About Crest Advisory

We are crime and justice specialists - equal parts research, strategy and communication. From police forces to public inquiries, from tech companies to devolved authorities, we believe all these organisations (and more) have their own part to play in building a safer, more secure society. As the UK’s only consultancy with this focus, we are as much of a blend as the crime and justice sector itself.
## Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Foreword</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The four key challenges that have emerged from our research</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recommendations for government</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recommendations for the police</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Openness</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Accountability</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Disproportionality</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Community engagement</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Foreword
Neil Basu QPM

After 30 years in policing, the findings from this research remain utterly shocking. The fact that less than half (45 per cent) per cent of Black adults trust the police and just 36 per cent of Black children trust the police is a terrible indictment for all of us that care about the future of British policing.

However, as shocked as I am, I’m not surprised. I suspect I may be the only Chief Constable of the last many years to have experienced being stopped and searched as both an adult and a child.

The irony is not lost on me that, despite setting all the rules at UK airports for the past four years, it’s almost impossible for me to get through an airport anywhere in the world, without being stopped, searched, or scanned and frequently swabbed.

There has been a long and tortured debate about the efficacy of stop and search, usually based on very limited evidence, beyond a few limited studies of hotspot policing in the US. What is clear to me is that there is now a serious need to look at the way stop and search is justified as a tactic and how it is implemented in practice. So I’m really pleased to see Crest’s recommendation of an independent taskforce to look at these issues in the round and develop good practice.

Policing needs to be done with communities not to communities, and that’s especially the case for Black and Afro-Caribbean communities. The incredible, 10 year success of Operation Trident - which was established to tackle gun violence within Black communities - proved that. I know this because I was there; working with Black communities to help put away some of the worst individuals in their midst. This would have been impossible without them. A vital enabler of success was the existence of good neighbourhood policing - the glue that binds communities and policing together. I believe that the erosion of neighbourhood policing over the past decade is part of the explanation for why we are where we are.

Of course stop and search will continue to be an important tactic for the police, but we need a much better conversation about the context in which it is used. I am not convinced that it can ever be the solution for gang violence. Too often, it seems to me to have been deployed as a street suppression tool that made us feel we were doing something when we couldn’t get intelligence. We also know that if the tool is misused, it can be counterproductive. When the answer lies in cooperation and intelligence from within the community, they have to trust you to give you that.
Change also means recognising a problem we all feel but do not always articulate: a growing disconnect with the public. It seems to me that ‘adultification’ is the result of a conflict profession where we, the police, the professionals, are rapidly desensitised by the trauma of policing and lose empathy as we drift further and further away from the communities we serve. Just look at “the Job and the life” survey conducted by Police Care UK and Cambridge University in 2018. 20 per cent of police officers who responded to the survey were suffering from undiagnosed PTSD.

What does this tell us about their personal wellbeing? But also, what does this tell us about the service and compassion they might give to others, especially those who are not like them? This needs to be studied more. The loss of empathy in policing is why the police are NOT the public and the public are NOT the police - despite the best efforts of the vast majority of officers. This was a Peelian principle we liked to quote but never achieved at scale, and when you do see it in isolated places, it’s like magic!

This disconnect is true of all communities but especially Black and ethnic minority communities, where generations of distrust have been passed down. To put this report in its proper historical context, I would argue that Enoch Powell’s 1968 ‘rivers of blood’ speech unleashed a wave of xenophobia and racism that pre-60s Windrush people had not experienced and into which post-60s and 70s, Asian and East African Asians arrived to find. Hence, the first-generation immigrants had different expectations - they expected to be welcomed to help build a ruined nation post-WW2, as children of the empire returning to the mother country. But instead, as my father and other people of that age have told me, they weren’t welcomed and indeed their experiences got much worse after 1968. Acknowledging this history is an important part of rebuilding relationships between policing and Black communities today.

These reports by Crest Advisory, both the research and the recommendations, should be required reading for every police officer, especially those senior officers who set policy and standards such as the current NPCC lead and the College. But this needs to be just the start. The time for talking is over - we now need to see substantive change.

---

Introduction

The British model of policing is based on public consent. That consent is not automatic: it has to be repeatedly hard won. Once undermined, the entire policing model risks falling into disrepute. That is the context in which Crest undertook research into the issue of stop and search, policing and crime. Through a combination of polling and focus groups, we sought to examine the perspectives of Black adults and children in more depth. The findings are stark. Black adults are more worried about crime and have less trust and confidence in the police than the general population. This is especially the case for Black Caribbean adults who are 29 per cent less likely to trust the police than White adults. Of particular concern is that trust appears to be declining across generations. Our poll of children found that only 53 per cent of Black Caribbean children would call the police if threatened by a knife and 25 per cent said they did not feel safe around officers.

These findings represent an enormous challenge for the police. Without trust and confidence, police officers cannot effectively discharge their duties, either through a lack of witnesses and intelligence needed to investigate or prevent crimes or because they are unable to fulfil their statutory safeguarding responsibilities.

At the same time, they also represent an opportunity. Our research shows that most people (of all ethnicities) support the use of stop and search in principle, provided it is justified on specific grounds, such as seizure of weapons or Class A drugs. For example, 86 per cent of all adults (and 77 per cent of Black adults) supported the use of stop and search if an individual is suspected to possess a weapon. However, that support is fragile and contingent: it depends on the police being able to demonstrate that stops are intelligence-led or based genuinely on reasonable suspicions (rather than random), and that they are conducted fairly, effectively and proportionately. Sadly, that has not been the reality for Black communities, who told us that they did not experience stop and search to be well communicated, explained or respectfully and fairly carried out. For example, we found that for 45 per cent of adults and 50 per cent of children who had been stopped and searched, the experience had had a traumatic impact on their lives, particularly Black and Mixed ethnicity adults. Moreover, most people were concerned about disproportionality in the use of stop and search.

In this report, we attempt to set out a series of practical and constructive reforms to the use of stop and search, which, if implemented, would secure broad public consent and enable the police to halt (and potentially begin to reverse) long-term falls in trust and confidence experienced by Black communities. In doing so, we acknowledge two important caveats. Firstly, that stop and search cannot be viewed in isolation: public concerns (particularly Black people’s concerns) about stop and search are closely connected to their experience of local policing overall. Action on stop and
search must be supplemented with improvements in other core policing functions, whether taking crimes seriously and/or supporting victims. Secondly, we are aware that Crest are not the first to shine a light on this issue or set out recommendations for change. Indeed a number of the recommendations we make in this report are variations of reforms that have been called for since the Macpherson report in 1999.²

**The four key challenges that have emerged from our research**

**Openness**

Our research shows there is concern at all levels about the lack of transparency in policing as to the reasons why people are stopped and searched. There is also concern about the extent to which officers communicate during their interactions. Improvements in communication, both from police forces to the public and from individual officers to the person they are searching, are clearly needed to rebuild damaged trust in the police, especially among Black and Mixed ethnicity people. The police should also make it easier for people who may not wish to register a formal complaint about the use of stop and search to provide feedback in other ways.

**Accountability**

The public need to be reassured that if officers are found to have misused their powers, then action will be taken to hold them to account. Measures to reinforce accountability must be in place at policy, operational and community levels. There should be proactive communication with the public so that where rules have been breached complainants, local communities, scrutiny panels and those who have been stopped and searched are aware of the action taken and are kept informed of outcomes.

**Disproportionality**

From our research it’s clear that the public are concerned about ethnic disproportionality in the use of stop and search. Policing needs to provide the public with greater clarity and transparency on what is driving disproportionality; the service must also make a concerted effort to address and reduce disparities.

**Community engagement**

Across our research, we found that there is support in principle for stop and search but concerns about how the powers are used in practice. To make the tactic more effective will require a dedicated commitment from policing to reduce the costs associated with its use, namely trauma, disproportionality and distrust. Relationships between police and communities must be

---

HMICFRS (2021) *Disproportionate use of police powers: A spotlight on stop and search and the use of force.*
IOPC (2022) *National stop and search learning report.*
strengthened and there is a need to ensure that where the powers are deployed the grounds for doing so are clear and certain.

**Recommendations for government**

1.1. **Establish an independent national task force to drive improvements in the use of stop and search**

The Home Office should set up an independent national taskforce to bring about wholesale changes in the way stop and search is used. Its role would be to develop a stop and search framework with clear, national minimum standards on:

- Training, guidance and vetting of frontline officers
- Use of force, to ensure consistency between and within constabularies
- Communication and engagement with communities, particularly in areas where there is high use of stop and search
- Addressing disproportionality and racism in the way stop and search is used

One of the taskforce’s first tasks would be to conduct a rigorous, evidence-based analysis of the strategic costs and benefits of stop and search, taking into account the impact on crime and on community confidence. The study would examine the quality and quantity of searches and how proposed reforms would enhance or limit effectiveness and perceived legitimacy. The conclusions - and evidence on which the conclusions are based - would be published in full.

Specific terms of reference would be agreed with the Independent Scrutiny and Oversight Board (ISOB) for the Police Race Action Plan, but should include the following lines of inquiry:

- The impact of conducting fewer, more targeted searches
- The use, impact and effectiveness of Section 60 powers
- The use of stop and search on children and the impact on safeguarding
- What further safeguarding measures are needed during stop and search, including ensuring the consistent presence of an appropriate adult
- The mismatch between the way stop and search is justified publicly (weapons) and how it is justified in practice (drugs possession)
- How different approaches to the way stop and search is conducted, such as decision-making, tactics, language, behaviour, and the differences between police units carrying out stop and search, affect effectiveness, perceived legitimacy and community relations
- Consider if there is a case for the return to community led policing operations, such as Operation Trident

Members of the taskforce would include academic experts, senior leaders in policing and community representatives. They would need to liaise with the College of Policing, His Majesty's
Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS), the Independent Office for Police Conduct, the National Police Chiefs’ Council (NPCC) leads for the Police Race Action Plan and ISOB.

1.2. Pilot the use of a publicly explainable threat level (similar to that used in counter-terrorism) to publicly justify enhanced use of stop and search for a specific area and period of time

Transparency in the use of stop and search is essential to increasing public awareness, trust and confidence in the police use of powers. If section 60 or equivalent powers are to be used at all, the Home Office should apply lessons learnt from other areas of policing, such as counter-terrorism, to pilot a threat level-type framework to publicly explain the reasoning and context behind operational changes in the use of stop and search. For example, following a particular spate of homicides, the force in question might seek to communicate that there is an elevated risk of serious violence within a particular community, which will trigger the enhanced use of stop and search for a limited period of time. Police forces should be able to explain what impact they expect this enhanced use of stop and search to have on crime, volumes of stop and search, and on the local community, including how it might affect people’s day to day lives. If the time limit for this enhanced use of stop and search is extended, forces should also be prepared and able to explain why. This transparency should extend to the end of the period of enhanced use, with an expectation that the police communicate the impact of stop and search to the communities directly affected. The data for this should also be made available, as part of broader recording practices on the use of stop and search powers. This pilot should be independently evaluated to assess impact, including any unintended consequences.

1.3 Strengthen scrutiny panels and make them more accessible

The Home Office should establish minimum standards for community scrutiny panels, setting out their training and development, size, and composition. These minimum standards should be made mandatory and support the College of Policing’s national guidance for community scrutiny\(^3\). Information should be collected and reviewed by the Home Office to ensure forces in England and Wales are meeting these minimum standards. The Home Office and the Association of Police and Crime Commissioners must ensure that scrutiny panels are representative of those who are stopped and searched. Young people who have been searched should be recruited, meetings should be held in venues that are easy to access, and members should be paid a disturbance fee for taking part.

1.4 Give clear backing to the NPCC/College of Policing Police Race Action Plan

Racism, discrimination and inequality in policing are barriers to trust for local communities and hinder the police’s ability to effectively serve. The Home Office should publicly commit to supporting the NPCC/College of Policing Police Race Action Plan, and consider measures to

---

\(^3\) College of Policing (2020) Transparent. Authorised Professional Practice. Available at: https://www.college.police.uk/app/stop-and-search/transparent#:~:text=Scrutiny%20should%20ordinarily%20focus%20on%20quality%20of%20interactions%20and%20effectiveness
support forces in implementing elements of the plan. Additionally, the Home Office should consider measuring and comparing the implementation of the plan across England and Wales, including for instance, in the use of implementation league tables.

**Recommendations for the police**

Our stop and search proposals to rebuild trust in the police, particularly among Black communities, are set out under the four challenges of openness, accountability, disproportionality and community engagement:

**Openness**

Many participants across our focus groups said police officers’ poor attitude and communication during stop and searches exacerbated the erosion of trust in the police among Black people.

"I feel like there should be more like times reported to people where police are actually helping young Black boys. And so it’s put more on like things like Snapchat and stuff. Because most of the time people are hearing it from Snapchat, and most of the time it’s like, oh RIP this person because they’ve been hurt by the police or something. So if there was more like stuff on apps like Snapchat, where it’s like, this police officer helped this certain person who’s got this certain colour."

(Child participant)

"If I can understand the reason why you’re being stopped and searched, and they do it with respect, then I’d be able to gain my trust with them again"

(Child participant)

These focus group findings were in line with our polling, which found that a concerningly high proportion of adults and children who had been stopped and searched (specifically Black adults and children), had experienced disrespect, unnecessary use of force, unprofessionalism, and lack of clarity about the terms of the search. While the GOWISELY procedure provides guidelines for officers in the necessary minimum degree of communication during a search, it is clear that more needs to be done to improve the way that officers engage with people they have stopped and searched, before, during, and after the search.

---

4 College of Policing (2022) Professional. Authorised Professional Practice. Available at: https://www.college.police.uk/app/stop-and-search/professional
Recommendations

2.1 New guidance to ensure greater consistency around how stop and search is communicated to people who are stopped
The College of Policing should provide updated guidance and training to all forces to improve the way officers communicate with people when they are stopped and searched while maintaining consistent standards, particularly with those who have specific needs or from communities with negative historical relationships with policing.

2.2. Encourage officers to acknowledge during a search that it may be traumatic for those involved
The College of Policing and the NPCC should issue updated guidance to encourage officers to explicitly acknowledge that being stopped and searched can be intrusive, and in some cases traumatic, for those involved. The acknowledgment may involve an apology for any inconvenience or upset caused when nothing is found, which some officers told us they would welcome doing. A form of words would have to be used which did not imply that an officer had been wrong to exercise their powers.5

2.3 Greater transparency around the narrative used to justify stop and search: acknowledging the role of drugs
There is a clear mis-match between the way stop and search is justified in public statements by the Home Office and senior policing leaders - as a tactic to tackle serious violence - and the actual justifications used by frontline officers (with 65 per cent of searches under PACE justified on drugs grounds). The causes of this mismatch are difficult to disentangle. One possible explanation is that the police find it ‘easier’ to justify drug stops than they do weapons stops and/or that possession of drugs is viewed by officers as a possible proxy for more serious offending. Others have argued that it is evidence that stop and search is being used as a suppression tool, which is embedding prejudice and stigmatising Black communities, rather than as a tactic to tackle violence.

We recommend that the Home Office and senior policing leaders publicly acknowledge this mismatch and, as part of the taskforce recommended above, commit to a programme of research to investigate its causes, including whether the police perceive enforcement against drug possession as a strategic objective. If it is indeed the case that the police view drug possession as a proxy for more serious violence, this needs to be clearly communicated, rather than implicitly assumed.

5 “This was one of our debates that we’re having. We’re having a lot more inputs about equality, diversity and inclusion and how we manage people. Now, I sat in a room with about 30 coppers and half of them said, I will never ever apologise for doing my job. Now my personal opinion is, I think that’s wrong. It’s not about apologising for doing your job. It’s about apologising to that person. So the way that they’ve they’ve been made to feel, irrespective of what your intention is, as a police officer. We have to understand that when we subject someone to stop and search, no matter how much you try to put a positive influence on that, you are still going to leave an impact on that person.” Police officer.
2.4 Improve the way trust and confidence in policing are measured and assessed

Police forces should commit to systematically measuring the trust and confidence of the communities they serve, particularly young people and minority groups. They should also take steps to understand what it’s like to be stopped and searched by holding regular focus groups or carrying out surveys; the process would be separate to formal complaints and feedback procedures. Forces should supplement policing confidence data from the Crime Survey for England and Wales by providing a larger sample size from a targeted local survey. This would include tailored questions for each police force area that can be analysed to look at specific demographic data.

2.5 Highlight positive examples of police/community interaction to create a more rounded picture of policing

Some of our focus group participants said negative online coverage of police/community interactions had an adverse effect on their mental health. Police forces should work to create a more rounded picture of what they do, by highlighting some of the many examples of positive engagements that officers have with members of the public.

Accountability

Experts, focus group participants and policing stakeholders highlighted the importance of effective scrutiny of the police use of stop and search. But scrutiny, on its own, is not enough - those in our focus groups said it had to be backed up by action and enforcement when the powers are misused.

The measures required for accountability to be effective should ensure that:

- Stop and searches are recorded, with footage used consistently and appropriately
- Police forces and officers comply with accountability measures
- The complaints and feedback process is clear
- Officers are held accountable for misconduct during a search

"I think it's really important for us as police officers to have peer-to-peer reflection, honesty and transparency. Because there's been times when I've sat next to a police officer, and they've done something and I didn't like it. Personally, I've felt like the way that they dealt with that member of the public was wrong. And I've said that to them"
(Police officer)

"They get given the QR code or the stop and search reference after they were stopped and searched, for them to give the feedback. But no, I haven’t seen anything come through to the officer. Unless it was particularly bad or a complaint, or maybe something really, really good, which is highly unlikely someone
would say that they've got stopped and it was the best experience. (...) No, we don't see any, we don't see any other feedback at all."
(Police officer)

"So actually, how do we use data to give us insight into the credible use of stop search? So can we be factual? How do we use data to enhance, encourage and enforce good performance and good behaviour?"
(Expert 4)

Recommendations

3.1 Use body-worn footage to increase stop and search transparency
Police forces need to make body-worn video footage of stop and searches more readily available for scrutiny, to help explain the grounds and rationale for using the powers, particularly where images from other cameras have gone ‘viral’ and portrayed a search in a negative light.

To enhance accountability, chief constables, together with the College of Policing, should explore using innovative technology such as the stop and search mobile app launched by West Midlands police in 2017.6

We also recommend that forces carry out regular and random dip sampling of body-worn footage to ensure guidance on stop and searches is being followed.

3.4 Bolster the complaints process
The Home Office should ensure there is a more meaningful response from police forces when there are complaints about a stop and search. A complainant already has the right to request viewing body-worn footage of the search. That should be extended to requesting that police supervisors and/or a community scrutiny panel assess the footage or, where no footage is available, examine the relevant case file.

Disproportionality
A large proportion of those we spoke to or surveyed for our research were concerned about ethnic disproportionality in the use of stop and search. Many said it was crucial to address the issue if the powers were to have their support. Concerns about disproportionality in policing can have wide-reaching implications as they contribute to an erosion of the public’s trust and confidence.

It is also clear that there are serious concerns about racism in policing. With regards to stop and search, perceptions of racist policing are an active barrier to trust in the use of powers and in the police more broadly, particularly among Black children. Our focus groups show that children want to trust the police, but feel unable to due to concerns about racism, stereotyping and the use of stop and search.

"How many police officers do you really think view the typical Black boy as a human? And not just oh we’re going to end up in prison or dead anyway"
(Agent participant)

"Just like anything in life, there are people that tend to do certain things. Certain ethnic, ethnicity people, you know, obviously, you get a lot of Indian doctors... and that’s the same for crime. You know, crime tends to go with what they know, because they get brought up and it just gets passed down from generation to generation. And that’s what they tend to end up doing."
(Police officer)

"You know, there are places that I was policing 30 years ago in London that are still areas of high crime. And we’ve known where they are. And we’ve used all kinds of tactics, but they are still areas of high crime. And that will be because of disinvestment, lack of opportunity, high poverty. And those so-called lower super output areas, they tend to be disproportionately full of people of colour, particularly in large urban populations, because of, I would say, systemic and structural racism for many years in this country."
(Expert 1)

**Recommendations**

3.1 **People involved in policing and criminal justice must recognise the different experiences within Black communities and avoid making generalisations**

Findings from our research reveal stark differences in the trust, confidence and perceptions different Black communities have in policing - notably Black African and Black Caribbean communities. We recommend that policing stakeholders disaggregate the term “the Black community” and instead recognise the differing experiences within Black communities when discussing, analysing and interpreting findings from Black people across a diverse range of backgrounds. As a unit of analysis, the BAME label is meaningless and should not be used.

3.2 **Ensure that training on stop and search is trauma-informed, and includes a focus on discrimination and adultification**

Police officers need to understand the traumatic impact that a stop and search can have on people, particularly children. The College of Policing and individual forces must ensure it is part of officer training so that it becomes a factor when decisions are made about stopping someone. An
understanding of discrimination and adultification - where Black children are treated like grown-ups - should also be included in training.

3.3 Analyse disproportionality and stop and search data at the most local level possible

To ensure that stop and search can be understood, analysed and scrutinised by those outside policing we recommend that forces make figures available for the smallest geographical areas possible. This would mean collecting and publishing stop and search statistics for lower layer super output areas (LSOA), comprising around 1,500 people, every three months. Where possible, as much granular and complete data should be made publicly available including breakdowns of searches, reasons for searches and outcomes by: gender, age and ethnicity.  

The Lammy Review\(^7\) and HMICFRS\(^8\) recommended that the Home Office, chief constables and police and crime commissioners adopt an ‘explain or reform’ principle towards disproportionality in the use of stop and search. They would have to outline key strategic objectives towards reducing disproportionality where it could not be explained by contextual factors, such as deprivation, poverty, lack of education. We encourage this approach and suggest that chief constables give an assessment and explanation for disproportionality to their police and crime commissioner. The details should be published annually.

Community engagement

A recurrent theme of our research was that strained relationships between police and the communities that they serve have weakened the effectiveness of stop and search. Improving community engagement through neighbourhood policing was highlighted as a way to improve this:

"Actually learn about the community you’re actually working in. If you know more about the community, and work with community leaders, to understand how things work in the community, and what to look out for, you have much more, much more leverage"
(Adult participant)

"The work we did (...) following significant shootings, it was a neighbourhood based community effort, partnership, engaged, long term commitment to culturally better understand the community, the Black communities, in several groups. There is no one Black community, it’s across several strands. So you only really know and understand that when you work in partnership, and you’re committed in the long term, to an area, and the model of policing that best suits that style is neighbourhood policing."
(Expert 2)

---


"I think the solution is acknowledgement of the of the state of the issue and acknowledgement of the fact that it’s not all in Black people’s heads, that actually they have done generationally, you know, police have done a lot of things which have resulted in the situation that we’re in now."  
(Expert 5)

Recommendations

4.1 Guarantee a minimum level of neighbourhood policing to boost visibility in local areas
Reforms to stop and search won’t work if implemented in isolation: there needs to be a comprehensive push to rebuild relationships between policing and communities (of all ethnicities). A key element of this must be re-establishing genuine neighbourhood policing across England and Wales. If residents believe that police officers in their area understand local issues and are there to protect them they will be more likely to work with the police to share intelligence and co-operate on efforts to reduce crime. While this will not remove the potential negative impacts of stop and search, it may reduce them; police officers with an established, positive relationship with the community, who are able to explain the reasons for a search, are more likely to earn their trust. Police embedded in local communities will have greater knowledge about people who might be carrying weapons or drugs, reducing the likelihood of unnecessary stops.

We recommend that the Home Office encourage police and crime commissioners to set clear objectives to guarantee a minimum level of neighbourhood policing.

4.2 Community engagement should be made a priority
Police forces should prioritise authentic, long-term engagement in local areas so officers understand the communities they serve, staying in their post for as long as possible to minimise staff turnover and churn. Officers should be given incentives to carry out neighbourhood roles: monitored performance appraisal processes should explicitly recognise an officer’s understanding of their local community.

\[10\] One community-led initiative that was seen to be successful was Operation Trident, set up to tackle gun crime and homicide in London, of which, community engagement was felt to be one of key drivers of its success
Conclusion

The challenges raised by our research are extremely serious but they are not insoluble. Change is possible. The recommendations set out in this report are designed as a constructive and pragmatic response to a complex and multifaceted set of long-standing problems.

We found that there is serious concern within Black communities and the general public about disproportionality and racism in the use of stop and search and in policing. Discrimination in policing is a serious cause for alarm and is heavily impacting public perceptions of the police, across all communities. This needs to be recognised as an issue of urgent importance across policing at all levels, but particularly by senior leadership. Concerted action needs to be taken by senior policing stakeholders to drive forward the top-down institutional change needed to tackle disproportionality and racism within policing.

We recognise that stop and search, whilst a totemic issue for many people, cannot be viewed in isolation. We know that it needs to be seen within a wider context, which acknowledges problems of racism, disproportionality, disadvantage and concerns about basic policing. As a result, any changes to stop and search need to sit alongside a more comprehensive programme of reforms to policing, as perceptions of how stop and search powers are used by the police are linked to wider perceptions of whether the police are fulfilling their core functions and responsibilities.

Our findings show that trust in the police, particularly among Black adults and children, is alarmingly low. As much as this low trust is related to experiences of stop and search, it is also about policing’s lack of effective engagement with victims, witnesses and local communities to ensure their concerns about crime are being addressed. When it comes to rebuilding community relationships, there are precedents we can draw upon: Operation Trident, a programme delivered in London during the 2000s, was successful because it demonstrated the vital role that communities have in supporting the police to tackle crime and improve confidence. We need a similar spirit of community partnership now.

Similarly, other sectors have shown that it is possible to establish evidence-based consensus in contentious areas of policy, such as the role played by the National Institute for Clinical Excellence (NICE\textsuperscript{11}) in determining how finite health resources are allocated to patients. Establishing a new national framework for the delivery of stop and search in England and Wales can play a similar role in beginning to build a platform for consensus on stop and search.

Ultimately it is in all our interests that the police are supported to change, to ensure policing can rebuild trust in the service, and better support communities. Communities should feel confident in policing and expect the best from police officers, because police officers should represent the best of communities.

\textsuperscript{11} The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (2022) NICE Guidance. Available at: https://www.nice.org.uk/