



**METROPOLITAN
POLICE**

Historic Vetting and Hiring Practices Review

Final Report

January 2026

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Historic Vetting and Hiring Practices Review

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In August 2024, the Commissioner and the then Deputy Commissioner, commissioned Operation Jorica, a review of historic vetting and hiring practices following management information which showed varying outlying vetting refusal rates over a period of time. This review formed part of the Metropolitan Police Service's (MPS) broader work as part of New Met for London (NMfL) to raise professional standards and strengthen vetting within the MPS.

The review's aim was to understand the root causes behind historic vetting decision making for high profile officer misconduct and criminal cases, alongside the emerging management data that highlighted potentially concerning historic decision-making. The review also sought to ensure the MPS could identify and implement any additional risk management measures necessary to safeguard integrity and public confidence.

This report details the findings and the resulting mitigations of an MPS review of the organisation's historic vetting and hiring practices over the past 10 years prior to April 2023, with a particular focus on policy and practice both immediately prior to and during the Home Office Police Uplift Programme (PUP).¹

In summary, the review concluded that, over the past decade, senior leaders within the organisation have undertaken efforts to challenge policies and practices that contributed to extended lead times between individuals' initial application and the commencement of successful candidates' employment with the MPS. As a result, senior leaders embarked on an assertive approach towards hiring and vetting practices in order to meet what would become unachievable recruitment targets and grow the MPS's workforce at pace.

The focus appeared to be on speed and output; this unintentionally compromised integrity. The review identifies a series of decisions, some of which were taken in isolation, which all compounded together and inadvertently increased risk.

This resulted in the MPS making corporate decisions not to adhere to aspects of Authorised Professional Practice (APP), national guidance and the Police Regulations 2003 in its approach to hiring and vetting practices².

This review is a part of the MPS's ongoing programme to raise professional standards through a comprehensive approach. This work, initiated after the appointment of Sir Mark Rowley QPM as Commissioner in September 2022, has included transforming our approach to vetting and professional standards, tackling a significant legacy resulting in the dismissal of ~1,500 individuals not fit to serve in the MPS over the past three years.

A deep dive into historic practices, this review found continual and unprecedented resourcing demand³ resulting from the likes of increasing violent crime⁴, a targeted

¹ Police Uplift Programme

² It is acknowledged that at least one individual strongly disagrees with the inference that this would have influenced inappropriate decision making by Management Board colleagues who were responsible for vetting policy and vetting decisions

³ Resourcing risks highlighted in Performance Group minutes 27.3.2018

⁴ Violence documented as a priority in Performance Group minutes from 2018 onwards – 24.4.2018

firearms officer uplift following the Paris terror attack in 2015, and ambitions to have a workforce which was more representative of London's communities. Alongside the PUP, which placed significant pressure on the MPS, due to the direct link between meeting recruitment objectives and securing additional funding, senior leaders were required to work hard to achieve the substantially increased recruitment quotas.

Former MPS executives, supported by the Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime (MOPAC), provided the strategic direction to managers to "*remove all unnecessary hurdles and challenge long standing policy*⁵"

Whilst a requirement for '*consistency and high standards to be attained for both recruitment and training*'⁴ was stated a year later, raising operational demands, severe staff shortages in vetting, and ambitious hiring goals created a situation where the impact and risks of system changes didn't appear to be fully anticipated.

The available evidence, which is limited in part, indicates that deviations in vetting and recruitment practices were mostly agreed within force governance arrangements and, in some cases, drew on permissions in professional practice.

The scale and impact of these deviations ranged from minor in nature to those having a more substantive impact. These deviations included; not carrying out certain vetting checks, not requesting or reviewing references that should have been completed pre-employment, and in a small number of cases inappropriately overturning decisions by vetting officers, though with well-meaning intent to respond to known disproportionality in vetting decisions.

The scale and impact of these deviations that have been identified throughout this review have led to the recruitment and retention of individuals who should not have joined the MPS, contributing to police-perpetrated harm and public distrust.

The review acknowledges that it was an MPS decision to deviate from the process set out in regulations and guidance which led to the findings contained in this report. However, it is clear that the design of the PUP programme, and the link between recruitment and funding, with a focus on officers' numbers, created a highly pressurised environment.

The review has seen evidence that the joint NPCC and Home Office PUP team were aware that some other forces in England were not taking references.

The MPS's failure to meet PUP targets meant that funding was redistributed away from London to other forces. The pressures created by the targets (4,557 extra officers), grants and ultimately the PUP design is highly relevant context and is considered to be a driving factor in decision making.

The practices identified by this review are entirely consistent with concerns highlighted by His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary of Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) in 2022. HMICFRS' inspection of Vetting, Misconduct and Misogyny in the

⁵ 0518 – EML – Email titled Recruitment on 11.5.2018

Police Service⁶ warned of the risks to standards when recruiting at such scale and pace:⁷

'Recruitment through the Government's Police Uplift Programme (PUP) is underway on a massive scale. The programme commenced in 2019 and was designed to recruit 20,000 police officers in England and Wales by the end of March 2023. This is in addition to the recruitment required to cover the number of officers who leave for reasons such as retirement.'

Taking this into account, the service will need to recruit and train over 50,000 people over a three-year period. The scale and speed of this level of recruitment carries risks that, if standards of recruitment practice (including vetting) are not high enough, some applicants who are unfit to serve as police officers may be recruited.'

The review has not seen evidence that this HMICFRS finding moderated the pace and scale of Home Office ambitions in the PUP targets for forces.

As well as reviewing decision making, this review has also sought to quantify the level of risk arising from the practices identified to enable the organisation to identify what further mitigations are required beyond all the standards and misconduct interventions already implemented over the past three years.

The analysis of contemporary records has enabled the quantification of a number of cohorts who joined the MPS or had their vetting renewed during the timeline where deviations in practice were in effect.

Based on the assessed material, the following deviations and scale of cohorts affected have been identified:

Vetting Deviation or Practice Changes	Number of checks/applicants affected (or potentially affected)
No Special Branch vetting checks ⁸	4528
No MOD vetting checks ⁹	431
Limited checks for vetting renewals ¹⁰	3,338
Overturning of vetting rejections by the Vetting Panel ¹¹	114
Recruitment Deviation or Practice Changes	Number of checks/applicants affected (or potentially affected)

⁶ An inspection of vetting, misconduct, and misogyny in the police service - His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services | His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services

⁷ An inspection of vetting, misconduct, and misogyny in the police service - His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services | His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services

⁸ MPS counter terror-based intelligence system checks considering applicants and associates links to terrorism

⁹ Liaising with the Ministry of Defence to understand any passed employment history with any/all arms of the military, including poor performance and discipline.

¹⁰ Vetting renewals are required for all employees every 10- or 7-years dependent on level of clearance – a renewal, as per the College of Policing Vetting APP should consist of all the same checks as a full vetting clearance

¹¹ Police vetting decisions, like other processes, have known disproportionality in them leading to higher vetting rejection decisions for some demographics. To address this disproportionality a Vetting Panel operated to provide a check and balance on vetting decisions, particularly from underrepresented groups, who had been denied vetting clearances. These panels increased the scrutiny on decision making, with good intent, however, we now know in some cases, the panel overturned the decision of vetting officers despite adverse intelligence existing.

Number of officers, staff and volunteers recruited where there is a possibility that no or partial pre-employment references were obtained.¹²	17,355 ¹³
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The review has found that circa 5,100 officers and staff were affected during the period when there were deviations or practice changes (as listed above) to vetting. In addition, 3,338 officers and staff who were due for vetting renewal only had limited renewal checks completed.

Alongside this up to 17,355 officers and staff joined the MPS during a period where it is now known that pre-employment references were not being obtained, or only partially obtained. To understand the exact scale of those impacted would require a manual review of all 17,355 cases, therefore in this report we provide an upper limit number. In addition, 3,338 officers and staff who were due for vetting renewal only had limited renewal checks completed.

Where records are incomplete or quantification would require vast manual intervention, statistical estimates have been used to assess the number of individuals who may have joined the MPS with partial or no references, or who may have failed vetting given a notable decline in vetting rejection rates.

The MPS' Strategic Insights Unit (SIU), a small team of analysts, criminologists and behavioural scientists, have sought to quantify the impact of policy decisions made during the period in question. The SIU drew the conclusion from their analysis¹⁴ in respect of the removal of references:

'If pre-employment references had been taken during the period when they were not, an estimated ~250 people who joined the MPS may have failed their pre-employment reference check stage and not have joined the MPS.'

A significant number of individuals who may have been inappropriately employed during the period of this review will already have left the MPS as a result of our significant professional standards work including our data washes, targeted operations, more decisive decision-making and our vetting reviews.

To further mitigate the potential risk to the public and the wider work force, the MPS has employed a layered mitigation strategy based on the 'Swiss Cheese' model¹⁵ as a result of the findings of this review.

The MPS has nearly completed its mitigation strategy.

Of 730 cases subject to enhanced review, 39 officers and staff have been required to undergo re-vetting, with 23 cases already cleared, seven re-vetting cases ongoing and eight officers who have been referred for consideration of vetting clearance removal under the Police (Vetting) Regulations 2025. Four employees were also referred to

¹² A manual examination of recruitment applications would be required to accurately confirm the scale of the deviation. This was considered to be labour intensive and is mitigated by the MPS performance development appraisal regime and other integrity arrangements.

¹³ The recruitment figures used within this report are those provided by SSCL and then refined and confirmed by the MPS' own HR Data Dept

¹⁴ The SIU's analysis was conducted in early 2025 during a period of the review where not all information and data was available

¹⁵ The Swiss Cheese model explains how accidents happen in complex systems. It says that failures don't usually come from a single mistake, but from a combination of weaknesses in different parts of a system, like holes in slices of Swiss cheese lining up.

integrity assurance arrangements for risk management measures. These numbers were correct as of 5th January.

National security and MOD checks have also been revisited, and the force's strengthened appraisal system is considered to mitigate concerns relating to references. New technologies, including continuous integrity screening and a holistic people intelligence tool, provided additional reassurance.

The task to retrospectively address historic practices has, and continues to be, substantial. The mitigations instigated as part of this review layer on top of a set of targeted interventions which include:

- Checking every member of the MPS against the Police National Computer (PNC), which will continue on an annual basis, and the Police National Database (PND), of which the MPS is a pilot force for a National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC) led project, to ensure that PND checks are carried out daily from 2026 onwards.
- Ensuring the entire workforce is checked against internal crime and intelligence indices daily, which has been in place since March 2025.
- A stronger and more effective vetting system¹⁶ underpinned through the creation of a new MPS Vetting Policy.
- The MPS has been at the forefront of developing a regulatory regime with the Home Office to remove officers and staff from the service who are unfit to hold vetting, following on from Operation Assure.
- Piloting both the use of a National Protective Security Agency employee assurance tool, and the use of home visits as part of its recruitment process for police officers.
- There is a development of capabilities which will enable the MPS to bring together a range of data sets and information that will provide early indicators of potential standards or performance concerns to assist interventions.

Assurance regimes for both recruitment and vetting have also been strengthened, recognising the gravity of the findings detailed within this report, the MPS wanted to be assured about current practice. As such the MPS requested the joint MPS and MOPAC Directorate of Audit and Risk (DARA) carry out an internal audit. DARA have now reported on vetting practices¹⁷ and we await their report on recruitment practices.

Whilst the MPS remains vigilant, the layered approach to strengthening personnel security and identifying those that do not hold the values and principles of the organisation reflects the MPS commitment to realising the force's vision of less crime, more trust and high standards.

¹⁶ Through the MPS Vetting Transformation project which has included a new policy, decision making framework, improved training for vetting officers and better management information to support more effective governance structures.

¹⁷ MPS Vetting Advisory Review Report 2024/25 by DARA – June 2025 - "There have been significant improvements to governance and assurance arrangements over the last two years, which have provided increased direction on risk and decision-making and lead to an overall lower risk tolerance being adopted."

2. INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this report is to detail the findings of an internal review of the MPS's historic vetting and hiring practices with particular focus on policy and practices immediately prior to and during the PUP.

The review has drawn from the audit and recovery of contemporaneous documentation where available, statistical analysis undertaken by the MPS' SIU and debriefs with a limited number of interested parties and practitioners.

Support and documentation from the MPS' outsourced business partner Shared Services Connected Limited (SSCL), (who provide recruitment and other human resourcing services), has been critical, and SSCL have been incredibly helpful throughout this process.

This review does not constitute an investigation under the Police (Conduct) Regulations 2020, Police Reform Act 2002, the Police (Complaints and Misconduct) Regulations 2020 or equivalent under the MPS staff discipline policy.

3. BACKGROUND

3.1 MPS Context

Since Sir Mark Rowley QPM became Commissioner in September 2022, the MPS has undertaken one of the most extensive reforms to professional standards in British policing history. This was prompted by serious criminality, including the tragic murder of Sarah Everard by a former officer, and other high-profile misconduct cases that eroded public trust. Baroness Casey's review further highlighted deep-rooted cultural issues that the organisation needed to respond to.

Initial reforms focused on leadership-driven changes to encourage reporting and strengthen decision-making. Simultaneously, systemic improvements were introduced to embed lasting change. The MPS examined the root causes of declining standards and the behaviour of individuals who undermined its values.

Historically, the MPS's professional standards function lacked clarity, leadership, and resources. A fragmented two-tier model, with local Professional Standard Units (PSUs) handling minor cases, and a central Directorate of Professional Standards (DPS) managing serious ones led to inconsistent practices and lenient thresholds. Additional issues like that of poor policy, weak vetting, under-resourced units, and limited internal confidence to report wrongdoing further eroded the ability to maintain high standards.

As a result, the Commissioner ensured that multiple initiatives began when he started his tenure to hit three clear objectives:

Objective One: Tighten the entry point to the MPS through tough vetting standards.

Objective Two: Address the legacy cases built up over many years of police officers and staff who continued to serve despite troubling intelligence and / or evidence.

Objective Three: To build a more robust and sustainable misconduct system with the confidence of all to deal more robustly with problematic cases.

3.2 The drivers for this review

In addition to the weaknesses, and as a result of the interventions detailed above, additional concerns began to emerge in 2023 relating to the organisation's vetting and hiring practices, which appeared to be linked to a period immediately prior to and during the PUP.

This stemmed from critical incidents and retrospective vetting reviews as well as maturing data and analysis work from performance challenges.

Recognising that stricter vetting and more dismissals would have solved many past problems, the Commissioner and Deputy Commissioner endorsed a further review to fully understand the causes and consequences and enable identification of any additional risk management steps that were necessary.

4. STRATEGIC AIM

The strategic aim of the historic vetting and hiring practices review was; to explain, quantify and most importantly mitigate any risk arising from deviations from APP and secondary legislation in vetting and recruitment practices, occurring during the identified review period.

It was also intended to assure decision making and demonstrate accountability and transparency in order to promote public confidence in the MPS.

4.1 Scope

In keeping with the preceding phase, the scope extended to vetting and hiring practices over the past 10 years prior to 31 March 2023, with a specific focus on the duration immediately prior to (January 2018 to June 2019) and during of the Police Uplift Programme (July 2019 to 31 March 2023).

5. FINDINGS

5.1 Summary

Based on the available and considered evidence, this review makes the following findings in respect of the MPS's historic approach to vetting and recruitment:

Finding One: Recruitment Pressure - The Metropolitan Police Service was under considerable pressure to achieve resourcing and representative workforce ambitions, both immediately prior to and during the period of the PUP¹⁸.

These pressures were heightened by political interventions and adverse financial consequences for the MPS arising from PUP grant conditions. These factors created a pressured environment for vetting and human resources professionals that resulted

¹⁸ Attrition and retention rates highlighted as a concern, recorded as Risk 5 within the Corporate Risk update at the Risk & Assurance Board 7.3.2018

in system changes, and the unintended consequence of a realignment in the organisations risk tolerances.

Whilst intended to improve efficiency and performance, these had, in a number of cases, adverse consequences.

Finding Two: Vetting Deviations - Whilst permissible, over the past ten years, and most notably immediately prior to and during the PUP, the MPS elected to deviate from APP in the vetting of prospective officers and staff, as well as renewals of existing employees.

The deviations identified are:

- Automatic transfer of valid police vetting into the MPS for the life of the clearance (for transferees from other police forces into the MPS).
- Open-source check Any decision to deviate from this APP will require a robust rationale. This must be supported at chief officer level and stand up to scrutiny from His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS). Any such deviations should be readily identifiable and accessible for any audits limited to where intelligence or other information indicated a valid reason for doing so.
- No checks of former service personnel against Ministry of Defence indices, including service police, between at least May 2020 to September 2021.
- No research against Special Branch or SO15 counter terrorism indices between at least May 2020 to October 2020.
- Acceptance of past clearances for former MPS personnel who had left the organisation for up to one year.
- Reduced checks for both police officers and police staff renewals, including during a period of time where the vetting unit only conducted a PNC check on individuals (rather than the full vetting review required).
- A limited number of new recruit cohorts, on or immediately before April 2019, joined the MPS as an attested constable prior to receiving discretionary national security clearances (Counter Terrorism Clearance (CTC)) with the ambition that if an applicant failed their CTC they would be unable to progress further in their training.

To deviate from prescribed vetting checks was permissible under APP¹⁹, agreed through force governance arrangements, and represented a response to acute demand, including the PUP and insufficient capacity.

Finding Three: Vetting Panel - A Vetting Panel operated to address known disproportionality in the vetting system, designed to consider applicants, particularly from underrepresented groups, who had been denied vetting clearances. In some cases, however, the panel overturned the decision of vetting officers despite adverse intelligence existing.

¹⁹ College of Policing – APP Vetting 2017 – 4.5 Expectations of force vetting managers 4.5.1 FVMs should ensure that decisions made should be consistent with APP Vetting. If they deviate from it, their rationale must be recorded and supported by the chief officer team.

The operation of the Panel was consistent with the MPS' obligations under APP to tackle disproportionality and, according to one former senior leader, was 'values based'.

It undeniably reflected laudable workforce representation ambitions set out in the force's STRIDE²⁰ strategy and was highlighted as 'good practice' by the PUP programme in a joint Home Office, College of Policing and NPCC briefing circulated in September 2021²¹.

Although records are incomplete, over a number of years, the available evidence indicates that the panel directly or indirectly overturned the previous vetting rejection of at least 114 individuals, out of 505 known cases²². This resulted in their employment as an officer or staff member. Of the 114 who joined the MPS, there is evidence to show that 25 individuals who had their vetting rejection overturned by the panel, have since gone on to commit misconduct (or be accused of a criminal offence), circa 22%.

Finding Four: References - Between 2018 and April 2022, the MPS fully or partially dispensed with the requirement to obtain pre-employment references or deferred the completion of this process until new recruits were already in the service.

The review has seen evidence that the joint NPCC and Home Office PUP team were aware that some other forces in England were not taking references.

Finding Five: Recruitment Rationalisation - Whilst not in breach of statutory requirements, recruitment processes for transferees, internal police staff and Metropolitan Special Constabulary (MSC) to the regular police officer pipeline were rationalised, removing many personnel security checks.

Finding Six: HMICFRS - The findings of this review are consistent with the concerns highlighted by HMICFRS in their 2022 inspection into vetting, misconduct and misogyny in the police service²³, indicating that steps such as those taken by the MPS to try to hit PUP targets may have been taken by other forces.

6. RISK MITIGATION STRATEGY

The MPS is committed to building trust and high standards and ensuring only those with the highest standards of integrity serve the people of London.

In recognition of the concerns highlighted by this review, a layered mitigation response has been pursued. This builds on very considerable efforts to raise professional standards that have been ongoing since the appointment of the Commissioner.

²⁰ STRIDE Board minutes – 21.2.2018

²¹ Home Office, College of Policing and NPCC – Police Uplift Programme presentation – Disproportionality within Vetting – Understanding the 'As-Is' 01.09.21

²² Vetting Panel records for 2019 to 2023

²³ An inspection of vetting, misconduct, and misogyny in the police service - His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services | His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services

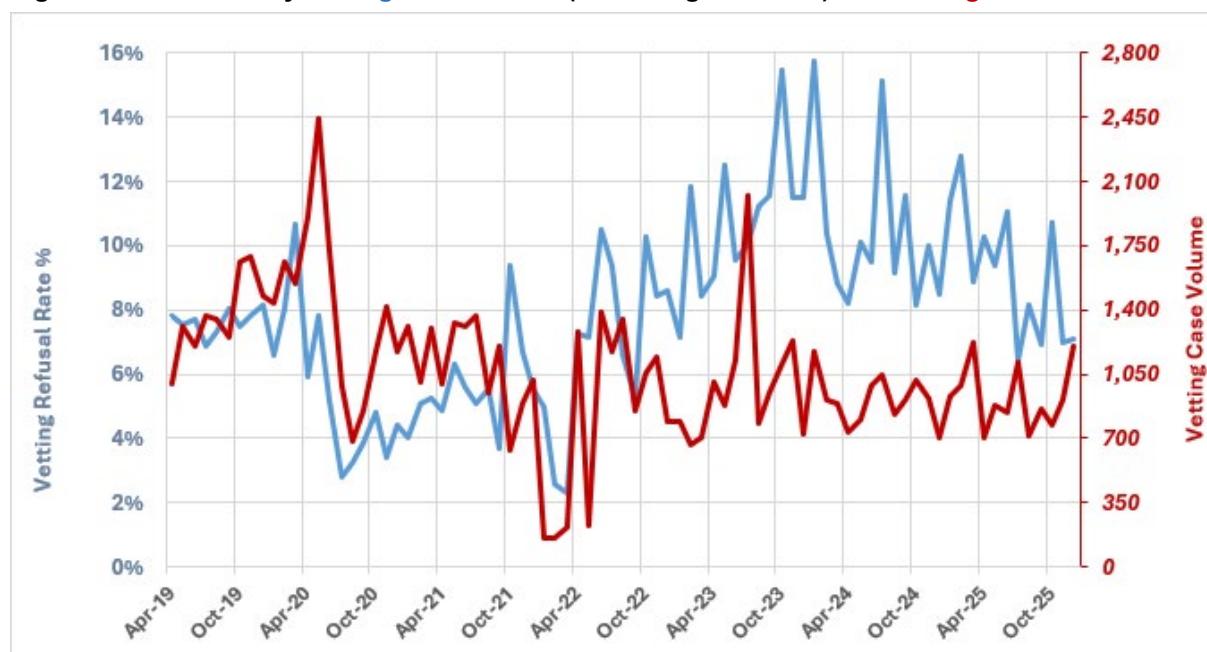
6.1 Primary Mitigations

The new Commissioner's focus on standards lifted vetting standards rapidly in late 2022 and in 2023, as can be seen from the rapid increase in vetting application failure rate. This more robust approach was subsequently formalised into an MPS Vetting Policy in June 2024 to ensure it was sustained and consistent. The MPS's policy is more explicit and precise than national APP and therefore less open to flexible interpretation by individual decision makers.

The new policy is complemented by an innovative vetting decision making framework (VDMF) and a Management Board endorsed statement of risk tolerance. As a result, MPS vetting officers have far clearer guidance and direction on risk factors that should lead to a rejection.

As illustrated in the below graph, vetting rejection rates have recovered and on average are now far higher than the period of the Police Uplift Programme:

Figure 5: MPS monthly vetting refusal rates (excluding renewals) and vetting case volumes



Elements of the MPS' approach to vetting is now being considered by the NPCC Vetting portfolio as good practice with a view to national adoption.

Since the enactment in June 2024, over 11,463 new applicants and 4,888 renewals have been tested against the higher standards brought about by the new policy and decision-making framework.

Previous deviations listed in this report have now ceased.

The practice of transferring vetting clearances into the MPS, including for transferees, and vetting exemptions have been terminated. The Vetting Panel has also been abolished.

An interim open-source intelligence capability is now used, ahead of a tendering process for an automated solution that will be integrated into a new case management system.

The obtaining of pre-employment references was fully reinstated in April 2022. In addition, substance misuse testing has been integrated into all future recruitment processes, including transferee processes.

Although the timebound nature of vetting and referencing is acknowledged, the prospect of unsuitable individuals joining the MPS has greatly reduced.

Professional standards have intensified with the creation of an Anti-Corruption and Abuse Command and our central DASO investigation units with the following results (accurate as of December 2025):

- Investigations doubled from 244 to 482.
- Operation Onyx reviewed 1,636 individuals involved in sexual/domestic abuse cases. 378 have left the MPS; others are being risk managed.
- Misconduct hearings increased, leading to 413 officers and 82 staff exiting.
- Greater use of Regulation 13 to remove unfit probationary officers.
- The implementation of Operation Assure which reviewed vetting failures; 96 exited as a result. This process has since been replaced by the Police (Vetting) Regulations 2025 after a legal challenge.
- Integrity assurance measures include ethical interviews, risk management, and enhanced supervision, as well as an annual integrity checklist which is now mandatory for all employees.
- Continuous integrity screening (Operation Sentinel) checks staff daily against internal databases. Operation Dragnet and Trawl identified known and unknown convictions and intelligence.
- Lawful Business Monitoring (LBM) was introduced in 2023 to monitor system use. Supported 1,613 investigations, 10% from proactive checks.
- Secondary mitigations include refreshed counter-terror checks and MOD liaison. Natural attrition and vetting renewals reduce residual risk.
- A vetting assurance regime and independent audits by the Directorate of Audit, Risk and Assurance (DARA) who have and will continue to provide oversight and quality control.

6.2 Secondary Mitigations

Given the findings of this review, additional mitigation measures were necessary to ensure stronger professional standards across the MPS.

In designing these, consideration has been given to the likelihood of risks arising from the identified system changes, the ease of identifying them and the scale and feasibility of mitigating action.

Mitigation activity commenced as part of this review process in early summer 2025 and is expected to conclude in early 2026. The mitigation work has included carrying out refreshed checks against our counter terrorism databases, as well as liaising with the Ministry of Defence and checking individuals against their indices. The final work that is ongoing is to ensure a small number of individuals have their vetting renewed.

It is important to highlight, however, that the effect of time is also helping to degrade the level of residual risk.

For example, whilst 11,500 new police officers were recruited between April 2018 and March 2022, natural wastage through resignations, retirements or other interventions has led to 3,374 leaving the service. Additionally, vetting renewals for 2016 will trigger from the later stages of 2025 and as of 14th May 2025, there were several thousand police officers, members of police staff and other employees who hold enhanced vetting clearances – from which greater assurances can reasonably be adduced.

As part of the review, we have carried out 4528 Special Branch checks and 431 Ministry of Defence checks that were not carried out as part of the deviations of the past.

The review has identified thirty-nine individuals who have needed to be fully re-vetted. This does not mean those individuals are unfit to serve, but their vetting was not effective when they joined the MPS. Twenty four of the thirty-nine have been granted vetting clearances with seven applications being progressed.

Eight of the cohort have been referred into the Police (Vetting) Regulations 2025 process to formally consider their fitness to hold vetting. These numbers were correct as of 5th January.

7. CONCLUSION

Over the course of the past decade, and particularly immediately prior to and during the period of the Police Uplift Programme, the MPS faced one of the most significant workforce resourcing challenges to confront the organisation in generations. Rapid recruitment efforts, driven by operational demand, political and funding challenges, led to system changes that inadvertently compromised integrity.

This review has found that there were deviations from policy and practice, overconfidence in the ability to recruit at scale and lack of resources in vetting increased risk. It is extremely difficult to establish a causation chain between system changes and the potential harm caused to the public and other members of the MPS. However, it is known that the scale and impact of these deviations ranged, with some tolerable and minor in nature, to those having a more substantive impact, including the recruitment and likely retention of individuals who have gone on to cause harm through criminality and misconduct – events that have undermined public confidence in the MPS.

In response, the MPS launched a layered mitigation strategy identify only 39 individuals requiring re-vetting. Vetting standards have been raised and formalised, risky practices have been ended, and new frameworks introduced. Professional standards have been strengthened through centralised units and increased investigations. Operations Onyx and Assure reviewed historic misconduct cases, leading to ~1500 exits over the past three years, along with ongoing professionalism reforms. Integrity assurance measures, continuous screening, and lawful business monitoring have been implemented to detect and manage risks, all of this work continues in earnest.

Additional bespoke mitigation measures in response to this review include counter-terror checks, vetting renewals, and independent audits.

The issues identified from this review are not unique to the MPS; national inspections have warned of risks in large-scale recruitment, underscoring the need for robust standards across policing. As such, if policing is to learn the lessons of history, then future 'at scale' police recruitment must be designed and executed in a manner that maintains standards and does not incentivise risk.

The MPS has briefed the Home Office and Mayor's Office for Police and Crime during the course of the review. We welcome the Home Secretary's commission of an HMICFRS inspection on the themes of this work in the early part of 2026. We expect that the Inspection while of the MPS, will be relevant to policing more broadly.

The MPS acknowledges recovery will take time but remains committed to high standards and public trust.

APPENDIX 1 - RECOMMENDATIONS

The authors of this report believe a number of important areas of organisational and national learning have been identified as a consequence of this review; these are as follows:

Recommendations 1: *The NPCC and Home Office consider the implications of this review on the design and use of conditional grant funding models for any future 'at scale' police recruitment projects.*

Recommendations 2: *MPS recruitment processes should be routinely assessed for compliance with legislation and professional practice, especially for any 'at scale' recruitment campaigns.*

Recommendation 3: *The MPS should, moving forward, set realistic workforce planning ambitions that are reflective of market conditions and the MPS' overall operating context.*

Recommendations 4: *The MPS should ensure that any deviations from standard recruitment practices for police officers, police staff (particularly those with designated powers), and the Metropolitan Special Constabulary should be formally documented, centrally recorded, and approved by the Executive Committee (ExCo) on an annual basis. This process should mirror the governance approach currently applied to vetting.*

Recommendation 5: *The MPS ensures future governance arrangements for officer and staff recruitment are fully compliant with Principle 6 of the Vetting Code of Practice 2025 and that effective separation and checks and balances are incorporated.*

Recommendation 6: *The College of Policing and Home Office consider mandatory prescription of checks in the future.*

Recommendation 7: *The College of Policing is invited to review the concept and operations of similar vetting panels nationally to determine their appropriateness and efficacy.*

Recommendation 8: *The police regulations requirement for obtaining and checking of references should be clarified with HMICFRS, in collaboration with the Home Office, and the College of Policing should consider a review of the relevant APP to ensure there is clarity as to the need to obtain references.*

Recommendation 9: *All MPS transferees, re-joiners and internal candidates for appointment must comply with biometrics, vetting and substance misuse testing in any future recruitment campaign.*

Recommendation 10: *The College of Policing and Home Office should consider a review of national recruitment and vetting standards with a view to further codification and assurance arrangements.*

Recommendation 11: *The MPS should consider its approach to documentation retention practices, especially within the context of key governance fora.*