



DAYLIGHT ROBBERY

A Report on Robberies in London
and how
the Met Engages the Public to help Detect and Deter these Crimes

April 2012

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Every day

- Your risk of being robbed in London is 6 times higher than if you were in Merseyside
- One half of all the robberies in England & Wales are committed in London
- 1 in 5 Londoners think it very or fairly likely they will be robbed or attacked by a stranger in the next 12 months
- Robbery is one of 2 offences the Met Commissioner is briefed about on a daily basis
- 100 robberies are reported to the Met each day
- 84% of London's reported robberies are never solved

In February 2012

- 2,663 robberies were reported to the Met
- To help solve these crimes, the Met posted 4 witness appeals
- The Met was 10 times less likely than other UK forces to appeal for witnesses to help solve robbery cases
- On 21 February a new community witness appeals site - StreetViolence.org - was launched to help the police deter and detect robberies and to make the capital safer. 9 days later, at the end of the month, 11,586 Londoners had visited the site
- The Met blocked its officers from looking at or using the site, and telling victims or the public about it

1. Executive Summary & Recommendations

As the facts on the facing page make clear, robbery is a pressing problem for London, its residents and its police. With the Diamond Jubilee, the Olympics and the Paralympics coming later this year, it is also likely to prove a problem for some of the capital's visitors.

While the case is clear that the Met should redouble its efforts to reduce the level of robberies, this Report demonstrates that it will not succeed in this unless it encourages and enables more people to come forward.

While the new Commissioner has made public engagement central to his strategy to cut crime and while the Met has launched campaigns on domestic violence and terrorism to get people to overcome their reluctance to help, no such initiative has been taken around robbery. Until this happens, the fact and fear of robbery will continue to cast a shadow on the lives of over a million Londoners.

To drive down the level of robberies in the capital, the Commissioner should encourage the Met to welcome the witness appeals service at StreetViolence.org and to engage with the hundreds of Londoners who are visiting the site for the first time each day. If, however, there is some well founded objection to this new community service, he should ask the Met to come up with some other initiative that galvanises and engages the public to help reduce the level of robbery and that removes the obstacles that deter so many witnesses from coming forward.

To this end, we recommend that the Met is given the lead and the political support (a) to make the reduction of robbery its key priority, and (b) to enable and encourage Londoners to come forward and help. In particular, we recommend that

the Met

1. adds a section to its website encouraging witnesses to come forward, setting out the support they can expect and explaining how they should make contact
2. publishes the criteria by which officers decide to issue witness appeals in robbery cases
3. explains and endeavours to reduce the average 8 week delay between the robbery and the posting of appeals with CCTV images of the culprit
4. aims to publish at least one half of the witness appeals for personal robberies that are issued by police forces nationally
5. provides the same support for witnesses of robberies as it offers witnesses of domestic violence and people with suspicions about terrorism
6. authorises and encourages officers to make use of and promote the community witness appeals service at StreetViolence.org, and
7. runs a media campaign on robbery that reassures the public that their help is wanted, needed and valued.

the Mayor of London - as the UK's first Police and Crime Commissioner - and his Office for Policing and Crime (MOPC) should

1. make the reduction of robberies the key priority when they set the next Policing Plan for London, and
2. ensure the allocation of resources for the Met reflects this priority.

3. Why Witnesses matter

"Without witnesses the administration of justice would suffer, and it is important to emphasise this, the community at large would also suffer."

Lord Judge, Lord Chief Justice (Sept 2011)

"Justice depends on the public having trust in the system; it depends on victims or witnesses of crime coming forward to report an incident, provide a statement and, as a case progresses, give evidence in court."

Getting it Right for Victims & Witnesses, Ministry of Justice (Jan 2012)

"It is really important that people who have witnessed violent crimes come forward to help police build up a case and bring the offender to justice."

Javed Khan, Chief Executive, Victim Support (Feb 2012)

As these comments make clear, witnesses are vital to deter and detect all types of criminal activity (and also in preventing miscarriages of justice). Their participation in the Criminal Justice System depends on their sense of civic duty and the encouragement and support that the police, courts and society gives them. This distinguishes witnesses from victims and suspects who have a direct interest in participating and from the police, lawyers and judges who have a professional role. Yet as the evidence in *Annex A* and *B* shows, there is a troubling sense - often informed by experience - that witnesses are overlooked and undervalued⁶. This is a real problem in the context of this Report as there are few crimes where eye-witnesses are as critical to their detection and deterrence as robbery.

71% of robberies are committed by strangers

While the victim is able to identify their attacker in a case of domestic violence or where they are neighbours or colleagues at work, this is not the case where the criminal is a stranger. Uniquely among violent offences, the British Crime Survey 2010/11 reports that 71% of robberies are committed by strangers⁷.

Witnesses are the key

Without the help of witnesses to identify those who commit robbery, the police have scant chance of catching the criminal or deterring them in the first place. As most robberies are committed in public places, there will frequently be witnesses about – a good number of whom, as we show, are willing to help the police make our streets safer.

CCTV can also help

Apart from witnesses, CCTV can play a helpful role in deterring and detecting robbery. However, this depends on (i) there being cameras at the site, (ii) which are working, (iii) the criminal either being unaware of or indifferent to them, (iv) the quality of the images being clear, (v) the images being made available to the police, and (vi) the police having the resources to go through the footage. On this point, following the 2011 riots, the Met at times had 800 officers trawling through CCTV footage. While some officers are skilled at identifying known criminals, the Met needed the help of the public to identify many of the people who were in the CCTV footage. When it publicised these images, the Met got a positive public response. As this makes clear, even when the police has good CCTV or photographic images they need to issue appeals for the public to help identify the criminals responsible who are shown in the picture.

⁶ Despite this, much of the present policy and media debate around witnesses unhelpfully focuses on the problems of protecting informers, gang members and associates of the criminals.

⁷ Nature of Violent Crime (Home Office) 10/11: 8% of robberies are committed by someone the victim knows well and 21% by people the victim knows by sight or to speak to.



Report a crime Online crime reporting Non-emergency contact number Other police forces Other policing bodies Other ways to report crime	Victim support Sexual assault Hate crime Stalking and harassment Domestic violence Crime victim survey	Licensing and permits Charities and street collections Events and demonstrations Firearms licensing Filming	Other contacts General enquiries Freedom of Information Information about you held by the Met Sapphire LGBT liaison officers Cadets Community safety units
Terrorism Anti-terrorist hotline Reporting online terrorist content	Traffic Report a collision Road closures Fixed penalty notices London safety awareness scheme	Provide feedback Thank the Met Make a complaint	

Home > Reporting crime

Reporting crime

Emergency contact number



In an emergency you should phone 999. You should use this service if a crime or incident is happening now or if anyone is in immediate danger. If you are deaf, deafened, hard of hearing or have a speech impairment, a text phone is available on 18000.

■ [When to call 999](#)

Online reporting



Certain categories of crime or incidents committed in the Greater London area can now be reported over the internet, as long as an urgent response is not required.

■ [Access online crime reporting](#)

Non-emergency contact number



We are committed to making it quicker and easier for you to get the service you need from us. Dial 101 for incidents that do not require an immediate police response. If you are deaf, deafened, hard of hearing or have a speech impairment, a text phone is available on 18001 101

■ [Dial 101](#)

Your local police station



In non-emergency situations you can report a crime or incident at any Front Counter. Front Counters are often busy from lunchtime to early evening. You may find it more convenient to attend outside these times. You can also access a range of services online.*

■ [Find a Front Counter](#)
■ [Online services](#)

Reporting crime

- [Home](#)
- [Non-emergency contact number](#)
- [Traffic collisions](#)
- [Online crime reporting](#)
- [Local police stations](#)
- [Reporting specific types of crime](#)

Related links

- [Crime prevention](#)
- [Missing persons](#)
- [Visitors to London](#)
- [Photography advice](#)
- [Crimestoppers](#)
- [Internet Watch Foundation](#)

Crimestoppers



Crimestoppers is an independent UK-wide charity working to stop crime. If you have information about any crime you would prefer to offer in confidence and anonymously, call free on 0800 555 111.

4. Met Website: Contact Us – Reporting Crime

Although the importance of witnesses is clear and unchallenged, as the pages from the Met Police website reproduced opposite show, the Met site lacks either a section or a subsection for witnesses and offers them no welcome, thanks or advice.

Emergencies

The 'Reporting Crime' page states that if the crime is occurring, or anyone is in immediate danger you should call 999. This is clear and welcome advice that will apply to witnesses in many cases of robbery. However, as most robberies will be witnessed by several people, although one may phone 999, other witnesses will often also be able to provide important information. If they are free to wait at the scene, they will be seen once the officer has dealt with the victim and secured the crime scene. For those for whom this isn't a practical option, the Met website offers four options (a) report online, (b) call 101, (c) visit the local station, or (d) contact Crimestoppers.

Reporting online

The option to report online is not available for most robberies or for witnesses. The Met allows victims and witnesses to report robbery online but only if it was motivated by hate⁸.

Non-emergency 101

As to 101, the new non-emergency number, the information here and elsewhere on the Met's site and from the Home Office makes no reference to witnesses. As such, it is not clear if and how well the operators are trained to help or reassure witnesses or be able to make ready contact with the right officers (as witnesses won't have a crime reference number). Also as these calls cost 15 pence, this new option may deter the young and poor.

Visit the local police station

Visiting the local police station is another option. Helpfully and candidly, the website cautions that stations can be busy at lunch and in the early evening. For most, a visit to a police station with a front desk will involve a journey across the borough. It will also require the witness to wait in line with people who have to report on bail conditions or have been charged with offences and there is no guarantee that the right officers will be at the station at that time. As the witness has no direct personal interest in the crime, the suggestion they should attend and wait in line at a busy police station may discourage some from engaging.

Crimestoppers

While Crimestoppers provides a valuable service, its appearance without qualification on the Reporting Crime section of the Met website is surprising. The ACPO Manual on Crimestoppers⁹ (agreed by the charity) states that "*Crimestoppers should not under any circumstances be used or promoted as a first contact point for victims or witnesses*"; and "*Crimestoppers does not take crime reports and is unable to offer crime reference numbers*". Additionally, the important channel Crimestoppers provides for anonymous tip-offs is not designed or suitable for people who witness robberies. This is clear from the ACPO Manual and from the type of information it says Crimestoppers seeks from callers about robberies. This includes (i) the suspect's name, address and workplace, (ii) if he robs people regularly and, if so, when and where; and (iii) if he has a drug habit.

⁸ https://secure.met.police.uk/hatecrime_national/index.php

⁹ Crimestoppers Manual (Association of Chief Police Officers) April 2010

5. Met Robbery Appeals in February 2012

In the summer of 2009 the Met stopped using Witness Appeal Boards, other than for road accidents and murder inquiries. This was due to a concern that the boards fuelled public fears about crime.

As a result, the principal way police officers across London appeal for witnesses is by placing an appeal on the Met website (www.content.met.police.uk/Page/Appeals).

Appeals for Robberies committed in February 2012

To get a sense of how these website appeals work in practice, we studied and analysed all the appeals posted on the Met website for personal robberies that occurred in February 2012. Recognising that some appeals will take a while to be posted, we continued our study to include February robberies where the appeal was posted by 20 March 2012¹⁰.

As *Table B* on the following page shows, the Met appealed for witnesses in 4 of the 2,663 robberies that were reported during February¹¹. From *Table B* and the text of the full appeals (see *Annex C*), it is difficult to discern why these 4 robberies were chosen over and above the other 2,659 that were reported to the Met that month.

Appeals for Robberies committed before February 2012

During the study, we also recorded 5 witness appeals posted during February that related to personal robberies that had occurred in the previous 6 months¹². We also analysed these and this appears in *Table C*.

Summary Met Appeals

One advantage of website appeals is they can be posted more swiftly and more cheaply than the old witness appeal boards. Our study shows that where the Met posted appeals for eye-witnesses, these appeared on average 8 days after the crime occurred (the range was 1 to 15 days).

One other advantage of website appeals is that they can include a photograph of the suspect. For these the study shows, it took on average 8 weeks for the appeal to be posted (the range was 5-19 weeks). Where a photo is included in the appeal, the police are looking for help to identify the criminal rather than eye-witnesses to help provide evidence that he committed the crime. In the context of proving a criminal case, this 8 week average delay will not be material. However, as the robber is meanwhile free to commit further crimes, there is reason for the Met to explain and endeavour to reduce these delays.

When the advantages of website appeals are so clear, two questions the study raises are (i) why the Met chose those 4 appeals for witnesses out of 2,663 robberies reported in February and (ii) why 29 of the 32 borough commands saw no need to seek the help of Londoners to catch robbers.

The reason for this low level of appeals should not now be the concern that such appeals feed the fear of crime. This is because all of these 2,663 robberies are shown on the official crime map at www.police.uk in and around Londoners' homes and communities - albeit without any details about the robbery or any police contacts for those who can help.

¹⁰ To include appeals for robberies committed at the end of February, we chose this period of three weeks because if eye-witness evidence is to be reliable and valuable in court it needs to be obtained as soon after the incident as possible.

¹¹ In the second of the five appeals listed they are asking the victims to make contact.

¹² In the sixth of the six appeals listed they are asking the victim to make contact.

ALL MET APPEALS FOR CASES OF PERSONAL ROBBERY THAT OCCURRED DURING FEBRUARY 2012

During February 2012, 2,663 street robberies were reported to the Met. We studied and analysed all the appeals posted on the Met website for street robberies that occurred in February 2012.

For robberies committed at the end of the month and because some witness appeals take a while to be posted, we extended our study to appeals posted up to and including 20 March 2012. We chose this period of the 3 weeks because if eye-witness evidence is to be reliable and valuable in court it needs to be obtained as soon after the incident as possible

Date of robbery	Date the appeal was posted	Time lapse	Borough command	Appeal for	Description of victim	Property that victim was robbed of	If appeal included photo of suspect	Weapon used?
1 st Feb	15 th Feb	2 weeks	Greenwich	Witnesses	51 year old male	Money bag	Photo	
4 th Feb	6 th Mar	5 weeks	Hackney	Victims	Two female adults	Unidentified property		
14 th Feb	28 th Feb	2 weeks	Lambeth	Witnesses	27 year old female	Bag		
15 th Feb	21 st Feb	6 days	Enfield	Witnesses	92 year old female	Handbag		
19 th Feb	20 th Feb	1 day	Lambeth	Witnesses	30 year old male	Bag		Knife

As the Table shows, we found 5 appeals, one of which was for the victims of the crime to come forward.

The full content of these appeals can be seen in the *Annex C*.

**OTHER MET APPEALS FOR CASES OF PERSONAL ROBBERY
THAT WERE POSTED DURING THE MONTH OF FEBRUARY
BUT OCCURRED PREVIOUSLY**

During our study, we also recorded and analysed the appeals in cases of robbery that were posted on the Met site in February 2012 but related to crimes that had occurred on or before 31 January. We recorded the following 6.

Date of robbery	Date the appeal was posted	Time lapse	Borough command	Appeal for	Description of victim	Property that victim was robbed of	If appeal included photo of suspect	Weapon used?
29 th Jan	28 th Feb	5 weeks	Lambeth	Witnesses	Adult female	Car-jacked	Photo	Knife
26 th Jan	1 st Feb	7 days	Fulham	Witnesses	45 year old female	High value jewellery		
9 th Jan	7 th Feb	5 weeks	Lambeth	Witnesses	85 year old male	Unspecified property	Photo	
6 th Dec 2011	6 th Feb	8 weeks	Southwark	Witnesses	Pensioner male	Wedding ring & money	Photo	
30 th Sep 2011	7 th Feb	19 weeks	Southwark	Witnesses	23 year old male	Neck chain	Photo	Knife
8 th Aug 2011	14 th Feb	28 weeks	Newham	Victim	Asian adult male	Money	Video	

Please note that the sixth and last appeal listed was not an appeal for witnesses, but an appeal for the victim to come forward.

www.content.met.police.uk/Page/Appeals

6. How the Met compares nationally

With half of all the robberies in the country taking place in London, one would expect that around half of the appeals nationally would be posted by the Met.

When we searched the number of robbery appeals that were posted by the Met between 1 February and 20 March 2012, we found that there were 90 entries on the Met website (see below). Of these 90 entries, there were the 11 distinct appeals¹³ in cases of personal robbery shown in the Tables on the previous pages.

The screenshot shows a search interface with a search bar containing the text "robbery AND appeal site:met.police.uk". Below the search bar, it indicates "Page 9 of 90 results (0.07 seconds)". The results are categorized into "Everything", "The web", and "Any time". Under "Everything", there are three main entries: "East Acton Safer Neighbourhoods team - Metropolitan Police Service" (dated 8 Mar 2012), "Elthorne Safer Neighbourhoods team - Metropolitan Police Service" (dated 8 Mar 2012), and "Commissioner's Excellence in Total Policing Awards - Metropolitan Police Service" (dated 29 Feb 2012). Each entry includes a brief description of the news item.

The same search for robbery appeals but from all police forces across the UK came up with 998 entries on police sites.

The screenshot shows a search interface with a search bar containing the text "robbery AND appeal site:police.uk". Below the search bar, it indicates "Page 36 of about 998 results (0.15 seconds)". The results are categorized into "Everything", "The web", and "Any time". Under "Everything", there are three main entries: "Woman robbed in Huntingdon - Cambridgeshire Constabulary" (dated 29 Feb 2012), "News & Appeals - Metropolitan Police Service" (dated 12 Mar 2012), and "Appeals for information | South Yorkshire Police" (dated 21 Feb 2012). Each entry includes a brief description of the news item.

This rough and ready search suggests that the Met are 10 times less likely than other forces to issue appeals when investigating robberies. This is difficult to understand. If anything, we would have thought the Met would issue proportionately more appeals as (i) half the personal robberies occur in London, (ii) there will be more CCTV images than elsewhere (and so the police should need more public help to identify the culprits in the images), and (iii) there will likely be more eye-witnesses to many of the robberies in our busy and crowded capital than those committed in other parts of the country.

¹³ Many entries were duplicates on the central and local Met sites, some were for armed robberies and some simply included the words searched but contained no witness appeal. NB There was also an appeal posted on 12/3/12 for a robbery in Hackney on 31/1/12.

7. Met Media Campaigns

Each year the Met runs 6 or 7 high profile campaigns on critical or pressing crimes. These usually give advice to the public or encourage people to come forward and help the police. From the start of 2011, one campaign was about robbery and two were about the need for eye-witnesses and the public to come forward and help stop or solve particular crimes.

Counter-Terrorism Campaign

In February 2012 the Met launched its Counter-Terrorism Campaign. This states *"We fully understand that people may be reluctant to tell the police about suspicious activity or behaviour. No piece of information is considered too small or insignificant"*. It urges the public to make a freephone call to the Confidential Anti-Terrorist Hotline because *"We would rather take lots of calls which are made in good faith, but have innocent explanations - rather than not getting any at all. Not making that call could mean we miss out on a vital piece of information"*.

Domestic Violence Campaign

In December 2011 the Met launched a campaign to cut Domestic Violence, with the strapline *"You make the call, we'll make it stop"*. This campaign focused on alerting *"neighbours and bystanders who may hear domestic violence incidents taking place to the fact that by calling the police on 999 the police can intervene"*.

Street Robbery Campaign

In January 2011 the Met launched a Street Robbery Campaign with the message *"The MPS takes street robbery very seriously – being robbed is a traumatic experience."*

The campaign did not encourage or enable eye-witnesses to help the police but advised the public to take care of their possessions when out and about. While the advice was sound, the campaign was not successful in reducing the level of street robberies, as over the past year these have risen by 10%.

Comment

It is notable that two of the campaigns launched under the new Commissioner Bernard Hogan-Howe drive home the single message that the police need eye-witnesses and the public to come forward, as otherwise chances to deter and stop domestic violence and terrorism will be missed.

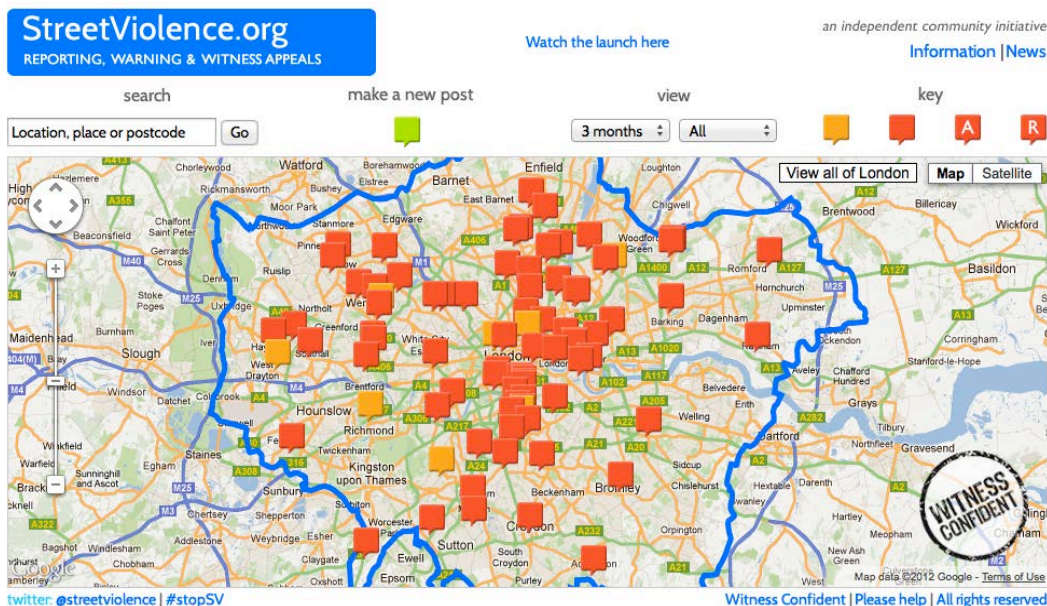
It is particularly welcome that these two Met campaigns reassure eye-witnesses and people with information about domestic violence or terrorism that there is a free, simple way they can contact the police and that the Met is ready for their call.

By contrast, the Street Robbery Campaign – which had been launched under the previous Commissioner - overlooked the role of witnesses and no mention was made of how they can best help. This is unfortunate because evidence from eye-witnesses will in most cases be more critical to catch and convict the criminal than in cases of domestic violence (where the victim can identify their attacker) or terrorism (where intelligence and informers usually provide much of the critical evidence). As such, we recommend that the Met runs a campaign on robbery that reassures the public that their help is wanted, needed and valued.

8. StreetViolence.org

This charity launched a witness appeals service that allows victims and the police to post appeals and warnings and to update the public when the culprit has been arrested and convicted. Where eye-witnesses can help, they are able to get in touch securely with the right police officers in minutes from their computer. The service was developed with the Met over two years to cut street violence and improve police-public engagement (having regard to some of the experiences and concerns raised by the public - see *Annex A* and *B*).

The site was launched on 21 February. Although there was no coverage about it in the printed press or on TV, 9 days later it had been visited by 11,586 Londoners, who stayed on average 2½ minutes. These are people who want to help the police catch criminals or find out more about street violence in the capital.



Regrettably, the Met has blocked its officers from (i) seeing or using the site, (ii) informing or encouraging victims to use it, and (iii) updating the public that the culprit has been arrested or convicted. This response was unexpected as the pilot site had been welcomed by detectives and as 2 weeks before the launch the Command responsible for London's policing had recommended the Met support the new service. It appears that at the last minute someone objected (a) to neighbourhood police teams having any role at all in this initiative to make the streets safer, and (b) to the notion that all victims - and not just those whose attacks were motivated by hate¹⁴ - should be able to report street violence online.

As a result of the Met's position, at 1 April there were only 70 appeals on the site¹⁵. These were appeals posted by victims or those posted by the Met on their site and which we then posted on StreetViolence.org. Despite the Met distancing itself from this community service to cut crime, 250 Londoners are starting to use the site each day to see if they can help the police¹⁶.

¹⁴ https://secure.met.police.uk/hatecrime_national/index.php

¹⁵ 8 of the posts by victims were from people who had chosen not to report the crime to the police. As these alerts provide valuable information to the police (and also as 1 in 5 of the Met's own robbery appeals in February were for victims), it is unfortunate that officers are being prevented from seeing this information.

¹⁶ It is also notable that the site - for which there is no precedent overseas - is attracting strong interest on the web and had 192,000 citations on Google in its first six weeks.

9. Met's Changing Culture

As with all organisations, the Met's culture is influenced by its leader and at the end of September 2011 a new Commissioner, Bernard Hogan-Howe, was appointed. Although as a large professional organisation it takes a while for the culture to change, 6 months is a good time to see whether and how far the lead set by a new head is taking root.

The new Commissioner replaced the mission statement "*Working Together for a Safer London*" with a more robust, specific one that chimes with the principle Robert Peel¹⁷ stressed when he created the Met: "*Total Policing is the Met's commitment to be on the streets and in your communities to catch offenders, prevent crime and support victims. We are here for London, working with you to make our capital safe*".

One of the first initiatives after the Commissioner's appointment was Operation Hawk in November. This focussed on neighbourhood crime and the Commissioner launched it saying "*It's a renewed emphasis on Safer Neighbourhood teams making the most of local intelligence and acting on it. To help us do this, we need to encourage communities to talk to us and report concerns, but then we must reward this trust, by delivering swift results and telling people what action we have taken.*"

In March the Met unveiled the new policing model to be rolled out across London this autumn: "*Neighbourhood policing will be the foundation of our total war on crime and our total care for victims... We will seize every opportunity to cut crime, tackle offending and support victims. And we will speak to and listen to people, and respond to their concerns*". Two key parts of this new model are that (i) every victim of crime will be offered a visit by the police and (ii) neighbourhood policing teams will be strengthened to include detectives and forensic staff who will investigate lower level crimes.

While the new Commissioner is emphatic in stressing public engagement, victim care and local policing¹⁸ and has set a clear line of travel for the Met, it is troubling that the opposition taken to the launch of StreetViolence.org was based around these very same points. This was apparent from the insistence that the site should (i) give no role at all to neighbourhood policing teams, and (ii) not permit victims to report street violence online for fear this will harm the ability of detectives to investigate (while overlooking the fact that the Met site allows such online reporting if the offence is motivated by hate).

As to robberies, it is not yet clear¹⁹ under the forthcoming policing model where the 83% of robberies that are not gang related or seen as lower level will be handled²⁰. In terms of cutting crime, making London safer and making the Met the best police force in the world, we suspect that it will be around such matters that the success of the Commissioner may ultimately be founded.

¹⁷ "The police are the public and the public are the police"

¹⁸ It may be noteworthy that when he was at HMI Constabulary, Mr Hogan-Howe helped develop StreetViolence.org, recommended that witness appeals on the site should link to photos of suspects (as it does) and suggested the name for the new service.

¹⁹ The Met states that "*Complex and serious investigations will remain with criminal investigation departments (CID), who will prioritise on pursuing and disrupting harmful criminals and gang members, and supporting vulnerable people, such as victims of hate crime or domestic violence*"

²⁰ It is clear that a modern user friendly, low-cost approach such as that in StreetViolence.org is well suited to this new policing model as it (i) enables and encourages victims and witnesses to contact the Met with minimum grief, (ii) allows for these email contacts to be copied easily (if not automatically) to the appropriate investigative team, (iii) lets the Met tell the public when robbers have been caught and convicted, and (iv) reduces Londoners' level of fear.

10. Conclusion & Recommendations

With 100 robberies reported to the Met every day, with a clear-up rate of 16% and with 1 in 5 Londoners believing they will likely be the victim of street violence in the next twelve months, the Met needs to redouble its efforts to reduce the number of robberies in the capital.

As the new Commissioner has repeatedly made clear, the Met is unlikely to make any real progress in this task unless it seeks and obtains the help of the public and in return demonstrates that it values and uses that help. Underlying this approach is the need for the Met to be, and to be seen by Londoners to be, a service.

To drive down the level of robberies in the capital, the Commissioner should encourage the Met to welcome the witness appeals service at StreetViolence.org and to engage with the hundreds of Londoners who are visiting the site for the first time each day. If, however, there is some well founded objection to this community service, he should ask the Met to come up with some other initiative that galvanises and engages the public to help reduce the level of robbery and that removes the obstacles that deter so many witnesses from coming forward.

To these ends, we recommend that

The Met

1. adds a section to its website encouraging witnesses to come forward, setting out the support they can expect and explaining how they should make contact
2. publishes the criteria by which officers decide to issue witness appeals in robbery cases
3. explains and endeavours to reduce the average 8 week delay between the robbery and the posting of appeals with CCTV images of the culprit
4. aims to publish at least one half of the witness appeals for personal robberies that are issued by police forces nationally
5. provides the same support for witnesses of robberies as it offers witnesses of domestic violence and people with suspicions about terrorism
6. authorises and encourages officers to make use of and promote the community witness appeals service at StreetViolence.org, and
7. runs a media campaign on robbery that reassures the public that their help is wanted, needed and valued.

The Mayor of London - as the UK's first Police and Crime Commissioner - and his Office for Policing and Crime (MOPC) should

1. make the reduction of robberies the key priority when they set the next Policing Plan for London, and
2. ensure the allocation of resources for the Met reflects this priority.

What about the Witness?

Engaging Communities in Fighting Crime

Louise Casey's landmark report *Engaging Communities in Fighting Crime*²¹ recognised that while in a number of areas the Government had made real progress in tackling crime, "it would be wrong to dismiss public concern about crime as nothing more than a gap between perception and reality"²². The report pointed out that 55% of the public said that crime was the most important issue facing the country and that while 79% of the public agree that the Criminal Justice System respects the rights of offenders only 33% are confident that it meets the needs of victims.

The report was informed by a *Have Your Say*²³ that was put on the Cabinet Office website and publicised to groups working with victims and witnesses and in the criminal justice field. Ms Casey makes clear that their evidence is "more likely to represent the views of the public who are actively involved in their community or affected by crime". Drawing on what she found, she observed that:

"If the public lack confidence in the police and others to act on their behalf against crime, a vicious circle can begin, breeding fear, public disengagement and withdrawal, feeding an environment in which crime is allowed to grow.

Only a small minority of people we heard from during the review told us they thought the public did not have any role to play in tackling or preventing crime. However, a very significant number expressed concerns about coming forward more generally to intervene, report crime or give evidence."²⁴

Research of University students on police-public engagement

Witness Confident published a report²⁵ on research it commissioned on the views and experiences of university students as to street robbery and the role of witnesses.

Only 37% of university students said they were confident if they were mugged on a busy street that one of the people who witnessed the incident would give a statement to the police. Women students were significantly more fearful than men with 61% saying they were not confident that any of the witnesses would help the police.

The students were asked to explain the reasons for their confidence or lack of it. Below we reproduce a few of the students' comments:

I have witnessed a crime, reported it to the police, made a follow up phone call and still not received any further police contact. Am I going to be influenced by anything other than a complete change of attitude by senior police let alone a charity???

M, Photography, Year 1, Canterbury

Make it easier and also the police should be more helpful. I have been victim of crime and they did practically nothing about it even though I had evidence such as car license plates and witnesses etc. All the police seem to do nowadays is direct you to victim support which is a waste of time.

F, Forensic Science, Year 1, London Southbank

²¹ *Engaging Communities in Fighting Crime* (Cabinet Office) 2008

²² *Ibid*, page 6

²³ *Engaging Communities in Fighting Crime – Have Your Say responses* (Cabinet Office) 2008

²⁴ *Note 21* Page 9

²⁵ *Public policy, the perils of indifference and street violence* (2009) Witness Confident.

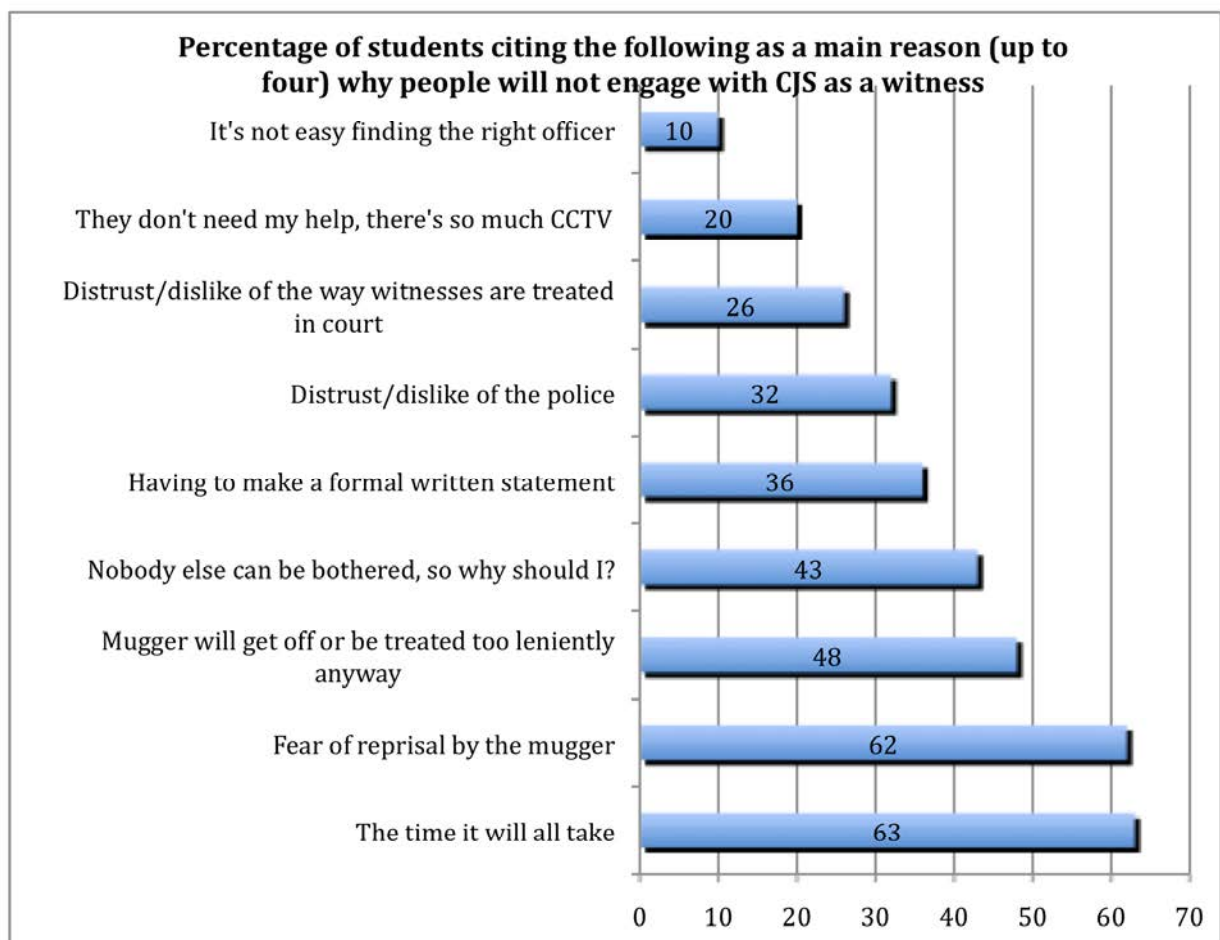
Help the victim get proper support and perhaps get things back that were taken from them, show a pro-active response. People I know that have been mugged have not reported it as they believed the police would not do anything to help them. Ensure the police follow up on leads properly and the criminals are dealt with properly to avoid them committing such crimes in the future and I believe people would be more co-operative.

F, Journalism, Year 2, Northumbria

Most people realise that the police are disinterested in anything other than targets or major crime. Even when they do receive statements, they do nothing to follow up.

M, Cinema, Year 1, Canterbury

The chart below shows the main reasons why students think people will not engage as witnesses (the reasons were prompted).



Vox Pops from Londoners

When Witness Confidential launched on 9/9/9 the BBC conducted a Have Your Say on people's experiences of reporting crime. It was one of the busiest debates of that year. Below we reproduce the experiences – both positive and negative - that were then cited by people who identified themselves as Londoners. These are reproduced in the chronological order they were made.

While we emphasise that these experiences will be 2-3 years old and that people's more recent experiences may have been better, they still provide a valuable indication of the likely mindset of some Londoners toward engaging with the police.

There's a lot of bashing of the police on here but to be fair I've seen a HUGE increase in police presence over the past couple of years. Random teams with dogs at the tube station (Ealing) checking for knives, or unmarked cars at 2am pulling us over to make sure we weren't up to mischief. When I was mugged, the police searched the area in cars for the culprits (they even took me with them) and then showed me pics of known offenders. The guy was later sentenced to a youth prison.

Mike, London

Why bother reporting crime? Where I live, North London, the police do not care, most of the "police stations" are closed except in office hours and they appear to run themselves as a private security force for those with influence. Lots of sirens everyday, no interest in neighbourhood crime. We all wonder what they actually are doing apart from rushing back for tea and a fag..

Peter Galbavy, London

The police are totally useless in cases of street crime. My 16 year old daughter was robbed of her mobile phone outside a busy rail station in London. No one offered to intervene at all. The station is littered with cctv and yet the police refused to access any of the images due to lack of priority and resources. The myth that cctv's are there for our protection is exactly that.....a myth.

Marco Ferrari, Streatham

In the past, I have reported crimes I have seen in progress but will never do it again due to the police response. The time they take to respond, sometimes days, is better than how they have dealt with the situation when they have arrived. The last straw was when a paedophile walked free, after a family member who was a witness to an action at a park turned up in court, only for it to be thrown out because the police officers did not turn up to give evidence!

Dee, London

What is the point when the Police don't even answer a 999 call? There was a big fight right outside my apartment, they managed to get into my building and were fighting @ 3am. It woke me up, I called 999 and waited FIVE minutes for the Police to actually answer. Did they bother? Of course not. Is it any wonder that crime figures are 'falling'?

George Williams, London

I recently tried to report a crime to Wimbledon police station and was told in no uncertain terms by the officer on the desk that as I was not the victim of the crime it was nothing to do with me and I had no business reporting it. Won't be bothering again.

Kevin Mitchell, London

I would report it but the hassle associated with the after effects is worrying. I have reported a crime in progress before and the criminal got caught, I then had to go to the police station, spend an hour giving statements and then worrying if the job gets let off, if he will come back and have a go at me or my family. You see the problem is criminals have more rights than the 'innocent' and they can see your details, the law does not protect those who help.... And that's the big problem.

Bob Smith, London

My experiences: unwarranted searches because they didn't like the look of me (twice), being assaulted on the bus, waiting hours for them to arrive then never being contacted back by the detective who promised to (even a 'sorry we can't help' would have been OK), never seeing any police on the street at night (living 100m from a police station). I can go on...

Ben, London

My brother went to someone's help who was being 'mugged', and found himself being arrested/cautioned by the police, and the 'muggers' walked away scot free. That's British justice and policing in our society today. He will never do it again. The police are not interested in catching real criminals anymore.

David Jacobs, London

When living in Notting Hill a while ago, I called to report two suspicious blokes in the street outside, casing a boarded-up building. The police arrived, the blokes scarpered and you know what the coppers did ? - walked straight up to my door and knocked - gosh, I wonder who called them out - shame the entire street (more importantly, any mates of the dodgy guys) then knew I was the one that called. Well done the Met - the Police generally mess up like this in my experience, I avoid them.

Chris

This week I went to a police station to report a crime and was told at 18:40 that we would be seen in 15min as they were just changing shifts. No-one else was waiting and the two operating police officers were doing nothing behind the counter. The shift change took place at 19:00. At 19:30 we were finally attended to. I will not give up my evening to report a crime if police officers are happy to neglect their duties for the last 20min of their shift and deceive the well-meaning public.

Phil, Stockwell

I was attacked in November by a crew in West London because I was on their turf. People in the houses could see what was happening and chose to watch instead of calling the police or an ambulance to help. 5 months later, I was told to go to a police station in Acton Town and was asked many questions, looked through many pictures. My mum left the room with one of the Det. he turned to my mum and said.. did you ever think your son could be lying. After that day I never heard from them.

Jake Young, London

Despite being a law abiding citizen with no history of any legal trouble, my experiences with the police have left me wanting as little contact with them as possible - therefore I am less inclined to report street crime than I might otherwise be. On the occasion when I did report a crime against me (vehicle break-in), they did not even bother turning up. How do otherwise ordinary people suddenly become so arrogant, ignorant and rude the moment they put their police uniform on?

Lee, London

I was the victim of a sexual assault in broad daylight at a bus stop in a 'nice' part of London. About 10 people ignored my cries for help and got on their buses. I rang the police, who

arrived promptly, but there was nothing they could do as the perpetrator had disappeared, and none of those who witnessed the assault had been prepared to stop him or stay to help.

Deborah Persaud, London

Reporting street crime is definitely not a waste of time. Looking out for our neighbours has to play a major part in retaining our community spirit. I have, however, tried to report a child being mugged in our street for his mobile phone. The police weren't interested.

Gill, London

My wife and I reported an attack on a young lady in the early hours of last Saturday morning. She was left lying on the pavement with a nasty head injury having been attacked (by her ex-partner as it turns out). The police told us they would only come if she wanted them to. She said she would make a statement if they came so we told them. They never came. The frightening thing is seeing what this man was capable of and it being brushed under the carpet and going unpunished – ridiculous.

Gerry, London

Met February Robbery Appeals

Greenwich Appeals Robbery

Posted 15 February 2012

Incident Date

1st February 2012

Incident Location

Robbery Eltham High Street



Description

Detectives are appealing for witnesses or information related to a robbery in Eltham High Street . On the 1st of February 2012 at 16:15pm the victim, a 51-year-old man, entered the Lloyds TSB branch in Eltham carrying an orange plastic bag which contained over £10,000 in cash. The victim approached the bank's counter and placed the bag on it. A man who was already inside the bank, pushed the victim to the floor, snatched the plastic bag and run away with it. The suspect is described as a white man, approximately 6' tall, in his late twenties, wearing a black and white wool hat, grey top with a hood and grey jogging bottoms. He also wore a black scarf and black gloves.

Police want to talk to a man captured on CCTV in order to assist police with ongoing enquiries.

Detective David Ibbott, from the Plumstead Robbery squad said: "We have reasons to believe that the suspect did not purposely follow the victim. He was already inside the bank where he seized his opportunity to steal the bag with the money. We would like to talk to the man captured on CCTV. If anyone knows who he is, they should contact the Robbery squad at Plumstead police station".

Can you assist police with their investigation? Do you know the man in the CCTV image?

Anyone with information should call the Robbery Squad, Plumstead police station on 0208 284 9449 or Crimestoppers.

Hackney Appeals Robbery

Posted 06 March 2012

Description

Detectives are appealing for two victims who appear to have been robbed on Seven Sisters Road, to come forward to assist with their investigation.

On Saturday 4th February 2012, at 05:30 hours, two women were approached by a woman and a man who was wearing glasses and had a beard. The two women were attacked by the pair and ordered to hand over what they had on them. The victims are clearly shocked and shaken by the incident. The attack was witnessed by an off duty police officer and subsequently two suspects were arrested for robbery. The victims could not be located at the time and their details are unknown. **Detective Constable Alex McCullough of Hackney's Robbery Squad, said:** "I am appealing for the victims of the suspected robbery or anyone who knows them, to have the confidence to come forward and report the incident. We are here to support and protect the victims and bring those responsible to justice." Anyone with information is asked to call DC Alex McCullough 0207 275 3232, quoting reference 4603189/12 or to remain anonymous they can call Crimestoppers on 0800 555 111.

Lambeth Appeals Robbery

Posted 28 February 2012

Incident Date

14/02/2012

Incident Location

Cotherstone Road, SW2 near the junction with Christchurch Road.

Description

Police Appeal: Can you help?

Lambeth Borough Police Officers are appealing for information and witnesses to a robbery.

The incident occurred on Tuesday 14 February at 14:40hrs on Cotherstone Road, SW2 near the junction with Christchurch Road. A 27-year old female was walking along Cotherstone Road towards Christchurch Road when she was grabbed around her throat from behind. The suspect demanded her phone and then ran away in the direction of Holmewood Road.

A witness made himself known to the victim moments after the robbery. He offered his phone to the victim so she could call police. Police are very keen to trace and speak with this witness. He is described as a black man aged between 30-40 years wearing casual clothing. He had been standing at the junction of Christchurch Road and Cotherstone Road, when the robbery occurred.

Anyone with information is encouraged to contact DC Darren Francis from the Robbery Squad on 020 8649 2440.

Enfield Appeals Robbery

Posted 21 February 2012

Incident Date

15/02/2012

Incident Location

Winchmore Hill, N21

Description

Police in Enfield are appealing for witnesses or information following a robbery in the Winchmore Hill area on Wednesday 15th February.

The victim, a 92 year old female had caught a bus from Enfield Town and alighted in Green Lanes, N21 at about 3.45pm.

As she turned left into Carpenter Gardens, N21 near the junction of Green Lanes when she was approached from behind by an unknown suspect.

Her handbag was stolen and the suspect made off on foot along Carpenter Gardens, N21. The victim was left very shaken.

The suspect is described as a white male, 13 - 15 years of age, wearing white trousers and a white hooded jacket.

Anyone with information about the suspect or if you saw anyone in the area acting suspiciously to please call DC Bheekoo at Enfield Police on 0208 345 -4469.

Lambeth Appeals Robbery

Posted: 20 February 2012

Incident Date

19/02/2012

Incident Location

Footpath between Streatham High Road and Hopton Road Streatham, SW16

Description

Lambeth Borough Police Officers were called on Sunday, 19 February at 19:45 hours to a footpath between Streatham High Road and Hopton Road Streatham, SW16 to a report of a robbery involving a knife.

The victim aged 30 was assaulted by two suspects who threatened him with a knife before making off with his bag.

The suspects are described as two black males aged 20-25 years. Both were wearing beanie hats and casual clothing. One was approx 5ft 10 in height and the other was approximately 6ft tall.

No arrests have been made.

Lambeth Borough Police's Robbery unit is investigating.

Anyone with information is asked to call DS Michael Quinlan from the Robbery unit on 020 8649 2439.

This Report is from Witness Confident an independent charity and legal advice centre that is taking a stand against the walk-on-by culture that fosters violent crime, feeds fear and fuels public disengagement from society.

With 100 robberies reported to the Met every day, with a clear-up rate of 16% and with 1 in 5 Londoners believing they will likely be a victim of street violence in the next twelve months, the Report makes the case that the Met needs to redouble its efforts to reduce the number of robberies in the capital.

The new Commissioner has emphasised that the Met must do more to seek and earn the help of Londoners if it is to cut crime. While this approach is beginning to take root in some areas of work, it needs to be at the heart of the Met's efforts to drive down the level of robberies in the capital. And with hundreds of Londoners starting to use a new community witness appeals initiative each day, the Commissioner should encourage the Met's officers to engage with them and to use the site and so help demonstrate that the Met and its officers are here to serve the public.

In this Report, we recommend that

The Met

1. adds a section to its website encouraging witnesses to come forward, setting out the support they can expect and explaining how they should make contact
2. publishes the criteria by which officers decide to issue witness appeals in robbery cases
3. explains and endeavours to reduce the average 8 week delay between the robbery and the posting of appeals with CCTV images of the culprit
4. aims to publish at least one half of the witness appeals for personal robberies that are issued by police forces nationally
5. provides the same support for witnesses of robberies as it offers witnesses of domestic violence and people with suspicions about terrorism
6. authorises and encourages officers to make use of and promote the community witness appeals service at StreetViolence.org, and
7. runs a media campaign on robbery that reassures the public that their help is wanted, needed and valued.

The Mayor of London - as the UK's first Police and Crime Commissioner - and his Office for Policing and Crime (MOPC) should

1. make the reduction of robberies the key priority when they set the next Policing Plan for London, and
2. ensure the allocation of resources for the Met reflects this priority.

April 2012

You can find out more about the charity and its work at www.witnessconfident.org and about its new service at www.StreetViolence.org