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# The consequences of a target-driven culture within policing

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**From the voices of  
Metropolitan Police officers**

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# Foreword

The Metropolitan Police Federation (MPF) has published this report in response to concerns expressed by our members about the burgeoning and deleterious use of targets as a management tool. A 'target culture' has long been established in the Metropolitan Police Service (MPS), but never before has target-setting been applied with such determination as a supposed means of improving performance.

The MPF sought to clarify the position with the MPS regarding the implementation and use of targets by arranging a meeting with the Deputy Commissioner, Craig Mackey, in November 2012. The issue was of particular concern in light of the developments within New York and the New York Police Department, where we had seen a direct change of political leadership in August 2012, which was largely predicated on the overzealous application of 'Stop and Frisk' legislation. This has been directly linked to the application of the 'Compstat' method of policing and drive to improve statistics by the setting of targets (Eterno & Silverman, 2012<sup>1</sup>). There is evidence from the NYPD that the legitimacy of policing is directly affected, with a loss of public trust and a reduced willingness to co-operate with police (Tyler 2014<sup>2</sup>).

The new emphasis on targets comes at a time of unprecedented change to policing in England and Wales, which is being felt particularly keenly in the MPS. In London, we are witnessing substantial rises in the number of officers who are retiring, transferring to other forces, leaving the Service entirely or taking career breaks – and this at a time when we are already about 2,000 officers short of our target strength and 3,000 below our previous peak level. We are also experiencing rises in sickness and the MPF has raised concerns around the administration of sickness management and the increasing effect of stress upon officers.

The administration of duties and leave is extremely challenging due to restructuring within the MPS and to personnel shortages and is having further adverse effects on our members' well-being.

We therefore believe that the issue of targets has become of critical importance to the organisation and must be urgently addressed. The evidence supplied to us by our members, from the streets and re-iterated in this report by excellent analysis from our commissioned authors, expertly constructs the nuances of this democratic 'voice'. Additionally, we have included a commentary on this report from Simon Guilfoyle, who is a leading British voice on systems thinking and an academic critic of the target-driven culture within policing. He supports this report's findings and warns of the consequences of failing to address them.

We therefore commend this report to our members and the MPS for them to digest and reflect upon in the sincere hope that we can quickly address the plethora of concerns and begin to alter this target culture within our force for the benefit of our members, the force and the wider public of the Metropolis.



**Dennis Weeks**  
**MPF Deputy General Secretary**

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<sup>1</sup> Eterno, J & Silverman, E (2012) *The Crime Numbers Game - Management by manipulation*. New York, *Taylor & Francis Group*.

<sup>2</sup> Tyler, T. (2014) 'Legitimacy and Procedural Justice: A New Element of Police Leadership'. *The Police Executive Research Forum - Newsletter*. 28 (1): 2-7

# Executive summary

- In 2010, the Home Secretary, Theresa May, called for the abolition of targets as a means of measuring performance in policing. Contemporary debates within policing, as well as academic research, confirm the negative effects targets can have.
- In January 2014, the Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) requested evidence of the existence of performance targets within the Service (see annex 4). The Metropolitan Police Federation (MPF) therefore continued to investigate the picture across the MPS.
- The MPF received approximately 250 e-mail responses to a request for members to relate their experiences of targets. These demonstrated the existence of performance targets and the effect they are having on borough policing and individual officers.
- The authors identified five methods that are being used locally to convey the importance of targets to officers. These include individual and team league tables; PDRs; performance meeting minutes; messages to supervisors about top performers based on targets; and advice about how officers might achieve the targets set.
- Nine key themes emerged around the perceived impact that performance targets are having on borough policing and individual officers:
  - **Culture of fear:** Officers report feeling almost continually under threat of being blamed and subsequently punished for failing to hit targets. This culture of fear pervades the borough as a whole, as well as the officers themselves. Three areas particularly concern officers: the use of ‘naming and shaming’; the use of unjust punishments; and the use of action plans which are merely an excuse for yet more targets.
  - **Lack of ownership:** The use of performance targets is seen as a top-down approach that many officers actively disagree with. Officers consequently feel no ownership of the practice and a substantial number feel disengaged. Many report “cutting corners” to meet quotas, which has clear negative effects on both the force and the public. They feel their concerns and reasonable explanations as to why they haven’t hit targets fall on deaf ears and can even be used against them.
  - **Irrelevant and meaningless:** Officers feel some or all performance targets are arbitrary, rendering them valueless and sometimes damaging. Even when performance targets are met, officers feel this is often down to chance. Sanctions, notably action plans, are also seen to be uninformed. Officers perceive targets to be inflexible and to cause discrimination against some individuals.
  - **Unrealistic and unachievable:** Officers report that performance targets are unfeasible, damaging their faith in management, impeding police performance (particularly for complex tasks) and having a negative effect on the public. Officers say they are under pressure to meet unattainable targets, but that none of the above is acknowledged.
  - **Disguise and denial:** There is a strong sense that performance targets are disguised and even denied by management, leaving officers confused and suspicious.
  - **Poor use of resources and officers’ time:** Officers report that target-chasing generates so much extra work that there is insufficient time for normal (and usually more important) duties. Many say they feel anything other than target-meeting work is deemed irrelevant. They add that a huge amount of police time is being wasted, corners are being cut and that both police and public are suffering as a result.

- **Contradicts key policing strategies:** Officers feel there is a huge contradiction between the principles enshrined in key policing strategies – in particular, Total Victim Care – and the use of performance targets. But they feel they are left with no choice but to prioritise the chasing of performance targets.
  - **Low morale:** Low morale in the MPS is already a widely-reported problem and performance targets are clearly exacerbating it. Officers report that, as a direct result of targets, many are taking sick leave or even resigning altogether, which is having repercussions for those who remain. This is a problem across all ranks.
  - **Unethical Behaviour:** Unhealthy and arguably unethical behaviour has become the norm in several boroughs, according to officers, as the end is used to justify the means when it comes to meeting performance targets. These behaviours include figure fiddling and policy breaches, with the result that a huge price is paid by both officers and the public.
- The responses contradict claims by the MPS that there are no targets in the organisation and call into question the MPS's commitment to Total Victim Care or the drive, instigated by MOPAC, to increase public confidence in the police by 20 per cent.
  - Of particular note is officers' sense of injustice, as well as a lack of confidence in organisational strategy. Both these things are known to affect morale and motivation. The responses also show that officers' perceptions of their own role is becoming highly confused as a result of performance targets.
  - These findings in particular have far-reaching implications. First, the sense of injustice and lack of support for the organisation's strategy are both arguably critical to effective and efficient policing. Second, it is known that one of the key drivers of public confidence is fair treatment by their police. Third, the lack of priority currently placed on service delivery as a result of performance targets means there is a wider risk to police legitimacy. Fourth, the recent media interest in this issue means there is a serious reputational risk.

# Methodology

The MPF received approximately 250 e-mail responses to its request. Although this is not statistically representative of members' views across the entire organisation, the responses contain a wealth of detailed evidence of target-setting across entire BOCU teams in the form of league tables and of individual officers being measured against each other by the league table method.

The responses also indicate the extent of officers' frustration at the use of targets, often in extensive detail. Many officers stressed the need for anonymity, such was their fear of speaking out.

# Introduction

When the Home Secretary, Theresa May, took office, she called for the abolition of targets as a means of measuring police performance. Furthermore, there is currently a drive to professionalise policing, by means of, among other things, adopting evidence-based practice and developing officers through higher education and academic qualifications. Also critical to the evolution of policing is research on procedural justice and fair treatment, which has been empirically proven to affect compliance with the law following an encounter with police.

Targets originally entered the police arena in the 1980s as a result of the New Public Management (NPM) agenda being applied to the public sector. This NPM was made manifest within policing by the application of performance indicators, numerical targets, 'league tables', audits and inspections, and the holding to account of individuals for perceived 'poor' performance.

It was believed that such methods would improve accountability, legitimacy and transparency of police performance (Locke and Latham, 2006). However, there is a growing body of evidence that quantitative targets can actually impede performance, especially in complex environments such as policing (Loveday, 2006). Further evidence suggests they can promote unethical and dysfunctional behaviour, such as the falsification of data. The quality of service provided to the public and victims of crime can be affected, too (Guilfoyle, 2013).

Additionally, anecdotal evidence (which is confirmed in this report) and research currently being conducted by the MPF suggests that morale can be affected by the use of targets. Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary's survey of senior police leaders found that they considered staff morale the biggest future threat to performance.

Recently, there has been much in the news about the use of targets. The Mirror published an article about stop and search which prompted the MPS to issue a statement asserting that it had no targets for this activity or for arrests.

The Guardian published an article about data manipulation and its impact on recording of rape and other sexual offences.

Even before this media interest, concerns had been raised with the MPF about targets being endemic in the MPS, both at a BOCU and OCU level. In December 2013, the Federation asked members to forward their experiences the use of targets in their departments (annex 1). It made a further request in February 2014 (annex 2).

It has long been the Federation's contention that target culture is not conducive to good quality police work and is negatively affecting our members in terms of development opportunities, stress levels and morale. The responses we received have strengthened this view.

This report outlines the key issues identified in the responses, both in relation to the types of targets officers are being asked to achieve and their perceptions of the effects of targets on them personally and on their work.

# Targets: the current picture

The e-mails contained a plethora of detail about targets involving a range of police activities. The bulk were for stop and searches, arrests, requests for CRIMINTs and sanctioned detections.

The main 'tools' used to apply and operate targets, as well as enforce officers' compliance are, as evidenced by the responses (there are examples of all of the below in annex 5):

- **Individual PDRs**
- **League tables for both teams and individual officers**
- **OCU/BOCU performance meeting minutes, where targets are set for department and subsequently for individual roles and ranks**
- **Targets for specific operations including TSG carrier targets (e.g. 100 stops to be conducted before the carrier is dismissed**
- **Messages to supervisors stressing they should make maximum use of officers who regularly featured at the top of league tables to ensure department/unit targets are reached**
- **Detail from supervisors about how officers might achieve targets (including 'selling' different classifications of detections to offenders to facilitate achieving the BOCU target).**

There is sufficient evidence of PDRs regularly containing nothing but targets as performance objectives. As such, this ignores officers' development needs and recognition of quality work outside of target-achievement.

The following statement accompanied an e-mail to staff about officers' positions in a league table: *'I have organised them into columns, if you are at the top you are the NUTS, if you are at the bottom you are POO!'*

# Implications in officers' own words

## Culture of Fear

***“The Met polices its own organisation through fear at the moment”***

There is evidence of a persistent and growing culture of fear spawned by the vigorous and often draconian application of performance targets, with many officers reporting that they feel almost constantly under threat of being blamed and subsequently punished for failing to hit targets.

In most cases, the threat hangs over the entire borough, as well as individual officers. There are examples of e-mails sent by management teams to all the officers within a borough about the results of league tables, incorporating threats of reprimands if management believed the borough did not rank high enough.

Many officers report that it has become the norm to expose any perceived ‘poor performers’ and single them out for special attention, a practice that is leaving many individuals feeling unnerved and anxious. One officer points to an e-mail that he and his colleagues received from management in response to their December statistics: *“It is still clear who is working and who isn’t!! A couple of you may be spoken to soon regarding your figures – be warned!”*

The practice of divulging the names of those who are perceived to be hitting the fewest targets is particularly concerning. *“Every month we are named and shamed with a league table by our supervisors, which does seem very bullying/overbearing,”* says one officer.

*“Currently, a PowerPoint presentation is circulated monthly to the supervisors of Neighbourhood Policing Teams, showing the strongest and weakest performers,”* says another. *“I believe this is a way to name and shame people, when it comes to lack of arrests and stop and searches.”*

One officer was told she couldn’t attend a career development course because of the borough’s poor rankings. *“At the moment I am not authorising any courses for the team, nor will I be endorsing any applications until the figures improve dramatically. This applies to the whole team and not just you,”* the e-mail from management stated.

Most officers who continue to fall below targets say they are put on action plans, but many report that these are merely an opportunity for further reproach, which only increases their sense of feeling overwhelmed and fearful of consequences. *“Unless we have achieved our target, we get put on IMA’s and Action Plans and this in turn puts more stress and strain on people,”* explains one officer. *“People have had enough!! The management take, take and take some more. We have NOTHING left to give.”*

## Lack of ownership

***“I never signed the action plan as I have never agreed with the figures game”***

Officers perceive performance targets as a top-down management practice on which they have never been consulted. Coupled with the fact that so many of them actively disagree with its usage, it’s little wonder that they feel no ownership of the practice or, worse, that they feel almost entirely disengaged from it.

Even when officers voice their concerns or provide reasonable explanations for a failure to hit certain targets, they rarely feel listened to. *“I have been spoken to on several occasions in relation to not achieving my daily, weekly or monthly target by my line manager,”* reports one officer. *“Each time I have provided adequate and reasonable explanation for not achieving the targets, such as not enough work of the type which counts towards targets to go round, dealing with protracted investigation, dealing with other matters such as lost property which isn’t measured by the SLT. But each time I’ve been told by my supervisor that these explanations are not taken into account by the SLT.”*

*‘I believe this  
a way to  
name and  
shame  
people’*

Advocates of performance targets claim they help managers understand how the system is performing, thereby allowing them to improve it in the longer term. But not one officer reported that this is happening. Conversely, they spoke of “cutting corners” and “speed reporting” having become prevalent in order to meet quotas. “[This] does little to garner any support or trust from the very victims we’re legally obliged to provide a duty of care to,” admits one officer. “But, sadly, this method is being used by more and more staff here to meet the burdening performance figures.”

The officer adds that this has taken its toll on the department as a whole and that sick leave is widespread. “The issue has been raised time and time again by the workforce in briefings and highlighted that ‘how are we supposed to reach our targets when there is not enough target-oriented work to go round?’ and ‘certain reports/allegations are going to take longer than others’. It is impossible to achieve quality and quantity at the same time but the message continually falls on deaf ears.”

Much research demonstrates that police officers spend only a minority of their time catching criminals and making arrests. With this in mind, officers’ quotes about there not being “enough” work further shows how the use of performance targets is skewed and does not reflect the reality of police work.

Some officers and staff feel that to criticise the use of performance targets, even slightly, carries risks. “I have an ongoing issue re: a complaint I put in, which was essentially ignored and as a result of my confronting the management of the unit over unethical practices, find myself regularly scrutinised above and beyond.”

## **Irrelevant and meaningless**

***“Some [measures] are of compete irrelevance as they can never be met, but there is still a drive to fix them. This then forces others to amend things so they appear to be achieving.”***

There is a strong sense among officers that some or all performance targets are arbitrary. Many report that as a result of them seeming to be subjective and uninformed, they can feel illogical, nonsensical and consequently futile and ineffective.

“The measurement of disruption of OCN or OCGs is a particularly meaningless statistical gathering exercise,” says one officer. “Firstly, an OCN/OCG is classified as two or more people involved in a similar crime. Secondly, the decision to award the sliding scale of disruption is made by a panel of police officers which is so subjective as to be almost worthless. It is not required for the Home Office and as a measurement of effort of crime fighting is sadly pointless.”

Even when performance targets are met, there is acknowledgement that a strong element of chance is involved. One officer reports receiving the following e-mail from above: “Attached are the figures for January. We’re 3rd for arrests and 2nd for stops!! How did that happen!!? Good work everyone.” If nobody knows how it happened, how can it be repeated?

Sanctions against officers who fail to meet targets do nothing to help. Particularly strong views emerge around action plans. “Somewhere in the region of 25-30 per cent of staff here are now on action plans,” explains one officer. “From what I have seen of them, these plans have neither a plan nor any discernible action in them. ‘Do more crime reports’ is a demand, not an action plan.”

Performance targets are inflexible and do not reflect the real world of policing, officers report. “There is no account taken where there is a lack of work relevant to targets or the number of calls that are dealt with do not result in a CRIS report (words of advice, calls sent back for deployment) or for quality of records completed,” says one officer who works in CRIB.

Some officer’s feel unfairly discriminated against. “My PDR has set targets regarding the number of CRIS reports that I should record within an hour while working in CRIB at ESB,” says one officer. “The target was obtained using a formula which the management admitted discriminated against people that work, as I did then, 10-hour shifts, as opposed to the formula used for staff who work 8-hour shifts due to refreshment break entitlements on a 10-hour shift not being taking into account.”

One officer who was asked to review various issues and processes where the borough was being

***‘It’s impossible to achieve quantity and quality at the same time’***

performance-measured, says: *“I was astounded at the levels of performance targets within this field that I was asked to look at to try and improve performance. I have to say it beggars belief how we get any cases to court.”*

Several officers believe that, ironically, the very areas which could benefit from targets don't have them. *“There are a number of targets they could measure that are meaningful i.e. customer satisfaction,”* says one. *“They have showed them as measures but are unable to come up with a method to measure them. The other obvious one is how many incidents/threats/deaths that our principals have been involved in, but this not mentioned in our performance. This seems bizarre as this is our core job.”*

*‘To best of my knowledge, the three-per-month figure was plucked from the air’*

## **Unrealistic and unachievable**

***“Many of us are struggling to meet these demanding and, quite frankly, unrealistic targets”***

Performance targets are often justified as enhancing management responsibility, motivating workers and fostering public accountability. But many officers claim that they do just the opposite. Many of the targets, they say, are unachievable and that this causes a lack of faith in management, impedes police performance – particularly for complex tasks – and has a negative effect on the public.

Anything less than 100 per cent success in achieving targets is branded as failure. *“Only today, one of the Inspectors was on parade stating that anyone not meeting any of their targets can expect a chat with their Sergeants to explain themselves. And this can be if you are lacking in just one area. From a personal point of view, I have had no problem of hitting the tickets and seizures, but drink drivers and disqual are becoming increasingly elusive. My lack of numbers in these areas is not for the want of trying and it seems that most are struggling with these arrests.”*

Particularly frustrating to officers is management's deaf ear to problems. Another officer explains: *“The targets are not even achievable if the officers on the LPT dealt with every single investigation/call. The fact that the targets are not achievable has been highlighted but so far no recognition of the fact has been forthcoming.”*

Many officers believe the unattainable nature of targets is an inevitable result of them being so arbitrary. One officer explains: *“X has set up an unachievable target for ALL LPT officers – three sanction detections per month. Even if the 24 LPT officers take responsibility for every single sanction detection and none are taken by the response teams (who also have SD targets) we can still only get 2.71 SDs per officer, and when the other teams have had their bite we are fighting for around one each. Officers are then called to account for not achieving the mythical three per officer and told that they are underperforming and that it is not good enough. To the best of my knowledge, the ‘three per month’ was a figure plucked from the air by DCI X.”*

Unsurprisingly, many officers feel pressured. *“I am finding my role here to be increasingly more pressured as unrealistic and over-demanding performance figures are set upon us as an individual and a department. I am expected to record at least 11 CRIS reports within my 10-hour shift – a target which is virtually impossible to achieve.”*

## **Disguise and denial**

***“We do not have targets, we have ‘expectations’ that the officers and staff are expected to reach”***

***“I have becoming very frustrated of late of the pressure being put on teams in the NPT to get figures (even though they apparently do not exist)”***

Officers believe target-setting is sometimes camouflaged and occasionally its existence is even denied by management. This leaves many feeling confused about what's expected of them and suspicious of the role targets play. After all, if management won't acknowledge they exist, what does that say about them?

*'People have even taken it upon themselves to come to work early and leave late'*

In one borough, officers have been told that there are no targets, just “expectations” that they should meet. In a second, officers and staff are given “unwritten targets.” In a third borough, staff and officers received an e-mail from management stating: “Whilst there are no ‘performance targets’ any more in the MPS, no set numbers of any particular thing you are required to achieve, the Service is still allowed to see what work is being done and assess whether we are performing to an acceptable standard.” There then follows a list of 10 areas in which officers’ and staff’s performance will be assessed – in other words, they have been given targets.

Even where the targets are clear for all to see, there is often a perception of denial by management. *“I currently work in CRIB,”* says one officer. *“We are forever being bombarded with figures and targets. Then, when the issue is raised with SLT, they say it’s all about customer service and satisfaction. Even though they set the targets. When asked for the SLT to put it in an e-mail that there are no targets, they refuse.”*

This apparent obfuscation over target-setting appears baffling to all ranks. Indeed, there is e-mail evidence of requests for advice from the Federation about the setting of targets at a local level from people in a variety of roles. This perplexity should not be surprising, given that the authors of this report have also briefly reviewed the Commissioner’s Forum and the responses to specific questions about targets are not definitive. Indeed, they are confusing.

### **Poor use of resources and officers’ time**

***“Whatever you do in a day, and no matter how hard you work doing other things, the reality is: you are judged on the arrests and detections that you have”***

***“I work flat out now 10 hours a day without breaks to try and complete my quota”***

Performance targets are generating so much extra work for officers and staff that they regularly feel constrained from performing their normal duties, which many believe are now deemed irrelevant by management. This is particularly pertinent given that police officers, in an age of austerity, are being expected to do more with less.

*“People are being actively discouraged by Sergeants to deal with anything other than offences that count towards our targets,”* says one officer. *“This means that officers are ‘letting things go’ in preference to other offences. I have heard of people now failing to issue FPNs for no MOT or for tinted windows, for example.”*

Another says: *“Often, crimes which are reported on-line (HOLON) or via the CHS system do not result in crime reports and one can be on the phone for a long period of time whilst offering the caller advice, information or perhaps a civil remedy, etc. All this takes time but this does not appear to be taken into consideration.”*

Many of the officers spoke of feeling they have to “rush” through reports to meet targets. *“This is counter-productive to a thorough telephone investigation and does not give adequate victim care but it is the only way to meet the punishing target we have to achieve. I am aware that everyone on the department rushes through their reports in fear that they, too, may fall behind on their targets.”*

One officer reflects the a commonly-held view that quantity is now deemed more important than quality: *“My team Inspector requests that all Police Constables produce at least two arrests per month, regardless of what they are for. He prefers quantity rather than quality, eg 5 x tom carders, immigration or begging rather than one or two quality arrest for money laundering. This is disgruntling, when officers spend time obtaining an arrest warrant and/or plan a multi-agency operation with a preventative approach.”*

Another explains: *“One PC was talking about a call he went to regarding an allegation of “using a kettle without permission” in a flat with a communal kitchen. Without going into detail, there was no offence and the ‘victim’ should have been told to grow up or charged with wasting police time. Because the allegation was part of the BOCU’s performance indicator, that PC had to spend two hours of his shift dealing with this until his supervisor was satisfied it could be resulted as a clear up!”*

Extra hours are often required for officers and staff to achieve their targets. *“People have even taken it upon themselves to come to work early and leave late in order for them to get their numbers on,”*

says one officer.

Another says he received the following e-mail from management: *“Myself, X, X and X do not want to give people extra weeks of night duty to enable them to hit their drink-drive target, nor do we want to go down the line of a daily return of work to us which will be required on an e-mail timed at 3pm, 11pm and 6am. However, this will be the course of action should we be in the same position after the first two weeks of February. Please look at your own individual DDT and focus on any shortfall. There is little point, for instance, in continuing to do danger FPNs if you already have that target but are short on others.”*

This is having an impact not only on staff, but on the public too, as an officer points out: *“Officers and staff have been known to attend work 1.5 hours early to ensure they have put on their ‘quota’. Members of staff don’t often take breaks. This bullying-type culture ensures that staff members ‘cherry pick’ jobs. Members of the public are not provided with a quality service as a result... The problem is that our management seem to be under the impression that it doesn’t take any time to do.”*

All this is taking its toll on officers and staff. One officer highlights an instruction that every borough should execute eight warrants targeting persons linked to gangs. *“To throw out a specific amount with no additional intelligence puts undue pressure on the officer(s) who have to meet that target.”*

## **Is at variance with key policing strategies**

***“How can we give victims the expected/deserved level of care when we are constantly being looked at to see how many CRIS reports we have put on?”***

It has already been highlighted that many officers feel they have to rush through their work to meet their targets, often at the expense of other duties that they believe would better serve the public. Indeed, many officers feel strongly that meeting seemingly endless targets prevents them from providing adequate victim care and is consequently inimical to the wider values of modern policing – notably, Total Victim Care. But since it is the only way to meet the targets, they feel they have no choice.

*“We are meant to be a Service that is dedicated and prides itself on Total Victim Care,”* says one officer. *“How can we give victims the expected/deserved level of care when we are constantly being looked at to see how many CRIS reports we have put on? We just don’t have the time to investigate properly. Management in the CRIB only care about CRIS numbers at the end of the day. They do not take into consideration all the other aspects of our work, namely Action Fraud, 99 (Lost Property), Crimints etc. Even though we as a unit have brought this to their attention, which they have completely ignored.”*

Another officer says: *“It has been drummed into us (from day one) by the senior management at CRIB that our performance is based on the number of crime reports which are created by an individual officer. They do not appear to take into account any other kind of report which is created. This often results in bad feeling among the staff and added stress to the staff who are having to rush a crime report to achieve their individual quota of crime reports. To me this would seem to go against the Commissioner’s Total Victim Care policy (as one is not spending enough time talking to victims). I wholeheartedly agree with this [Total Victim Care] policy but often feel pressured to finish the call without going that ‘extra mile’ for the victim.”*

It’s not just the wider values of the police that officers and staff feel performance targets contradict, as one staff member explains: *“As Financial Investigators, we are now being asked to complete at least two restraints per officer. The power to restrain someone’s, generally unconvicted, assets is extremely draconian, and we are told it is to be used sparingly. Legislation also advises this and Court of Appeal legislation R V Jennings 2006 also warns that extreme care should be taken, yet our SLT want these to be used as a performance target.”*

***‘We just don’t have the time to investigate properly’***

## **Low morale**

***“[This] is a very unhappy environment at the moment”***

Many officers and staff report that they are working under extreme pressure and against

unrealistic time constraints to try and meet targets. Not surprisingly, this is seriously sapping morale – at a time when morale is already widely reported to be a major problem within the police.

There are several instances of officers and staff taking sick leave, which also has a deleterious effect on their peers: “[*This*] is a very unhappy environment at the moment... People are downtrodden and constantly targeted, rest days cancelled to cover long-term sick, etc,” says one officer.

Some people are even leaving the Force as a result. “Some colleagues have taken the drastic step of resigning from the Service,” reports another officer. “These are officers with 10 or more years’ experience that have just had enough of the constant stress/pressure placed upon them.”

One officer fears that the pressure could have fatal consequences. “We have had two deaths in our office in recent months, believed to be stress-related. Surely this cannot be a co-incidence?” he asks.

The officer adds that their borough has a particularly high level of sickness. “This is in no small part due to the targets and constant brow-beating by SLT. Officers/staff who are genuinely off on sick leave are being pressured to come back to work early and are constantly phoned by management to see when they will return.”

It’s not just those in the lower ranks who are affected, as one officer explains: “Morale is low due to the constant pressure for achieving targets... Overall, it doesn’t seem to matter what type of officer you are i.e. number of complaints (or lack of), how you are as a person, if you try your best... all it comes down to is what boxes you manage to tick. This all seems very wrong and demoralising. It also causes people unnecessary worry, including not wanting to come to work and seems to affect those in rank too, who are also under pressure from above to get us to achieve.”

The MPS staff survey (2012) found that officer morale is strongly influenced by people’s perceptions of the fairness with which they are treated. This is pertinent to the e-mails the MPF received from officers involved in particular specialist roles (e.g. schools officers) who were expected to meet generic arrest targets set for all individuals at their rank across the BOCU despite this being patently impossible.

For some officers, the workplace is a world away from what they had been told policing was about: “We are all coming into the work office at X police station and squabbling over who has an arrest planned, who has been storing contacts up to be arrested, etc. The schools office is now very cunning, sneaky and very low in morale... if the public knew the Police Service had to arrest by numbers rather than crimes, there would be a national outcry, and as an officer with over 20 years’ service, this was not how I believed policing would go when I first joined.”

‘There are officers of 10 or more years’ experience who have just had enough of the constant stress’

## **Unethical behaviour**

**“Figure fiddling is... rife”**

**“It is a hot bed of policy breaches and you would be able to get some really very damning information from the unit”**

Arguably unethical – and certainly questionable – behaviour is reported to have become entrenched in several boroughs, as the end is used to justify the means when it comes to meeting performance targets.

“We are set individual targets of four arrests per month and 10 stop and searches,” says one officer. “There should be at least one positive stop and search per month (ie leading to arrest), and there is also the ‘suggestion’ that should you be called to an incident, perhaps stop and search them first or whilst investigating the incident (obviously that is a serious breach of procedure and law) in order to get a search figure.”

Another reports: “As I type, I am listening to my personal radio and can hear a unit saying that they are on their way to an ‘S’ graded call and that they will not be able to make the charter time, as they are a little way off. The inspector has then asked for a unit to pass the location and to TOA as they pass, so that the charter time is not missed. How is this acceptable? Surely this falsely shows that response teams can deal with the volume of calls that come through, when in reality they can’t.”

Another explains, “We are subject to a requirement of 1.3 crime reports per hour. Subsequently, having constantly increased the requirements for investigation (such as additional risk assessments, CCTV enquiries, etc) the amount required has not changed. As a result of this, it is estimated that approx 40 per cent of staff on the floor (including myself) have been subject to an action plan requiring an improvement to be made over a period of three months. I do not feel this is a realistic way of measuring productivity as some reports will undoubtedly take longer than others and, overall, this has harboured resentment towards colleagues who have adopted more inventive work practices to achieve these figures.”

Where management denies the use of performance targets, questionable working practices can be particularly rife, according to this officer: “An aspect I have encountered is management denial. I have witnessed first hand a discussion amongst two DIs and a DCI regarding an allegation. Their first reaction was to look at reasons not to investigate and the second was trying to no-crime the allegation. There is also a regular ‘get-out’ clause where an allegation is reported on one BOCU that may have originated on another. In order to keep the figures down, a BOCU will refuse to take the allegation on in order to show there is ‘no crime’.”

*‘I do not think this is a realistic way of measuring productivity’*

## Conclusion

The responses to the MPF’s request for evidence about targets refute claims that there are no such things in the MPS (see annex 4). Furthermore, these responses are compelling and vividly highlight officers’ sense of injustice about targets as a method of performance measurement, both at a team and individual level.

This is of particular concern to the authors in view of the recent analysis of the MPS Staff Survey (2012) which revealed that having a sense of organisational justice – particularly fairness – drives morale, job satisfaction and motivation among officers and staff.

Further outputs of higher morale include officers advocating the organisation externally and being supportive of the organisation’s strategic plans and vision. The latter was also found in this report to be lacking among officers when it comes to performance targets.

Both are arguably critical to effective and efficient policing. Other research suggests that low morale can harm police performance and output, which saps public support and confidence in police<sup>1</sup>.

Our report finds that the use of targets is also affecting officers’ perceptions of their own role and is leading to confusion about what they are expected to deliver. This is concerning, given the drive for Total Victim Care and MOPAC’s target of an increase of 20 per cent in public confidence in London’s police. The MPS confidence model (2010) shows that one of the key drivers of public confidence is fair treatment and this is therefore further evidence that the impact of performance targets extends well beyond the officers themselves to the wider public.

The lack of priority currently placed on service delivery, and the report’s evidence about certain targets negatively impacting on this, means there is also a wider fundamental risk concerning police legitimacy. Indeed, procedural justice research<sup>2</sup> has found that belief in police legitimacy is hugely influential on individuals who come into contact with the police in terms of their complying with the law.

Given the recent media interest in this issue and the Home Affairs Select Committee’s focus on crime data, there is a serious risk of this information receiving a significant amount of negative attention on a national level. Therefore reputational risk is potentially a real issue.

Although all of these themes identified have been explored separately, there is inevitable overlap between them, and the issues are not mutually exclusive, nor are the implications.

The issues raised in this report therefore have far-reaching implications.

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<sup>1</sup> Chatterton & Bingham, 2006 <sup>2</sup> Jackson et al, 2013



# MPF Targets report comment

I have been asked to comment upon the Metropolitan Police Federation's report '*The Consequences of a Target-Driven Culture within Policing – From the 'Voice' of Metropolitan Police Officers*'. I do so as an independent subject matter expert, published author and university lecturer – the views expressed are therefore not made on behalf of any organisation. My response draws upon academic research, established literature and a broad range of evidence, including my ongoing PhD studies into UK police performance management and how it can be developed.

The evidence presented in the report is consistent with the type of target-driven performance management practices and associated outcomes observed elsewhere in the literature. Practices such as pitting officers against each other in league tables and designating arbitrary numerical targets for arrests, detections, or stop checks, for example, are known to give rise to dysfunctional and potentially unethical behaviour. The same applies for team level, divisional level and organisational level percentage targets, such as those cited within the report.

Evidence regarding the outcomes associated with target-driven performance management suggests that adverse behavioural change is a highly predictable consequence; it is also known to have a harmful impact on workforce well-being, morale, and in some cases, may even damage individuals' psychological welfare. Numerical targets also have the effect of triggering a myopic focus towards those activities subject to the targets, leaving other important aspects of operational activity exposed and thereby increasing risk.

Furthermore, as focus shifts towards attaining the targets, effects on the system can include a decrease in efficiency and productivity, whilst waste and skewed activity increases. This results in capacity being absorbed unnecessarily, as well as a loss of clarity around organisational purpose. Notably, there is no accepted scientifically rigorous method for setting a numerical target and no effective technique for preventing the unintended consequences that have been shown to ensue.

In my opinion, the antidote to the well-documented deficiencies and risks of target-driven performance management is simple. Numerical targets and associated counter-productive practices should be removed, thereby instantly realising capacity and restoring focus on organisational purpose. A more mature and sophisticated approach to measurement (for example, the use of Statistical Process Control charts to interpret data) may then supplant the target-driven approach. This enables leaders to make considered decisions without being influenced by perverse incentives; it also encourages greater transparency and accountability.

There are opportunities within the Police Service today to recognise and move beyond the toxic effects of target-driven performance management, replacing it with a fresh approach that fosters greater comprehension of organisational information, without the unintended side effects. The message is that performance measurement is absolutely critical, but it needs to be done differently. Supplanting target-driven performance management with a systems-oriented approach would not only remove the catalysts for dysfunctional behaviour, but also realise additional benefits by encouraging experiential learning, continuous improvement and a more efficient, effective and legitimate service.

**Simon Guilfoyle**

*March 2014*

# Annexes

## Annex 1: Federation request for target evidence

JEC Circular Number: 90-13

JEC Office Ref: 1585

16th December 2013

To: All Representatives

Colleagues

### **Performance Target - Evidence request**

I am appealing for all Federation members to assist us in gathering evidence on the issue of targets in policing. You will all be aware that recently this issue has been raised in the public domain through a Parliamentary committee and other stories circulating within the press. The Metropolitan Police Federation has had significant concerns for some time around this issue of the use and directions given, when targets are used in policing.

I have been collating some examples of these, having requested them from representative colleagues over the last few months, which have been helpful. However, I am aware that there are many more examples within our force. I have now raised this issue with the Deputy Commissioner, who has agreed to look into the wider issue of targets and the MPS approach and direction. We hope that this review will be purposeful and produce a better position for all colleagues across the MPS.

In order to assist the Deputy Commissioner in this task we would like to present evidence of what colleagues are receiving in the form of targets in their roles. Please can I therefore request that any evidence of this is sent into our office for my attention on the following email address [jecenquiries@metfed.org.uk](mailto:jecenquiries@metfed.org.uk) or by post to:

Metropolitan Police Federation  
York House,  
Elmfield Park,  
Bromley,  
Kent  
BR1 1LU

This call for evidence will be open until the 20th January 2014. After this date we will not require any further evidence at this stage. Any officer with concerns generally around targets can discuss these with their local representatives who can raise this within the Federation structure where required.

Thank you for your support.

**Dennis Weeks**

**MPF Deputy General Secretary**

## Annex 2: Federation statement following the media reporting

Colleagues

As many of you will be aware, the Metropolitan Police Federation has been asking officers to help us collate evidence of a target culture that we believe is widespread within the MPS.

This request followed me raising the issue of targets with the Deputy Commissioner in December 2013 and the purpose of obtaining the proof is simple. We believe that the use of targets is corroding good policing and inappropriately affecting our members. As such, we intend to produce the redacted evidence to the MPS Management Board for further discussions.

We do not make this statement lightly and rely on good and substantial evidence across other public services in this country, as well as in other countries in the civilised world.

In particular, we point to the Police Service in New York, which has been under considerable scrutiny and criticism for its approach to policing through the so called 'Compstat' system that drives a constant target performance culture. Whistleblowing incidents have seen a number of officers disclose the severity of the drive to chase targets and the inappropriate actions that are unfortunately spurred by doing so.

ACPO President Sir Hugh Orde, who acknowledges the dangers of pursuing a target-driven performance culture, has suggested the need for further understanding of these dangers in UK forces.

Moreover, it is worth noting that when the current Home Secretary took office, she stated there was only one aim and that was to cut crime and she therefore called for an end to targets within policing.

The media has also highlighted disclosures around policing targets and the inherent dangers that potentially follow, in particular around stop and search.

We believe there are other ways to monitor and encourage performance that do not risk the reputation of individuals and the organisation, but instead drive good policing delivery across the full spectrum of policing needs.

West Midlands Police officer Simon Guilfoyle describes some of these ways in his book 'Intelligent Policing'. On his website <http://inspguilfoyle.wordpress.com/>, you can read his simple explanations of his theory that he claims he tried and tested as a neighbourhood inspector. He can also be followed on twitter @simonjguilfoyle.

Tellingly, one of our own senior officers recently responded to a blog by Inspector Guilfoyle about his theory by tweeting, "Why does this make such sense, but I'm always enticed to do the opposite". The comment highlights the extent to which targets have become entwined in our culture.

This will take significant will and understanding to change and whilst I am grateful that the Management Board of the Deputy Commissioner and AC Byrne are willing to discuss and review this, the officer's comment reveals we have a lot of convincing and demonstrating to do to bring about real change.

We believe that if change is forthcoming, it will improve officers' working environment and will improve performance in the longer term. We believe that the substantial evidence on these matters will prove our points on your behalf and would recommend that all officers have a read of Inspector Guilfoyle's work and judge for yourselves as there is another way for us all to succeed in delivering good policing.

**Dennis Weeks**

**JEC Deputy General Secretary**

### **Annex 3: Follow up request for evidence**

Colleagues

As many of you will be aware, the Metropolitan Police Federation has been receiving evidence both orally and by e-mail of a target culture that we believe is widespread within the MPS.

This follows me raising the issue of targets with the Deputy Commissioner in December 2013 and

the purpose of collating the proof is simple. We believe the use of targets is not necessarily conducive to good policing and is inappropriately affecting our members. As such, we intend to produce the redacted evidence to the MPS Management Board for further discussions.

We do not make this statement lightly and rely on good and substantial evidence across other public services in this country, as well as in other countries.

When the current Home Secretary took office, she stated there was only one aim and that was to cut crime and she therefore called for an end to targets within policing. The media has also highlighted disclosures around policing targets and the inherent dangers that potentially follow.

We believe there are other ways to monitor and encourage performance that do not risk the reputation of individuals and the organisation, but instead drive good policing delivery across the full spectrum of policing needs.

I am aware that the Deputy Commissioner and AC Byrne are willing to discuss and review any evidence we present to them.

We believe that if change is forthcoming as a result, it will improve officers working environment and will improve performance in the longer term. We believe that the substantial evidence on these matters will prove our points on your behalf.

**Dennis Weeks**  
**JEC Deputy General Secretary**

#### **Annex 4: MPS response to Sunday Mirror article**

##### **Met responds to stop and search target claims 28.01.14**

The Sunday Mirror published an article on Sunday, 26 January which claimed that the Met sets officers targets for stop and search and for arrests.

The Met issued a response to this which made it clear that there are no individual targets for stop and search or for arrests.

Our approach to stop and search seeks to ensure that we use stop and search powers in a more focused way and that when we do, we are more likely to have a positive outcome.

While the Met has corporate targets for crime reduction, there are no individual targets set for officers or boroughs to achieve. The only objective that has been defined relates to the outcome we expect following a stop and search being conducted. In short, this means we aim for 20% of all stop and searches to result in an arrest.

This is already being exceeded in eight of our boroughs, with Merton achieving an arrest rate of 24.1% from stop and search in December 2013. The overall arrest rate for the Met from stop and search was 17% in the same month.

Having listened to community representatives and reference groups, we do however set expectations for the types of crime which stop and search should be tackling. As such, our focus is on dealing with crimes that cause the public most concern. Therefore, we would expect that 20% of all stop and search should target weapons, 40% should target neighbourhood crimes (also known as the MOPAC 7 priority crime types), and 40% should address local issues (which may include drugs related matters).

Despite the media reports this weekend, the Met has been presented with no evidence of officers being set targets for stop and search or for the number of people they are expected to arrest.

The Met is subject to regular scrutiny by groups such as the Community Monitoring Network, along with the Independent Police Complaints Commission, in order to ensure that powers are applied with

honesty and integrity. Each borough commander must also justify their officers' use of the tactic to a local stop and search panel.

ACTP Simon Byrne said: "There have been a number of concerns raised both internally and in the media recently about the setting of personal targets for stop and search and for arrests.

"A key plank of our 'Total War on Crime' is using legislation and tactics that work, as audaciously as we can to put criminals on the back foot.

"Whilst I make no apologies for a strong emphasis on raising standards and on our service to Londoners, I am very clear that this should not be translated into setting personal numeric targets for officers and staff.

"Performance improvement is always more than a hunt for numbers and we need to take a rounded view of how individuals behave that is consistent with our values rather than random performance targets."

Should officers or anyone else have any examples of such targets being set, or details of officers being disciplined for failing to meet them, we will review the circumstances. The Met cannot be any clearer on this matter. We do not set officers targets for how they apply their powers of arrest and stop and search. These can only be used at the discretion of the officer based on the circumstances they face when responding to operational matters.

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 safer.

### **Annex 5 – E-mailed evidence of the methods used to deliver messages about targets**

#### **Message from supervisor regarding using the 'prolific searchers' to meet stop and search targets**

All, I have e-mailed you because you are the 1st or 2nd line managers of one of the boroughs top 10 searchers (over the last 3 months).

Our targets for stop and search are a 20% arrest rate with 20% of searches for weapons, 40% for neighbourhood (property) crime, leaving no more than 40% for drugs. Clearly how well (or poorly) our most prolific searchers do will have a huge impact on reaching these targets.

#### **OBSERVATIONS (AND I APPRECIATE THESE ARE VERY SWEEPING)**

[name] - Arrest rate is below 10% and 100% of searches are for drugs. Needs to improve arrest rate and not be so reliant on drugs searches.

[name] - Arrest rate a bit low (13%) but very high proportion for weapons and very few for drugs is helping the borough's figures.

[name] - Arrests rate OK (18%) and his very high proportion for N'Hood crimes and low proportion for drugs is helping the borough's figures.

[name] - Fantastic arrests rate (46%). Good proportion for weapons. Slightly high for drugs but with his arrest rate it can be forgiven.

[name] - Very low arrest rate (4%) and over 80% of her searches are for drugs. Needs to improve arrest rate and not be so reliant on drugs searches.

[name] - Arrest rate is below 10% and 80% of searches are for drugs. Needs to improve arrest rate and not be so reliant on drugs searches.

[name] - Very low arrest rate (4%). A good proportion for N'Hood crimes and drugs a little high. Needs to improve arrest rate.

[name] - Arrest rate is OK (18%) but over 95% of searches are for drugs. Needs to be less reliant on drug searches.

[name] - Zero arrests and over 80% of searches for drugs. Needs to improve arrest rate and not be so reliant on drugs searches.

[name] - Arrest rate is low (5%) and 100% of searches are for drugs. Needs to improve arrest rate and not be so reliant on drugs searches.

*Can you provide suitable feedback to our most prolific searchers so we drive our stop and search activity towards the targets?*

**League table of officers (names removed) highlighting amounts of arrests and stops conducted**

| <u>Arrests</u> |   |  | <u>Stops</u> |   |  |
|----------------|---|--|--------------|---|--|
|                |   |  |              |   |  |
| Name           | 6 |  | Name         | 8 |  |
|                | 5 |  |              | 8 |  |
|                | 4 |  |              | 7 |  |
|                | 4 |  |              | 7 |  |
|                | 4 |  |              | 7 |  |
|                | 4 |  |              | 6 |  |
|                | 4 |  |              | 6 |  |
|                | 3 |  |              | 5 |  |
|                | 3 |  |              | 5 |  |
|                | 3 |  |              | 5 |  |
|                | 3 |  |              | 5 |  |
|                | 3 |  |              | 5 |  |
|                | 3 |  |              | 4 |  |
|                | 2 |  |              | 3 |  |
|                | 2 |  |              | 3 |  |
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|                                     |  |
|-------------------------------------|--|
| <b>Team</b>                         | Problem Solving Team 2   |
| <b>Date &amp; Time</b>              | 16th November 2011, 16:00  |
| <b>Chaired By</b>                   |  |
| <b>Persons Present</b>              |  |
| <b>Apologies</b>                    |  |
| <b>Team Objectives</b>              | <p><i>“Working in partnership and with community support, to make xxxx a safer place to live, work, worship and study in for all residents, businesses and communities.”</i></p> <p>The police priorities will be as follows:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Tackling drug crime &amp; disorder</li> <li>2. Focus on illegal and badly run premises</li> <li>3. Improving XXX public realm &amp; reputation</li> <li>4. Tackling ASB &amp; enviro-crime</li> <li>5. Develop partnership work to tackle illegal immigration</li> </ol> <p>From these police priorities the team objectives are as follows:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Run regular proactive patrols and operations to detect, deter and prevent drugs offences.</li> <li>2. Gather intelligence using the Crimint + system on criminal activity.</li> <li>3. Support partnership days with xxx council targeting illegal and badly run premises.</li> <li>4. Focus on reducing the number of street prostitutes in xxx by supporting them into treatment, using cautions &amp; arrests, arresting known offenders (both prostitutes and customers)</li> <li>5. Support UKBA in dealing with immigration offences</li> </ol> |
| <b>Team Performance</b>             | <p>xx explained that he expected the team to be proactive with significant amounts of self generated activity.</p> <p>xx highlighted his expectation that team members would achieve the following results:</p> <p><u>PC's</u></p> <p>1 arrest per shift<br/>5 stop &amp; searches per shift</p> <p><u>MSC</u></p> <p>1 arrest per month<br/>5 stop &amp; searches per shift</p> <p><u>PCSOs</u></p> <p>5 stop &amp; accounts per shift<br/>2 crimint reports per shift</p> <p>xx reminded the team of the requirement to ensure tasking returns were submitted on time and with full details so that team performance could be monitored.</p>   |
| <b>Short/Medium/Long Term Plans</b> | <p><u>Short Term</u></p> <p>The team would continue with existing prostitute operations and move to being more focussed on drugs.</p> <p><u>Medium</u></p> <p>The team will work with other agencies and units from the MPS to launch a “total war on crime” combating offences across xxx with TSG and other business groups.</p> <p><u>Long</u></p> <p>The team will reduce total crime in xxxx will become “business as usual”</p>  |
| <b>Training</b>                     | <p>xxxx gave a brief update on PCSO powers and reminded them of the evidence required for a section 5 public order act arrest.</p> <p>All staff were tasked by xx to complete 121 feedback forms with any training requirements.</p>   |

|  |  |
|--|--|
| <b>Sickness / Welfare / Discipline</b> | <p>xxxx reminded all present to report sick using People Services.</p> <p>xxxx reminded all present that CARMS compliance would be monitored and staff must book on and off. Any shift changes etc must be authorised by xx in advance. Any officers needing to report for duty at times other than shown on CARMS should obtain approval from xx.</p> <p>Xxxx asked all present to ensure high standards were maintained especially around uniform appearance which would be robustly enforced.</p> |
| <b>AOB</b>                             | <p><u>Overtime</u></p> <p>XXX made it clear that no overtime was to be submitted for approval to xxxx unless xx had authorised it first BEFORE it was incurred. This included planned overtime.</p>  |
| <b>Date of Next Meeting</b>            | TBC  |

**● Evidence from individual's PDR (detail removed)**

|  |            |            |
|--|------------|------------|
| To ensure minimum standards of investigation are complied with for DV and Burglary crimes. | 31/03/2013 | 31/03/2013 |
| To achieve 3 arrests/be involved in 3 arrest per calendar month.                           | 31/03/2013 | 31/03/2013 |
| To achieve 5 stop/searches per calendar month.   | 31/03/2013 | 31/03/2013 |
| To ensure all mandatory training (OST, ELS, NCALT) is completed as required.               | 31/03/2013 | 31/03/2013 |

Interested in lateral Progression to Specialist Roles? No

Interested in promotion? No

**3 Drivers: to be completed with reference to the MPF in line with the Performance Framework for the rank/role.**

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Meets the required standard within this area.

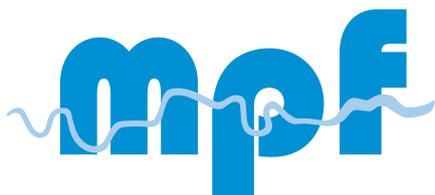
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Meets the required standard within this area.

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Meets the required standard within this area.





**METROPOLITAN POLICE FEDERATION**

**York House, 2 Elmfield Park,  
Bromley, Kent BR1 1LU**

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