



HOUSE OF COMMONS
LONDON SW1A 0AA

The Rt Hon Nick Hurd MP
Minister of State for Policing and the Fire Service
Home Office
Direct Communications Unit
2 Marsham Street
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Our Ref: JG / ZA25949

4 December 2018

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Jason Minster".

I am writing to you on behalf of my constituents in the London Borough of Brent to express my serious concern about the funding of our police and security services. It is disappointing, at the very least, that the Budget failed to stabilise, let alone strengthen, the financial sustainability of police forces. This was despite the evidence, in the real world, on our streets, of a surge in knife crime and also despite the Home Secretary pressing the Chancellor for increased funding for policing.

More than 100 people have been killed in London alone in violent crimes this year, yet recent figures indicate Metropolitan Police officer numbers are liable to fall to just 26,800, their lowest level since 2002, without increased funding. As the Minister of State for Policing and the Minister of State for London do you agree with one of the Country's policy leaders for Race, Chief Constable Jon Boucher, who warned the police service was "heading towards a cliff edge" unless police forces are properly funded? If you do not I would be interested to know your detailed reasons.

In the London Borough of Brent we now have 163 less Police Officers and 109 less Police Community Support Officers than in June 2010 and your department appears to be unaware of, or is indifferent to, the real impact of these cuts on ordinary people, my constituents, who have noted that police are not present on the ground as they used to be.

Alongside the rise in violent crime, important issues for my constituents include speeding vehicles, drug-dealing and anti-social behaviour; they want neighbourhood policing and acknowledge the difficulties local police face in a working environment increasingly stretched for resources. In other words, they know this is not the fault of the police and have drawn their own conclusions about who is to blame.

Brent has a strong sense of community which I share and am deeply involved in, and I know the council has been working hard with local people to make neighbourhoods safer, bringing local residents together to tackle local issues. Even so too many lives have been blighted by rising crime levels.



I have seen the terrible effects of tragic and senseless crime on both victims and perpetrators and their families and communities. I have seen the impact of funding cuts on community groups and teams who have worked ceaselessly to address the root causes of crime at its most local level. The slashing of funding has dealt a grievous blow to youth services and early intervention programmes.

I understand by June 2018 all forces were required to produce force management statements for each London Borough. Using those management statements can you advise me:

- *How many 999 calls are received each month in the London Borough of Brent?*
- *How many 999 calls are received each month across all London Councils?*
- *How many of these calls are crime-related?*
- *How many of these calls involve mental health incidents?*
- *How are these calls managed and triaged?*
- *How many are neighbourhood policing problems or led to the deployment of PCSOs?*

I understand the Home Office relies on HM Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) to advise whether forces are efficient and effective, but HMICFRS does not assess forces' "financial sustainability" or borough profiles. How then do you use the information and data collected by HMICFRS to make decisions about the level of funding allocation across the boroughs in London? The Government controls more than 70 per cent of funding to the Metropolitan Police and the general grant funding has fallen by more than £700 million or nearly 40 per cent in real terms on a like for like basis and in recent years the Mayor of London, Sadiq Khan has had to find more than £600 million of cuts.

In 2015 the Public Accounts Committee advised the Home Office the formula for distributing police funding as "unfit for purpose." - A point accepted at the time by your Department, the then Accounting Officer said that the formula **had "become more and more detached from the real demands on policing"**.

So please advise me why the Department's approach to allocating funding to Commissioners has been out-of-date and ineffective for several years and yet your Department still has no plans in place to change it? Your Department started to review the approach to funding but stopped that work in March 2017. Why?

Inevitably there will be consequences for residents in my constituency if central government funding does not fully take into account the complexities of Brent and its many communities. Brent is markedly more diverse than the London average; 54% of residents were born "overseas" (37% for London) and 65% are from BAME groups (43% for London).

- Childhood obesity at 24% is more prevalent than for London as a whole.
- Brent is the 39th most deprived borough out of the UK's 326.
- 14% of children live in workless households, 24% live in poverty and the number of



children with Education Health and Care Needs Assessments has increased by 14% over the last three years.

Brent Council advise me that the number of young people known to the Youth Offending Service has increased by 31% in the last two years. Do you have any evidence that austerity in other public services has impacted on the police because it is often the first line of response? And can you explain to me and my constituents why, according to the House of Commons Library, funding per head in Brent North has fallen by 20% in the last 5 years, the highest of any police force in the country.

By 2020 London Boroughs' core funding from Government will have been cut by 63 per cent in real terms and their "spending power" will have fallen by more than a third. This has to be put in the context of the £387m which has been cut nationally from youth services; these services included drug and alcohol services for young people at risk of being sucked into a world where crime is commonplace, programmes to help young people excluded from school, and community centres which gave young boys and girls a safe place off the streets.

Your department's own analysis revealed indicators that the police service as a whole is finding it increasingly difficult to deliver an effective service. This analysis includes data on:

The time it took to charge an offence increasing from **14 days in the year ending March 2016 to 18 days in the year ending March 2018.**

The proportion of crimes resulting in a charge or summons falling from **15% in March 2015 to 9% in March 2018.**

Your department advising that police have carried out less proactive work. For example, there are **fewer breathalyser tests and fewer convictions for drug trafficking and possession.**

Given the above I see no need to interpret to you that public confidence in the police is declining and I would ask how your department intends to provide strategic direction and allocate the funds necessary to maintain effective local policing services and conviction.

HMICFRS has also raised concerns that victims do not always receive a timely response from the police because of the volume of calls police staff are managing and the availability of response officers. Many of my constituents raise this as a real matter of concern as they report anti-social behaviour, provide evidence of drug dealing and known crime hot-spots but there are insufficient police available to respond.

I welcome the news from Cressida Dick today that for the month of November 2018 violent crime has plateaued following the decision to move 122 traffic officers across in September 2018 to join the violent crime taskforce. I am sure you will agree with me this is merely moving resources to allow more targeted stop and search in areas with a higher levels of violent crime and is not the long term solution. However, it does illustrate that more police officers on the street can stop many young kids resorting to violence and hurting each other.



Overall this paints a gloomy picture and highlights the extreme difficulties for police officers working in an environment increasingly stretched for resources. It also shows that my constituents are now paying more to fund police services, compensating for the government cuts and at the same time are seeing less policing.

Can you now assure me that your department will be placing extreme pressure on the Treasury to commit the resources our police need to provide the highest standard of care to keep my constituents and our communities safe? as I fail to understand why at a time when we have seen a shift in the threat of terrorism, the impacts of large and complex investigations, a rise in knife crime, acid attacks and moped crime our police men and women are not being provided with the resources they need.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Barry Gardiner". The signature is stylized and includes a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Barry Gardiner
Member of Parliament for Brent North