycat behaviour.**

### The involvement of young people

21. Initial media reports of the disorder tended to characterise it as an event predominantly involving young people under the age of 18. The Ministry of Justice data show that, of the 1,984 suspects who had an initial hearing at a magistrates court by midday on 12 October 2011, 26% were aged between 10 and 17 and 74% were adults. However, 27% of the suspects were aged between 18 and 20 and only 5% were over 40. Of the young people aged between 10 and 17, 88% were male and 12% were female. The Ministry of Justice stated: “Young people appearing before the courts came disproportionately from areas with high levels of income deprivation as defined by the Income Deprivation Affecting Children Indices (IDACI) rankings for 2010.”<sup>25</sup> It reported that 64% of 10 to 17 year-olds for whom data were available came from the quintile of most deprived areas, compared with only 3% who lived in the quintile of least deprived areas. The Ministry of Justice also noted that 66% of 10 to 17 year-olds appearing before the courts for offences relating to the disorder, for whom data were available, had some form of special educational needs, compared with 21% of all pupils in maintained secondary schools.<sup>26</sup> However, we did not receive evidence on whether this was relevant or exceptional. The Ministry of Justice statistical bulletin provides local data. This report is concerned with the policing of the disturbances, but it is to be hoped nevertheless that the Government will examine the evidence about the relationship between the riots, areas of high deprivation, poverty and youth unemployment in general. We welcome the fact that the Government has now set up the Troubled Families Unit.

22. We are fully aware that most young people were as shocked by the outright criminality, violence and damage, as well as the fear caused, as all others in the community. The disorder should not be taken as a reflection on young people in general. We mention the involvement of young people and young adults not to demonise them, but to emphasise the importance of engagement between the police and young people as part of wider crime-prevention measures. During our inquiry, we heard several interesting examples of innovative work to build positive relationships between young people and the police. For example, Croydon Xpress, a project run by Croydon Voluntary Action, is running a

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24 Q 93

25 Ministry of Justice, Department for Education and Department for Work and Pensions, *Statistical bulletin on the public disorder of 6<sup>th</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup> August 2011—October update*, 24 October 2011, p 28

26 *Ibid.*

programme that aims to improve the relationship between Police Community Support Officers and young people, by bringing the two groups together to discuss their concerns and preconceptions.<sup>27</sup> We also heard from Kickz, a nationwide project involving Premiership and Football League clubs working with their local police forces to engage with young people in disadvantaged areas of the country. Kickz submitted evidence to show that its programmes had a positive impact on levels of crime and antisocial behaviour in the areas where it operates, although it was not clear that it was statistically significant. To carry out a really meaningful analysis of the impact of such projects in the context of the disorder, it would be necessary to compare the situation in cities which experienced riots and looting with cities which did not. Similarly, in London it would be necessary to make comparisons between different boroughs, while acknowledging that the nature of London makes travel across boundaries a compelling factor. We commend these projects on the work that they have done with young people.

**23. Projects that have as one of their aims the improvement of relations between the police and young people are to be encouraged. The age profile we discussed earlier suggests the need to focus on young adults, as well as those below the age of 18. At a time when there is pressure to cut budgets, such projects need to produce quantitative and qualitative data to demonstrate their impact, to help funding bodies make evidence-based choices about how to distribute resources. While such activities and projects are to be commended, we nevertheless remain concerned at the number of young people who continue to complain about what they perceive as police hostility towards them.**

### The involvement of gangs

24. Almost as soon as the disorder was over, there was speculation about the extent of gang involvement. The Home Secretary told us: “It is obvious that gangs were involved.”<sup>28</sup> She qualified this by saying: “it is possible that that [the involvement of gangs] is not as high as people at first thought, but that does not mean that the Government should not be doing work on gangs.”<sup>29</sup> Six weeks later, the Home Office released figures that showed that overall 13% of people who were arrested for offences relating to the disorder were “affiliated to a gang”. The figure was 19% in London and West Yorkshire and 17% in Nottinghamshire, although in the case of the latter two forces the numbers of people represented by these percentages are relatively small: 13 and 20 respectively. In other forces, fewer than 10% of all arrestees were gang members. These data come with the caveats we discussed above in relation to the Ministry of Justice data. It should also be noted that evidence of gang membership among the first tranche of those to be charged is not the same as evidence that gangs were involved in organising the disorder. **There is a need for an agreed definition of a “gang” in this context. The Home Secretary should clarify what the Home Office means by the term in the context of the August disorder and the methodology used to establish whether a particular individual was “affiliated to a gang”.**

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27 Ev w54

28 Q 208

29 Q 211

25. We received little evidence to suggest that gangs played a significant organisational role, although when we visited Croydon we did hear anecdotal evidence that some of the rioting and looting was pre-planned and that groups met up beforehand to discuss what they would do. Local people reported seeing “organisers” directing some of the looting, and goods being carried off to waiting vehicles or pre-arranged depot points. We also heard anecdotal evidence, both during our visit to Feltham Young Offenders Institution, and from Nick de Bois, the Member of Parliament for Enfield North, that gangs adopted a form of “truce” with each other during the disorder:

According to my understanding, there was almost a truce between the various gangs, and it would not surprise me to find in the ultimate arrests, if any gang members have been caught, that there may be gangs from another area that were arrested in Enfield and vice versa.<sup>30</sup>

These comments were echoed by the young offenders we met in Feltham, and during the riots roundtable event that the Runnymede Trust held at Westminster.

26. Even though it has yet to be proved that there was significant gang involvement in organising the disorder, we are convinced that action to tackle gangs is important in its own right. We welcome the publication by the Home Secretary in November 2011 of the Government’s proposals for tackling gang and youth violence. We are encouraged by their cross-departmental nature, particularly in the light of the comments from Bill Bratton, the former Chief of the Los Angeles Police Department, who stressed to us that although the police were a key element of any strategy to tackle gangs, what ultimately made anti-gang strategies effective was a partnership approach with other agencies such as children’s services.<sup>31</sup> We will monitor the Government’s progress in implementing its proposals for tackling gangs.

27. We heard from Waltham Forest Council about its gang prevention programme, which was launched in January 2011 and which adopts a multi-agency approach to target individuals who are involved, or at risk of becoming involved, in gang culture. The council stated that the programme “provides a clear and understandable choice to the individual between accepting the range of help that is available to them or instead expecting significant disruption to the daily routine through the interventions of multiple public sector agencies.”<sup>32</sup> The council argued that its gang prevention programme helped to ensure that it was less affected by the disturbances than surrounding boroughs. When pressed on what difference the programme had made in practical terms, Councillor Chris Robbins, Leader of Waltham Forest Council, commented: “It meant that we had very good intelligence, immediate intelligence.”<sup>33</sup> He stressed that the programme was part of a broader approach to ensure that the local council had a good relationship with the police and said that this too had played a part.

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30 Q 246

31 Q 558

32 Ev167

33 Q 609

**28. We were pleased to see evidence of local initiatives to tackle gang culture, such as the programme that is currently being run by Waltham Forest Council. The Home Office should continue its role in keeping track of the progress and success of such initiatives and ensuring that examples of good practice are disseminated to other local public sector bodies and agencies. We encourage other councils to study the anti-gang work that is being carried out by Waltham Forest.**



## 3 The police response

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29. We have been consistently impressed by the bravery and dedication of individual officers who took part in the operations to tackle the disorder. As we heard from our witnesses and during our visit to Croydon, individual officers encountered violent situations in which they were often outnumbered, sometimes in locations with which they were not familiar and after working long shifts. Some had neither the equipment nor the specific training to deal with these situations, but were nonetheless prepared to stand up to aggressive crowds. The Association of Chief Police Officers informed us that, between Saturday 6 August and Wednesday 10 August, 299 police officers were injured.<sup>34</sup> Police officers are prepared to put themselves in harm's way every day for the protection of the public, and these exceptional events have served to remind us all of the dangers they face on the public's behalf.

30. Following the August disorder, the Home Secretary asked Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary to undertake a review to ensure that the police have the tactics, guidance and training to deal with what she described in a speech to the Chief Superintendents Association conference in September as "potentially a new era of public order policing."<sup>35</sup> The review is wide-ranging, as the terms of reference make clear:

HMIC will examine the existing systems that generate support (both human and technical) to meet public order policing requirements. This will include reviews of current guidance, mutual aid, pre-emptive action, tactics (and their adaptability), training, and arrests policies. It will also examine the fundamental and underlying requirement for information and intelligence to inform decision-making.

HMIC will also examine the current police guidance manual for public order, *Keeping the Peace* (ACPO: 2010), and review its content on the priority given to the maintenance of order; the critical mass required to achieve and deploy tactics successfully; the use of force by police; kit and equipment; and the management of intelligence.<sup>36</sup>

We do not seek to duplicate this work, and in this chapter, we focus on the principal lessons that came out of the evidence that we received.

### Police powers

31. While the disturbances were taking place, and over the following weeks, one of the topics of discussion was whether the police had sufficient powers at their disposal to tackle the disorder. In October, the Government launched a consultation on police powers to promote and maintain public order. The consultation document seeks views on three proposed changes, two of which—new powers to request the removal of face coverings and

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34 Ev 152

35 [www.homeoffice.gov.uk/media-centre/speeches/supers-speech](http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/media-centre/speeches/supers-speech)

36 [www.hmic.gov.uk/media/HMIC-Review-of-Public-Order-Policing-Terms-of-Reference-2011-09-27.pdf](http://www.hmic.gov.uk/media/HMIC-Review-of-Public-Order-Policing-Terms-of-Reference-2011-09-27.pdf)

new powers to impose curfews—may be relevant to our inquiry. However, there was no sense among any of our witnesses that that law needed to be changed to give the police more power to tackle public disorder. The then Acting Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police, Tim Godwin, told us in August: “At this moment in time there is nothing to suggest that additional powers would have assisted us or improved our response.”<sup>37</sup> The Association of Chief Police Officers stated that its members “have not indicated that they require further policing powers.”<sup>38</sup>

32. The senior police officers we spoke to made it clear that the power to use equipment such as water cannon and baton rounds was available, but such equipment was not used because it was not considered suitable in the type of situations that they encountered. Chief Constable Peter Fahy of Greater Manchester police said that using water cannon and baton rounds would have been “very, very difficult” in the sort of “fluid...fast moving situation” that his officers faced.<sup>39</sup> There was also the sense among our witnesses that such tactics would not have helped and indeed might have inflamed the situation or led to more casualties. The Mayor of London, Boris Johnson, told us: “We were able to contain very serious disturbances in London with the use of robust, commonsensical policing in a traditional British way”, a point which was echoed by Acting Commissioner Tim Godwin, who said: “I take great pride in the fact that we filled up prison places as opposed to hospital beds”.<sup>40</sup> **We cannot recommend any increase in police powers as a result of the August disturbances without seeing specific evidence of a need for such powers and none came our way during this inquiry. It is our view that in the situation then prevailing, it would have been inappropriate as well as dangerous, to have employed water cannon and baton rounds. We agree with our witnesses, including senior police officers, that such use could have escalated and inflamed the situation further. The lessons learned in the past in Northern Ireland over such equipment should not be lost on policing in the mainland when rioting occurs. Water cannon in particular are an indiscriminate weapon and could have affected innocent bystanders, as well as rioters.**

## Police guidance and training

33. Although we do not believe that the police response to the August disturbances was inhibited by a lack of powers, there were other problems with the response. Clearly in almost all cases the police were facing circumstances that had not been expected or anticipated. This is connected to the difficulty of identifying causes. The element of the spontaneous and the unexpected involved in these events was considerable. The police cannot be blamed for failing to anticipate something that no one else anticipated either. However, lessons need to be learned. One of the problems seems to have been identifying the nature of the activity within the crowd. Indeed, there appear to have been circumstances when the police operated as if they were policing a legitimate event such as a student or political demonstration, and treated it as a challenge to prevent public order

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37 Ev 157

38 Ev 152

39 Q 369

40 Q 35 and Q 82

offences, whereas the activity on this occasion appears to have been predominantly, if not entirely, criminal.

34. What happened in August raises issues in relation to both guidance and training. The Association of Chief Police Officers, together with the Association of Chief Police Officers in Scotland and the National Policing Improvement Agency, publish a 144-page guidance manual, *Keeping the Peace*, which police forces use when responding to large-scale public disorder. The scope of the manual is described as follows:

The information ... relates to the policing of large-scale national and regional events and the routine policing of local community events. This type of policing is centred on the management of crowds and includes the policing of planned and spontaneous public events, including protest, and the policing of any events which result in, or may result in, public disorder.<sup>41</sup>

The guidance is subject to annual review and the Association of Chief Police Officers told us that “relevant issues” from the recent disturbances would be factored into its revision.<sup>42</sup>

35. The introduction to the manual states that it “is not intended to be exhaustive or restrictive and does not preclude the innovative use of strategies and tactics which are lawful, human rights compliant and which have been adequately risk assessed.”<sup>43</sup> We are, however, concerned that there may have been over-reliance on the manual at the expense of discretion and common sense. When we asked Bill Bratton, the former Chief of the Los Angeles Police Department, what were the best tactics to employ to deal with public disorder, he replied: “The idea is to plan for the worst, hope for the best, and at the same time be very capable of spontaneity.”<sup>44</sup> Spontaneity strikes us as particularly important in fast-moving situations such as those experienced in August, and it is not supported by excessive reliance by forces and police officers on proscriptive national guidance.

36. We did encounter examples of spontaneity on the part of the police during our inquiry. To take just a few examples, the Rt Hon Tom Brake, Member of Parliament for Carshalton and Wallington, told us about the borough commander in Sutton, Detective Chief Superintendent Guy Ferguson, who unexpectedly found himself leading a baton charge down Sutton High Street. We also heard from Temporary Assistant Chief Constable Bob Sanderson of South Yorkshire Police, about how, once South Yorkshire Police saw what was happening elsewhere in the country, they did not rely on the guidance manual, but took various local initiatives to reduce the likelihood of such disturbances occurring in their area.

37. We do not want lessons from policing the August 2011 disorder to be forgotten, but—in the light of concerns we have expressed in previous reports about reducing bureaucracy and paperwork in the police service, and questions about the suitability of the *Keeping the Peace* guidance—nor do we want that guidance manual simply to be edited and expanded further. The next challenge to the police may appear similar, but may be different in reality.

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41 *Manual of Guidance on Keeping the Peace*, 2010, p 8

42 Ev 152

43 *Manual of Guidance on Keeping the Peace*, p 8

44 Q 566

The priority must be to ensure that the police are able to respond intelligently and that they have the flexibility and resilience to respond to any circumstances that arise in the future. Training and advice on public order policing should be provided, but there should be more discretion for local forces and commanders, and officers on the front line, to respond to individual situations of public disorder in the way that they think best, instead of an expectation that the answers will be contained in the guidance manual. We hope the way in which we, the Government and many others have reflected on the events of August will help the police in meeting the next challenge, but in the end it will come down to the ability of the police service to anticipate and respond to local developments and to co-operate effectively with each other across the country, and with all their local partners.

38. The Metropolitan Police Service defines the three different levels of public order training as follows:

Level 1—the Territorial Support Group, who receive Public Order training every five weeks.

Level 2—officers who receive public order training every 18 months, and can be called upon to police public order events.

Level 3—officers with no specialist public order training or kit, who can assist with policing cordons etc.<sup>45</sup>

All police officers are level 3 public order trained. The August disorder has raised the question of whether more, or indeed all, officers should be level 2 trained and Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary is expected to make a recommendation on this. Clearly, it will have to take into account the cost implications of any increase in level 2 public order training. Under measures contained in the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011, the Strategic Policing Requirement will set out the Home Secretary's assessment of national threats and the appropriate capabilities to counter these threats. **The number of officers who should be level 2 public order trained should be specified in the Strategic Policing Requirement.**

39. The Institute of Civil Protection and Emergency Management, the members of which include retired senior police officers, commented on the importance of identifying and training public order commanders:

The key to successful public order policing does not rely on more equipment or more legislation but the careful selection and training of appropriate police commanders to deal effectively with outbreaks of public disorder. It is a fallacy to believe that every senior or middle-ranking police officer will make a good public order commander. In the same way as there are those who have a talent for computer or communication systems, administration, organisational planning (as opposed to operational planning) or criminal investigation, there are those who have a similar talent for handling serious public disorder. It is essential that such individuals are identified and given appropriate training.<sup>46</sup>

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45 Ev 157

46 Ev w62

Police forces need to identify officers who are likely to have the skills necessary for public order command and to train them accordingly. The ability to act spontaneously and use initiative should be among those skills. Public disorder of the nature and scale seen in August is rare. The Institute commented: “Few of the police commanders who were involved in policing the 2011 outbreaks of disorder may face such situations again.”<sup>47</sup> This makes the need for training all the more important.

40. Sir Denis O’Connor, Her Majesty’s Chief Inspector of Constabulary, told us that there had been relatively low levels of public disorder in recent years, and consequently, police training in this area had been “insufficient.” He commented that, given that those involved in disorder can use social media to organise themselves quickly and attempt to outmanoeuvre the police, there is a need to focus on a “devolved command” structure. He added: “but you need to prep for that in a way we haven’t before.”<sup>48</sup> He emphasised that the issue was not simply about numbers of police officers, but “about the people you have being highly skilled, prepared and ready to go”.<sup>49</sup> **In fast-moving situations involving public disorder, devolved command is vital: local commanders should have the discretion, and the necessary training, to make their own assessment of the situation and of what tactics to deploy, rather than rely on the guidance manual. We are not convinced that the public order training for commanders, and for individual officers, is adequate at present. Nor does it encourage flexibility and spontaneity. We urge the Government to take our concerns into account when considering its response to the recommendations on public order training made in the review by Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabulary.**

## Police numbers

41. The tactics that the police could employ to tackle the disorder were inevitably determined to some extent by the number of police officers available. As we have already said, what made the August disorder unprecedented was the sheer number of different incidents taking place in a wide range locations over a relatively short period of time. Sir Hugh Orde, President of the Association of Chief Police Officers, commented: “The tactics were simply a function of the number of officers available on the ground to deliver.”<sup>50</sup> The then Acting Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police, Tim Godwin, stated that the police had a “full range of tactics” to deploy and that it was purely numbers that were “the inhibitor”.<sup>51</sup>

42. The effect of increasing the number of police available to deploy can be seen most starkly in London, where 22 out of 32 boroughs were affected by the disorder. On the evenings of Saturday 6 and Sunday 7 August, 3,000 uniformed officers were on duty across London. On the evening of Monday 8 August, 6,000 uniformed officers were on duty, but the disorder in London was not finally quelled until Tuesday 9 August, when 16,000

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47 *Ibid.*

48 Q 797

49 Q 805

50 Q 122

51 Q 80

uniformed officers were on duty.<sup>52</sup> The Home Secretary commented: “It was when they increased the numbers that they put on the streets, together with a tough arrest policy which we have been clear about as well, that that actually had the impact.”<sup>53</sup> The Metropolitan Police Service is carrying out a strategic review of its operation to police the disorder; its interim report stated: “in hindsight, the numbers were not enough and they did not arrive quickly enough to deal with the speed with which the violence escalated.”<sup>54</sup>

43. Both in London and elsewhere in the country, police officers were sometimes not present at all in areas where disorder was taking place, or were present but were considerably outnumbered. The absence of a police presence or the sight of police officers apparently standing by and allowing criminal behaviour to take place was distressing for those whose homes and businesses were being attacked.

44. The Rt Hon Malcolm Wicks, the Member of Parliament for Croydon North, in the debate on 11 August, praised brave police officers, firefighters and ambulance staff, but added that the thin blue line was very thin indeed. He then went on to say:

I heard dozens of reports ... that the police had effectively been nowhere to be seen. 999 calls were sometimes unanswered. When people got through, they were told that no officers were available. If they dared to call again out of fear about what was happening, they were told they were being a nuisance and ‘Please, do not call again.’ The thugs ruled the roost.<sup>55</sup>

Lynn Radose, who lived in a flat in Tottenham that was burnt down during the disorder, and who said that she and her husband were “scared for our lives”,<sup>56</sup> described her experience:

We could see the flames of the bus ... we started to see the riot getting closer to our building and there weren’t any police anywhere that we could see from our building. The only thing we could see was a police helicopter and the rioters getting closer and closer and closer.<sup>57</sup>

45. Sir Denis O’Conner, Her Majesty’s Chief Inspector of Constabulary, told us that assessing the critical mass required to deal with large-scale public disorder entailed consideration not only of the number of officers, or even the number of officers who were level 2 trained, but the number of officers required in order to “go forward and arrest people”.<sup>58</sup> He stated:

It will actually help that we have more people who can stand, hold and protect but ... that is not enough when people are flash-mobbing across the capital city. You might

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52 Figures provided by the Metropolitan Police, Ev 157

53 Q 210

54 Metropolitan Police Service, *Operation Kirkin: Strategic Review, Interim Report*, 30 November 2011, p 4

55 HC Deb, 11 August 2011, col 1174

56 Q 268

57 Q 264

58 Q 803

have more to stand, hold and protect, but not to go forward and disrupt. Essentially, we favour a strategy of disrupting and intercepting the people.<sup>59</sup>

46. There is also anecdotal evidence that some people became involved in the disorder because they saw the police standing by and not arresting anyone, or because there were no police present at all. This was the view of the young people we spoke to at Feltham Young Offenders Institution. The fact that arrests would be made later, using CCTV footage, does not seem to have been appreciated by some of those who took part, who assumed that a lack of arrests at the time meant that looters were getting away with it, an assumption which may well have underlain their decision to join in.

**47. What ultimately worked in quelling the disorder was increasing the number of police officers on duty and flooding the streets with police. If numbers could have been increased more rapidly, it is possible that some of the disturbances could have been avoided. We regret that this did not happen and, with the benefit of hindsight, we regard the operation to police the disorder in many towns and cities, and particularly in London, as flawed. In future, in the event of similar disorder, the focus should be on increasing the number of officers on the streets as quickly as possible, both by deploying the maximum number of officers from within the force in question, and by calling on the resources of neighbouring forces and, if necessary, forces from across the country. Ultimately, the effectiveness of the tactics the police have at their disposal to address large-scale disorder depends on there being sufficient police officers available to put these tactics into effect. Without the necessary numbers, the tactics cannot be deployed. During the summer 2011 incidents, flooding the streets with police appears to have been vital. A strong police presence should also have a deterrent effect on those opportunists considering joining in the disorder. The single most important reason why the disorder spread was the perception, relayed by television as well as new social media, that in some areas the police had lost control of the streets.**

## Mutual aid

48. Police forces have at their disposal not only their own officers but also, in situations when their own officers are not sufficient, officers from other forces. The arrangement by which one force loans officers to another is known as mutual aid. Initially, mutual aid is arranged regionally by the police force that requires assistance. One police force can ask a neighbouring force for a loan of officers, as the Metropolitan Police did in the early stages of the disorder. However, when larger numbers of officers are required, and a greater geographical reach comes in to play, there is a formal arrangement for co-ordinating mutual aid, led by the Police National Information and Co-ordination Centre, which is part of the Association of Chief Police Officers.

49. The Association of Chief Police Officers told us that, during the disturbances, the first formal request for mutual aid came from the Metropolitan Police Service on Monday 8 August. On 9 August, requests for mutual aid were also received from Avon and Somerset, Gloucestershire, Greater Manchester, Nottinghamshire and the West Midlands. The Association commented:

The scale of mutual aid required multiplied by the number of forces involved required swift and effective action. ACPO PNICC [Police National Information and Co-ordination Centre] rose to that challenge – PNICC staff worked tirelessly to ensure that colleagues in all forces that had requested mutual aid had the resources they sought and that the level of aid was sustained where the force considered it necessary. This was extremely complicated given the number of forces requiring aid but no force failed to receive the resources that it had requested.<sup>60</sup>

50. The Police National Information and Co-ordination Centre uses Police Support Units as its currency. A Police Support Unit consists of 25 police officers and two medics. The table below shows the overall number of Police Support Units provided to forces by mutual aid by date. The use of mutual aid by the Metropolitan Police Service beyond 14 August does not indicate that the Metropolitan Police Service uses mutual aid on a permanent basis; it reflects the need to police the Notting Hill Carnival and the planned English Defence League march in Tower Hamlets on 3 September, which was subsequently cancelled.

Table 1: Number of Police Support Units provided to forces by mutual aid, by date

Date/Period	Total No of Police Support Units	Metropolitan Police Service	Others
8.8.11	12	12	
9.8.11	66	50	16
10.8.11	80	42	38
11.8.11	65	42	23
12.8.11	63	40	23
13.8.11	64	40	24
14.8.11	45	40	5
15.8.11	40	40	
16.8.11	34	34	
17 – 18.8.11	10	10	
19 – 21.8.11	40	40	
22 – 25.8.11	10	10	
26 – 29.8.11 (Notting Hill Carnival)	50	50	
30.8 – 4.9.11	10	10	

Source: ACPO written evidence

51. In one sense, as the Association of Chief Police Officers pointed out, the mutual aid system worked: no police force failed to receive the aid it requested. However, there are issues about whether the system could have operated more quickly and whether it left areas that had loaned officers to other forces vulnerable. Chief Constable Peter Fahy of Greater Manchester Police told us that his force loaned officers to the Metropolitan Police “as part of national mutual aid” the day before disorder broke out in Manchester.<sup>61</sup> Cambridgeshire Constabulary told us:

The Constabulary responded effectively to requests from the PNICC [Police National Information and Co-ordination Centre] and deployed 120 officers per day

60 Ev 157

61 Q 356



for a considerable period of time. The force only has 240 officers PSU [Police Support Unit] trained and abstraction has stretched the force's resilience.<sup>62</sup>

Acting Commissioner Tim Godwin stated: "The thin blue line is quite thin on occasion."<sup>63</sup> The August disturbances were one of these occasions.

52. The future of the arrangements for co-ordinating mutual aid is not entirely clear, due to the proposed structural changes that the Government intends to make to the bodies that are intended to enable police forces to function effectively—as described in a previous report as the "landscape" of policing.<sup>64</sup> Under these changes, it is possible that the Association of Chief Police Officers will cease to exist, and that its current responsibilities will fall either to a Professional Body for policing, or to a Council of Chief Constables. Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Constabulary, Sir Denis O'Connor, also stressed to us that the current capacity of the Police National Information and Co-ordination Centre, within the Association of Chief Police Officers, to co-ordinate mutual aid was very limited.

**53. The current mutual aid system is intended to deal with increased demand for police officers in one or a few areas. Different arrangements are required for re-deploying officers where there is widespread disorder. The Government must also make it clear which body would be responsible for co-ordinating mutual aid if the Association of Chief Police Officers were to cease to exist under structural changes to the landscape of policing. It is also very important to appreciate just how much depends on mutual confidence and co-operation and not just top-down administrative arrangements. Any new arrangements which merely clarify who is responsible and fail to nurture joint working and co-operation will be extremely fragile and possibly doomed to failure.**

## Police interaction with businesses

54. We discuss communication between the police and the public more generally in our chapter on social media. Here we are concerned with communication between the police and businesses. Speaking of the relationship between the police and small businesses more generally, Ann Swain, Home Affairs Chairman at the Federation of Small Businesses, told us "there is the general feel among small businesses that police are not interested in crime against businesses" and said the rural industrial estates were a particular concern. She agreed with the suggestion that a strategy to tackle business crime should be a requirement for all police forces, although she acknowledged that some forces, for example Sussex Police, which had set up a Business Watch to cover rural industrial estates, engaged "very effectively" with the business community.<sup>65</sup>

55. The issue of how the police passed information on to businesses during the disturbances causes us some concern. Ann Swain commented that in Manchester the Federation of Small Businesses itself was used as a channel for communication. However, she described the communication in other areas as "patchy", stating: "One group of

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62 Ev w25

63 Q111

64 For further information, please see our report on the "New Landscape of Policing", Fourteenth report of Session 2010-12.

65 Qq 745-48

businesses would be given one set of advice and then another group nearby would be given a different set of advice, so when they talked absolute confusion then reigned.”<sup>66</sup> The evidence of Jane Ellison, the Member of Parliament for Battersea, who visited shops and restaurants in her constituency in person to advise them to close, also bears out the argument that the approach to informing businesses was somewhat haphazard. She commented:

All the little shops were still open and all the little takeaways and restaurants. The only significant large shop in that road...was shut...Either they had taken a head office decision or they had had intelligence that the smaller shops were not privy to.<sup>67</sup>

**All police forces should have a communication strategy in place so that if it is decided that there is a credible threat of severe public disorder, all businesses in the affected area are given early and consistent advice about what action they should take. The strategy should be drawn up in conjunction with business as a partnership document, making use of arrangements within the local business community where these can be depended on.**

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66 Q 742

67 Q 341

## 4 Costs of policing the disorder

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### The nature of the costs

56. Costs to police authorities from the August disturbances arise in four main ways:

- the cost of providing mutual aid (the loan of officers from one force to another; the cost is usually borne by the force that requests the aid, with a significant uplift generally also applicable on the basis of the Hertfordshire agreement);
- opportunity costs (the benefit loss from an officer being deployed away from their normal duties);
- the cost of in-force deployments;
- claims for compensation made under the Riot (Damages) Act 1886.

57. The Association of Chief Police Officers told us on 24 November 2011 that, across the United Kingdom, the current estimated total cost of the operation to police the disorder was £89.827 million, of which £21.588 million related to mutual aid, and £68.239 million to in-force costs. The cost of paying for claims for compensation under the Riot (Damages) Act is not included in this total. A full break down of the costs, by force, is included in the written evidence. The Association stated: “The total costs include costs of cancelling rest days, changed shifts, additional overtime etc and some travelling and subsistence costs.”<sup>68</sup> The Association emphasised that calculating the costs was a work in progress, that there was some outstanding information, and that it was unlikely to have a final picture until the new year.

58. The cost of paying for claims under the Riot (Damages) Act is not yet known. The Prime Minister stated in November that police authorities had received about 5,000 claims, which were currently in the process of being assessed. He commented: “Many of these claims are complex and will take time to process. It will therefore be some time before we know the final costs falling to individual authorities.”<sup>69</sup>

### Reimbursing the costs

59. The Association of Chief Police Officers told us:

A key issue ... for forces in the aftermath of the disorder, will be the question of reimbursement ... In light of the economic climate and the planned budget cuts for policing, as well as the unique nature of recent operational challenges, we believe that

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68 Ev 140

69 Letter from the Prime Minister to Rt Hon Keith Vaz MP, 10 November 2011

it would be appropriate for government to think outside existing mechanisms to ensure that police force costs are fully reimbursed.<sup>70</sup>

The Association of Police Authorities stated that it was seeking “a blanket policy of 100% claw back of all costs of these unprecedented disturbances from Her Majesty’s Government.” It also expressed concern that prudent police authorities could be penalised if reserves were taken into account when calculating repayments:

those police authorities, who have exercised prudent financial management over recent years, could potentially be penalised as a result of the recent disturbances. The existing procedures for allocation of Home Office special grants, is predicated on an assessment of authorities’ existing budget and reserves. In such circumstances those with healthier reserves would be expected to pay more.<sup>71</sup>

60. During the debate about the disorder in the House of Commons on 11 August, the following exchange took place:

**Keith Vaz:** ...Is the Prime Minister saying that, if a police force has to dip into contingencies to pay for what has happened in the past few days, the Government will reimburse all the money?

**The Prime Minister:** ...The Treasury is standing ready to assist police forces. Clearly, the bill for the Metropolitan police force for the past few days will be large and, if they continue to deploy in those numbers, it will get larger and the Treasury will stand behind that.<sup>72</sup>

Appearing before the Liaison Committee on 8 November, the Prime Minister stated:

First, on the Riot (Damages) Act, people claim through the police and we have said that we would stand behind that. In terms of the additional cost of policing, my understanding is that if individual police budgets are overspent by more than 5% on policing the riots, they will put in a request to the Home Office, so there is a sort of process for that. I am sure that the Home Office will look at that very sympathetically.<sup>73</sup>

Reimbursing police authorities who have overspent their budget by more than 5% as a result of policing the disorder strikes us as somewhat arbitrary and may even create a perverse incentive to police authorities to reach the 5% figure when calculating their costs.

**61. The Government should urgently clarify whether police authorities will be able to recover the total cost of policing the riots, as initially suggested by the Prime Minister. The August disturbances were an exceptional series of events and, at a time when police authorities are being asked to make significant savings quickly, they might reasonably request assistance in meeting the cost of the policing operation.**

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70 Ev 152

71 Ev w67

72 HC Deb, 11 August 2011, cols 1064-65

73 Uncorrected transcript of oral evidence taken before the Liaison Committee on 8 November 2011, HC (2010-12) 608-iv, Q 304

## The Riot (Damages) Act 1886

62. The Riot (Damages) Act 1886 enables people to claim compensation for loss or damage to their home or business as a result of riots. The Act cannot be used to claim compensation for personal injury, vehicles that were damaged or stolen (unless the vehicle was inside a building that was damaged), or loss of trading. Normally, claims under the Act have to be made within 14 days, but in his speech to the House on 11 August, the Prime Minister stated that the deadline would be extended to 42 days for those who wished to make a claim as a result of the August disturbances. Birmingham City Council told us that it welcomed the extension to the deadline and the British Insurers Brokers Association commented that it strongly recommended “that the 14 days be changed to a minimum 42 days on a permanent basis.”<sup>74</sup>

63. The British Insurance Brokers’ Association also stated that there was initial “confusion” about the application of the Act and that the “Government was not sufficiently prepared to react immediately to meet their statutory duties when the riots first began”.<sup>75</sup> It commented that the statutory claim form was not available straight away and “when BIBA finally obtained the form itself it was so outdated it contained columns for pounds, shillings and pence.” The Association helped the Government to design a new form and stated: “After considerable effort by the Government and the insurance industry, BIBA believes that the Government is now in a position to respond to future riots claims under the Act, but the period of uncertainty and confusion was of great concern.”<sup>76</sup>

64. Although the Prime Minister has clearly stated that the “Government will ensure the police have the funds they need to meet the cost of any legitimate claims”,<sup>77</sup> the Riots (Damages) Act is a controversial piece of legislation. The Association of Police Authorities commented that it endorsed the recommendation of our predecessor Committee in 2002 that the Act should be repealed because it is out of date. It stated: “the Act has serious flaws (it does not include cover for motor vehicles parked on the street as there were no motor vehicles in 1886), and it was introduced at a time of much lower levels of insurance provision by the private sector.”<sup>78</sup>

65. The Association of British Insurers, on the other hand, commented that the Act, “remains fit for purpose and a useful piece of legislation which shares the risks between the State and the private sector.”<sup>79</sup> The Association stated that, although the insurance industry offers policies to cover riot damages, not everyone takes out such insurance and commented:

We expect thousands of claims to be made under the Act by the uninsured and without it they would be left uncompensated against acts of violence and looting which were no fault of their own. We believe that, just as victims of crime can be

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74 Ev w43; Ev w75

75 Ev w75

76 *Ibid.*

77 HC Deb, 11 August 2011, c 1053

78 Ev w67

79 Ev w31

compensated under the Criminal Injuries Compensation Scheme, victims of the recent riots should also be afforded compensation for their losses.<sup>80</sup>

It noted that insurers can “recover some of their outlay under the Act”, although not in cases where policy coverage exceeds the coverage provided by the Act, and stated:

Without the comfort that insurers take from the existence of the Act and the fact that they can recover a proportion of their losses under it, the insurance market is likely to behave differently than it currently does. Insurers would be more likely to seek to try to assess the risk of rioting and the likely cost of rioting in particular areas and for particular businesses and properties.<sup>81</sup>

**66. The Riot (Damages) Act 1886 is something of an anomaly. There are few types of damage or loss which are the subject of financial compensation by the state. In order to defray some of the costs to the state of paying out under the Act, we recommend that the victims surcharge, which is currently payable at a flat rate of £15, be reviewed to consider whether in future it should be increased for public order incidents where the Riot (Damages) Act 1886 could be invoked, and in other cases where compensation is triggered. We further recommend that the deadline for making a claim under the Act be permanently extended to 42 days. In the light of the concerns expressed by Darra Singh, the Chair of the Riots Communities and Victims panel, we urge the Government to speed up the process of reimbursing people under the Act.**

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80 *Ibid.*

81 *Ibid.*

## 5 The role of social media

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67. By social media we are referring mainly to internet-based sites that enable people or organisations instantaneously to exchange messages with a large number of other people, Facebook and Twitter being two of the main examples. We have included under this heading BlackBerry Messenger, a service which is available to people who have BlackBerry mobile phones, and which enables people to form groups and instantly to exchange encrypted messages within that group. There were both negative and positive aspects to the use of such media during the disturbances.

### Using social media to incite criminality

68. One clear negative aspect, which received a lot of coverage in the days and weeks immediately after the disturbances, was what the Association of Chief Police Officers described as “the use of ‘chitter-chatter’ via social media sites by the criminals engaged in the unrest”.<sup>82</sup> The Home Secretary told the House: “Social networking sites such as Twitter and Facebook and messaging services such as BlackBerry Messenger have been used to co-ordinate criminality and stay one step ahead of the police.”<sup>83</sup>

69. In practice, social media that easily enable the exchange of encrypted messages, as BlackBerry Messenger does, are more likely to be used by those with serious criminal intent than unencrypted networks such as Twitter. We heard limited, anecdotal evidence of BlackBerry Messenger being used to encourage disorder. David Lammy told us that he found out that “there were text messages going around prior to Saturday night [6 August] encouraging violence on BlackBerry Messenger networks.”<sup>84</sup> Stephen Bates, the UK and Ireland Managing Director of Research in Motion, which produces the BlackBerry device, told us: “There is no dispute that social media was used for malicious purposes.”<sup>85</sup>

70. Richard Allan, Director of Policy at Facebook, said that Facebook had found “a handful of cases” in which Facebook had been used to incite disturbances.<sup>86</sup> There have been a small number of prosecutions of people who used Facebook to incite disorder: two men were sentenced to four years in August, one was sentenced to four years in November, and two were sentenced to three years in December.

71. When Alexander Macgillivray, General Counsel at Twitter, was asked whether it was clear that Twitter had been used to incite disorder, he replied:

We haven’t seen that, at least I have not seen it yet in this particular case. There are a bunch of different organisations looking at the public tweets. One of the advantages

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82 Ev 152

83 HC Deb, 11 August 2011, col 1141

84 Q 254

85 Q 502

86 Q 504

of our network is that, of course, it is public so people can look and examine and tell us more than we would know about what is going on.<sup>87</sup>

Paul Lewis, a *Guardian* journalist who, together with Professor Tim Newburn from the London School of Economics, is leading the “Reading the Riots” study, which is examining riots-related messages on Twitter, commented: “I think the evidence that Twitter was used by people who were rioting is extremely slim at the moment, despite what many people say.”<sup>88</sup>

72. Nathan Chin, a young person who had turned his life around with help from the Prince’s Trust, commented:

I think, as well, that the TV, the media, never helped the situation. When you saw what was going on in Tottenham, it allowed everybody in the whole of the country to think, “Hold on, if they can do it there, this can happen in our city.”<sup>89</sup>

The young people we met at Feltham Young Offenders Institution had heard about the disorder through word of mouth or by watching the television. We have mentioned already that we believe that there was a significant copycat element to the disorder. Television images showing individuals apparently getting away with looting while the police were either absent or not actively intervening played a significant part in encouraging such behaviour.

**73. Some of those who took part in the disturbances undoubtedly did use social media to communicate with each other. However, other, older forms of communication and more traditional media also played a part in spreading the disorder. People who made an active decision to join in the disorder could equally well have learned about it on the television as on social media.**

## Social media as a source of intelligence

74. The spread of social media provides the police with a new source of intelligence, but a far from straightforward one. Sir Denis O’Connor, Her Majesty’s Chief Inspector of Constabulary, described social media as a “game changer”, but said that currently the police were “not geared” to make use of the data.<sup>90</sup> The main difficulty, as several senior police officers pointed out to us, is the sheer volume of information involved and the task of distinguishing credible threats from rumour and speculation. Assistant Chief Constable Sharon Rowe of the West Midlands Police, summarised the situation as follows:

on the social media ... I do think there is a challenge for policing nationally ... on how we ... evaluate that information to turn it into intelligence. We are into a totally new game now and a new world of fast dynamics where we have to put a policing operation in very quick time in place. We have that challenge of being able to

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87 Q 507

88 Q 599

89 Q 665

90 Q 812



evaluate what is true and what is rumour ... I think we have to ask some questions around how are we to turn that intelligence around quicker.<sup>91</sup>

The use of intelligence from social media forms part of the review of public order policing by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and we look forward to the results of this work. There is an urgent need to establish best practice in this relatively new area.

## Using social media to inform and reassure

75. It is clear that social media were also put to good use during the disturbances: sites such as Twitter and Facebook enabled police forces quickly to convey accurate and up-to-date information to the public. Nottinghamshire Police, for example, made what it described on its website as “significant use of its Twitter and Facebook accounts to ensure residents were provided with information and reassurance.” The decision to do this was made at 6 pm on Tuesday 9 August. At that stage, the force had about 2,000 followers—that is, people who subscribed to its messages—on Twitter. By 5 am on Wednesday 10 August, it had 12,650 followers. The number of people accessing the force's Facebook page rose from 700 at 6 pm on Tuesday 9 August to 2,633 by 5 am on Wednesday 10 August.<sup>92</sup> Temporary Assistant Chief Constable Bob Sanderson of South Yorkshire Police, an area that did not experience any disorder, told us that social media was a key factor “both in terms of assessing the mood of communities and how they were feeling, but more importantly to provide that reassurance and the factual information”.<sup>93</sup> Examples of messages left on South Yorkshire's social media sites in response to these updates certainly suggest the public found them useful. Temporary Assistant Chief Constable Sanderson commented:

One tweet read, “It's like being tucked up by the police every night and reassured all day.” Another said, “Thank you for the updates last night. I had a great sleep because of you. Well done.” I could go on and on, because there were dozens and dozens of individuals who tweeted those positive messages back.<sup>94</sup>

76. Assistant Chief Constable Terry Sweeney of Greater Manchester Police stated: “it [social media] was particularly important in mobilising the support of the community behind the police response.”<sup>95</sup> Social media was also used by members of the public to keep each other informed about the spread of the disorder in order to stay safe and avoid the trouble. Mr Andrew Nicholas, who runs a family building company in Enfield, told us that one of his members of staff

was aware quite early on during the course of Sunday that something was going to happen, because younger members of her family were being contacted via social media groups to tell them that they had heard that something was going to happen and that they should stay indoors and not go out.<sup>96</sup>

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91 Q 445

92 [http://nottinghamshire.police.uk/newsandevents/news/2011/august/09/keeping\\_the\\_public\\_informed/](http://nottinghamshire.police.uk/newsandevents/news/2011/august/09/keeping_the_public_informed/)

93 Q 753

94 Q 754

95 Q 377

96 Q 243

77. We commend the police forces that used social media during the August disturbances to spread messages to inform and reassure the public. We recommend that all forces make use of these media, both at times when unusual incidents are taking place and on an everyday basis. They are a cost and time effective way of improving the connection between the police and some sections of the public. By no means everyone uses such media, so there will still be a need to communicate by more traditional means, but forces should actively encourage people to sign up to their Twitter and Facebook accounts to receive the latest information.

### Potential shutting down of social media

78. Although there is some evidence that BlackBerry Messenger and to a more limited extent Facebook were used to incite criminal behaviour, none of our witnesses recommended shutting down social media during times of widespread and serious disorder. They all agreed that there were positive and negative aspects to the use of such media and that, in the words of Acting Commissioner Tim Godwin, it would have been a “net negative to turn it off.”<sup>97</sup> Even David Lammy, who called for the suspension of BlackBerry Messenger while the disorder was taking place, said: “I called for suspension in the heat of the problems. Clearly, the police were able to get order without suspension, so that is not my view now.”<sup>98</sup> **It would be actively unhelpful to switch off social media during times of widespread and serious disorder and we strongly recommend that this does not happen.**

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97 Q 113

98 Q 287

## 6 Conclusion

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79. The disturbances in August were an exceptional series of events, and although their disparate nature makes it hard to draw many overarching conclusions, there are clearly some lessons to be learned from the way in which the operation was policed. Individual police officers acted with great bravery during the disorder. We also share the view of the then acting Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police, Tim Godwin, that it was a strength of the police operation that it filled prison places, rather than hospital beds, although clearly both of these are a sign of failure to prevent the situation from arising in the first place. Overall the police service needs to improve the way in which it addresses public order situations. One of the key factors that underpinned the rioting was that people saw others apparently getting away with looting and other forms of criminality.

80. We reiterate that what ultimately worked in quelling the disorder was increasing the number of police officers on the street. Mutual aid arrangements need to be reviewed to assess whether it would be possible to increase numbers more rapidly and to determine how best to deal with a situation in which different forces in different areas of the country require additional assistance at the same time. The use of social media, both as a source of intelligence and as a way to reassure and inform the public, is also an emerging area of public order policing that requires urgent attention. There were examples of good practice during the August disorder that should be built upon in the future. There will no doubt be other lessons to be learned from the other national and local reviews into the disorder and we await their publication with interest.

81. In the aftermath of the riots and looting in London and in a number of other cities, there was a search for immediate explanations and causes. We, with the encouragement of the Government, agreed to undertake an inquiry. We hope that this report provides a useful insight into the events themselves but if anybody hoped that we would find specific causes, they will be disappointed. It has been clear from the start that the death of Mark Duggan acted as a trigger. It is also clear that there was a great deal of “copycat” activity. But the clarity ends there.

82. Even in Tottenham, it is not clear that the circumstances surrounding the death of Mark Duggan were the only influences at play. In other locations, the link to the original trigger is even more tenuous and provides no explanation for what went on.

83. There have been several other inquiries and reports. Some of them have looked at specific aspects of behaviour, interviewed specific group of people, or concentrated on police responses, training or logistical requirements. Each has provided insights, but none of them gives a full picture and despite the considerable amount of work and evidence-gathering that we have undertaken, we too have to admit that no clear causes and explanations have emerged. There may be an element of disengagement on the part of some of those involved in the disorder, but unlike some events in the past, including the riots in the 1980s, there does not seem to be any clear narrative, nor a clear element of protest or clear political objectives.

84. There may have been some elements of organisation in some locations. There may also have been some engagement by gangs, but in general this seems to have been opportunistic rather than organised and, on this occasion, appears not to have been a significant cause of the rioting and looting. Many people seem to have been drawn into criminal activity almost on the basis of joining in a big party and without any sense of the seriousness of the acts they were undertaking. In Feltham Young Offenders Institution, we met rioters who had been in work and had a secure future in front of them. Some of the rioters were well off and many were young adults rather than teenagers, whose sense of risk is often less than that of adults. In a number of locations, the police were certainly taken by surprise and were often policing the situation based on wrong assumptions about what they were dealing with. But none of this leads to a clear picture, nor an explanation of causes and underlying influences. We believe we have made a useful contribution, even though we have not been able to reach complete conclusions. Some further information may emerge in the coming months, perhaps arising out of inquests and the investigations of the Independent Police Complaints Commission. We await the Government's response to our report with interest and will then decide what further action to take.

## Appendix: Terms of reference

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The Home Affairs Committee is holding an inquiry into the lessons that may be learned from the wide-scale rioting and looting by predominantly young people in London, Birmingham, Bristol, Nottingham, Liverpool, Manchester and other cities in August 2011. In particular, the Committee is interested in:

- Police relations with the communities where violence took place before the riots, including similarities with and differences from previous public disorder events;
- The role of social media in spreading disorder and in the response to it;
- The role of organised groups in promoting disorder;
- The role of the IPCC, HM Inspectorate of Constabulary, and ACPO/NPIA public order guidance;
- The techniques used by the police to quell the rioting, including:
  - a) Decisions taken over the deployment of police officers (availability of officers, response times)
  - b) The use of standard techniques: containment, dispersal, specialist public order officers, dogs, horses,
  - c) The deployment of non-standard techniques: armoured police cars, baton rounds, water cannon, curfews
    - Variations in the responses of different police forces;
    - Lessons to be learned from the police response to previous public disorder incidents;
    - Training of officers to deal with riots;
    - Whether there were any constraints on the police such as limited resources or powers;
    - Whether there should be any changes to the legislation regulating normal policing processes during times of major disorder;
    - Whether the age of many of the rioters constrained the police in their use of anti-riot technique;
    - The application of the Riot (Damages) Act 1886; and
    - To revisit relevant recommendations made in previous Home Affairs Committee reports into Policing the G20 protests and Knife crime, and other relevant recommendations, to assess if they have been implemented by successive governments.

## Conclusions and recommendations

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1. The death of Mark Duggan was a significant factor in the disorder that took place in Tottenham. In the event of a fatal shooting of a member of the public by a police officer, it is essential that the force concerned communicates swiftly with the victim's family. There is no excuse for confusion about whose role this should be: a family liaison officer should be dispatched immediately by the force in question. Until this has happened, no substantive public comment should be made, and the name of the deceased should not be released. Guidance on family liaison in the event of a death after police contact is provided in a National Policing Improvement Agency manual from 2008. The Agency should update this guidance to make it clear what information local police are responsible for communicating to the family and the community, and what should be left to the Independent Police Complaints Commission. The initial communication should be followed by regular communication between the Independent Police Complaints Commission and the victim's family. It is also essential that the Commission and the local police communicate accurately with the press and the public. There should be a protocol in place to ensure that staff at the Commission are clear about what information can be publicly confirmed, particularly in the very early stages of an investigation. (Paragraph 16)
2. We note in passing our continuing dissatisfaction that the Independent Police Complaints Commission still does not have a permanent Chair, more than 18 months since Nick Hardwick's move to become Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Prisons was announced. We are concerned that this lack of leadership is affecting the work of the Commission. We call on the Government to fill this vacancy as a matter of urgency and to put in place arrangements to ensure that long gaps of this sort are avoided in relation to public appointments. (Paragraph 17)
3. Given that the disorder had a significantly different character in different areas of the country, we recommend that all data produced by the Government in relation to the disorder should ultimately be broken down to a district level, and that an explanation be given if this is not possible. (Paragraph 19)
4. There was a substantial element of opportunistic criminality to the disorder that took place in August 2011, and of copycat behaviour. (Paragraph 20)
5. Projects that have as one of their aims the improvement of relations between the police and young people are to be encouraged. The age profile we discussed earlier suggests the need to focus on young adults, as well as those below the age of 18. At a time when there is pressure to cut budgets, such projects need to produce quantitative and qualitative data to demonstrate their impact, to help funding bodies make evidence-based choices about how to distribute resources. While such activities and projects are to be commended, we nevertheless remain concerned at the number of young people who continue to complain about what they perceive as police hostility towards them. (Paragraph 23)

6. There is a need for an agreed definition of a “gang” in this context. The Home Secretary should clarify what the Home Office means by the term in the context of the August disorder and the methodology used to establish whether a particular individual was “affiliated to a gang”. (Paragraph 24)
7. We were pleased to see evidence of local initiatives to tackle gang culture, such as the programme that is currently being run by Waltham Forest Council. The Home Office should continue its role in keeping track of the progress and success of such initiatives and ensuring that examples of good practice are disseminated to other local public sector bodies and agencies. We encourage other councils to study the anti-gang work that is being carried out by Waltham Forest. (Paragraph 28)
8. We cannot recommend any increase in police powers as a result of the August disturbances without seeing specific evidence of a need for such powers and none came our way during this inquiry. It is our view that in the situation then prevailing, it would have been inappropriate as well as dangerous, to have employed water cannon and baton rounds. We agree with our witnesses, including senior police officers, that such use could have escalated and inflamed the situation further. The lessons learned in the past in Northern Ireland over such equipment should not be lost on policing in the mainland when rioting occurs. Water cannon in particular are an indiscriminate weapon and could have affected innocent bystanders, as well as rioters. (Paragraph 32)
9. The number of officers who should be level 2 public order trained should be specified in the Strategic Policing Requirement. (Paragraph 38)
10. In fast-moving situations involving public disorder, devolved command is vital: local commanders should have the discretion, and the necessary training, to make their own assessment of the situation and of what tactics to deploy, rather than rely on the guidance manual. We are not convinced that the public order training for commanders, and for individual officers, is adequate at present. Nor does it encourage flexibility and spontaneity. We urge the Government to take our concerns into account when considering its response to the recommendations on public order training made in the review by Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabulary. (Paragraph 40)
11. What ultimately worked in quelling the disorder was increasing the number of police officers on duty and flooding the streets with police. If numbers could have been increased more rapidly, it is possible that some of the disturbances could have been avoided. We regret that this did not happen and, with the benefit of hindsight, we regard the operation to police the disorder in many towns and cities, and particularly in London, as flawed. In future, in the event of similar disorder, the focus should be on increasing the number of officers on the streets as quickly as possible, both by deploying the maximum number of officers from within the force in question, and by calling on the resources of neighbouring forces and, if necessary, forces from across the country. Ultimately, the effectiveness of the tactics the police have at their disposal to address large-scale disorder depends on there being sufficient police officers available to put these tactics into effect. Without the necessary numbers, the tactics cannot be deployed. During the summer 2011 incidents, flooding the streets

with police appears to have been vital. A strong police presence should also have a deterrent effect on those opportunists considering joining in the disorder. The single most important reason why the disorder spread was the perception, relayed by television as well as new social media, that in some areas the police had lost control of the streets. (Paragraph 47)

12. The current mutual aid system is intended to deal with increased demand for police officers in one or a few areas. Different arrangements are required for re-deploying officers where there is widespread disorder. The Government must also make it clear which body would be responsible for co-ordinating mutual aid if the Association of Chief Police Officers were to cease to exist under structural changes to the landscape of policing. It is also very important to appreciate just how much depends on mutual confidence and co-operation and not just top-down administrative arrangements. Any new arrangements which merely clarify who is responsible and fail to nurture joint working and co-operation will be extremely fragile and possibly doomed to failure. (Paragraph 53)
13. All police forces should have a communication strategy in place so that if it is decided that there is a credible threat of severe public disorder, all businesses in the affected area are given early and consistent advice about what action they should take. The strategy should be drawn up in conjunction with business as a partnership document, making use of arrangements within the local business community where these can be depended on. (Paragraph 55)
14. The Government should urgently clarify whether police authorities will be able to recover the total cost of policing the riots, as initially suggested by the Prime Minister. The August disturbances were an exceptional series of events and, at a time when police authorities are being asked to make significant savings quickly, they might reasonably request assistance in meeting the cost of the policing operation. (Paragraph 61)
15. The Riot (Damages) Act 1886 is something of an anomaly. There are few types of damage or loss which are the subject of financial compensation by the state. In order to defray some of the costs to the state of paying out under the Act, we recommend that the victims surcharge, which is currently payable at a flat rate of £15, be reviewed to consider whether in future it should be increased for public order incidents where the Riot (Damages) Act 1886 could be invoked, and in other cases where compensation is triggered. We further recommend that the deadline for making a claim under the Act be permanently extended to 42 days. In the light of the concerns expressed by Darra Singh, the Chair of the Riots Communities and Victims panel, we urge the Government to speed up the process of reimbursing people under the Act. (Paragraph 66)
16. Some of those who took part in the disturbances undoubtedly did use social media to communicate with each other. However, other, older forms of communication and more traditional media also played a part in spreading the disorder. People who made an active decision to join in the disorder could equally well have learned about it on the television as on social media. (Paragraph 73)



17. We commend the police forces that used social media during the August disturbances to spread messages to inform and reassure the public. We recommend that all forces make use of these media, both at times when unusual incidents are taking place and on an everyday basis. They are a cost and time effective way of improving the connection between the police and some sections of the public. By no means everyone uses such media, so there will still be a need to communicate by more traditional means, but forces should actively encourage people to sign up to their Twitter and Facebook accounts to receive the latest information. (Paragraph 77)
18. It would be actively unhelpful to switch off social media during times of widespread and serious disorder and we strongly recommend that this does not happen. (Paragraph 78)
19. The disturbances in August were an exceptional series of events, and although their disparate nature makes it hard to draw many overarching conclusions, there are clearly some lessons to be learned from the way in which the operation was policed. Individual police officers acted with great bravery during the disorder. We also share the view of the then acting Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police, Tim Godwin, that it was a strength of the police operation that it filled prison places, rather than hospital beds, although clearly both of these are a sign of failure to prevent the situation from arising in the first place. Overall the police service needs to improve the way in which it addresses public order situations. One of the key factors that underpinned the rioting was that people saw others apparently getting away with looting and other forms of criminality. (Paragraph 79)
20. We reiterate that what ultimately worked in quelling the disorder was increasing the number of police officers on the street. Mutual aid arrangements need to be reviewed to assess whether it would be possible to increase numbers more rapidly and to determine how best to deal with a situation in which different forces in different areas of the country require additional assistance at the same time. The use of social media, both as a source of intelligence and as a way to reassure and inform the public, is also an emerging area of public order policing that requires urgent attention. There were examples of good practice during the August disorder that should be built upon in the future. There will no doubt be other lessons to be learned from the other national and local reviews into the disorder and we await their publication with interest. (Paragraph 80)
21. In the aftermath of the riots and looting in London and in a number of other cities, there was a search for immediate explanations and causes. We, with the encouragement of the Government, agreed to undertake an inquiry. We hope that this report provides a useful insight into the events themselves but if anybody hoped that we would find specific causes, they will be disappointed. It has been clear from the start that the death of Mark Duggan acted as a trigger. It is also clear that there was a great deal of “copycat” activity. But the clarity ends there. (Paragraph 81)
22. Even in Tottenham, it is not clear that the circumstances surrounding the death of Mark Duggan were the only influences at play. In other locations, the link to the

original trigger is even more tenuous and provides no explanation for what went on. (Paragraph 82)

23. There have been several other inquiries and reports. Some of them have looked at specific aspects of behaviour, interviewed specific group of people, or concentrated on police responses, training or logistical requirements. Each has provided insights, but none of them gives a full picture and despite the considerable amount of work and evidence-gathering that we have undertaken, we too have to admit that no clear causes and explanations have emerged. There may be an element of disengagement on the part of some of those involved in the disorder, but unlike some events in the past, including the riots in the 1980s, there does not seem to be any clear narrative, nor a clear element of protest or clear political objectives. (Paragraph 83)
24. There may have been some elements of organisation in some locations. There may also have been some engagement by gangs, but in general this seems to have been opportunistic rather than organised and, on this occasion, appears not to have been a significant cause of the rioting and looting. Many people seem to have been drawn into criminal activity almost on the basis of joining in a big party and without any sense of the seriousness of the acts they were undertaking. In Feltham Young Offenders Institution, we met rioters who had been in work and had a secure future in front of them. Some of the rioters were well off and many were young adults rather than teenagers, whose sense of risk is often less than that of adults. In a number of locations, the police were certainly taken by surprise and were often policing the situation based on wrong assumptions about what they were dealing with. But none of this leads to a clear picture, nor an explanation of causes and underlying influences. We believe we have made a useful contribution, even though we have not been able to reach complete conclusions. Some further information may emerge in the coming months, perhaps arising out of inquests and the investigations of the Independent Police Complaints Commission. We await the Government's response to our report with interest and will then decide what further action to take. (Paragraph 84)

# Formal Minutes

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**Thursday 15 December 2011**

Members present:

Keith Vaz, in the Chair

Nicola Blackwood  
James Clappison  
Michael Ellis  
Dr Julian Huppert  
Steve McCabe

Alun Michael  
Bridget Phillipson  
Mark Reckless  
Mr David Winnick

Draft Report (*Policing Large Scale Disorder*), proposed by the Chair, brought up and read.

*Ordered*, That the draft Report be read the second time, paragraph by paragraph.

Paragraphs 1 to 47 read and agreed to.

A new paragraph—(*Mr David Winnick*)—brought up and read, as follows.

While recognising the wish of the Government to take measures to substantially reduce the deficit, we remain concerned at the scale of the expected reduction in police numbers. It has been repeatedly argued by Ministers that such reduction should not lead to any weakening of public order. However, if disturbances similar to those in August occurred again, when the number of officers would be considerably fewer, there would be strong reasons to doubt if there would be sufficient to deal with such a situation, bearing in mind the criticism that not enough were around at times in August. We would urge Ministers, in the light of events, to reconsider financial decisions which will lead to a substantial cut in police numbers.

Question put, That the paragraph be read a second time.

The Committee divided.

Ayes, 1

Mr David Winnick

Noes, 4

Nicola Blackwood

Michael Ellis

Dr Julian Huppert

Mark Reckless

Paragraph disagreed to.

Paragraphs 48 to 84 read and agreed to.

Annex agreed to.

*Resolved*, That the Report be the Sixteenth Report of the Committee to the House.

*Ordered*, That the Chair make the Report to the House.

Written evidence was ordered to be reported to the House for printing with the Report, together with written evidence reported and ordered to be published on 19 December.

*Ordered,* That embargoed copies of the Report be made available, in accordance with the provisions of Standing Order No. 134.

[Adjourned till Tuesday 20 December at 10.40 a.m.]

# Witnesses

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## Tuesday 6 September 2011

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**Boris Johnson**, Mayor of London, and **Kit Malthouse**, Deputy Mayor with responsibility for policing Ev 1

**Tim Godwin**, Acting Commissioner, and **Lynne Owens**, Assistant Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service Ev 10

**Sir Hugh Orde**, President, and **Chief Constable Tim Hollis**, Vice-President, Association of Chief Police Officers Ev 16

**Len Jackson**, Interim Chair, and **Deborah Glass**, Deputy Chair, Independent Police Complaints Commission Ev 22

## Thursday 8 September 2011

**Rt Hon Theresa May MP**, Home Secretary Ev 27

**Nick de Bois MP**, and **Mr Andrew Nicholas** Ev 37

**David Lammy MP**, **Mr Niche Mpala Mufwankolo**, owner of the Pride of Tottenham pub, and **Lynn Radose**, resident of River Heights Ev 41

**Shabana Mahmood MP**, **Amrick Ubhi**, **Khalid Mahmood MP**, and **Michael Brown** Ev 46

**Jane Ellison MP**, and the **Reverend Paul Perkin** Ev 51

## Thursday 15 September 2011

**Chief Constable Peter Fahy**, and **Assistant Chief Constable Terry Sweeney**, Greater Manchester Police Ev 56

**Chief Constable Chris Sims**, and **Assistant Chief Constable Sharon Rowe**, West Midlands Police Ev 62

**Chief Constable Julia Hodson**, and **Assistant Chief Constable Paul Broadbent**, Nottinghamshire Police Ev 68

**Stephen Bates**, Managing Director UK and Ireland, Research in Motion, Blackberry, **Richard Allan**, Director of Policy, Facebook, and **Alexander Macgillivray**, General Counsel, responsible for public policy, Twitter Ev 73

## Tuesday 11 October 2011

**Bill Bratton**, former Chief of Police, Los Angeles Police Department Ev 81

**Professor Tim Newburn**, London School of Economics, and **Paul Lewis**, Guardian journalist, Reading the Riots project Ev 85

### Tuesday 25 October 2011

**Councillor Chris Robbins**, Leader of Waltham Forest Council, and **Gary Broadhurst**, Tottenham Hotspur Foundation's Community Development Manager, Kickz Project Ev 91

**Ginny Lunn**, Director of Policy and Strategy, Prince's Trust, and **Nathan Chin**, and **Arnold Sebutinde**, young people formerly involved in gangs Ev 96

**Rt Hon. Mr Kenneth Clarke QC MP**, Lord Chancellor and Secretary of State for Justice, and **Rebecca Endean**, Director of Analytical Services, Ministry of Justice Ev 100

### Tuesday 8 November 2011

**Tom Brake MP** Ev 109

**Charles Perryman**, Chairman, South Yorkshire Police Authority, **Temporary Assistant Chief Constable Bob Sanderson**, South Yorkshire Police, and **Ann Swain**, Home Affairs Chairman, Federation of Small Businesses Ev 112

### Tuesday 22 November 2011

**Rob Berkeley**, Director, Runnymede Trust, and **Yohanes Scarlett** Ev 118

### Tuesday 29 November 2011

**Sir Dennis O'Connor**, HM Inspector of Constabulary Ev 123

**Darra Singh**, Chair of the Riots Communities and Victims Panel, and **Heather Rabbatts**, Panel Member, and **Louise Casey**, Head of the Troubled Families Team, Department for Communities and Local Government Ev 128

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(published in Volume III on the Committee's website [www.parliament.uk/homeaffairscom](http://www.parliament.uk/homeaffairscom))

1	Tony Baldry MP	Ev w1
2	Dr Roger Patrick	Ev w2
3	Robert F Bartlett MA	Ev w3
4	Association of Professional Ambulance Personnel	Ev w4
5	Anthony Sims	Ev w4
6	National Black Police Association	Ev w5
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9	Cheshire Police Authority	Ev w15
10	Councillor Paulette A Hamilton, Handsworth wood ward	Ev w16
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13	Cambridgeshire Constabulary	Ev w25
14	Airwave	Ev w29
15	Association of British Insurers	Ev w31
16	Greenwich Action for Voluntary Services Submission	Ev w33
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18	Liberty	Ev w36
19	Birmingham City Council	Ev w43
20	StopWatch policy group	Ev w45
21	Youth members of StopWatch	Ev w48
22	Southwark Council	Ev w49
23	Zero Meridian (London chapter) of the National Association of Seadogs	Ev w51
24	Croydon Xpress	Ev w54

25	City of Bradford Metropolitan District Council	Ev w56
26	Institute of Civil Protection and Emergency Management	Ev w62
27	Derby West Indian Community Association	Ev w66
28	Association of Police Authorities	Ev w67
29	Stafford Scott	Ev w71
30	British Insurance Brokers' Association	Ev w75
31	National Association for the Advancement of Coloured People UK	Ev w77
32	Sarah Hamilton	Ev w77
33	E-engage Development Ltd	Ev w79
34	Sainsbury's Supermarkets Ltd	Ev w79
35	Kickz	Ev w80: 81
36	London Criminal Justice Partnership	Ev w81: 82
37	Police Federation of England and Wales	Ev w82



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