



THE GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO THE  
SIXTEENTH REPORT OF THE HOME AFFAIRS  
COMMITTEE SESSION 2010–12 HC 1456

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

**Presented to Parliament  
by the Secretary of State for the Home Department  
by Command of Her Majesty**

**February 2012**

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# **Government response to the Committee's Sixteenth Report of Session 2010 – 2012: Policing Large Scale Disorder: Lessons from the disturbances of August 2011**

## **Introduction**

1. The Government welcomes the work of the Home Affairs Select Committee (HASC) in its examination of policing the disturbances of August 2011, their causes and the lessons learned. The Home Secretary gave oral evidence to the Committee on 8 September 2011, and written submissions were provided in November and December 2011. The Secretary of State for Justice gave oral evidence on 25 October 2011.
2. There is a growing body of evidence about the riots to which this HASC report is a welcome addition. Whilst this report acknowledges its limitations in identifying clear causes and explanations, we nonetheless appreciate the contribution it makes. The Cabinet Office commissioned a National Centre for Social Research report into the involvement of young people in the riots, and a cross-party Communities and Victims' Panel, led by Darra Singh will report to the Deputy Prime Minister later this year. Crime statistics are available at local authority level in the Home Office publication *An Overview of Recorded Crimes and Arrests resulting from Disorder Events in August 2011*. Statistics on those appearing in court for offences related to the public disorder are also available in the Ministry of Justice publication, *Statistical Bulletin on the Public Disorder of 6<sup>th</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup> August*. Alongside this, police forces have published their own reports and Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC) published its report, *The Rules of Engagement: A review of the August 2011 disturbances* on 20 December 2011. The Government will continue to look at all the available evidence and ensure we draw the proper conclusions.
3. Serious public disorder, violence and criminality spread across many parts of England in August 2011 in the wake of the shooting of Mark Duggan in Tottenham. It is clear that the rapid escalation, sheer scale and widespread geographical distribution of the disorder presented an exceptional challenge for the police. In many areas the police and their partners responded quickly to defuse potential disorder and many police and emergency services staff acted with great bravery to quell the disorder and protect the public. Nevertheless, Chief Officers in some areas have themselves said that, when faced with an unprecedented situation, the immediate police response was not enough.
4. A significant programme of work is in hand across a range of departments and agencies to address the implications of the disorder and to understand its lessons. The shocking scenes on our streets, the loss of life and the damage to

the property and livelihoods of innocent victims means it is vital we do all in our power to make sure they never happen again.

5. The Home Secretary commissioned HMIC report, *The Rules of Engagement: A review of the August 2011 disturbances*, confirms that the initial police response, in particular to the first disorder in Tottenham, was too slow. This has been acknowledged by the Metropolitan Police themselves. The report makes a number of interrelated recommendations which will require careful and serious consideration by the Government and the police service working together. This work will be aligned with the development of the statutory Strategic Policing Requirement (SPR).
6. Within days of the disturbances, the Government launched a multi-million support package, including £10m for immediate clean-up costs, and a new £20 million high street support scheme to help affected businesses get back up and running quickly. A Public Disorder Recovery Team was set up to coordinate cross-government recovery effort.
7. There can be no excuse for criminality and we know from data on those arrested for riot-related offences that there was a core of repeat offenders who saw the disorder as providing an opportunity for apparently risk-free criminality. While cases continue to be dealt with by the courts, Ministry of Justice statistics for the first tranche of prosecutions showed that 76% of those who had appeared in court in connection with the riots had a previous caution or conviction. On average each rioter charged had committed 11 previous offences.
8. Overall the criminal justice system (CJS) responded extremely well to the unprecedented challenges caused by the disturbances. Police, prosecutors, courts, prisons and youth offending teams across the country worked around the clock to ensure that justice was served swiftly once arrests were made. The Government intends to capitalise on the learning from this and is looking at a broad set of policy options for transforming the criminal justice system to ensure it operates as efficiently and effectively as possible. Our CJS reform plan will deliver swift, sure and proportionate justice in a way which increases the transparency and accountability of the system. The reforms will also help to improve victims' and witnesses' experience of the CJS.
9. A significant minority of rioters were shown to be gang members. Although they were a minority, the harm they caused was disproportionate and the Government believes it is right that we tackle this long-standing issue. In November last year, we published, *Ending Gang and Youth Violence: A cross-Government report*, to look into the scale of the problem of gang and youth violence, analyse its causes, and identify what can be done by government and other agencies to stop the violence and to turn around the lives of those involved.

10. The Government has considered the Committee's recommendations in detail, and our response is provided below. We have grouped our response to recommendations where appropriate.

**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)**

The Government welcomes and supports the work of the Independent Police Complaints Commission (IPCC), the Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) and National Policing Improvement Agency (NPIA) to ensure that, in future, there is no confusion about the arrangements for communication with the victim's family following a fatal shooting. This includes both the ongoing review of the NPIA family liaison guidance and the IPCC's and ACPO's work to review the media handling protocol and to ensure that the revised protocol is widely promulgated and understood.

**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)**

The IPCC has a key role to play in ensuring the public have confidence in our ability to hold the police service to account in an independent and effective manner. The Home Secretary has announced today (16 February 2012) the appointment of Dame Anne Owers as the new permanent chair of the IPCC. Dame Anne has considerable experience of criminal justice and a formidable public reputation for independence

and addressing sensitive and complex issues of public interest with integrity, incisiveness and authority.

**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)**

Crime statistics were broken down to local authority level in the Home Office publication, *An Overview of Recorded Crimes and Arrests resulting from Disorder Events in August 2011* (see table A5, p. 26 of the publication). Arrests data were broken down to the lowest level possible from the police force data provided (which was at police force area level).

The most recent Home Office crime statistics published on 19 January 2012 *Crime in England and Wales: Quarterly updated to September 2011* present the impact that the disorder had on the overall police recorded crime statistics and break this down to local authority level for the 15 local authorities that experienced the highest volume of disorder-related crimes.

On 24 October 2011, the Ministry of Justice published detailed information on the local area in which defendants prosecuted or convicted of offences related to the public disorder resided. The Ministry of Justice is still investigating what additional detailed local area information can meaningfully be made available and will provide the Committee with a further response in due course.

**4. There was a substantial element of opportunistic criminality to the disorder that took place in August 2011, and of copycat behaviour. (Paragraph 20)**

The Government agrees. While cases continue to be dealt with by the courts, Ministry of Justice statistics for the first tranche of prosecutions showed that 76% of those who had appeared in court in connection with the riots had a previous caution or conviction. On average each rioter charged had committed 11 previous offences.

Home Office statistics show that the most common crimes involved some form of acquisitive crime (burglary, attempted burglary, robbery, and theft and handling offences); these accounted for 50% of all recorded crimes.

**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)**

Neighbourhood Policing has transformed how communities experience and relate to policing. Every neighbourhood in the country now has a permanent, visible and dedicated neighbourhood policing team working openly and in partnership with all members of their community, including children and young people. Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs) in particular have a vital role to play in identifying local priorities, solving local problems and low-level crime and engaging with the community.

Findings from a recent survey with children aged 10-15<sup>1</sup> highlighted the positive impact that neighbourhood policing is having on young people, with;

- 83% having seen an officer or PCSO in or around their school;
- almost half knowing the officer by name or sight;
- over 75% being satisfied with the contact they have had with the police.

Such positive perceptions and relationships between local police and young people can only help to improve the response to tackling local crime and anti-social behaviour.

Decisions on how officers and resources are deployed in each force area are a matter for the relevant Chief Officer and their Police Authority, who will make decisions based on local priorities and needs.

**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)**

The Home Office report, *An Overview of Recorded Crimes and Arrests Resulting from Disorder Events in August 2011* set out the number and percentage of those arrested in the disorder who were considered to be affiliated to a gang. The report explains that police forces, rather than the Home Office, were asked to make this assessment themselves. Accordingly, there will have been some inconsistency between forces in how this was done as no standard definition of street gang membership was used between forces at that time.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://stage.homeoffice.gov.uk/hosb0811>



We have, however, defined street gangs in the *Ending Gang and Youth Violence Report* published on 1 November 2011, which adopts the definition set out by the Centre for Social Justice's 2009 Report, *Dying to Belong*:

"A relatively durable, predominantly street-based group of young people who:-

1. See themselves (and are seen by others) as a discernable group;
2. Engage in criminal activity and violence;
3. Lay claim over territory (this is not necessarily geographical territory but can include an illegal economy territory);
4. Have some form of identifying structural feature; and
5. Are in conflict with other, similar gangs."

**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)**

The Home Office is aware of the strong partnership approach in Waltham Forest, which was used as a case study in the *Ending Gang and Youth Violence* report. There are many other good practice examples of work to tackle the gang culture in other areas across the country.

Through the new Ending Gang and Youth Violence Team, we will be gathering further examples of good practice and sharing these through a new Knowledge Hub, currently under development. This is an online resource, which uses social networking models to create connections between practitioners and experts. It will enable local practitioners to share practical experience and examples of innovative approaches, and to ask questions of a network of peers and experts from a range of fields.

**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)**

The Government will always ensure that police have the tools and powers they need to maintain order on our streets.

Water cannon are not currently approved for use on mainland UK, and the Home Secretary has not received any request for them to be approved. However, she would consider very carefully the views of Chief Officers, Police Authorities and, from November 2012, Police and Crime Commissioners, bearing in mind that the water cannon situated in Northern Ireland can be made available at 24 hours' notice if needed.

On 13 October the Home Office launched a consultation on police powers relating to face coverings, curfews, and the relevance of the word 'insulting' in section 5 of the Public Order Act 1986. This consultation closed on 13 January, and the responses are under consideration.

**9. The number of officers who should be level 2 public order trained should be specified in the Strategic Policing Requirement. (Paragraph 38)**

Policing public order incidents depends not only on numbers of public order-trained officers but, also, as HMIC noted, on the appropriate speedy deployment of all front-line officers, effective collaboration between the 'blue-light' services, and the successful co-ordination of mutual aid between forces.

The statutory Strategic Policing Requirement will set out the national expectations of capacity, capability and interoperability to which Police and Crime Commissioners will be required to have regard from November 2012. It will be their responsibility to ensure that their forces have the capacity to contribute to national policing requirements, and to hold their Chief Constable to account for delivering their policing functions in a way that has due regard to the SPR, including the ability to respond to public disorder.

**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)**

In asking HM Chief Inspector of Constabulary to undertake a review that would 'support clearer guidance to forces on the size of deployments...pre-emptive action,

public order tactics, the number of officers (including commanders) trained in public order policing and an appropriate arrests policy', the Home Secretary was seeking to ensure that the public order policing response is as effective as it can be.

The HMIC report has proposed a significant review of the structure of public order policing, and, further to its recent assessment of public order training, highlighted aspects that need to be revisited in the light of the riots.

We will consider the HASC's recommendation carefully alongside those of the HMIC review and of those forces who have undertaken their own reviews.

**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)**

Chief Officers in some areas have said themselves that, when faced with an unprecedented situation, the immediate police response was not enough. What matters is not the total number of police officers employed, but the total number deployed, and how effectively they are deployed. It is important that the police response to public order situations be swift and targeted right from the start, so that they do not escalate, the public are protected and reassurance to communities can be given. HMIC have made recommendations on mobilisation of forces for the police service to consider.

**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)**

Mutual aid was key to enabling forces in the areas worst affected by the riots to respond effectively. The Police National Information and Co-ordination Centre (PNICC) was responsible for the deployment of 89 of the 390 Police Support Units deployed at the height of the riots. HMIC have highlighted some of the barriers to PNICC's capacity to take on a more proactive role in organising mutual aid.

The Government will consider carefully the future of PNICC in light of ACPO reforms and our intention to establish a Police Professional Body, as well as HMIC's recommendation for a public order 'all source' hub and national mobilisation capability. We will take the HASC's recommendations into consideration alongside this.

The SPR, to which PCCs will have to have regard, will set out national expectations of capacity, capability and interoperability.

**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)**

There were many examples of Community Safety Partnerships and Business Crime Reduction Partnerships acting with forces to protect businesses and business areas, benefiting from effective local communication arrangements.

The Home Office will support the sharing of effective practice in this regard through a user-friendly database on its website.

**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)**

Upfront assurance will be provided for 85% of the final operational costs incurred by police authorities for policing the August disturbances. Later in the year, the Government will consider support beyond 85% and we will work with police authorities individually on this point.

On Riot (Damages) Act costs, the Government has agreed to reimburse police authorities for the costs related to riot (damages) claims.

**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)**

The Government is doing all it can to support those people whose homes and businesses were damaged last August. Immediately following the disturbances, the Government made it much easier for victims to make compensation claims under the Riot (Damages) Act:

- The time for victims to make their claims was permanently increased from 14 to 42 days;
- The antiquated prescribed claims form was replaced with a simpler form for victims to use;
- A national claims handling bureau was set up for victims with no insurance to make claims under the Act.

The Government does not make compensation payments directly to individuals or businesses - this is the responsibility of insurers and police authorities. The Home Office is doing all it can to offer support to both. The Policing Minister has met with affected police authorities and representatives of the insurance industry on several occasions to urge them to speed up their compensation payments to victims.

To date, insurers have settled 80% of claims made by householders and have fully paid out, or made interim payments, to almost three-quarters of businesses affected by the riots. Over half of all valid uninsured claims have now been settled by police authorities.

The Home Office is currently undertaking a review of the Riot (Damages) Act 1886, and will consider all options for reform, including all alternatives to the current mechanism for compensation under the Riot (Damages) Act. The review will draw on lessons from the August disturbances, including consultation with people affected by the disturbances who made claims under the Act and organisations involved in the recovery. We expect the review to be completed before the end of this financial year.

In the recently published consultation document, *Getting it Right for Victims and Witnesses*, the Government sets out its proposals to increase the value of the Victim Surcharge ordered with fines, and extend the Surcharge to conditional discharges and community and custodial sentences. Revenue raised from the Surcharge helps fund emotional and practical support services for victims of crime. Currently the Victim Surcharge is only ordered with fines at a flat rate of £15.

The Government is clear that the provision of timely and effective support is essential in helping victims cope with and recover from the impact of crime. It is also clear that offenders, rather than the taxpayer, should increasingly contribute to the cost of funding support services.

The Government will update the Committee on options for reforming the Victim Surcharge before the summer recess, once the consultation period has closed and responses have been considered.

**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)**

(Response to recommendations 16, 17 & 18) The Government is committed to a free and open internet.

It is clear from the use forces made of social media to engage with their communities during the riots that they are a valuable resource, and the Government has no intention of switching them off. They were also used by communities to organise clean up operations in the aftermath of the riots.

Although social media were used by some to organise disorder and criminality, it has been widely acknowledged in many of the reports on the riots that a number of the forces used social media extensively to engage with their communities and provide reassurance. The Metropolitan Police's number of Twitter followers rose from 4,500 before the riots to 42,000 afterwards, a figure which seems to have been sustained. As early as 9 August, Operation Withern's gallery of images for identification had received 4 million hits.

ACPO is taking the lead on making sure that expertise on using social media as a positive tool for communication is mainstreamed across police forces.

The Home Secretary has held a constructive meeting with the main internet service providers to look at what it would be right to do in order to prevent criminality and work is underway to take forward the actions agreed.

**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)**

The Government has always acknowledged the bravery of individual police officers who put themselves in harm's way to protect their communities. Police leaders worked tirelessly in leading their officers through a difficult time, and they deserve much credit for that.

This effort was complemented by the swift response of the criminal justice system. We are clear that the determination and ability to bring offenders before the courts quickly and deal with them robustly has had a salutary effect on many individuals who thought there would be no penalty for their unlawful behaviour. This approach is also challenging the perception that rioters were allowed to get away with looting and criminal damage.

The Home Secretary commissioned HMIC to undertake a comprehensive review to capture, analyse and consolidate the lessons emerging from the riots. Their recommendations will be progressed with the police service.

**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)**

The Government has welcomed the research conducted by a variety of organisations into the riots. The research has been wide-ranging and has provided findings and recommendations that will inform policy and practice both locally and nationally.

The Home Office is working with social media companies and law enforcement to discuss the lessons learned and technology challenges posed by the recent disorder and determine how we can work better together in the future.

As we outlined in response to recommendation 12, mutual aid was key to enabling forces in the areas worst affected by the riots to respond effectively. The Government will consider carefully the future of PNICC in light of ACPO reforms and our intention to establish a Police Professional Body, as well as HMIC's recommendation for a public order 'all source' hub and national mobilisation capability.



An effective multi-agency response is critical to preparing communities for any future civil emergencies. The Department for Communities and Local Government's Resilience Advisers, who provide the link between the local and national level in a wide range of civil emergencies, have been working with partners to ensure lessons learned from the disorder contribute to partnership working in the future.

**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 groups 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)**

(Response to recommendations 21, 22, 23 & 24) We welcome the range of work undertaken to understand what happened and why. It is important that we understand why the riots happened, and that we do all in our power to make sure they never happen again.

The Home Office analytical publication, *An Overview of Recorded Crimes and Arrests Resulting from Disorder Events in August 2011* provides strong evidence that the extent and nature of crimes committed varied across different days and different areas. It was a series of events, and not just one riot. What we do know, however, is that criminality was a key factor; and there is no excuse for criminal behaviour.

While cases continue to be dealt with by the courts, Ministry of Justice statistics for the first tranche of prosecutions showed that 76% of those who had appeared in court in connection with the riots had a previous caution or conviction. Although gangs members made up a significant minority of the rioters, they caused a disproportionate amount of harm. The statistics show that one in five of those arrested by early September in connection with the riots in London were known gang members. Similar figures were recorded by West Yorkshire police, and Nottinghamshire had only a slightly lower proportion. Most other police forces identified fewer than 10% of all those arrested as known gang members. Some police forces have given examples of gang members being involved in the handful of more serious, life-threatening incidents that took place during the disturbances, for example a firearms incident in the West Midlands.

It is true to say that the August riots shocked the nation – yet for many it was a call to action to defend and restore their communities. Town halls and individuals across the country organised well-attended clean-ups, and the police have seen an increase in volunteers and in followers on social media. Alongside this, the Government has initiated research into the disorder and, along with the police, will continue to learn the lessons from the August 2011 riots to ensure our communities see no repeat of these dreadful events.



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