

SueLLa Braverman at the APCC and NPCC Partnership Summit

Introduction

Thank you.

I want to start by congratulating you on the theme you've chosen for this summit. Cutting crime and building confidence is exactly what's needed.

The way to ensure public confidence in the police is to focus on getting the basics right. What I call 'common sense policing'. The kind of policing the law-abiding patriotic majority deserves and expects.

No politically correct distractions, just good old-fashioned policing – with a relentless focus on making our streets, homes, and transport networks safer...

...responding to all burglaries; tackling antisocial behaviour and the horrendous trade in illegal drugs; and supporting victims.

I know that if police officers are properly empowered to do the job for which they signed up, they can really drive down crime. The government wants to see reductions in homicide, other serious violence, and neighbourhood crime – and I know it's possible.

Our best police officers are simply put, the finest in the world. In my time in office, I've witnessed excellence from the policing of Her Majesty the Queen's funeral to the response to disorder in Leicester. I want that excellence to come as standard.

Achievements

I know what good policing looks like because I've seen it in action.

The County Lines and Project ADDER programmes are making huge inroads into defeating the scourge of illegal drugs – tackling supply and disrupting gangs.

Almost three thousand county lines have been closed down since 2019, putting dealers out of business and helping huge numbers escape the clutches of drug addiction and exploitation.

That's work that you achieved and you led.

The work of the Milton Keynes and Thames Valley Police is another great example. There, police are ensuring that those caught carrying knives face swift and certain consequences. That they are arrested, charged, and remanded in custody. More forces should follow this example to send the clear message that carrying weapons on our streets will not be tolerated.

PCCs have played a major role by helping to co-ordinate local, multi-agency work in support of all these objectives.

Performance and standards

Things can be turned around for the better in a comparatively short period of time. Superb leadership from Chief Constable Stephen Watson has made a big difference to Greater Manchester Police.

They are responding there far faster to emergency calls and the number of open investigations has halved since 2021.

How did he do it? He put more bobbies on the beat, pursued every crime, made excellent use of stop and search, and insisted that officers were smartly turned out with polished boots. He rejects woke policing and embraced a back to basics approach. For me, that is excellence in policing.

If we are to maintain a world-class reputation for policing, we need to be willing to learn from others, share best practice, and continuously look to improve.

I am really grateful that Chief Constable Watson has offered to share what he has learned from turning Greater Manchester Police around. Everyone should pay close attention.

Six police forces remain in “engage” – and I expect to see them make the necessary improvements quickly, working constructively with HMICFRS. They have my full support and I want to see them succeed.

I am very concerned that more than half of the forces inspected by HMICFRS in their recent inspection cycle have received poor grades for how they respond to the public and nearly half for how well they investigate crime.

This is fundamental – policing is a public service above all else.

Just last week, HMICFRS released their sobering report into vetting and corruption.

Far too often, standards have not been high enough and despicable people have been able to enter and remain in the police.

Policing is a job that attracts the very best of us. The vast majority of Police officers are exemplary citizens. But anyone who might want to hurt others simply must not be able to join – and those who are otherwise ill-suited need to be weeded out, and quickly.

The report finds that previous warnings have not been acted upon. That is unacceptable. I therefore welcome the fact that the NPCC has promised that Chiefs will do everything necessary to deliver on the recommendations of the report.

It is essential that we get both vetting and recruitment right, which means chief officers must draw from the best and widest pool of talent possible, as

well as ensuring consistent and high standards in the vetting processes.

I also welcome the College of Policing's proposals for change, which follow a full, independent review of progression and development to chief officer ranks. These measures, once implemented, will increase transparency, and open-up access to senior level development.

The government has provided significant investment to the College of Policing to create a National Leadership Centre. It will develop standards and a leadership development framework for all ranks.

The interim findings of Baroness Casey's review set out unequivocal failures by the Metropolitan Police Service, who did not act effectively on allegations of serious misconduct, in particular instances of sexual misconduct and discrimination.

I know that Sir Mark Rowley shares my view that this is utterly appalling and intolerable. That's why he has created a new Anti-Corruption and Abuse Command, recognising that change must come from within the Metropolitan Police Service.

But I will not hesitate to act either. I recently announced an internal review into the effectiveness of the police officer dismissals process, for example. And I'm very keen to get your views as we go through that process.

Cutting crime

We have some big challenges when it comes to fighting crime.

I am deeply concerned about the levels of homicide. While the number of murders that took place in the first six months of 2022 suggests the numbers are falling, a reduction will only be possible if the whole policing system works closely together.

The College of Policing's Homicide Prevention Framework, which launched last month, was developed with the NPCC and HMICFRS, and is a great example of collaborative working and the sharing of expertise.

Meanwhile, I am making £130 million available this financial year to tackle serious violence, including £64 million for our network of 20 Violence Reduction Units.

From January, the Serious Violence Duty will place a duty on local partners to work together to tackle the root causes of violence.

As I said at the Conservative Party conference, broken windows matter. There is no such thing as petty crime. Any tolerance of low-level disorder and crime will only beget more serious crime. You all know this, I am sure of it.

It is absolutely correct that all forces have agreed to send an officer to the scene of every residential burglary. I thank you for that commitment. Every kind of neighbourhood crime needs to be tackled robustly if we are to ensure public confidence and trust.

The Safer Streets Fund has supported interventions addressing local needs across England and Wales, which is why the government announced a further £50 million earlier this year to support 111 projects.

I also want to see a major improvement in the way the whole of the criminal justice system deals with rape. It is promising that more victims of sexual offences are coming forward to report crimes to the police and that more suspects are being charged.

But we still have a very long way to go. As a society, too often, we have failed the victims of sexual violence. That cannot continue.

Operation Soteria is an innovative and ambitious programme, supported by the Home Office, which is bringing together frontline policing, the CPS, and academic expertise to transform the response to rape.

The new national operating models being developed by the programme will, from June 2023, support your police forces in delivering a sustainable shift in the way rape is investigated.

Officers need to be and will be better equipped to build strong cases and to focus on the behaviour of the suspect, rather than subjective assessments of a victim's credibility.

Avon and Somerset, the pioneering force in Operation Soteria, have reported that charge rates have tripled since they began the pilot, and arrests are twice as high.

Policing must seize the opportunities presented by Operation Soteria to further improve your response to rape.

The final report by the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse published last month shows how endemic these unspeakable crimes are.

The first-hand accounts of the terrible abuse endured by children and how badly they were let down by those who should have protected them are truly shocking. This report has redoubled my determination to do all in my power to end the scourge of child sexual abuse.

Along with the overwhelming majority of the public, I am disgusted that misplaced cultural and political sensitivities in places like Manchester, Rotherham, and Telford got in the way of tackling wicked grooming gangs preying on vulnerable children.

We will drive radical change.

The Home Office will take whatever action is available to us to make our communities safer. In Rochdale, the two foreign nationals who were members of that terrible grooming gang were deported. Other members of the group were deprived of their British nationality and the Home Office remains absolutely committed to deporting these individuals where the law allows it.

This is not just a matter for the police – it is a matter for all of us – the

law-abiding majority, but it is right that HMICFRS is inspecting the police response to grooming gangs.

As Home Secretary, I'll ensure that there are no safe spaces for rapists, paedophiles, domestic abusers, grooming gangs, burglars, or criminals of any kind. Those convicted – particularly repeat and sexual offenders – should expect longer sentences. And I will talk honestly and unapologetically about crime – which is never justified and which needs to be investigated and rooted out fearlessly.

Our police officers' time is precious, and the public want the police to be tackling crime, not debating genders on Twitter. I have asked my officials to revisit the issue of non-crime hate incidents as a first step, as I want to be sure that we are allowing you to prioritise your time to deal with threats to people and their property.

Underpinning all of this is transparency and accountability – we must not shy away from being open and honest with the public about performance.

Strip search is one of the most intrusive powers you have at your disposal. There is a grim reality that many of you in this room will recognise. Many criminals will stop at nothing to evade detection. Sometimes, people may carry items that pose a danger to themselves, or others, concealed on them. Strip search is therefore a necessary and essential power and one that this government supports the police to use to protect the public and fight crime.

However, any strip search must be carried out professionally, respectfully, and lawfully, with full consideration for the welfare and dignity of the person being searched, particularly when they are a child.

What the government is doing to support policing

I am on your side.

I want us all to pull in the same direction. And I will do everything in my power to support you and to back you.

Officers and staff show remarkable commitment to keeping the public safe in the face of danger.

Detectives do extraordinary work to ensure we can put criminals behind bars.

So I cannot help but feel a deep sense of gratitude and pride when officers and staff have their bravery and commitment formally recognised through medals, honours, and awards.

However, I recognise that this only represents a fraction of the outstanding actions taken every day by our police across the country. I want to ensure that the amazing job you do is recognised in full, and we are committed, through the Police Covenant, to ensuring that this is done correctly.

I am committed to supporting you in using your powers without fear or favour to keep our streets, and keep our people safe. Under my watch you have my

full backing to use stop and search, which is a vital tool in the fight against crime.

Since 2019, the government has been making it easier for you to use stop and search, by relaxing restrictions on Section 60 powers, used in anticipation of violence, and empowering you to stop and challenge known knife carriers through Serious Violence Reduction Orders.

Every knife seized through stop and search is a potential life saved. In the 12 months to March this year, you removed around 14,900 weapons and firearms from our streets through stop and search and made almost 67,000 arrests following a stop.

To those who try to undermine your use of stop and search, or question your legitimate use of investigatory powers, or the use of force which leads to the prevention of crime, I say this: our police are working to keep you safe. To keep your children safe. To save lives. Let them do their work.

It is only right that you can stand firm against criminals, rather than listening to those who would denigrate your work or use data selectively to undermine your credibility.

On a daily basis, our police officers put themselves in harm's way to protect us.

Taser is a vital tactical option. I saw how vital a tool this can be when I visited Thames Valley police to observe firearms training.

In March 2020, the government gave more than £6 million to forces to purchase over 7,000 devices, increasing the number of officers who are trained in and have a Taser.

In August 2020, we approved the use of the Taser 7, a more accurate and effective device, for policing.

In March we approved the use of Taser by specially trained special constables.

I am committed to ensuring that the police have access to Tasers wherever appropriate.

Of course it's not just violent criminals on our streets that we are determined to stop. I also want to see more fraudsters caught and brought to justice. I am sure that is an ambition we all share.

The government is allocating a further £400 million over the next three years for tackling economic crime including fraud.

By March 2025, over 330 new officers dedicated to this work will have been recruited into City of London Police, Regional Organised Crime Units and the National Crime Agency. We will replace the current Action Fraud system with a new and improved service, and we will increase intelligence capabilities in the NCA and the national security community to identify and disrupt the most

harmful criminals and serious organised criminal gangs.

And we are making sure that the biggest tech companies are doing everything they can to prevent online fraud through our world-leading Online Safety Bill.

The latest figures from the Police Uplift Programme show we have recruited more than 15,000 additional officers – so we are well on the way to 20,000. I have met some of these new officers, and it is great to see their enthusiasm for their new careers; some not far from here, in a Safer Neighbourhood Team within the Met.

The College of Policing has been working hard to raise the standards of initial entry and ensure officers are equipped to meet the challenges of policing today. And we know that to build public confidence, we must draw from the widest possible pool of talent across all sections of society.

To deliver this, forces must increase efforts to implement the new entry routes successfully. Whilst I have heard some good things about the new entry routes, such as better retention of officers who feel better equipped to do the job, I have also heard from many of you that there is a need for more flexibility to ensure broad access to a policing career.

So, I have asked the College to build on their work by considering options for a new non-degree entry route, to deliver officers of the highest calibre, which will complement the existing framework. In the meantime, the current transitional non degree entry route will be kept open.

Our police force must be open to those who do not have a degree or want one.

And I will take the scissors to any red tape that gets in your way. Sir Stephen House's Operational Productivity Review will be particularly useful in this endeavour.

I am concerned that crime recording requirements can be seen as too complex and burdensome. I am committed to working with the police to see how recording can be simplified without compromising on putting victims first.

I also want to see policing and the National Health Service work better together to support individuals experiencing acute mental health distress so that people in need of medical help get the right care at the right time, while also reducing inappropriate demand on policing.

New public order legislation will improve your ability to pre-emptively tackle unlawful protests and tackle repeat offenders, and new criminal offences will allow for punitive outcomes that reflect the harm caused by the selfish, criminal minority.

Past decisions by the courts have made your job more challenging. My reference to the Court of Appeal has proven that the Ziegler ruling has been misinterpreted and has only a limited scope.

Although most police officers do an excellent job, sadly, in recent months

and years we have seen an erosion of confidence in the police to take action against the radicals, the road-blockers, the vandals, the militants and the extremists.

But we have also seen the police appear to lose confidence in themselves; in yourselves. In your authority, in your power. An institutional reluctance. This has to change.

Criminal damage, obstructing the highway, public nuisance – none of it should be humoured. It is not a human right to vandalise a work of art. It is not a civil liberty to stop ambulances getting to the sick and injured.

Such disruption is a threat to our way of life. It does not 'further a cause'. It is not 'freedom of expression' and I want to reassure you that you have my – and this government's – full backing in taking a firmer line to safeguard public order. Indeed, that is your duty.

Scenes of members of the public taking the law into their own hands are a sign of a loss of confidence and I urge you all to step up to your public duties in policing protests. The law-abiding patriotic majority is on your side. This is what common-sense policing means.

Too often, a restricted interpretation of legislation is taken. A lack of certainty on the meaning of serious disruption to the life of the community and how the cumulative impact of repeated protests should be considered has led to a limited use of existing powers. I hope to see improved guidance on these matters so that public order commanders and officers can make full use of the powers available to them with confidence.

The public order act will give you more tools but too often, the rights of protesters are placed above the rights of others. Criminal activists cannot be allowed to bring misery and chaos to the law-abiding majority. Free speech and the right to protest do not entitle people in a democracy like ours to break the law. And importantly, the legitimate use of your force safeguards freedoms for all of us to enjoy.

My thoughts and wishes go to the Essex Police officer who was injured this morning on the M25 while responding to the guerrilla tactics of Just Stop Oil protesters.

Building confidence

Policing is a very difficult job with a simple mission: to keep the law-abiding majority safe. And to keep the criminals off our streets.

That means that the public have a set of basic expectations of policing. They expect to be able to contact their local police, they expect to see police in their neighbourhood confronting crime and making their streets safer. They expect the police to get the basics right.

It has been almost 10 years since the introduction of Police and Crime Commissioners – elected by the public to be their voice and to hold chief constables to account.

I am very grateful for the work you have done since 2012, bringing the system together to deliver local priorities and advocating for victims across the criminal justice system.

In Devon and Cornwall, for example, the PCC has commissioned a strategic delivery partnership with Victim Support to put victim's needs at the centre of service commissioning. And in Northumbria they have developed and championed the Multi-Agency Tasking and Coordination approach for improving partnership working in domestic abuse, providing a model that others have since adopted.

But I want you to go further. I am committed to delivering the recommendations from the PCC Review so that you have the tools you need to be strong and visible leaders in the fight against crime.

It will give you a more defined role in relation to offender management and local partnerships, including strengthening the arrangements of Local Criminal Justice Boards.

I also want to see better and more consistent data, which underpins a joined-up approach to local crime fighting activity.

I am overseeing new central guidance on data-sharing, as well as bringing together local level examples of good practice, to help build a more data-confident culture. I also want to see more data transparency to drive up standards across policing.

And I want to say how much I admire Chief Constables – and indeed officers of all ranks. It is precisely because I believe in the police that I have such high expectations – expectations which I know the best among you desperately want all officers to meet.

I want to hear from you, I want to have a meaningful dialogue with all of you. I want our senior police officers to understand better what is happening on the ground, and how you are making innovative operational decisions to stop crime and apprehend perpetrators – I will be asking for regular correspondence from all of you on your crucially important efforts.

Conclusion

British policing is respected throughout the world.

I feel very optimistic about the years ahead. Brilliant people keep coming forward to serve. Inspired and inspiring leaders are driving change in their force and their community.

And we already have a template that works.

It dates back to the days of Robert Peel.

Technology may change and new challenges will come along – yet the basics remain the same.

If we all stay true to that tradition of public service, we will succeed and we will succeed together.

Thank you.