



A New Met for London

The **STOP & SEARCH** Charter

A formal statement from the Metropolitan Police Service, co-authored by members of the public and independently governed, on how stop and search should be conducted in London.



METROPOLITAN
POLICE

MORE
TRUST

LESS
CRIME

HIGH
STANDARDS

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Foreword – Commissioner Sir Mark Rowley

Stop and search is a critical policing tool. Done well, it stops those intent on causing death, injury and fear in our communities. It takes dangerous weapons and drugs off our streets and in doing so, it saves lives.

Over the past four years, 17,500 weapons were seized as a result of stop and search, including at least 3,500 in 2024.

But done badly, it has the potential to burn through trust with those we are here to protect, undermining our founding principle of ‘policing by consent’ and damaging our efforts to keep the public safe.

Polling shows that up to 68 per cent of Londoners, including young Londoners, support the use of stop and search. But the level of support varies depending on who you ask.

Many Black Londoners, for example, have told us how stop and search creates tension between their communities and the police. But people living in these communities, which are often among those that suffer most from serious violence and drug-related crime, also tell us that they want us to do more to keep them safe.

The apprehension around stop and search isn’t limited to the public either. In recent years we’ve seen a reduction in the confidence of officers to use this important power.

They fear negative community reaction and complaints that can lead to lengthy investigations, the personal impact of which can be really challenging.

If they are to have more confidence they need to know that the communities they’re operating in back them to use this power, providing of course that they use it in the right way.

That is what this Charter sets us on a path towards. It’s not about doing less stop and search but about doing it better by improving the quality of encounters, informed by the views of the public it is intended to protect.

Many of our officers already use their powers in this area very well. They show empathy, they de-escalate and they understand the impact that being stopped and searched can have. They do all that while still recovering dangerous weapons and seizing drugs.

The Charter commits us to supporting all our officers, through improved training, more supervision and better access to technology, so they can meet that high standard their colleagues are setting.

It also gives the community a greater role in the oversight of how, when and where stop and search is used which we hope will help to build trust in a policing tactic that, so often, has been at the root of mistrust.

If we are to take the fight to those intent on causing serious violence, fear and intimidation across London then stop and search must form part of that effort. If we allow its contentious nature and the concerns associated with it to force us into doing less of it, then only the criminals win.

This Charter is particularly powerful because it has been written with communities. We’re immensely grateful to all who stepped forward to work with us. We are committed to this change and to further rebuilding trust by continuing the conversations that have made it possible so far.

Why is this needed?

Modern Stop and Search legislation and policy has come a long way since its creation, it has developed and improved as times have changed and has been aided by new technologies such as Body Worn Video. Multiple layers of governance and regulation have attempted to address issues of legality and fairness, however stop and search is still raised as a significant area of concern by the community, particularly in relation to its disproportionate use and the traumatic effect it can have on young people.

Concern as to how stop and search is used is not new, and there have been several reports and inquiries, on top of repeated community engagement in an attempt to address these issues dating back 40 years. It should be noted that there are many historical cases where policing has not lived up to the standards expected and acted in a way that has caused shock and fear in the community. The creation of generational trauma where people of different ages are affected by a different cross section of cases and scandals affects their opinion on the effectiveness of policing and is another major challenge that needs to be considered. It is

important to acknowledge that the change recommended in this document is directed towards the organisation and not to those officers who are trying so hard to serve the community. It is the responsibility of the MPS to ensure its officers are properly trained, supported and governed. This is an opportunity to reset our expectations and give officers the confidence and skills they need to police London.

The creation of a Stop and Search Charter to commit to significant change was recommended by Baroness Casey in her 2023 review into culture and standards of the Metropolitan Police. In keeping with this idea, this Charter has been co-produced with the people of London, acknowledging their concerns and working together in order to problem solve. A written commitment from the Metropolitan Police is an important step for accountability and the principle of collaboration means it fundamentally represents the thoughts of the community. The Charter is the first step in acknowledging the need for change and will be followed by a more specific set of actions outlining how this will be achieved.

Concern as to how stop and search is used is not new



How has it been created?

The Charter has been very carefully and deliberately constructed to reflect the views of Londoners and use the opinions of those living in the City to help improve policing. The biggest challenge was how to get a representative view of nine million people, in one of the most diverse cities in the world.

To achieve this, the first thing to acknowledge is that stop and search is disproportionately used against those from minority backgrounds and young people, in particular men and boys, and that this group are also more likely to be the victim of a violent crime. Most Londoners will never experience a stop and search and so it was felt that those who were most affected by the power should have their say as to what needs to change. Three events were held at New Scotland Yard, 32 events across London and a series of online sessions (open to all), where those most affected were asked to take part. At every session, attendees were asked the same five questions:



What should a Charter on Stop and Search aim to achieve?



What should be included in a Stop and Search Charter?



How should the Charter be governed and scrutinised?



Who else needs to be involved?



Should there be a Charter? Do you think it will work? And, what will prevent it making a difference?

Once the sessions were completed, all of the feedback was reviewed and summarised into themes. It quickly became clear that there were eight continuously reoccurring themes, and these were where Londoners felt the MPS needs to focus in order to rebuild trust and confidence. We then tested these themes with a wider audience of 8500 Londoners in a series of surveys and found there was clear support for these priority areas.

The final process was the writing of the Charter itself, on the 1 May 2024, 80 young people between the ages of 16 and 23 were invited to New Scotland Yard to interpret feedback and write the Charter. Those attending were split into eight groups and each given one of the themes, they were facilitated by 10 community members with a background in working with young people who helped them with the task, alongside officers and staff from the MPS. Responses from each group were collected and summarised into one document, using as much of the young people's language and phrasing as possible. To be confident that each theme reflects the feedback from the groups, the result was sent back to both the internal and external facilitators, and also to the young people to ensure it represented their views.

What follows are eight commitments agreed and signed by the Metropolitan Police, created by those Londoners most affected by stop and search, agreed by a wider London and written by young people. These commitments, will help to rebuild trust and confidence with the community, by creating a fairer and better governed process whilst giving officers the guidance and support they need to do their job.

1

Focus on the quality of the encounter

Commitment

The MPS will commit to making sure that officers do stop and search with professionalism, showing basic forms of respect. Communication and tone are important and the MPS will make sure that officers understand what it feels like to be searched, build relationships with the community and make sure that other officers step in if not done correctly.

Community Expectation

The police should be given training on communication and perspective as their mind-set is important. Their communication should be clear and calm, in-offensive and non-derogatory, taking into account issues such as neurodiversity. The MPS should commit to creating a safe and comfortable environment and should break the process down to make sure those being searched understand what is happening and prevent escalation.

How officers approach someone is important and should show basic forms of respect, officers shouldn't feel like they are above others and should be aware of what the encounter will feel like to different people depending on race/sex/age. Officers should be humble, answer questions, understand what it feels like to be stopped and searched in public and realise that if done aggressively, it can escalate a situation.

The MPS should build better relationships with the community and commit to not stereotyping

individuals based on their clothing, race or whether they are in a group. Officers should be committed to holding each other to account for stop and search, if an officer is overdoing things, other officers should step in. Video should be reviewed to make sure this is happening with disciplinary action if done badly and this should be put on record. There should be more consistency on consequences which will hopefully lead to a decrease in poor behaviour.

2

Improved training

Commitment

The MPS will commit to improving training so that officers better understand their local community, especially those with protected characteristics. It will train officers to improve communication so it is more professional and empathetic and make sure that officers are confident in de-escalation, humility and delivering GOWISELY*.

Community Expectation

Officers should understand their community, local officers from local communities should have further training on the areas they work. They should be trained to communicate effectively, informing people clearly why they are being stopped with better delivery of GOWISELY. Training should make sure there is improved professionalism by making officers confident in de-escalation, humility and communication.

Work should be done to prevent prejudice against protected

characteristics, particularly those that are non-visible and invisible disabilities.

*GOWISELY is an acronym used by officers which represents the minimum information to be given during a stop and search.

3

Improved supervision

Commitment

The MPS will commit to a more robust supervision process and a generally more holistic and inclusive approach to stop and search. It will conduct regular and random reviews of stop and searches and ensure the consequences for poor stop and search are effective and allow for progression and change.

Community Expectation

This will involve effective and robust supervision that contains both police and non-police to reduce bias and have a community point of view. More effort should be made to engage those under the age 18 and involve them in the supervision process. A supervision report should be made public as well as sanctions and there needs to be an agreed level of Body Worn Video that is supervised at random and from complaints.

Supervision needs to be held in high regard, those in higher up roles should be more responsible and training should be improved for supervisors so they know the true intent of stop and search, how it is meant to work and how it should be implemented. There should be better communication of this strategy

because to have an accurate and informed analysis of stop and search, people have to understand its design.

Officers should be held accountable for their actions and the MPS should make sure there are sanctions for poor performance and stricter enforcement of sanctions for misconduct, these should depend on how many years they have in the MPS and also repeat offences. Supervisors should make officers aware of any mistakes they make, to ensure they are not repeated. Those on probation may have to redo training before they can do another stop. Consequences are necessary to expel complacency.

4

Improved complaints handling

Commitment

The MPS will commit to making sure the complaints process is clearly communicated and accessible to everyone. It will prevent internal bias by ensuring the community are involved with decision making in the complaints process and provide accessible statistics that clearly show how different people are affected.

Community Expectation

Complaint forms should be more accessible to everyone and the complaints process and disciplinary action that will follow should be clearly communicated, this may involve communication other than in writing. Terminology should be reviewed, the complaints process should be easier to access, read and understand for people who struggle with reading and literature e.g. those with disabilities.

All Body Worn video footage should be reviewed in relation to complaints, and community members should review them alongside police officers to advise which complaints go through to prevent internal police bias. Each complaint should be reviewed by a board of external, community members and those members should be representative of the community. To be representative is to be diverse and reflective of different demographics e.g. age, race, ethnic background, sex.

Complaints statistics should show how frequent particular groups show up and need to show all particular backgrounds e.g. age, area. Ethnic background etc. The term 'all ethnic minorities' should be more representative and not grouped into one. The data around complaints must be made more representative and holistic. Categories/hierarchy of the type of complaint should be used, making it easier for both the individual and police officer to identify the cause of complaint e.g. misuse of power, misconduct.

5 Better use of technology

Commitment

The MPS will commit to improving its use of technology to make data and processes more accessible, make feedback easier and explore the possible use of artificial intelligence to identify trends.

Community Expectation

This includes looking at the use of QR codes for easy to access and clear information and the collection and analysis of qualitative feedback in the subjects own words. The use of AI should be explored to identify

recurring themes and the use of Apps to create accessible data, signpost processes and explain legal procedure. Technology should be used to improve access, show transparency and show a clear process.

6 Enhanced independent governance and scrutiny

Commitment

The MPS will commit to independent and consistent community involvement in governance and scrutiny.

Community Expectation

All boroughs in London are different and have different experiences, each should have their own meetings about stop and search where they can discuss what matters to them.

Community groups are essential for independence and should be involved more frequently to dip sample Body Worn Video. Those involved should represent the community and how they are selected needs to be clear with a regular rotation of members. The community should help set the supervision criteria for stop and search, and there should be a survey review process created for those being stopped. The supervision criteria needs to be able to be updated by the community to reflect important cases which may change their focus.

7 Community involvement in where, when and why stop and search is being used

Commitment

The MPS will commit to working with local communities to regularly discuss when and where stop and

search is being used. They must listen to the concerns of the community and explain why it is being used to reduce fear and show that it is being used fairly and without prejudice.

Community Expectation

Local police need to genuinely listen to their community and the concerns they have about stop and search. They need to be able to show that stop and search is being used fairly and that their suspicions are justified so the community feels confident they are not being stereotyped or targeted.

When young people are in groups, you can't tell the difference between a group of kids playing football and others from outside the community, sometimes they run because they are scared and don't understand the process. Officers need to be less aggressive in their approach, polite and make sure they are not bringing bad energy. Their approach needs to be more targeted and tailored towards young people to prevent embarrassment and trauma. Some people are treated unfairly, with a lot of physicality, even though they are innocent, the MPS must work more closely with the community to address these issues, especially with young people.

8

Better public understanding of stop and search

Commitment

The MPS will commit to educating all Londoners of all ages by way of different communication streams on their rights, the correct process, the reason behind each stop and search and raise awareness in general of the law.

Community Expectation

There needs to be a consistent forum to have a conversation about stop and search, why it is used and where, because people do not know their rights. This involves more focus on education in schools and a greater effort to teach young people their rights and why stop and search is being used by targeting information to the right areas. Schools officers are important in early interactions and they should be trained to deliver workshops and have open discussions with young people.

Efforts also need to be made to reach those who are not in school, there should be better use of social media to consistently inform people of the benefits and use of stop and search. Young people should be involved in the creation of this content to make sure they are engaging and use the right language. They could also appear in it, showing a joint approach.

A leaflet and poster should be created to distribute to all Londoners regarding their rights e.g. at bus stops, transport networks, social places etc. promoting the reason for stop and search and how a positive search is achieved. Young people should be involved in engaging the public and letters should be sent to parents with a leaflet asking them to discuss their rights with the young people. Engaging parents is key to making changes in every person's attitude. There should be clear timelines put in place for monitoring and delivering the above e.g. school engagement x3 a year, posters and leaflets sent yearly, social media posts regularly and public attitude can be tracked using surveys.

The MPS must ensure that everyone is given a receipt of their search for transparency, proof may be needed for a teacher, parent or employer.

Delivery plan

Now that the commitments have been created, the focus turns to the specific actions that are needed to rebuild trust and confidence within each area. Acknowledging the significant amount of work that needs to be done, commitments have been allocated a 'Lead Responsible Officer', a senior person in the Metropolitan Police who has been carefully selected. They have responsibility for working with the community to create a mutually agreed action plan that will lead to change, and then ensure those actions are achieved. The plans will identify specific outcomes desired, and how success will be measured.


There are five Lead Responsible Officers who will be responsible for meeting with the community and ensuring that the proposed change is reflective of community opinion, at which point all eight action plans will be collated and put into a tracker, which will be made public. This tracker allows the public and the governing body to measure progress against the change and hold the Metropolitan Police to account should it not be completed. It should be noted that the

scale of this change is large and so this tracker is likely to span several years, rather than months. The changes will therefore be properly benchmarked, evidenced and implemented.

As with each stage of this process, there will be a regular review of the contents of the action plan to ensure that the direction still remains relevant and that it is done in the most efficient way.

Who will hold us to account?

It is important that when regularly reviewing the progress of this piece of work, success is not determined by the Metropolitan Police. There must be an element of independent scrutiny that is able to hold the organisation to account, based on the commitments it has agreed to. The MPS aims to identify and work with an independent governing body to provide regular updates on progress to Londoners.



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Acknowledgements

We would like to thank the many people who have helped us on this journey, many of whom have given up their time and shared their opinions on what they feel needs to change. In particular we would like to thank the many young people who have engaged with this work and written the commitments in this document, it is encouraging to see young people take action on something they believe in. This is not an easy problem to solve, and we could not do it without you. We thank you for your belief that this will make change HOWEVER, there is a lot more to do.

If you would like to be involved in the next phase of this change, or you know an organisation who works with young people, or those most affected by stop and search, please let us know by emailing **HQMailbox-.Charter@met.police.uk**



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