



# Seen but not heard – women’s experience of the police

Report of a collaboration between the Women’s National Commission,  
Thames Valley Police, Todd Consulting and the University of Surrey.

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WOMEN'S NATIONAL COMMISSION



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## ***A message from Rt Hon John Denham MP, Minister of State for crime reduction, policing and community safety***

This report looks at the way the UK Police Service responds to the women, particularly the socially excluded women, of this country. It brings together, for the first time, the views of both sides.

Their views are remarkably consistent.

Both police officers and women recognise that the service provided by the police needs to improve – and both recognise that improvements have to be made by both sides in order to succeed.

I am pleased to welcome such an important contribution to this debate.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'John Denham'.

**John Denham**

## Foreword

### ***By Baroness Crawley of Edgbaston, Chair of the Women’s National Commission, and Julie Spence, President of the British Association of Women Police***

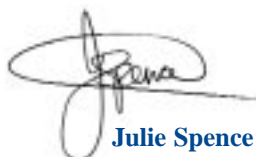
We have all read stories in the media about how poorly the police engage with their local communities, but very rarely read about the strenuous efforts they make to improve their relations – they are simply not ‘newsworthy’.

This report combines two important pieces of research into how the police engage with a very large section of our society – women. It looks at the issues from the perspectives of both the police and women themselves, and makes a number of recommendations to improve relationships.

We hope that it will stimulate debate and the will to change in both the Police Service and community organisations throughout the UK. Because this is not a one-sided problem: the police cannot deliver the services their communities want without the help of those communities. Both sides need to work together.



**Christine Crawley**



**Julie Spence**



## Acknowledgements

This report and study was the result of a collaboration between the Women's National Commission, Thames Valley Police, Todd Consulting and the University of Surrey. The main Thames Valley Police sponsor was Julie Spence, President of the British Association of Women Police.

Thanks are due to the Women's National Commission partner organisations, which gave us contacts and, importantly, provided a trusted conduit for groups of women who are often unwilling to speak directly to the police. Thanks are also due to the Home Office whose Minister, Charles Clarke (Minister of State, Home Office 1999-2001) provided funding for the report.

**Part I** of the report was prepared by Todd Consulting:

- Ann Todd, of Todd Consulting, facilitated meetings with the project Steering Group and subsequently the focus groups, wrote up results and drafted this section.
- Roy Benford, Todd Consulting, undertook additional research and critique.
- Jenny Sweeney co-facilitated the larger groups and undertook analysis and critique.

We should like to thank contributors to Part I:

- Iman Achara, Westminster Refugee Centre and GEMS: Genuine Empowerment for Mothers in Society;
- Kim Smith, The Women's Resource Centre;
- Elizabeth Clarkson, Housing for Women;

We should also like to thank the following groups for their participation:

- GEMS: Genuine Empowerment for Mothers in Society;
- Housing for Women;
- The Women's Resource Centre, Shoreditch;
- Croydon Borough Council;
- Westminster Refugees Consortium;
- Oxford Housing Rights;
- Josephine Butler Society;
- Salvation Army;
- National Board of Catholic Women;
- Soroptimist International;
- Network for Surviving Stalking;
- Youthvoice Worldwide.

**Part II** of the report is entirely based on a police research project produced by Cayne Smith, an MSc Forensic Psychology student at the University of Surrey, who was advised and overseen by Professor Jennifer Brown.

Our thanks are due to the Thames Valley Police Officers who took part in interviews with Cayne, and to the local community-based women's forum on racial harassment which allowed him to observe. We are also grateful to the Council for Racial Equality for its important contributions to Cayne's report.

## Overview of Report

The Police Service has long recognised that it fails to reach, and serve effectively, some parts of the community, and that many of the people disadvantaged by this are women.

**Part I** of this report was based on professional research designed to give a voice to those women who are least likely to be heard – the ‘invisible’ and ‘excluded’ women in our society – by reporting their views in their own words. These views were gathered during a series of focus groups attended by women drawn from both the community at large, and from representative women’s organisations.

**Part II** is a complementary – but entirely separate – report on the same issue, prepared by a research student from the University of Surrey and drawing on police data. Research consisted of interviews with a number of police officers, with local community organisations and by observing a domestic violence discussion group.

There was no collaboration between the authors of the two studies.

### Key messages

The views expressed in the two parts of the report are remarkably consistent. The messages that come through repeatedly bear emphasising early on:

- ▶ **‘not hard to reach, but hard to hear’.** Women are in regular contact with the police – there is no problem there. The problem is that they are ‘hard to hear’: their needs are often submerged by cultural or social pressures, and by prejudicial or stereotypical views and a poor appreciation of their needs on the part of the police;
- ▶ **it takes two to improve a relationship.** Both sides – the women and the police – recognise that relationships between them can and must improve, and that the solution lies in their hands, working together. Neither side can succeed in isolation.

Because our focus was on a particular section of the community we do not claim that the experiences we report are true for the community as a whole – nor, indeed, for women as a whole. But we do claim that they are representative of the views of people who, for various reasons, are more likely to encounter higher levels of crime and poorer housing, and who may lack confidence in their ability to deal with the police – a situation which, for some, is made worse by the patronising attitudes which many reported as routinely adopted by the police.

The report does not, therefore, attempt to present a balanced picture of the overall service provided by the police, but rather a picture of women’s experience of the police as seen from both perspectives.

The benefits for the police in engaging with these women are, we believe, two fold:

- ▶ a **better understanding** of the people they serve, and
- ▶ based on that improved understanding, a **better chance of success** as they develop and implement improved ways of serving their communities.

The report is not designed to provide answers, but we hope it will help to inform the thinking of those responsible for finding ways of helping the police better to hear and serve these women. We – the WNC, Thames Valley Police, Todd Consulting and the University of Surrey – hope it will also prompt further research and more detailed work.



## PART I: *the Women's story*

This part of the report was prepared by Todd Consulting on the basis of a professional research study into how women in the community interact with the police.

### Introduction

Over half – 52% – of the UK population is female. This study was initiated to investigate how women:

- want to access the protection provided by the law, and
- view their experience with the front line of the criminal justice system – the police.

It provides the first hand, near verbatim experience and comments of the women participating in the study.

The study itself was, as we have said, the result of a collaborative partnership between the WNC and Todd Consulting, but relied greatly on the goodwill of the participants. We felt it necessary to limit the scope of the study somewhat so as to produce a useful report without undermining that goodwill. The authors hope it will provoke more research into the way the police interact with women.

This report was written to highlight the issues that affect the lives of women in the United Kingdom every day. It concentrates on the experiences of those women who are often regarded as ‘hard to reach’ – the socially excluded women living in poverty, in poor quality accommodation and/or in areas plagued with crime, often from within minority ethnic communities of first generation immigrants. (Part II of this report includes police statistical data about contacts between police and their communities).

The report gives a ‘customer’s eye view’ of the way the police respond to the challenges of serving a diverse and changing community. **The common theme is the importance of the police to the community and of the protection they provide for women** – for some, a vital service on which their lives depend. It is in this context that their comments and suggestions for improvement should be read. The women we consulted were not anti-police: the majority of them wanted better contact and relations with the police.

*“I was not put off coming because the police might be here. It is important to engage with them, to challenge them about what they are doing”.*

Participant in focus group

This report contains some strong comments. We hope that they will be read in the spirit that they were made – constructively, by a part of the population that values and depends on the police service and wants it to be the best possible.

### Content and structure of the report

This report has been written to give maximum exposure to the women’s experience, expertise and views. Views are, therefore, either reported in a near verbatim fashion, or were written by the women themselves. No attempt has been made to correct grammar or to change phrasings, and we highlight direct quotes from the women.

The report consists of:

- an overview of the key findings and themes from the focus groups;
- an overview of the focus groups findings;
- a summary of the women’s ideas for improving relations between women and the police, and the main recommendations made by the women.



Detailed write-ups of the focus group discussions, the methodology and participant feedback about the focus groups are included in the annexes.

Throughout the report the abbreviation WNC is used to refer to the Women's National Commission.

Note: The phrase 'community group' is used to describe the organised groups of women who share concerns about particular community problems or issues and which contributed to our study. They included groups of minority ethnic women from a single culture and locality as well as groups of women from a variety of backgrounds, races and cultures.

## Which women?

Our study included women British residents from Latin America, Somalia, Yemen, Egypt and Pakistan, as well as White, Black and Asian British women.

Participants were young, middle aged and older women, and Muslim, Christian and other spiritual allegiances, agnostics and atheists were represented. Some had little formal education. All lived in London and the Thames Valley area. Although some participants were relatively well-off, the majority were poor and came from minority ethnic communities, including refugees. This emphasis was suggested by the Thames Valley Police.

## Key findings

The key problem in the relationship between women and the police is not lack of contact but an inability to hear what the 'other side' is saying. The voices of women are often muffled by both pressures from their own communities and unhelpful attitudes on the part of many police officers. The poor service received from the police makes women less likely to trust them.

### Key finding 1

'Hard to reach' groups are defined as such by the agencies trying to make contact, and seem to owe more to the nature of the agencies than the groups themselves. Police research indicates that the police have disproportionately more contact with minority ethnic groups than with white members of the public – suggesting that they do not have problems in making contact so much as in effective engagement.

**Not 'hard to reach' but 'hard to hear'.**

Initial suspicion quickly turned to enthusiasm during the focus groups, in part because the facilitators were women, and seen as independent of all 'official' bodies. The use of local women's groups as trusted channels of contact was helpful, as was the decision to use independent authors and to publish the report, making it accessible to organisations in addition to the police. There is now interest in continuing and developing the exercise amongst the participating groups. That enthusiasm is shown in the feedback we received from the participants.

### Key finding 2

Direct engagement between the police and socially excluded women can be helped by using local independent women's groups that already have the trust of the women themselves. Women's organisations – both local 'grassroots' groups and local branches of national organisations – provide a way to reach to women.

The anonymity guaranteed to all participants enabled them to express their concerns freely. From their evidence, gender appears to be a key factor in women's experience of the police. There was a remarkable

degree of consistency amongst participants, both in their concerns and in the responses they have experienced from the police. The study shows that women:

- are **particularly concerned** about domestic violence and violent, random street crime;
- feel that, generally speaking, they are **patronised and stereotyped** by most police officers;
- believe that their needs are given **insufficient weight** by the criminal justice system, and their priorities are **poorly understood** by the officers assigned to deal with them.

The recent efforts that the police have made in establishing specialist units to respond to issues such as domestic violence and rape are appreciated and have made a very real difference and improvement. There is genuine praise for these developments, and for the individual police officers who work with the community. The contrast between these very effective units and individuals and the inadequacy of the approaches of front line police officers in these areas leads to an inconsistent experience for women: on the one hand they get understanding and practical help from the specialists they encounter during ongoing problems, and on the other a reactive and poorly informed response from the uniformed officers at a time of crisis.

### Key finding 3

Both police and civilian staff who act as the first point of contact with women need training on gender and cultural issues in order to help women to reach specialist officers. Minority ethnic groups want the police to understand more about their cultural and religious needs.

Women from immigrant communities in particular did not understand the police services available to them. Refugee women often had difficult and threatening experiences of police forces in their home countries, and this made them reluctant to contact the police.

### Key finding 4

Women in immigrant communities, especially refugees, need help to understand the different roles of the police and other local agencies – particularly the difference between the role of the UK police and the police services they are used to.

There is a strong sense of community amongst women – even amongst those who live in depressed and inner city areas. Many of our participants came as representatives of community groups. These articulate and capable, although not necessarily formally educated, women provide a strong and much needed route into the hidden communities. An unexpected bonus was their experience and expertise in representing women victims of crime to the criminal justice system and the police. This makes both their evidence and their suggestions for improvement particularly pertinent and powerful. (Incidentally, many “community brokers” are men. Although they can be a useful route into the women in their communities, they can also be domineering if unchecked, helping to reinforce the problems faced by women. They should not be used to the exclusion of direct and effective engagement with women themselves).

### Key finding 5

Women are a vital and ready source of ideas for effective community policing. They should be directly engaged by police forces as part of the formal consultation process for the community policing strategy.

The responses to this study suggest that the police would find it useful to approach women through local women’s groups, and that it may be helpful to use women to make contact with them. The willingness of the women we consulted to speak out about their experiences of dealing with the police made it clear that their voices were not being heard through usual consultation mechanisms.

## Key themes

Most women come into contact with the police as a victim rather than as a witness to, or possible perpetrator of, a crime. Three main themes emerged from the focus groups.

The first is **women's experience as service users**. This was very mixed, and included:

- ▶ **poor customer care:** from the poor quality of police stations to a culture of disbelief and discrimination from individual officers, generally those at the 'front desk' – who can help or hinder the 'customer' needing specialist attention. Many women reported instances of sarcasm and slow or ineffective responses to low level (and sometimes high level) crime;
- ▶ **'low status'** in the customer hierarchy. Those officers who specialised in women's problems – domestic violence and community officers, etc – gave the impression of being under-resourced, the status of the work being dependent on the policies of the individual force. Despite this, and more positively, women reported a much better level of service from specialist officers – although their effectiveness could be seriously undermined by poor service at the front desk.

The second theme was **barriers**. Women reported a sense of remoteness from a police service most commonly seen in helicopters, cars and in police stations which were not user friendly (nor, sometimes, local or easy to find):

- ▶ we found that first generation immigrants in particular were **not sure of the role of the police**. In many cases their perceptions were influenced by experiences of quite different policing regimes in their home countries;
- ▶ many reported that they had **problems when trying to reach the police**. A shortage of police resources meant, for example, that hard-pressed call centres were unwilling to persevere when callers had strong accents, and support services such as fingerprinting following a burglary, for example, were available only during 'normal' office hours;
- ▶ the women felt that they were treated with less respect than men: there appeared to be a police **'culture of disbelief'**.

The third was **women's priorities**, which were very specific:

- ▶ the overwhelming priority for women is **personal security**: tackling street attacks and domestic violence were their main priorities;
- ▶ the women recognised the value of **greater police involvement with the community** as a way of delivering policing services more effectively, and wanted actively to participate.

Much of the experience reported in Part I of this report is borne out by the police research report in Part II.

## Focus groups: overview of findings

### Women and the police

Women's experience of the police appears to show the existence of two cultures within the police organisation. Specialist units created to address the complex issues of domestic violence and sexual assault

attract consistent praise, as do the officers who work with community groups on a local basis. It is the day to day, twenty-four hour, 'front desk' emergency service – whether provided by 'phone or face to face – that causes most difficulties.

Individual experience is dependent on the response of individual officers, many of whom seem insensitive to the needs of women, and of the support available from other groups and agencies.

*"There was an inconsistency in response from different police stations. Not every police officer dismissed the issue but some did. This was confusing because the policy on domestic violence was supposed to apply to all staff, not just to those in specialist units. Some victims have had very good and supportive experiences with the police."*

Focus group B

This lack of consistency is not only confusing for women, but has several direct consequences for the police:

- the failure to apply national best practice at the local ‘24 hour’ level;
- the creation of additional costs. For example, in domestic violence cases the failure to refer the victim to the appropriate support agency means that the abuse may be repeated with consequent extra costs for the woman, her children, the police, and other state and voluntary agencies (NHS, DWP etc);
- the unpredictable response adds to the unwillingness of women to come forward to the police about other topics;
- the reputation of the police is damaged, undermining the excellent practices of some officers and the specialist units.

Many of these problems might be overcome by looking again at how the police organise themselves. The police are currently the go-between for all issues and problems – from sensitive issues such as mental illness leading to anti-social behaviour, which require a range of social and health supports, to ‘crime control’ where they are required to identify and deal with criminals. The police should be able to call upon other agencies on an emergency basis so as to provide both an appropriate response to the calls made on them and the reassurance that their local communities need in order to build up trust and confidence in them, but without diverting police resources to deal with issues peripheral to the crime.

### Resources & importance

The perception of the women in our study is that the community based services, particularly those addressing women’s concerns, are not valued by the police service – despite the undoubted commitment of individual officers. This view is reinforced by the lack of resources devoted to these activities.

*“Police officers attending community events is appreciated, BUT they must be given time to do so.”*

Focus group C

### Patronising

Every group of women we consulted, whatever their socio-economic group, background, race, culture or age group, said that when they dealt with the police, even as informants or victims, the police would:

- patronise them;
- stereotype them;
- listen to any man present before turning to the woman complainant;
- noticeably take women more seriously when they had a label or title that identified their ‘rank’ or ‘role’.

Individuals were treated with less respect if they were distressed, and especially so when English was not their mother tongue.

### A sense of security

Domestic violence and street crime emerged as the main concerns for all of the groups.

Domestic violence appears to affect all types of women, irrespective of cultural background, race or socio-economic grouping. Study participants included abused women, but even those who had never been victimised knew women who had. Active in their community groups, many had been called upon to help women who had been subjected to abuse.

Random attacks in the street were a common experience within our study, and adversely affected the women’s feeling of security and safety in their own neighbourhoods. These attacks were a more common experience for the poorer women and those living in inner city areas.

This feeling of insecurity may explain the repeated calls by the participants for ‘more policemen on the beat’. The situation is worse in London, where finding and gaining access to police officers and the relative ‘safety’ of police stations is more difficult.

### Domestic violence

Women's experience of the police response to domestic violence demonstrates both the complexity of the problem and the inconsistent police response to it. The study highlights the important role of the many

*"If you stay in an abusive relationship, the police will say to you, "You have called us once, you went back, don't call us again."*

Focus group C

expert support groups that exist in this field. The women's experience is that the police have neither the resources, training nor – in some cases – the inclination to make any lasting impact.

When victims managed to access a police station, front line officers were too often reactive, unable to deal with a distressed individual and sometimes believed the perpetrators rather than the victims.

Officers seemed frustrated by the unwillingness of many victims to press charges, and the fact that it was the same couples who repeatedly visited the police station. This frustration is understandable, but ignores the known collusive and manipulative nature of these relationships – an example of the barriers to police understanding that need to be broken down.

There is a wealth of expertise and experience available to the police on this topic from the many groups who work in the arena. Given the importance of the issue to all women, an improvement in this area, both in terms of response and in terms of media messages about the unacceptability of such abuse, would have a profound impact on women's perceptions of the police.

#### Specific comments made about the police response to domestic violence:

- Lack of fast response to domestic violence emergency calls;
- Intergenerational abuse not seen by the authorities as domestic violence, and therefore they were unwilling to deal with it, despite the fact that the consequences for the victim were similar;
- Not enough women officers in the domestic violence units;
- The criminal justice system was seen as very complex and very slow in bringing perpetrators to justice;
- No effective protection available for those victims of domestic violence who are illegal immigrants or whose status has not been confirmed and are unable to access Income Support or other welfare services.

### Street crime and random violence

Street crime, including random attacks on individuals committed by criminal, anti-social children and teenagers, is rife in the areas where many of the poorer women in our study live. This affects the quality of their lives every day. The police are seen as powerless to deal with this, particularly when confronted *'by children who are word perfect about their 'rights'*. This undermines the credibility of the police amongst women.

### Role confusion

The study provided some insights about the perceived role and ability of the police to resolve crime and other problems.

The police role in dealing with crime was understood by all of the women in all of the groups and appeared to be very similar to that in other countries. However, the lack of interest in relatively petty crime confused some of the poorer respondents in London, particularly since the consequences were very important to them in financial terms. A 'zero tolerance' approach would win support.

It was clear from the focus groups that women who have lived in the UK for some time understand the police role in protecting the individual against violence, including domestic violence. This insight had often been gained through their community groups. The idea of the police as the protector of the individual in matters traditionally seen as family issues was new to more recent arrivals. It had not occurred to one group, whilst another said; "I tell our members that it is different here. You cannot behave as you would at home [to chastise children], if you do that here, you will be in trouble. You have to change how you behave."

There was confusion, particularly amongst women recently arrived in the UK, about the roles of the various local and national government agencies, especially the role of the police within the criminal justice system. New residents point out that they do not receive any information about the system – and interestingly, many British citizens born and educated in the UK are equally confused. It would appear that the police are expected to deal with every aspect of difficulty faced by the community in the face of widespread ignorance about what the police can and cannot do. Consequently, police time is wasted as they act as ‘guides’ through the various agencies.

### Accessing the police

Police stations (particularly within the Metropolitan Police area) were reported to be hostile places, difficult to find and difficult to access. At some stations, victims of crime had to stand in line in the street outside, clearly an unsuitable arrangement. For many women this made their problems worse through lack of privacy, the danger of repeat attacks (in cases of domestic violence) and the shame of being seen by members of their community.

Against this, there was a clear demand for outreach work by the police. Participants felt that the police should be going out to talk to victims rather than demanding that they attend the police station. The DWP<sup>1</sup> was repeatedly held up as an example of good practice in providing a welcoming office environment.

### Shame and fear

A common theme was the feeling of shame and fear associated with approaching the police for help. Underlying reasons included the multiple roles that the same police officers perform (such as the prosecution of crime, community policing and the enforcement of Immigration Service orders).

*[The police should have] “more contact with different cultures to help overcome their ignorance...”*

Focus group A

### Communication skills for life on the ‘front line’

The communication skills of police officers were a recurrent theme in the focus groups. Participants were concerned about police failings in this area, but they also had a clear picture of the complexity of the task with which the police are charged.

They pointed out that officers receive little training in communicating, not only with those who do not speak good English, but also with those who are distressed and/or physically or mentally ill. This is an area of concern, given the nature of the daily workload of the police.

*“The amount and level of police training in communication compares very poorly with that given to social workers and psychiatric nurses, yet they are often dealing with the same constituency: the mentally ill, the distressed, the dysfunctional and socially inadequate, and the violent.”*

Focus group B

The women highlighted the expertise that was available in DWP, social work and psychiatric nursing. It was pointed out that the clients were often the same.

## Ideas to improve engagement

The women we talked to were not short of ideas for improvements:

- make police stations more **‘customer friendly’**, for example by improving lighting, furniture and facilities, making provisions for speaking to an officer in confidence and for queues for attention inside the station. Some women compared unwelcoming police stations with more customer friendly DWP offices;
- give a **higher ‘status’** to domestic violence (for example, by training more specialist officers and prioritising within the police agenda so that they are not called away to other duties) and learning from the many examples of **‘best practice’** (the domestic violence unit run by the Southampton Police was singled out for praise);

<sup>1</sup>Department for Work and Pensions, formerly Department of Social Security

- the importance of **local contacts** – ‘community outreach work’ – was emphasised, together with longer ‘tours of duty’ in particular localities. Improvements in these areas would help officers to build a core of expertise and trust with the people they serve, helping them to make the important long-term contacts that will help them when working with schools, refuges, and centres of community and faith such as Muslim centres. Women’s organisations within the community, either local representatives of national organisations or members of neighbourhood and local groups, are important routes in for the police (and other ‘official’ agencies), acting as trusted channels of communication with women who would otherwise not respond to overtures.

A complete list of suggestions is given at Annex A.

Beyond these practical changes, the women we talked to wanted police officers to be helped to break down barriers, chiefly through training in:

- cultural and gender issues** – helping officers better to understand the people they are dealing with;
- communications** (social workers and mental health workers were seen as good role models, and the police often deal with the same client groups);
- awareness training** – not for the police, but for children in school and first generation immigrants as well as other members of the community – on citizens’ rights and responsibilities under the law, and the work of police and other agencies in serving communities and upholding the law.

Because many of the women we talked to were unfamiliar with the different responsibilities of the police and other agencies within the civil and criminal justice system, their ideas for improvements often crossed these boundaries. They expected the two systems to work more effectively together, rather than separately. We have included these comments in order to reflect accurately their opinions and experience.

## Focus groups: summary of recommendations

The groups made many positive comments and suggestions as to how the police could improve their services to women.

### Gender

The police need to move away from their traditional ‘male’ or ‘macho’ culture:

- make gender awareness and training in women’s experience a core competence for all police officers;
- recruit, retain and promote more women into strategy and policy setting units, as well as in front line and specialist roles. Women need to see women – and preferably women from within their own communities – within the force. And the presence of more women would help to change the prevailing culture.

### Reaching out to the community

The community wants to be heard – the police need to be prepared to listen:

- interpreting services should be offered automatically when dealing with those who do not have good English;
- learn how to communicate with the community from other government and local government departments, or local organisations. For example:
  - the DWP on ‘customer friendly’ front offices and staff training for ways of reaching disadvantaged people;
  - the psychiatric nursing and social work professions for ways of helping people who are ill or under stress;
  - community groups which have expertise either in the problem or the relevant culture;

- outreach activities should be properly resourced and valued. Officers should be encouraged to play an active part in community life as part and parcel of their job:
  - talking to community groups helps to build relationships and trust and could lead to the police being invited to become members of the group. Similarly, schools outreach work helps to present the police in a positive light;
  - setting up discussion meetings to consult on community issues emphasises the police willingness to meet and work with the community;
  - making sure that new UK residents understand the role of the police service, the civil structures within the UK, and their rights and duties as residents will help the community to trust and value the police, and the police to serve the community better;
  - where possible, locating police stations in the centre of the community – for example, shopping centres or community halls – helps to make them more accessible both physically and psychologically.

### Domestic violence

Domestic violence is the key issue for many women, and the police need to prioritise it accordingly:

- specialist officers and units are very helpful, but only if they can be reached by the victim:
  - all officers need training in responding to domestic violence, not just those in specialist units, to enable them to recognise the problem, handle it sensitively and make the appropriate referrals;
  - training should draw on the expertise in non-police support groups and other agencies;
  - there should be ‘zero tolerance’ of domestic violence;
- women need immediate access to clear information about the way the courts can ‘fast track’ cases of domestic violence.

### Conclusion

We found that the women we talked to shared a common experience of being treated poorly. This experience cut across class, education, and race: women consistently reported receiving less respect for themselves and their concerns. In each community we talked to, the women’s agenda was different from that of the police. It seemed that, although good (sometimes very good) *policies* for consultations and customer services are in place in many police forces, good *practice* is patchy.

Anecdotally, we were told that lack of resources is a significant problem. However, we are aware of some forces which have successfully developed and implemented a range of complementary policies, and these examples may provide useful lessons from which other forces can learn.

We conclude that:

- **women are not ‘hard to reach’, but ‘hard to hear’.** The women we talked to were unanimous in their support for a strong and effective policing strategy which delivers a secure and safe environment. They were keen to work with us to get that, and this is illustrated in both the many and varied ideas for improvement which were yielded by a very short study, and by the evaluation feedback;
- encouragingly, **much of what women want is already available from some police forces** that have taken local initiatives. The important next step is to spread this practice to all areas;
- **the police must engage with the whole of their community** – including women – and that the needs of the ‘invisible’ are as urgent a priority as those of the more vocal, largely male, members of the community. The needs of women in particular should be separately addressed as an integral part of public policy on policing.





## PART 2: *the Police Officer's tale*

### – *the police view of their relationship with the community*

#### Overview

This report is based on a paper, “The service delivery expectations of the police and ‘hard to reach’ groups” by Cayne Smith from the University of Surrey, working with Thames Valley Police.

This study looked at the way in which the police engage with women and other ‘hard to reach’ groups in two policing areas. Drawing on existing and new research, the study compared expectations on both sides, examined the ways in which they differ and made proposals for remedying perceived defects in the way the police serve their communities.

The study showed that, in the two policing areas considered, there were significant differences in the amount of contact different communities had with the police:

- the white community (both men and women) had many fewer contacts with the police than would be expected from the size of the population, and minority ethnic groups considerably more (Afro-Caribbeans comprised a tiny minority of the total populations of the two areas, yet had the most police contact);
- overall, men had more police contact than women;
- older people (most of whom are women) were less likely than younger people to make a complaint to the police;
- the most common reason for being in contact with the police is through being suspected of criminal activity.

The key problems perceived by both the police and the representatives of their communities were:

- **lack of mutual understanding** and **poor communications**. Communities did not understand the role played by the police in the UK and found it difficult to get this information. Public consultation exercises, which might help to forge links with the community, were not adequately publicised and so failed to attract community involvement. The police had an inadequate grasp of the cultural environment they were operating in, particularly at the front line, and failed to make appropriate arrangements for dealing with some members of the community;
- **lack of trust and confidence**, coupled with **unreasonable expectations**. The police responded to incidents as quickly as their resources allowed, but some incidents were treated more urgently than others. Police resources could be redirected to other, more critical work at the expense of ‘everyday’ policing activities. The communities did not understand this, having played no part in determining police priorities, and expected the same level of response at all times. When it was not delivered they felt ‘let down’. The suspicion on the part of ethnic minority communities that the police might be discriminating against them in the delivery of services undermined any trust that they might otherwise inspire;
- **poor quality police data**. Police contacts with actual or alleged offenders tend to be well documented, other contacts much less so. This makes it difficult to assess how many of the perceived problems are rooted in fact – and difficult, therefore, to devise ways of dealing with them.

The solutions to these problems focused on:

- **better communication** – about the role of the police and how the community might work with them to improve the delivery of services, for example by agreeing police priorities;
- **better training** for front line police officers in dealing with vulnerable members of the community;
- **improved cultural awareness** within the police force, helping them to respond appropriately and sympathetically to distressed members of minority ethnic communities, and particularly women.

## Aims of the study

This study aimed to supplement the existing research about the relationship between the police and ‘hard to reach’ groups by looking at population data (derived from the 1991 Census and broken down by gender and ethnicity) compared with police statistics of contacts with the public.

The more detailed research and analysis looked at service expectations between the police and ‘hard to reach’ groups in order to highlight public expectations, police priorities and any gaps in the delivery of police services – that is, where the police are failing to match public expectations.

Data were obtained from Thames Valley Police officers and community representatives from ‘hard to reach’ groups.

Further information was obtained from a local women’s forum discussing racial harassment, attended by 12 Asian women, a Police Community Race Relations officer and council representatives.

Police forces and Authorities find the research useful when developing policing priorities for inclusion in annual policing plans, and in the development of strategies aimed at tackling any gaps in service delivery, whether by improving the standards to those expected by the public or, where appropriate, managing public expectations to accept a more realistic level of service.

## Introduction

In the last two decades there has been a growing interest surrounding the relationship between the police and the community generally, and between the police and members of minority ethnic groups in particular.

*Reports of racism rose from 49 in 1991 to 73 in 1992, followed by a huge increase to 291 in 1993.*  
Source: Police Complaints Authority 1993

Following the Brixton riots, the Scarman Report<sup>2</sup> commented that the police ought to reflect the society they serve, and added that the needs of ethnic minorities were “very significantly underestimated”. The report suggested that the police had not become sufficiently adjusted to the problems of policing a multi-

racial community and argued that special efforts should be made to recruit more people from ethnic minority groups, in order to be representative of the community as a whole.

The Scarman Report was described as “ground-breaking” because it set out an agenda for the development of a better relationship between the police and minority ethnic communities. However, whilst it certainly prompted the development of improved policies, observers argue that these had little demonstrable effect on the interaction between the police and minorities.

*Black people are five times more likely to be subjected to ‘stop and search’ procedures than white people.*  
(Home Office, 1998)

Almost twenty years later the Macpherson report (1999), prompted by criticisms of the investigation into the murder of black teenager Stephen Lawrence, ensured that the whole question of policing ethnic minorities was re-opened.

The Macpherson Report again highlighted concerns about the relationship between the police service and minority ethnic communities, and in particular the communities’ lack of confidence in the police. The report identified a number of problems, including the feeling amongst minority ethnic groups that they were both over-policed as suspects and under-represented by their local police force when they became victims of crime.

Associated with these problems was the acknowledgement by some police forces that they were ‘institutionally racist’.

<sup>2</sup> Scarman, 1981: para 5.6

One way of understanding the needs of the local community is through community consultation<sup>3</sup>. This suggestion was put forward during the Scarman Inquiry, which recommended that arrangements be made in each police area for obtaining the views of local people about matters concerning local policing<sup>4</sup>. The police are now statutorily required to consult the public in order to restore and maintain the trust and confidence of the public, particularly the minority groups within communities. Consultation exercises are carried out by the Police Authorities Community Consultative Group (PCCG)<sup>5</sup>.

**Racism:** "The collective failure of an organisation to provide an appropriate professional service to people because of their colour, culture, or ethnic origin. It can be seen or detected in processes, attitudes and behaviour which amount to discrimination through unwitting prejudice, ignorance, thoughtlessness, and racist stereotyping which disadvantage minority ethnic people." (Macpherson Report (1999, Chapter 6 para 34))

Unfortunately, findings suggest that both the police and community have mixed views of the effectiveness of PCCGs. They are widely regarded as unrepresentative, non-strategic, time consuming and not particularly influential. Importantly, 'hard to reach' groups are perceived as excluded from the consultative process.

### Occupational culture

As recently as 1994, the organisational culture within the police was characterised as 'overtly masculine, emphasising physical action, competitiveness and heterosexuality'<sup>6</sup>. The harassment and discrimination faced by women and ethnic minority officers has attracted criticism, and it has been suggested that these attitudes and behaviours may be carried over into the way the police engage with their local communities. Cultural changes within the police organisations have been shown to have an impact on the way they interact with the public.

Despite an increase in recruits since the 1980s, women are still very much a minority in the police service and their chances of reaching a senior rank much less than men of equal ability<sup>7</sup>. Women officers are restricted in the amount and type of experience they are able to gain<sup>8</sup>, and this in turn affects their job satisfaction and may inhibit their promotion prospects. The fact that fewer women than men achieve promotion can reinforce male stereotypes about women's abilities.

Recruitment from the minority ethnic population is hampered by their lack of positive experiences of policing. When recruited they face disapproval from their own community and, more seriously, they may face discrimination from within the force such as racist jokes from the 'canteen culture'<sup>9</sup> and low promotion opportunities.

Similar organisational discrimination is faced by homosexual and lesbian officers, and again this is reflected in police relations with those members of the community<sup>10</sup>.

- ▶ In 1998, only 2% of the total police establishment in England and Wales consisted of police officers from ethnic minority groups. In 2001 the proportion had risen to 2.4%
- ▶ In 1993 only 13.2% of total force establishment in England and Wales were women. In 2001, women provided 17.1% of the total establishment.

### Positive developments

The treatment of women in rape and cases of domestic violence has improved over the past two decades<sup>11</sup>, not least as a result of a BBC documentary in 1982 which attracted strong public condemnation of the way the police force in question (Thames Valley) dealt with a woman in a rape case. As a result many forces established 'rape suites' – there are eight in the Thames Valley Police Force alone – in order to deal with a rape victim in a more sensitive and understanding manner.

A similar improvement was made in the police response to domestic violence cases when police forces were reminded of the number of different legal strategies under which offenders might be arrested. Domestic Violence Units followed, helping the police to support victims more effectively as well as encouraging a more sensitive and supportive response to women in violent relationships.

<sup>3</sup> Section 96 of the Police Act 1996

<sup>4</sup> Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC), 2000

<sup>5</sup> Elliot and Nicholls, 1996

<sup>6</sup> Fielding, 1994

<sup>7</sup> Gregory and Lees, 1999; Heidensohn 1989

<sup>8</sup> Anderson, Brown and Campbell, 1993

<sup>9</sup> Waddington, 1999; Holdaway, 1994

<sup>10</sup> Henderson, 1981; Derbyshire, 1990

<sup>11</sup> Women's National Commission, 1985; Radford and Stanko, 1991

Treatment of ‘racially motivated’ crime has also improved in response to internal and external pressure and a growing awareness of the community’s needs<sup>12</sup>. Some forces have established special units designed to deal with the impact of such incidents and, whilst there are still problems in reporting and ultimately recording and prosecuting such incidents, there is an increasing commitment to take them seriously<sup>13</sup>. Community relations work with minority ethnic groups has helped many police forces to have a much better understanding of the link between good policing and good community relations, and attach much more importance to racial crime<sup>14</sup>.

### ‘Hard to reach’ groups

In the past, poorer communities – the working class, minority ethnic groups, the unemployed, drug users and the homeless – were more likely to have unsatisfactory experiences with the police<sup>15</sup>. Today, those economic divisions have been replaced by groupings related to lifestyle and culture<sup>16</sup> and cross boundaries of gender, race and religion<sup>17</sup> – for example, women as a whole are more likely to experience difficulties in dealing with the police. These very different communities often have very different views about the police, and what they want from them<sup>18</sup>.

This creates enormous challenges for a police service that has to balance conflicting demands from an increasingly diverse society. The term ‘hard to reach’ groups – a general term referring to the many ‘minority’ groups who have difficult relationships with the police – has been extended to include young men, the gay community, members of minority ethnic communities, children, those who suffer domestic abuse, and the elderly<sup>19</sup>. Domestic abuse is most often suffered by women. Most elderly people are women, and women in minority ethnic groups are more likely than their male counterparts to be culturally inhibited or subject to traditional disciplines which are not accepted within the UK. The implications for women are clear.

However, there has been some discussion as to what constitutes a ‘hard to reach’ group.

The HMIC<sup>20</sup> report found that, once contact has been established, and a relationship developed, the label of ‘hard to reach’ becomes redundant. Groups were ‘hard to reach’ only where both sides – the police and the community – were unwilling to engage in open dialogue.

## Key finding 1

Groups identified as ‘hard to reach’, such as minority ethnic communities and victims of domestic abuse, are not hard to reach at all. They are accessible and willing to take part in consultative processes, but are ignored.

**‘Hard to reach’ is not a failure to reach but a failure to hear.**

Source: HMIC paper, 2000

### Types of ‘hard to reach’ groups

Victims of domestic violence have traditionally been seen as hard to reach. This problem appears to be even more acute in the immigrant communities who often tolerate and deny the violence, protect perpetrators and silence victims<sup>21</sup>.

<sup>13</sup> Jones and Newburn, 2001

<sup>14</sup> Walklate, 2000

<sup>15</sup> Commission for Racial Equality, 1999

<sup>16</sup> Reiner, 1997

<sup>17</sup> Jones and Newburn, 2001

<sup>18</sup> Johnston, 1999

<sup>19</sup> Smith, 1987

<sup>20</sup> Crime and Disorder Act (1998) in guidance for Community Safety Partnerships

<sup>21</sup> Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC), 2000

The elderly are also often difficult to reach, mainly because of their views and sometimes isolated lifestyles. Most elderly people are women and apathy, feelings that the police can do little about offences, fear of officialdom or concern about retaliation, often leads them to have little contact with the police<sup>22</sup>. At the other end of the age spectrum, young people may also have difficult relationships with authority figures such as the police, believing they will be viewed as potential troublemakers rather than victims<sup>23</sup>.

Disabled people, homosexuals, travellers and gypsies are all considered to be ‘hard to reach’ for a variety of reasons, including their lifestyles and the police perception of their needs.

In recent years a new ‘hard to reach’ group has emerged in growing numbers: asylum seekers, who pose more challenges to an already over-stretched police service. Many of the problems associated with this group include a fear of authority leading to unreported racial attacks, a lack of integration into the community, and poor communication between statutory agencies and local residents<sup>26</sup>.

## Key finding 2

Access to justice can be seriously restricted through a combination of cultural, social and legal circumstances.

Even those overcoming cultural pressures to remain silent are wary of requesting help from law enforcement agencies, as they may have had poor experiences with authorities in their country of origin.

They may also be worried that they will be subjected to discriminatory treatment, because of their ethnicity, gender or immigration status.

Many battered women either do not know about the criminal justice system, or do not see it as a source of help. Even if the police do become involved, communication difficulties can undermine their best efforts to assist the women.

## Research on ‘hard to reach’ groups

Paradoxically, a group described as ‘hard to reach’ could be stigmatised by the use of that term. Groups categorised as ‘hard to reach’ because of their characteristics, such as minority ethnic communities, might not in fact have any inherent problems in their relationship with the police – yet the stigma could still apply, creating problems.

A recent report showed that successful policing could flow from improved relations with the community, and is borne out by case studies such as the Cleveland Police response to local prostitution.

*Cleveland Police (Middlesborough) dealt with conflicting demands by residents and businesses, distressed at the high prevalence of street prostitution, by adopting a range of responses including consulting agencies working to help women prostitutes, and holding focus groups with the women themselves. These helped to show that the ‘traditional’, punitive response had failed to address the underlying problems, causing the women to turn to prostitution, and helped the police to develop a more effective approach.*

<sup>22</sup> The British Council, 1999

<sup>23</sup> Hicks, 1996

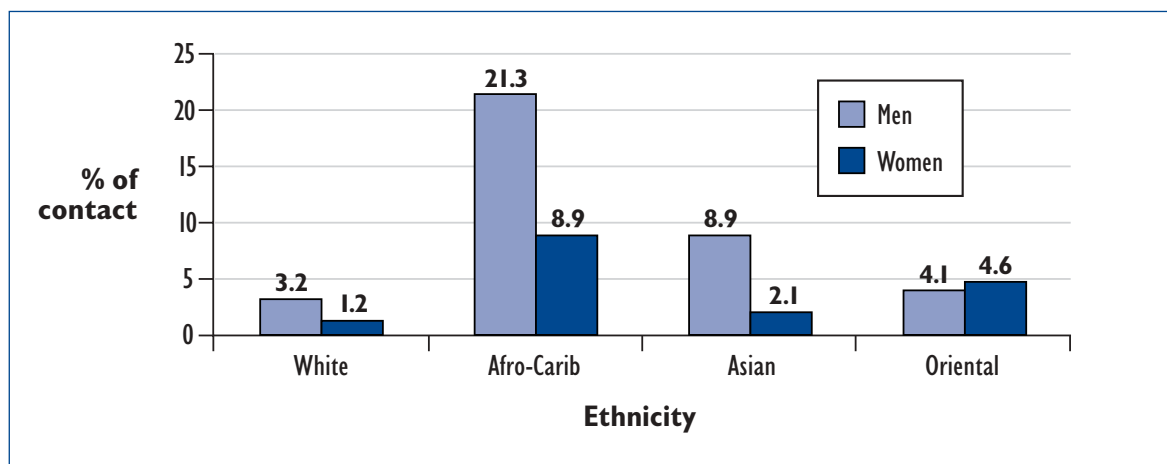
<sup>24</sup> Horgan et al., 1995

<sup>25</sup> Hillier, 2000

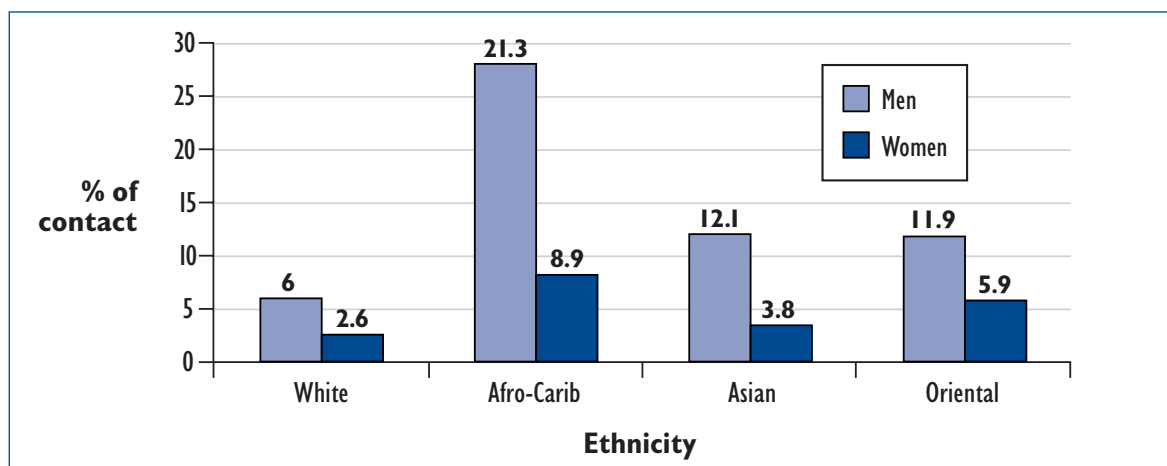
## The data

The study first looked at data for two police areas within Thames Valley Police. Both had low levels of minority ethnic officers, although minority groups accounted for about 21% of the local population. The extent of police contact varied dramatically between different ethnic populations. The tables below show the average number of police contacts across both areas expressed as a percentage of the total populations.

**Percentage of police contacts by gender and ethnic group in Area A**



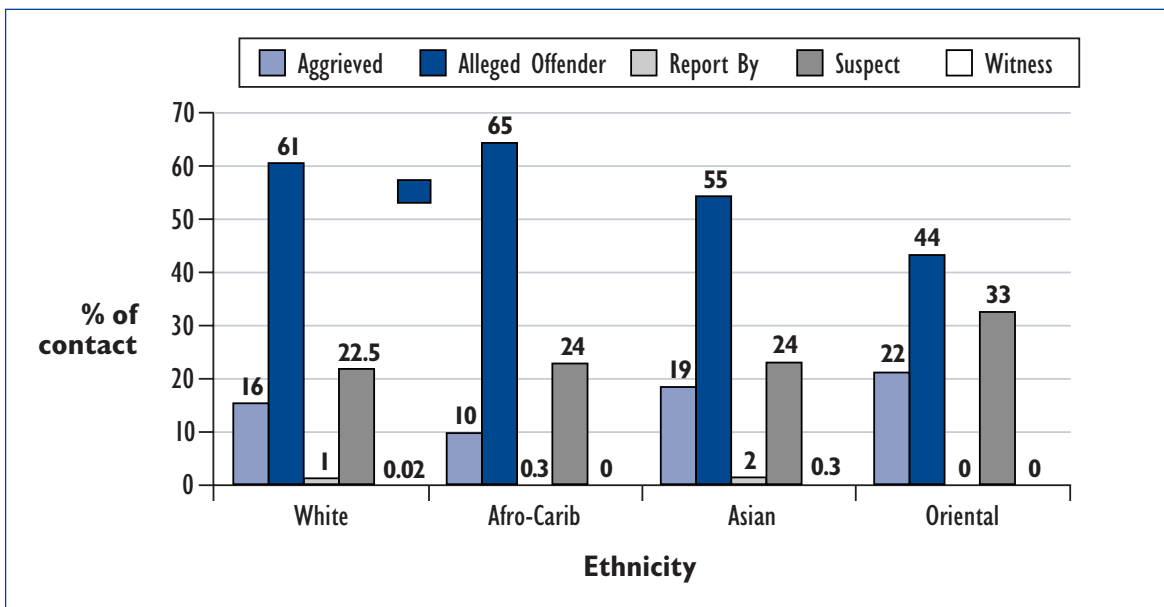
**Percentage of police contacts by gender and ethnic group in Area B**



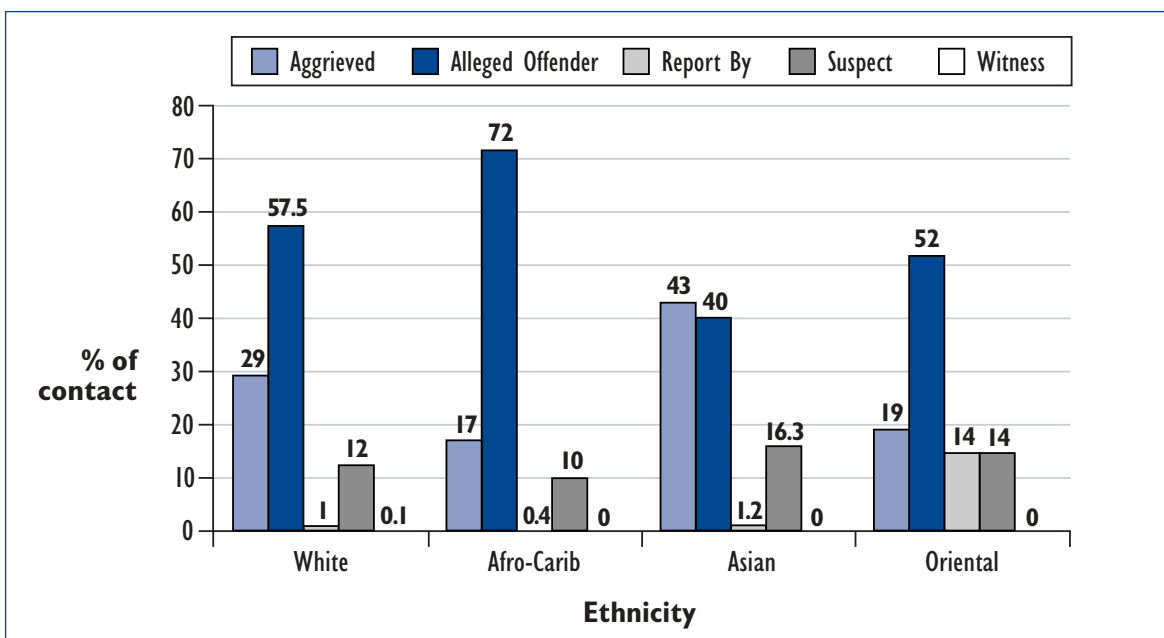
Based on the two areas studied, white people were amongst the least likely group to experience police contact. Afro-Caribbeans were most likely to experience police contact, despite comprising only 2% of the population, and other ethnic groups had similarly unbalanced levels of contact.

The reason for police contact also varied between ethnic populations and between men and women.

**Percentage of type of police contact for men in Area A**



**Percentage of type of police contact for women in Area A**



Both sexes come into contact with the police most often as an alleged offender or suspect, but women are next most likely to contact the police as an aggrieved person – that is, to report an offence against them. But in Area B the percentage of women approaching the police as an aggrieved person far outweighed those suspected of criminal activity (the ratio of aggrieved men to alleged offenders was also considerably closer in Area B).

However, it appears that the low levels of police contact as witnesses or to report a crime may be due to a tendency on the part of the police to record only ‘adverse’ contacts – that is, where the person is suspected of an offence. Over 70% of police contact records show the person’s ethnic background as ‘unknown’ or ‘other’ – and the range of ethnic types used by the police is very restricted compared to, say, census records. Contacts with women victims may also be under-recorded.

Minority ethnic communities clearly have very high levels of contact with the police. Given that most of this contact, judging by police records, is related to alleged criminal activity, it is not surprising that there is some distrust of the police in these communities.



## Results from interviews: problems and priorities

Interviews were conducted with key police officers in two areas, and with local community representatives recommended by the police.

There was a clear agreement amongst all non-police interviewees about the most important **problems**. These were:

- fear of crime;
- low levels of crime reporting;
- poor communications between the police and the communities they serve, including poor access to consultations and discussion groups;
- the different levels of responsiveness between senior and ‘front line’ officers.

Both police and community representatives agreed on the **priorities** for the service:

- immediate response to incidents;
- consistency;
- awareness of cultural differences;
- awareness of police services;
- trust.

Many of these problems and priorities overlap, and for convenience are discussed together.

### **Problem: fear of crime and low levels of reporting**

The crimes most feared by participants were related to race/hate, property, crime committed by young people and repeat attacks.

*One community representative suggested that the police needed to “focus on the issues surrounding the crime.”*

There may be several reasons for low levels of crime reporting, including a fear of retaliation by the perpetrator, fear of peer group sanctions (for example, families wishing to suppress cases of domestic violence) and, not least, a lack of confidence in the police (coupled with some nervousness related to police experiences in the victim’s home country).

*“The public expect to see a response in minimal time: that is the most important thing to them.”*

*“An officer may have up to 40 incidents waiting for them at any one time.”*

It was striking that some community representatives said that the police might not be automatically viewed as a source of help (highlighting the need for more publicity about the services provided by the police). There was a view that minority ethnic communities deserved extra protection.

One of the police service’s key functions is to work with communities to reduce fear of crime and improve community safety, and this research suggests that, in the two areas studied at least, the police are failing to deliver this remit.

The lack of confidence in the police could be overcome if they were able to meet community requirements in terms of responsiveness.

*“There’s bewilderment [on the part of the community] that we say our thing, they listen, but nothing materialises.”*

The community wants a reported incident to receive a response in minimal time, and immediate follow-up. The police want to provide this, but are under-resourced. Attempting to provide this level of response means that time spent on other activities (such as

reducing social crime by targeting the causes instead of just the symptoms – an active police response rather than reactive) is reduced. Failing to provide that response leads community members to suspect discrimination and adds to the problem of distrust.

**Possible solution:** there is a clear need to improve response times, but more realistic expectations on the part of the public would also be beneficial – for example, the public may expect an immediate response to all reported incidents whereas the police view might be that some are more urgent than others. Both sides would need to agree how various types of incident should be handled.

### **Problem: poor communications**

The police are required by law to consult the public on whether and how the police can meet the public’s requirements in terms of service delivery – yet community representatives say that their members are not aware of consultation exercises. However, there is anecdotal evidence that communities want to contribute to the debate.

**Possible solution:** better and more focused advertising of these exercises may improve the level of community participation, and thus enhance their value. For example, consultations could routinely be offered in minority languages and through a variety of media (local newspapers and magazines, discussion groups and the Internet etc), and the length of consultation exercises could be agreed with community leaders. Guidance could ensure that all police forces adopted a consistent approach based around ‘best practice’.

*“On three separate occasions we have circulated information [about consultations] and managed to bring forward a substantial number of interested individuals.”*

*“If better advertised, attendance would definitely increase.”*

*“Attendance was police dominated and the rest were professionals who are unlikely to be in touch with communities’ needs.”*

Consultations enable a community to contribute to formal discussions about matters of importance. Informal discussion groups allow communities and police opportunities to discuss issues more widely – provided they are accessible and can be seen to have an effect. Both help to break down barriers of distrust.

Language can present a major barrier to communication, especially amongst older immigrants, and this may add to the problem of low levels of crime reporting discussed above. The police have a budget for interpreter services, but this varies from one police area to the next, and can be strained with the arrival of new minority ethnic groups.

**Possible solution:** volunteers from amongst the community in question would be one way of tackling the issue, and this would have the added advantages of giving those people an additional insight into the way the police service operates, and helping the police to understand the different cultural values within the community.

This last point touches on two important priorities identified by the police and their local communities: the need to improve cultural awareness on the part of the police, and to improve awareness of police services on the part of the communities.

The police already provide cultural awareness training to officers, and specialised race and relations training to senior officers, and aim to deal with each community “according to their cultural understanding and differences”. However, the community representatives interviewed felt that the issues had not been adequately addressed.

**Suggested solutions:** the representatives suggested that the police should extend the current one day of cultural awareness training and make police officers more aware of institutional racism.

There is a clear gap between what the community wants to know about the police and the services they are aware of, particularly amongst asylum seekers and Asian women. The police have attempted to address this by distributing leaflets in minority ethnic languages advertising police services, but recognise that they need to do more. For example, the approach to distribution methods tends to be ad hoc, and the expertise of community representatives may be overlooked when developing them.

## **Problem: levels of responsiveness in senior and front line officers**

*“It only takes one insensitive incident to undo ten examples of good work.”*

The community want a consistent, professional service from the police, but feel that front-line officers do not always deliver this.

Both police and community interviewees agree that senior police officers demonstrate a better understanding of, and commitment to, their community’s needs than the front-line officers who actually meet them on a day-to-day basis. This may be a result of the senior officers’

*”Front line officers have a slow grasp of issues”*

greater experience and more frequent contact with community leaders, but it indicates that the skills are present in the police service. This may also explain why senior officers have a more positive impression of the strength of their relationship with the

local community than do the members of the community themselves.

*“I was turned away at the door [of the police station] on three occasions and told to pursue it in my own way as there was ‘no injury’. I pursued this incident with a senior officer, who I knew only because of my position, who told me there was a case. Such events create negative attitudes towards the police that then feed back into the community.”*

**Possible solution:** senior officers could share their experience more widely through in-house training, and by delegating or creating opportunities for community out-reach work. The community representatives interviewed suggested that a “more comprehensive monitoring and evaluation of police performance” would help to raise standards.

From the police’s point of view, the major problem was resources – too few to deliver all the services expected by the community to an appropriate standard. Resources that are made available may be called upon for more urgent matters.

**Possible solution:** the police and communities should work together to agree priorities – and both sides need to recognise that priorities may sometimes have to change.

### **Priority: trust**

Trust is an integral part of the relationship between the police and the local community, and a lack of trust and confidence in the service can be made worse by perceived discrimination. Senior police officers respond by developing community partnerships and grasping opportunities to speak to community groups. Both sides recognise that trust is slowly growing between them. Within Thames Valley Police, for example, public perception data is gathered by an annual general public questionnaire, one aspect of which refers to whether the public regard the police as ‘trustworthy’.

Detailed data are reproduced at Annex D.

## Annex A

### The WNC focus group reports

The focus groups were each asked to respond to a series of questions. Many of their views were shared across all four groups, but some were unique to a particular group. For completeness, the groups' views are reproduced here in their entirety.

All participants were guaranteed anonymity.

#### Focus group A

##### *Have you had experience of going to the police? When would you go?*

The main concerns of the participants were street crime and domestic violence. They were disappointed with the response of the local police to street crime. Several of the women in the group had been mugged several times: *"I went to the police, they were not able to do anything, they respond slowly, I won't go again for this type of thing."* They were disappointed that there was not a more visible police presence in the area. They felt that a safer environment could be created by the provision of CCTV, both on the streets and on the estates where they lived. A lot of crime was being committed by children, but nothing seemed to have been done about it. About burglary, the comment was that, *"You have to go to the police for the insurance, but they can't do anything"*.

This group reported that members had been 'fobbed off' by the local police on occasion by being given what turned out to be wrong information, and had been on the receiving end of sarcasm. They commented that they thought it was difficult to get a good response from a police 'call centre', where the people who answer the phones were under obvious time pressures and were unwilling to persevere with strong accents.

On domestic violence, the experienced lack of fast response from the police was a cause of real concern. Several of the participants were involved in supporting women victims of domestic violence, and pointed out that the delay of 40 minutes that some had experienced could literally be fatal. They were surprised that each borough seemed to have a different procedure on handling domestic violence, adding to the level of complication.

However, the group said that in the last couple of years communications had improved as a result of local authority and Metropolitan Police outreach initiatives.

One of the concerns expressed by the participants was that there were no 'youth' activities, and this encouraged inappropriate behaviour amongst the young, (the reference was particularly about the young men of their community).

##### *What would stop you going to the police?*

Shame, and fear of neighbourhood interest. In the participants' countries of origin the police do not have a 'protection of the citizen' role, and the arrival of the police meant that a crime had been committed and caused much interest amongst the neighbours. They felt the concept of the police force as protectors of the individual would be alien to new arrivals in the UK. No information was provided to new arrivals about how things work, particularly the role of the police, which was learned only through years of living here.

*A recent experience of an attempted Immigration Service deportation was discussed. The Immigration Service used the local police as back up, surrounding the participant's flat and blocking off the area. These are the same officers to whom one is supposed to report crime.*

However, participants thought that the local community police officers were very good, and their presence had started to make a big difference as they explained how things worked in the UK. The police had got to know the community representatives, and the participants were now taken seriously when there was a problem.

The media image of the police in the UK was not good. On the television police officers were often portrayed as drunk or corrupt. This is bad for their reputation and hardly encouraged approaches.

**Example:** *a young couple wanted to marry against the wishes of their parents, and the police had stepped in very quickly. The couple have now married.*

The decision to go to the police for complicated issues like forced marriages or domestic violence is seen as one for the individual or family concerned. As women members of the community, they had to wait to be asked before they could point out what was available to remedy 'family' issues, for example forced marriages. The

question of domestic violence was a more pressing and complicated concern. One of the participants had been threatened by the abuser when she provided support for the wife. Another has a neighbour who is abused. They felt it was all right for a neighbour who heard screams to call the police.

### *What could the police do to improve access for the women in your community?*

#### **Respond sensitively to the different cultures and backgrounds within the community:**

- police need to understand the cultures they are dealing with – for example, it may be inappropriate to send two male officers to talk to a lone woman;
- they also need to understand the organisations that are important to those cultures. Particular examples were mosques and Islamic cultural centres, which tend to be demonised by the popular culture;
- more training for the police in how to talk to the public – “more understanding, listening, communication. More approachable, less hurried”;
- there should be no discriminatory behaviour from/by the police;
- attract and retain police officers from a wider range of backgrounds. Men and WOMEN from ethnic groups. Set up initiatives to attract and retain them.

#### **Make the police presence more visible:**

- more police on the beat;
- more contact with the police to break down community ignorance of the police and their function;
- better protection from street crime on the streets and estates (CCTV etc);
- locally suffering from a lot of crime from children, something should be done;
- provision of information (in appropriate format) to new entrants/residents on the legal system and how to access it;
- address the very prevalent knife culture in the area.

#### **Community organisations also need to offer more support:**

- the dispersal of refugees throughout the country was seen to be a problem. Refugees end up without support and a long way from people of their own culture and language. Community organisations should be encouraged to provide support to help incomers to understand their rights.

### **Focus group B**

#### *Have you had experience of going to the police? When would you go?*

- Domestic violence;
- anything that's a crime.

Experience of going to the police had been mixed, especially over domestic violence. Even the guidance booklet written by the local Police Authority had been written without reference to the support provided by the other agencies working in this field. The definitions of domestic violence were exclusively related to partner/married relationships. Yet there was a lot of violence within other relationships, particularly between parents and teenagers in step-families.

Responses from different police stations were inconsistent. Not every police officer dismissed the issue, but some did. This was confusing because the policy on domestic violence was supposed to apply to all staff, not just those in specialist units. However, some victims have had very good and supportive experiences with the police.

When it comes to domestic violence, police officers treat men and women differently. And when language is a problem, they will believe the man. Various examples were given of the perpetrator manipulating the situation and even calling the police at the same time or before the victim, and of police officers telling the plainly distressed and non-English speaking victim in graphic 'sign' language that they were 'not a taxi service', and therefore could not do anything about transport to a place of safety.

When challenged on their behaviour and asked 'why' by the community representative, some police officers have been very rude. Police officers were not very good at dealing with repeat visits from victims of domestic violence, and became frustrated when women did not want to press charges.

Domestic Violence Units were much better, working on a multi-agency basis. However, violence could happen at all times of the day, and when it was late at night it was all a lot more difficult. If the victim doesn't speak English and is distressed the police should call an interpreter without waiting to be asked, in accordance with policy guidelines.

The police did not take petty crime seriously, despite its relative importance to the victims. Examples given included the 'worry factor' when a mobile phone was stolen and an individual on a fixed low income worried about being charged for the stolen calls, and the shopkeeper who claimed that a £10 note offered in payment for goods was counterfeit leaving the non-English speaking customer being unable to get redress. It was pointed out that for the poor, unable to afford legal advice, the police are very often the first port of call when something has been stolen.

It was noticeable that when women complained to the police they were often not taken seriously unless they appeared with an advocate, such as the representative organisations. The police did not want to get involved with neighbour disputes.

Out of control teenagers had developed a new game of assaulting women on the streets. Nothing was being done about this behaviour. A similar experience on a bus was described when the driver refused to throw the teenagers off.

Police presence in the poorer areas was noticeably absent, and the police were not seen unless they were in cars or helicopters. There was however, a heavy CCTV presence in some of the poorer areas which, whilst good for evidence gathering when a crime was committed, was intimidating and a threat to privacy. A similar situation applied around psychiatric hospitals, such as the Maudsley, where the prevalence of dual diagnosis (addiction and psychosis) patients meant that the police were afraid to patrol the streets. This was in marked contrast to an area such as St John's Wood where the police presence was very visible ("and such charming policemen!"). It was difficult at times to get help: police stations were often difficult to find and unpleasant places to go to.

There were particular issues around asylum seeker victims of domestic violence, particularly where asylum had been refused. In these cases there was no place available for the victim in a refuge and the local authority had no further obligation to house them, so the victim had to stay with the perpetrator. If they left their Social Services-provided accommodation the agency said it had no further obligation to house them.

There was also a perception that only asylum seekers had to prove their identity in public disorder cases, and that this implied that they were illegal immigrants. (Other members of the group were able to state that this was not the case, that everybody had to prove their identity in public disorder cases).

### *What could the police do to improve access for the women in your community?*

- **More "outreach" work by the police** would help the community to understand what they do and to see them as a force for the good:
  - the police should 'network' and work with service providers in the borough. (Some of the organisations attending the study workshops had invited the local police in to talk to them so that their own members could learn how the system works in the UK);
  - the police should also do more in the schools and with teenagers. In depressed and overcrowded areas

- bullying is endemic. The police should reach out and work as part of the community, particularly running youth clubs/activities. This could be done relatively cheaply with the support of community organisations. It would let the kids get to know the police in a constructive way and would be really useful, especially at half term when the streets are full of bored kids amusing themselves inappropriately;
- they could build links by providing some self-defence/street wise training. This would be particularly appreciated against random attacks on the street, and for personal safety at night (“we can’t all afford to take a taxi home”).

**■ Better training for the police, for example in:**

- complex issues such as domestic violence, using the agencies that work in these areas and secondments;
- communication. The amount and level of training compares very poorly with that given to social workers and psychiatric nurses. Yet the police are often dealing with the same constituency: the mentally ill, the distressed, the dysfunctional and socially inadequate, and the violent.

**■ More customer-focused approach:**

- the police should apply the language policy proactively and not wait to be asked either by the individual or the community group to provide interpreters;
- they should not avoid the depressed and overcrowded areas – they should be visible, and should patrol on foot;
- there is a need to mesh all the services for victims of domestic violence. There needs to be co-ordination between the law, Social Services, the provision of physical safety, and the rules on housing.

**Focus group C**

*Have you had experience of going to the police? When would you go?*

The group said that they would go to the police for:

- complaints about domestic violence;
- burglary – but only to obtain the crime report number for the insurance. Generally it was felt that the police response was less than adequate. Officers were not interested, the finger print officers worked only 9-5, Monday to Friday;
- rape;
- for any violent crime.

The group agreed that they would not go to the police for:

- minor assaults as there was no evidence, (several of the participants had been victims of apparently random attacks);
- “anything that I could deal with myself”.

The group felt that there had been a change in police attitudes on domestic violence. Fifteen years ago, the police would record an incident, but take no action because it was ‘domestic’. The advent of Domestic Violence Units had been a definite change for the better, and the police now treated the problem more seriously and with greater knowledge and expertise.

Similarly the development of Rape Units was excellent. There was, however, an issue of continuity amongst the police who worked in the specialist units. With continuity it was possible to build a relationship of trust, important where the perpetrators were members of the victim’s family.

However, the group felt that intergenerational abuse was not taken seriously by the police because it fell outside their man/woman partnership model. Yet this too was domestic violence, and adult women could suffer from it. The system for bringing perpetrators to justice was too long-winded, and consequently it was difficult to see it through to the end.

The police were now taking the women's refuges seriously, and responded when needed, especially as they knew the individual staff members. Participants felt that the police definitely responded better when given a woman's title and organisation. The same respect was not given when the individuals concerned presented themselves as members of the public.

The subject of domestic violence was complicated and the response of the police was often simplistic. For example, court orders and injunctions were ineffective against a violent person, and participants would not advise victims to seek these methods of protection. The solution was to remove the victim from the abusive situation, which was difficult if they had no other means of support. This was particularly an issue for Asian victims, as once they left the family they became isolated. Those who were not brought up in the UK would have no idea of where to go to get help, or even that help was available. Foreign students were also in this position, since without funding they could not be welcomed into the refuges and were forced to return to an abusive relationship. Similarly, foreign domestic workers were often treated as slaves by those who had brought them into the country.

The group was concerned about the number and impact of undisciplined children. With the increasing pressures on single parents to go out to work, children were bringing themselves up. The police needed to get involved with the current generation of criminal kids, including through schools' out-reach work.

#### *What would stop you going to the police?*

- Hostile feel of the average police station. The front desks were not welcoming places, most had had no money spent on them for years, and people often had to queue;
- the police are often not the first point of call. The women would go first to a local women's group or the doctor etc;
- the police stereotype and patronise women.

#### *What could the police do to improve access for women?*

These suggestions all focused on the problem of domestic violence.

##### • **Build credibility:**

- use outreach for building up evidence, visit the victim at home to collect data. Use the same officer to collect data each time, so that trust is built.

##### • **Understand the local community:**

- use the relevant community language;
- talk to the Asian refuges, as they are the experts on domestic violence within the Asian communities;
- use police officers of the same ethnic mix as the population for 'front line' work, especially in sensitive situations like domestic violence;
- police officers attending community events is appreciated, BUT they must be given time to do so.

*"Families, as a way of raising children and supporting individuals, are the core of society. Dysfunctional families impoverish society. So why does community policing seem to be the poor relation?"*

##### • **Other suggested improvements:**

- make police stations user friendly, especially the 'front office'. Learn from the DWP, and remember that most women are victims and reporters of crime, not perpetrators;
- provide basic training in domestic violence, child abuse and racial awareness, for ALL police officers not just those in the specialist units. Need to recognise the need for professionals in these difficult areas;
- police should have full knowledge of all the agencies that work in the domestic violence arena;
- more specialist units and multi-agency discussion groups, including domestic violence Help Lines.



## Focus group D

### *Have you had experience of going to the police? When would you go?*

The group would report the following either as victims, observer, witness or reporter in order to alert the police to what was going on:

- |                               |                       |
|-------------------------------|-----------------------|
| • Any infringement of the law | • Drugs               |
| • Violence                    | • Car break in        |
| • Public behaviour            | • Harassment          |
| • Child or race abuse         | • Homophobia          |
| • Stalking                    | • Safety and security |
| • Suspicion                   | • Domestic violence   |

### *What would stop you going to the police?*

#### • **Fear of the consequences:**

- the police do not put out appropriate messages about issues of concern to women (for example, about domestic violence);
- reporting being a victim of domestic violence might lead to the family being split up;
- have reported racism from the police (Black on Asian, and White on Black examples were discussed), would fear that the police would require her to justify self even if she were the victim;
- feel the need to have an airtight case.

#### • **Police image:**

- publicity and media coverage indicate that the police think of crime within the context of property crime (car theft/street crime), rather than crimes from which women suffer more;
- the police generally have poor customer care skills, and attitudes differ from police officer to police officer. Front line officers are often patronising to women and assume that women are uninformed;
- the police stereotype individuals on the basis of class & status;
- for burglary it's not worth the hassle, the police never catch anyone and the sentences are low;
- the police do not seem to have dedicated women officers to deal with women's issues, such as domestic violence.

### *What could the police do to improve access for women?*

#### • **Better training for all police officers:**

- train new recruits in talking to women within the community;
- have a national standard of training on the type and quality of required behaviour, and ensure that training is ongoing;
- listen & learn from other state agencies who deal with the public;
- provide training on stereotyping.

#### • **Improved customer focus:**

- provide customer care training and have common customer care standards across and within police forces;
- raise the kudos of the units that specialise in the issues that matter to women (domestic violence, rape), and attract & retain more women officers in these areas;
- recruit more women & have them in strategic roles.

### *What could the police do more of?*

- Use the example of excellence as a model where it exists, for example Southampton Police Domestic Violence Unit;
- example given of an initiative where women victims of domestic violence were provided with 'phones (by a charity) so that they could call for help more easily;

- Working Police meet twice a month with the multi-agency racial harassment and incident group. The group now knows that any issues raised will be followed up. Need more of this type of consultation;
- listen to and use the specialist knowledge (about refugees, stalking etc) of particular groups and charities as training resources.

*In addition to those reasons you provided above, why would the women you represent not go to the police?*

- **Social pressures:**
  - elderly women will not go to the police: “you deal with it yourself, crime is a disgrace”. Victims of crime are perceived as weak;
  - some young people think of the police as the enemy, particularly with the advent of curfews.
- **Police image as ineffective:**
  - poor publicity and press statistics on crime show an emphasis away from core women’s concerns, such as domestic violence;
  - the criminal justice system is seen as ineffective, especially (based on some experience) the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS). The group stated that the CPS does not give credence to women, and that in sexual assault cases there is an imbalance in favour of the accused with a woman victim being required to provide in depth information about her personal life. There is consequently a high personal cost to the victim of proceeding and an increasingly low likelihood of any conviction. The accused are also given much more expert legal support. There is a lack of continuity in the staff provided by the CPS to any particular case, which combines with the use of junior staff to give a poor quality service.
- **Fear:**
  - child protection, stalking, abuse – “because there is a lack of knowledge of your rights and the police do not provide objective information. Fear of the bureaucracy taking over, embarrassment, shame and guilt”;
  - those women with mental health problems and those who were disabled were at a particular disadvantage when dealing with the police;
  - police treat you as a number not a person.

*What could the police do to improve access for the women you represent/work with?*

- **Emphasise the priority of the domestic violence problem:**
  - zero tolerance for domestic violence;
  - raise the credibility and status of officers dealing with these areas;
  - provide officers as speakers to women’s groups, talking about the problems around domestic violence;
  - raise the awareness of religious organisations, ministers and priests.
- **Make the process easier:**
  - make the places to report crime obvious;
  - provide specialist courts to deal with domestic violence;
  - the police to make themselves more available;
  - publicise relevant telephone numbers in surgeries, buses etc.
- **Improved police awareness of the issues:**
  - use external experts from expert groups on these issues (e.g. domestic violence);
  - all police officers (not just community officers) should be trained in these issues: “get the officers in the cars involved”;
  - mainstream all gender issues and require it as a core competence in police officers’ evaluation process. It should be ‘built in, not bolted on’;
  - invite articulate individuals to talk to the police about these issues;
  - use secondments to provide the police with wider experience.

**Other suggestions:**

- be aware of the negative impact of publicity about high profile rape and stalking cases;
- have at least one woman on the Police Inspectorate;
- be aware that, whatever the policy decisions, it is the behaviour of the operators on the ground that counts;
- learn from the experience of other bodies, particularly those who deal with the same ‘customer base’, for example the DWP.

***And other feedback...***

The manager of a homeless women’s hostel, known to a participant, sent in the following comments:

- women would not generally approach anyone in uniform, as they are seen as ‘authority figures’, and to be shunned. However the women would approach the police if abused;
- the hostel takes women from ‘X’ prison. These would not contact police, again because of the reluctance to acknowledge authority, and possibly because of bad past experiences;
- women in the hostel recently had a heated argument, and the police were called. The women would not press charges against each other, as this would have been recorded against them. This is another reason why they would not engage with the police.

## Annex B

### Methodology: WNC focus groups

#### What did we set out to do?

- to encourage women to speak for themselves about their experiences and concerns in approaching the first gateway of the criminal justice system – the police. We wanted to know what would work for them in accessing the protections given to them by being resident in the UK;
- to see how hard it is to reach these groups;
- to represent women’s opinions and experiences back to those who are in a position to ensure that women’s voices are heard, i.e. the police, the Home Office.

The intention was to access and listen to the women of the various communities themselves, and to listen to their authentic experiences and wishes. Our purpose was to ask not what they thought of the police but what works and what does not work for them when they seek the help of the police, what their experience has been and what could be done to improve access and response.

We conducted four focus groups, which sought the opinions of some fifty women. Some attended as individuals, but the majority came as representatives of women’s community groups. Therefore, we indirectly accessed the experience and lives of many more women. The unexpected bonus from this was the amount of expertise and experience, particularly in advocacy for victims of crime, that the women brought to the groups.

#### How did we find them

Attendance was by invitation. Participants were approached via the network of contacts available to the WNC. Organisations included:

- |                                   |  |
|-----------------------------------|--|
| • Housing for Women               | • Croydon Borough Council                          |
| • Westminster Refugees Consortium | • Women’s Resource Centre in Shoreditch            |
| • Oxford Housing Rights           | • Josephine Butler Society                         |
| • Salvation Army                  | • National Board of Catholic Women                 |
| • Soroptimist International       | • Network for Surviving Stalking                   |
| • Youthvoice Worldwide            | • GEMS: Genuine Empowerment for Mothers in Society |

#### Consultation method

The consultation method chosen was that of a focus group, with the objective of entering into a dialogue with the participants. The groups lasted for approximately two hours and were conducted in the late afternoon/early evening period, during the week. Each opened with a talk by one of facilitators about the study. This focused on how the project had started and emphasised the independence of the WNC, and the facilitators, from the police. The facilitator stressed the fact that the report would be fed back to several interested third parties, as well as the participant police force and WNC member groups and the participants themselves, and was careful to explain the constraints of the process to avoid creating unwarranted expectations.

The groups were facilitated by up to two expert women management facilitators. They did a lot of listening and checking back to the groups to make sure that the points raised had been understood and recorded accurately. The focus of the groups was on the real experience of the women, wherever they came from. Opinions that were not based on personal experience were tactfully excluded. The groups were usually conducted in an open circle to encourage discussion, and there was no table or any other barrier put in front of the facilitators.

#### Success or failure?

In assessing the success or failure of using this method of consultation, we refer both to the quality of the data it has produced, the extent of the participation in the consultation and the comments of the women themselves (contained in Annex A).

Our initial intention had been to speak to individuals, and we were surprised and delighted to find that there were so many groups that wished to participate. We felt that this demonstrated the extent of community activity amongst women. Their involvement added greatly to the value of the research because they brought much practical experience, and expertise gained from that experience within the criminal justice system, in acting as advocates of women victims of crime and abuse. Through the focus groups we were also able to reach individual women who confirmed their reported experiences.

The WNC believes that this study, although necessarily limited in its scope, is the first step in making contact with a number of groups which have been 'invisible' to the police.

### **Literature review**

A limited review of other research was conducted as part of this project, confined to Home Office publications. Within this set, nothing was found that related to gender and 'hard to reach' groups. The Home Office publications on domestic violence (see below) indicate that much good practice is being developed but that there is no common approach across the country, and even suggests that the police themselves are not interested in the problem, other than as a nuisance. This provides an interesting reflection of the experience of the participants of this study.

### **Police Research Series:**

- Paper 138: 'Widening Access: Improving police relations with hard to reach groups': Jones & Newburn: ISBN 1-84082-594-4
- Paper 104: 'Arresting Evidence, Domestic Violence & Repeat Victimisation': Hanmer, Griffiths, Jerwood: ISBN 1-84082-241-4
- Paper 100: 'Policing Domestic Violence; Effective Organisational Structures': Plotnikoff, Woolfson: ISBN 1-84082-205-8

## Annex C

### WNC focus group participant feedback

Participant feedback was given by a variety of methods. Where it was written down, it is reproduced here without correction. Where it was given verbally, it is transcribed here. All information was given with the guarantee of anonymity.

The feedback emphasises several points already made:

- the importance of the police using women intermediaries to contact women in the community;
- the distrust of the police felt by some potential spokeswomen;
- the need to arrange similar consultation meetings at times and in places that fit in with women's lifestyles as, for example, mothers or employees.

#### Feedback 1

*"The feedback from the meeting has been positive, people enjoyed it. They felt that because the police were not there, there was a freedom to speak, and it helped that it was all women, there was a solidarity of gender. They enjoyed it and would like to do it again, and would be interested in continuing the work through a second approach. They appreciated having a forum in which they could focus on a particular issue in depth, and they felt they learnt from it.*

*It was good to have independent facilitation, that meant that it was not 'official' in anyway, and it was valuable in that it got unguarded honest comments from the women. It wouldn't have been like that even if we (our organisation) had facilitated it. The professional facilitation brought things out that would not otherwise have been brought out.*

*It would have killed it if there had been anyone there in uniform. The police are identified with trouble, even if you are not in trouble. There is an ambivalence towards the police, even if they are warm and caring as individuals, as soon as there is a problem they have to go into official mode."*

#### Feedback 2

*"I haven't heard directly from people directly about why they couldn't come when they had agreed to do so. I can offer you a summary of what I was told by those who did not want to attend. There were concerns re timing: too late in the day for women with children, and for many organisations insufficient notice to arrange for anyone to attend.*

*The organisations we invited to send someone often cited issues re: potential conflict of interest resulting from their work supporting/ representing their users complaints to the police vs. users then perceiving those organisations to be consulting constructively with them.*

*A general reluctance, hostility and suspicion of any initiatives by the police aimed at black and minority ethnic communities, given the history of the Met's racial harassment of these communities. All those invited to participate in the group were aware that police staff would not be directly involved or attending groups, but nonetheless had no motivation to co-operate with any project that might benefit the public image of the police.*

*Few if any invited perceived that there would be any benefit for them in attending. Many front line voluntary groups providing services for women are overworked, understaffed and under resourced. They often work extra hours for no pay just to ensure the survival of the organisation, and being asked to provide another service for free (in this case consultation) rarely appeals.*

*If you wish to extend this project then you might wish to consider approaching borough-based women's centres that provide a range of front line services for women in the local community."*

**Feedback 3**

*“Thank you for the opportunity to take part in the focus group. It was extremely interesting and I hope that our contributions on an individual and group level will prove to be of help to you. We have already written a report for our organisations and would be happy to make further contributions to your focus groups should you need this.”*

**Feedback 4*****Did you find the group interesting/useful?***

- ▶ *Yes, I found the group interesting and useful because it is addressing needs of women.*
- ▶ *Yes very interesting in our line of work and a useful opportunity to discuss issues/problems which we've experienced in the past.*
- ▶ *Yes, it was interesting to hear about other people's experiences and listen to their views and ideas.*
- ▶ *Extremely interesting and useful.*
- ▶ *Yes, especially talking about other people's experiences.*

***Did the approach used during the focus group differ from that you would normally expect from the police when they are 'consulting' with you? In what way did it differ?***

- ▶ *The approach was very appropriate, it was not very formal. It was easy to discuss issues.*
- ▶ *Yes as at the start of the meeting it was outlined that Ann and her colleague were not here to support the police– but to gather views/opinions & information for their research.*
- ▶ *I haven't been to a police consultation group before, so wasn't expecting any particular format.*
- ▶ *The approach was more relaxed, and you felt more at ease with women.*
- ▶ *Yes, it was more informal, it did not really seem as though the police were involved.*

***Was there anything you particularly liked about the way the group was conducted?***

- ▶ *The format was very good looking at topics and getting women to contribute from experience.*
- ▶ *Informal and relaxed setting– in which everyone was given an opportunity to voice opinions and views.*
- ▶ *It was a relaxed meeting. There were about the right number of people there, as everyone was able to take part and say what they wanted to.*

***How would you suggest we improve these groups?***

- ▶ *No other suggestions really, but would like to know that more of this type of group can be held in future. Would like some feedback too.*
- ▶ *In terms of the refuge – a number of residents expressed an interest, but as it was a weeknight during a school term, many residents were not available to attend. Therefore, to attract more participants, either hold meeting in local area or perhaps hold a meeting on a Friday evening.*
- ▶ *There should be more people attending, and you should have the meetings a little closer.*
- ▶ *Try to seek wider participation*

*Any other useful comments?*

- ▶ *To thank all officials and women that were involved.*
- ▶ *A good approach and the findings would be interesting.*
- ▶ *Not directly relating to the police, but at the group we were discussing child behaviour. I think it would be a good idea if baby and childcare was taught in school during teenage years. It's far more relevant than a lot of the subjects taught there. It would give children more facts and wider views than just their parents or carers, so that if they are lucky enough to become parents themselves when they grow up, they will have more information on what to expect and how to cope.*



## Annex D

### Serving the community: detailed police data

#### Quantitative analysis

Census data (1991) was collected for two areas, A and B. Area A consisted of a population of 267, 753 of which 132,885 were men and 134,868 women. Area B consisted of a population of 141,152 of which 69,765 were men and 71,387 women.

**Table 1 - Shows the ethnic population break down of the two areas A and B**

Area	White	Black Caribbean	Black African	Black other	Indian	Pakistani	Bangla-deshi	Chinese	Asian	Other	Irish
A	250819	3890	983	1233	3478	3266	236	901	1207	1740	5538
B	11970	2791	443	691	13180	9329	131	336	1036	1245	4136

Source: Census 1991

**Table 2 - Shows the percentage of police contact (per ethnic group) in areas A and B**

Ethnicity	Gender	% Police contacts – Area A	% Police contacts – Area B
White	M	3.2	6.0
Afro-Caribbean	M	21.3	27.9
Asian	M	8.9	12.1
Oriental	M	4.1	11.9
White	F	1.2	2.6
Afro-Caribbean	F	8.9	8.3
Asian	F	2.1	3.8
Oriental	F	4.6	5.9

NB Analyses based on police data are based on a limited number of cases, since ethnicity was not recorded in nearly 70% of the cases.

Men have most police contact as an alleged offenders, and this is especially true of Afro-Caribbean men who have 65% of their total police contact in this way, and White men who have a similar value of 61%. The second highest type of police contact for men is as a suspect, with Orientals having the highest amount of this contact (33%). In all ethnic groups, men are unlikely to report a crime or have police contact as a witness to a crime.

White, Afro-Caribbean and Oriental women have most police contact as alleged offenders (Afro-Caribbean women are the highest at 72%). These groups have their second most amount of police contact as an aggrieved individual. Asian women have most police contact as an aggrieved person, and the second most as an alleged offender. In all ethnic groups, women were unlikely to report a crime or to have police contact as a witness (with the exception of Orientals, 14% of which reported a crime).

White, Afro-Caribbean and Asian men have most police contact as an alleged offender, the second most amount of police contact is as an aggrieved person. Orientals have most police contact as an aggrieved individual (65%). Again, in all ethnic groups, men were unlikely to report a crime or have police contact as a witness.

Women in all ethnic groups have most police contact as aggrieved individuals. Asian women have the highest amount of contact (71%). The second amount of police contact is as an alleged offender. All ethnic groups were unlikely to report a crime to the police and had low levels of contact as a witness to a crime.

**Table 5 Shows the percentage of adverse police contact with men and women in areas A and B.**

Gender	White	Afro-Caribbean	Asian	Oriental
Men – area A	84	89.5	78.4	77.7
Men – area B	64	83	58	66.7
Women – area A	69	82	56	66.6
Women – area B	66	55	88	54.5

### Results of the statistical analysis

**Table 3 – summary of the observed and expected levels of police contact for all ethnic groups in area A (+ and – signs indicate higher and lower than expected levels of contact).**

Ethnicity	Gender	Observed	Expected	% difference
White	Men	4125	4836	- 14.7
Afro-Caribbean	Men	640	134	+ 79.1
Asian	Men	371	167	+ 55
Oriental	Men	18	17	+ 5.5
White	Women	1568	1839	- 14.7
Afro-Caribbean	Women	276	47.5	+ 83
Asian	Women	86	58	+ 32.5
Oriental	Women	21	7	+ 66.6

**Table 4 – As above, for area B.**

Ethnicity	Gender	Observed	Expected	% difference
White	Men	3431	4317	- 20.5
Afro-Caribbean	Men	576	189	+ 67.2
Asian	Men	1460	967	+ 6.4
Oriental	Men	18	12	+ 75
White	Women	1558	1757	- 11.3
Afro-Caribbean	Women	155	58	+ 62.6
Asian	Women	446	349	+ 21.7
Oriental	Women	11	6	+ 45.4

The results show that, in both areas, White men and women are significantly under-represented in terms of their observed and expected police contact values. Afro-Caribbean and Asian men and women, and Oriental women, are significantly over-represented in terms of their observed and expected levels of contact.

## Annex E

### Serving the community: methodology and bibliography

#### Primary data

Qualitative data in the form of semi-structured interviews were obtained from members of the research police force and community representatives of ‘hard to reach’ groups. Further information was obtained from an observation of a women’s forum for racial harassment. Themes from these interviews are constructed using a Content Analysis. A Gap Analysis was then applied to the various themes produced.

#### Sample

Key personnel in two Divisions were approached to take part in the study. In order to avoid any disruption or risk of compromising relationships with the police and community, community representatives were approached on the suggestion of the police. All participants took part on the basis of informed consent with assurances of confidentiality and anonymity. Interviews focused on the police’s views and perceptions of ‘hard to reach’ groups on a number of dimensions. Broadly, these themes included:

- whom the police define as ‘hard to reach’;
- how the police attend to their needs;
- how the police perceive their relationship with ‘hard to reach’ groups;
- the difficulties and barriers they experience;
- the issue of resources;
- successful/unsuccessful projects run by the police and other community organisations;
- consultation processes;
- other issues thought to be important to the police.

**Table 1 – Shows details of the interviewees who participated in the research:**

Interviewees	Role	Gender	Police or Community representative	Area
1	Chief Inspector	Male	Police	A
2	Head of programmes for domestic violence	Male	Police	B
3	Council Racial Equality officer	Male	Community	A
7	Refugee community development officer	Female	Community	B
5	Interpreter for Racial Harassment Forum	Female	Community	A
6	Council Racial Equality officer	Male	Community	B
Forum	Racial Harassment Forum for Asian Women	Female	Community	A

The interviews held with community representatives focused on views and perceptions of the police concerning the service they provide to ‘hard to reach’ groups. Roughly, these topics included:

- type of contact with the police;
- contact with the community;
- community perceptions and expectations of the police service;
- identification of barriers between the police and the community;
- consultation processes;
- recommendations for improved relations between the police and the community.

### **Observation**

A forum for racial harassment was attended in order to gain direct information from 'hard to reach' community members. The researcher sat amongst a group of 12 Asian women, a police Race Relations Officer and council representatives. The structure of the forum was very open. Women were encouraged to talk about problems they were or had been facing in the community and how they felt the police were reacting to these. In addition the researcher was permitted to ask questions relevant to the research aims. These questions were a slight variation of the those used in the interview with community representatives. The themes for the above interviews and forum were derived from a review of current literature, including recent journals and Home Office publications. All interviews (with the exception of one person who objected) were tape-recorded to allow free and uninterrupted conversation. Information from the forum was recorded using a pen and paper. Transcripts were constructed from the interviews and themes constructed using a detailed Content Analysis. The process was repeated for police and community representatives.



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