Policing young adults

A scoping study

John Graham, Director with **Jacqui Karn**, Senior Research and Development Officer, The Police Foundation

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The Police Foundation

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The Barrow Cadbury Trust is an independent, charitable foundation, committed to supporting vulnerable and marginalised people in society. The Trust provides grants to grassroots voluntary and community groups working in deprived communities in the UK, with a focus on Birmingham and the Black Country. It also works with researchers, think tanks and government, often in partnership with other grant-makers, seeking to overcome the structural barriers to a more just and equal society. Its Transition to Adulthood (T2A) programme evidences and promotes effective approaches for young adults throughout the criminal justice process.

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T2A
TRANSITION TO ADULTHOOD

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Executive summary

This report presents the findings of a small scoping study on the policing of young adults. Its main aim is to highlight key issues and challenges and identify a future agenda for research, policy and practice. It draws on a small number of interviews with young adults, police officers and individual experts (e.g. policy makers, community safety experts and relevant literature). The study focuses on encounters between young adults and the police, particularly those involving stop and search and the night-time economy, and how well the police handle – and are trained to handle – such encounters.

The study was commissioned by the Barrow Cadbury Trust as part of its Transition to Adulthood initiative, which promotes the notion that the criminal justice system (CJS) should take better account of the specific needs of young adults aged 18-24. This is based on research which shows that young adults do not all reach maturity by the age of 25 and that the transition to adulthood has, over the years, become longer and more difficult to navigate. Since young adults continue to test boundaries and question authority, the offences they commit tend to be more similar to those committed by juveniles (i.e. those under the age of 18), but the criminal law in the UK, in contrast to some European countries, does not recognise young adults as a distinct legal category.

Although young adults are a high-risk group in terms of crime and victimisation, they are disproportionately engaged in the criminal justice system. This has important implications for their chances of desisting from crime, which typically occurs during this period of transition. The police, in their role as gatekeepers, play a key part in

controlling the flow of young adults into the criminal justice system. But in contrast to other parts of the system, they take little if any account of the developing maturity and specific needs of this age group in enforcing the law.

Many, but by no means all young adults tend to hold negative views of the police, who in turn tend to view young adults as suspects in need of control rather than potential victims in need of protection. Mutual negative stereotyping can undermine relations between young adults and the police and face-to-face encounters are often fraught. This applies in particular when the police exercise their powers of stop and search, the use of which has doubled in the last decade. Young adults expect the police to be polite, fair and respectful and to explain why they have been stopped and searched. Lack of support for young adult victims serves only to reinforce negative perceptions. Although young adult women experience fewer encounters with the police, many tend to hold similarly negative views, but they are more fearful of being attacked and more concerned about lack of police protection and being taken seriously when reporting sexual offences. How the police handle encounters with young adults, especially in high-risk situations, therefore has important implications in terms of the willingness of young adults to cooperate with the police, their trust and confidence in them and ultimately police legitimacy.

Young adults are more likely than any other group to be subject to stop and search, but it is young adult men from black and minority ethnic (BME) groups in particular, who are up to seven times more likely to be stopped and searched than their white counterparts, who hold the most negative

views of the police. Poor community relations between the police and this age group can lead to serious confrontations and negative spirals of conflict, particularly where policing is target driven and opportunities for positive engagement with young adults are limited or ineffectual.

In contrast to stop and search, the policing of the night-time economy is organised around the imperative that everyone should have a good time and get home safely. The police are more concerned with preventing problems than fighting crime and work closely with other partners to maintain an orderly and peaceful environment. There may be lessons here for the policing of young adults in other contexts. The interest of the leisure industry to secure lucrative markets for their products helps to ensure this approach to the policing of the night-time economy. So while there is agreement on the need to manage alcoholism, disorder and antisocial behaviour, most partners have little interest in criminalising consumers' behaviour.

Initial and in-service police training could be one way of improving the policing of young adults. The main emphasis of police training is, however, on the law and how to enforce it, not on interpersonal skills and how to deploy them. The police receive little training on managing encounters with different members of the public and defusing difficult situations. Neither do they receive much on-the-job mentoring or supervision. In practice, many (especially young) officers are ill-prepared for interacting effectively with young adults and are inadequately supervised by their senior officers.

Where relations between the police and young adults are poor, greater efforts need to be made to identify better ways of engaging with this age group, particularly the most hard-to-reach. Both female and older officers seem to handle encounters better and more could be made of their experience. Both are better at communicating with young adults and avoiding confrontation. There are also a number of ad hoc projects trying to improve the policing of this age group, drawing on for example the different skill set of youth workers or organizing role plays. But on the whole, police officers tend to defer to the deterrent model of criminal justice, exerting their authority through the traditional channels of arrest and charge rather than using their discretion to make more effective decisions.

This modest scoping study has also pointed towards the need to undertake research on a number of issues, including why young adults are generally reluctant to report offences to the police (particularly the reluctance of young adult women to report sexual offences) and what might be done to reverse this. Further research on stop and search – and in particular what constitutes best practice with different groups of young adults (especially BME groups) in different situations – could contribute not only to improving police practice but also to police legitimacy more broadly.

1. Introduction

This report presents the findings from a small scoping study on the policing of young adults [1] with funding from the Barrow Cadbury Trust (BCT).

The main aim of this study is to identify some of the key issues and challenges in the policing of young adults with a view to informing a future agenda for research, policy and practice. It focuses on some of the key points of contact between the police and young adults in public spaces, with an emphasis in particular on the use of stop and search powers and the night-time economy, and how well the police are trained to handle such encounters and deploy the powers available to them. It does not as such provide a set of recommendations on how to improve the policing of young adults but rather identifies some of the issues and challenges that need to be addressed in order to progress this agenda.

It forms part of a much larger programme of work by Barrow Cadbury, which was started in 2005 with the publication of the report of its Commission on Young Adults in the Criminal Justice System. The report, entitled 'Lost in Transition', highlighted the difficulties young adults caught up in the criminal justice system face and led to the convening of the Transition to Adulthood (T2A) Alliance three years later. The Alliance, hosted by the Barrow Cadbury Trust, comprises a broad coalition of organisations with a common interest in pursuing an agenda for change.

The T2A Alliance has called for a fundamental shift in the way the criminal justice system responds to young adult offenders that is proportionate to their maturity, more responsive to their needs and therefore increases their chances

of desisting from crime. In 2010, the Independent Commission on Youth Crime and Antisocial Behaviour (Police Foundation, 2010), echoed the Alliance's concerns and endorsed its recommendations. These were to:

- Support and allow more restorative (and conflict mediation) policing approaches;

- Improve initial and in-service training to ensure the police service deals fairly, respectfully and consistently with young people;

- Increase the emphasis on engaging young people in shaping services, policy and practice; and

- Apply the triage model of diversion of young adults at risk piloted in London to all young adults up to the age of 24.

Three years ago the T2A Alliance funded three pilot projects to test this more nuanced approach to young adult offenders. This led to the 2012 publication of the T2A report 'Pathways from Crime' (T2A, 2012), which identifies ten key points at which professionals can deliver a more effective approach for young people in the transition to adulthood. The T2A Pathway recognises that formal contact with the criminal justice system often starts with police contact. The decisions taken by police officers determine the future fate of those they encounter; they are effectively the gatekeepers of the criminal justice process. Arrest and charge can lead to prosecution, conviction and a criminal record, which in turn can adversely affect the future employment chances of a young adult offender and ultimately their capacity to desist from crime. The T2A Pathway recognises that young adults disproportionately occupy public space, encounter the police, take up their time and engage in visible offending behaviour.

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[1] Young adults are defined here as those aged 18-24.

But it also points out that young adults are more likely than other age groups to be victims of crime; they need protecting as much as policing.

The focus of this report

As mentioned above, the main aim of this scoping study is to identify some of the key issues and challenges that arise out of encounters between the police and young adults. It focuses in particular on the practice of stop and search and the policing of the night-time economy and how well the police are trained for these. It explores the mutual perceptions, understandings and behaviours that characterise encounters and what decisions and outcomes flow from them. And it explores the training that police officers receive in preparation for dealing with such encounters in real life. It draws on an analysis of a small number of focus group interviews with young adults and police officers as well as individual interviews with policy makers, lawyers, academics and community safety experts (see Annex 1)[2] as well as a brief overview of the relevant literature in this area.[3] It then attempts to draw out some key issues and challenges and how these might be addressed through research, policy and practice.

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[2] It is important to emphasise that the views of those interviewed for this study should not be taken as necessarily representative.

[3] A relatively comprehensive review of the literature on young adults and the criminal justice system has been undertaken for the Barrow Cadbury Trust, but it focuses primarily on the concept of maturity and the factors that lead to desistance and says little about policing (Prior et al, 2011). There is actually very little research that specifically focuses on the policing of young adults as most research focuses on the broader policing of young people, most often with a focus on those under 18. There are however a number of broadly recurring themes which emerge from the research on policing and young people generally, much of which is likely to apply to young adults.

2. Background

Youth to Adulthood: An extended transition

In the United Kingdom, individuals gain most of the legal rights of adults on their eighteenth birthday, including becoming an adult in the eyes of the law. Up to the age of 18 individuals who commit criminal offences are classified as juveniles and are subject to juvenile law, but on reaching their eighteenth birthday they are considered as adults under the criminal law and, with a couple of small exceptions[4], are treated the same as adults who are in their twenties, thirties and beyond.

While in law all young adults are considered to be adults on reaching 18, in reality, the transition from childhood to adulthood takes place at different times for different people; chronological age offers a poor guide to a person's maturity. Recent research on brain development suggests that while cognitive maturity – the capacity for thinking, reasoning and understanding – develops during adolescence, psychosocial maturity – those aspects of development and behaviour that involve interpersonal relationships and help individuals to make socially responsible decisions – doesn't develop until young people are well into their twenties. Neither the law nor the criminal justice system recognise or reflect this research evidence.

Psychosocial maturity comes with responsibility and independence, but in the last few decades the means for achieving both have become increasingly scarce. The transition to independence and hence full adulthood takes longer today, is more complex – there are now more potential 'routes' – and is often characterised by 'two steps forward, one step back'. The evidence speaks for itself.

Young adults today are more likely to postpone leaving home, entering marriage and having children. The average age for young women to have their first child has risen to nearly 28 and according to the Council for Mortgage Lenders the average age of first time homebuyers is now 33. More significantly, the proportion of first time buyers under the age of 30 purchasing a property without the help of either parent has fallen dramatically since 2005 from two out of three to just one in five (Council of Mortgage Lenders, 2011).

More young people study for longer as the thresholds for entering a more skills-based labour market have become increasingly higher. Others are trapped in a cycle of unemployment, low paid insecure jobs and part time work with access to the full national minimum wage and social security benefits denied them until they reach their early to mid-twenties. Excluding those in full time education, 19.6 per cent of 18-24 year olds in England and Wales are unemployed, nearly one third of whom have been unemployed for more than a year (Office for National Statistics, 2012) and the proportion of 18-24 year olds[5] not in education, employment or training has increased by 45 per cent in the last ten years (Department for Education, 2012).

Either way, young adults are now more likely than in the past to be wholly or partly financially dependent on their families and less able to take on the same levels of responsibility as older adults until they are well into their twenties and even beyond. The increases in youth unemployment and the number of young people outside education and training are likely to further

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4 For example, some 18-20 year olds are held in Youth Offender Institutions rather than adult prisons.
5 England only.

this trend. Together with the squeeze on benefit payments and lack of access to affordable housing, this trend is likely to increase the risk of social exclusion and delay natural desistance for those engaged in offending, particularly for those with a criminal record who face additional barriers to employment.

There is a risk that the current economic crisis could increase the potential for conflict between the police and unemployed/underemployed and socially excluded young adults on the streets. It may also increase the risk of drug dependency, alcohol misuse and mental ill-health, all of which may bring young adults into greater contact with the police. Black and minority ethnic young adults, who are disproportionately stopped and searched and suffer higher rates of unemployment and homelessness than white young adults, are particularly vulnerable to increased contact with the police. It is important to ensure that policing during what may become a long and potentially very damaging economic recession avoids criminalising and alienating a generation.[6]

Young adults, crime and victimisation

Unlike juveniles (those aged 10-17) or adults (those aged 18 and above), there is little systematic data on 18-24 year olds, largely because this age group is not recognised as a specific legal category. It is known however that they are disproportionately likely to be engaged in the criminal justice system (along with 14-17 year olds): although they represent only ten per cent of the population, they account for approximately a quarter of all recorded crime (Bowles and

Pradiptyo, 2005) and a quarter of all persons registered on the DNA database (Centre for Criminal Justice Studies, 2010).

Based on self-report data, it would seem that offending peaks around the late-teens for males (mid-teens for females) after which it tails off[7]. This pattern varies however according to the offence being committed. Shoplifting, for example, tends to peak earlier – around the age of 14 – whereas theft from the workplace (unsurprisingly) tends to peak later at around the age of 20 (Hales et al, 2009). Most importantly, self-report as well as other sources of data consistently show that young people begin to desist from crime during the latter stages of the transition to adulthood (see Loeber and Farrington, 2012). This period of transition therefore offers a unique opportunity to develop policy and practice that promotes desistance and minimises the risk of entrenching criminal careers.

During the peak offending period young people are still developing physically, mentally and emotionally, but the criminal justice system takes little if any account of this. In England and Wales (and indeed the rest of the UK), there is an immediate change at age 18 in responsible professionals and systems, with the Youth Justice system passing over responsibility for any individuals they are supervising to the adult probation service and the courts imposing adult procedures and punishments. A recent joint inspection report criticised the transfer of young people at age 18 to adult services, particularly those who had to move from the youth estate to the young adult estate (Criminal Justice Joint Inspection, 2012).

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[6] An important aspect of interaction between police and young adults is public order situations, such as demonstrations, large scale events and riots, however these types of encounters are not covered here.

[7] This is based on data from the Offending, Crime and Justice Survey (OCJS), covering a four year period (2003 to 2006).

In reality, the pattern and nature of offending behaviour does not suddenly change at 18 and in many cases more closely resembles the kind of offending engaged in by juveniles. Some countries now recognise this discrepancy; in Germany, Austria, Switzerland and Lithuania, and up to a point in the Netherlands and the Scandinavian countries, young adults who commit offences can be adjudicated under juvenile rather than adult law. This more flexible approach to young adults is endorsed by the Council of Europe, which recommends to its member states that culpability should reflect the age and maturity of the offender and be more in step with the offender's stage of development, with criminal measures being progressively applied as individual responsibility increases (Council of Europe, 2003). Member states should reflect the extended transition to adulthood, with young adults under the age of 21 being treated in a way comparable to juveniles and subject to the same interventions when the judge is of the opinion that they are not as mature and responsible for their actions as full adults. To facilitate their entry into the labour market, it also recommends that every effort should be made to ensure that young adult offenders under the age of 21 are not required to disclose their criminal record to prospective employers, except where the specific nature of the employment dictates otherwise.

Over recent years there has been a heightened focus on young people as offenders which has overshadowed their experiences as victims and hence what service they might want *from* the police. According to the British Crime Survey (BCS), the risk of being a victim of both personal crime and all BCS crime is highest among young adults aged 16 to 24. A quarter of all homicide and probable homicide victims are young adults, mostly young men (Office for National Statistics, 2009). In 2009/10, 31.8 per cent of those aged 16-24 self-reported as victims, compared to an all age average of 21.5 per cent. One reason for this high rate of victimisation is that young adults are more likely to regularly go out to clubs and pubs. 38.7 per cent of those who go out once a week or more to pubs and clubs reported being a victim, compared to only 20.1 per cent of those not going out (Chaplin et al, 2011).

The response of the criminal justice system

By the time young offenders reach their mid to late twenties and have matured, most will have desisted from offending (Loeber and Farrington, 2012). But all too often the response of the criminal justice system ends up hindering as opposed to helping the process of desistance (McAra and McVie, 2007). Despite large falls in crime – recorded crime has fallen by 20 per cent over the last five years – the number of young adults aged 21-24 found guilty or cautioned for an indictable offence has remained stable (see figure 1). This contrasts with the total number of people found guilty or cautioned for an indictable offence, which fell by 8 per cent. What is surprising is that the number of 18 year olds found guilty or cautioned for an indictable offence, although higher in total than those aged 21 and over, declined by 27 per cent during the same period (the equivalent figures for 19 year olds is approximately 17 per cent and for 20 year olds 11 per cent – see figure 1). It would be useful to conduct some detailed analysis to establish the reasons for this disparity between 18-20 and 21-24 year olds.
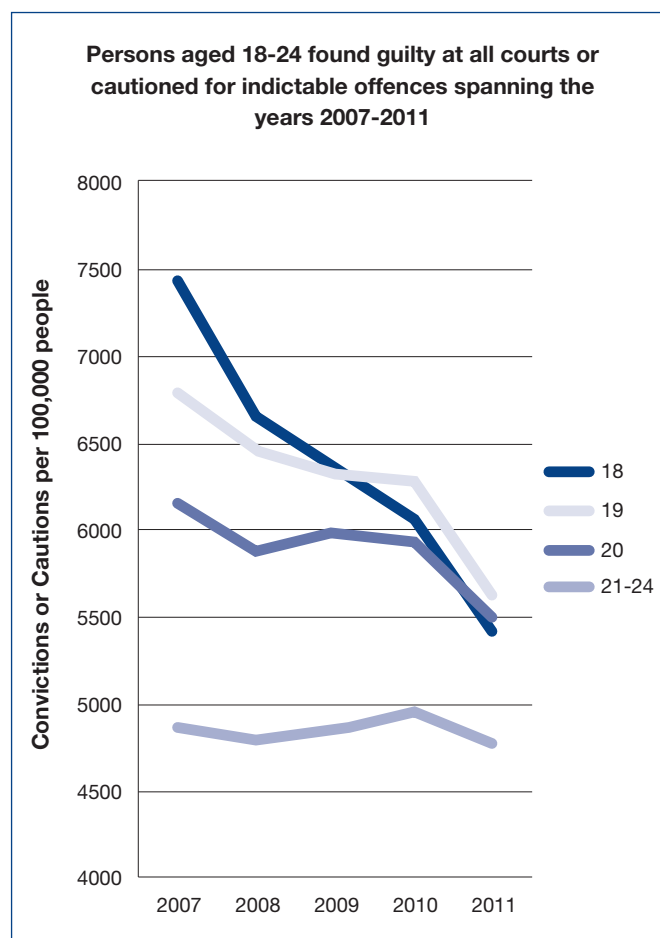
Although as a category young adults are less likely to be convicted or cautioned of an offence today than five years ago they are still over-represented in the criminal justice system. Despite making up just 10 per cent of the British population and recorded as committing about a quarter of all crime, they account for more than a third of those commencing a community sentence, one third of the probation service's caseload and almost one third of those sentenced to prison every year (T2A, 2012). It is not known however whether or to what extent this apparent over-representation reflects a more serious offending profile.

Finally, young adults aged 18-20 are second only to juveniles aged 15-17 in terms of their chances of re-offending within a year of being convicted, although their proven re-offending rate[8] has actually declined in the last decade by about three per cent (Ministry of Justice Statistics Bulletin, 2011).

Why the police matter

The T2A Alliance highlights the police role as gatekeepers to the criminal justice system. Police are the first representative of the system that individuals come across either as victims or offenders, and their approach and actions can be critical. They decide whether or not an offence has taken place, who to engage with, whether to initiate a search and whether to arrest. The police also have significant discretion after arrest, in terms of decisions on whether or not to take further action, refer to other services, or issue an informal sanction such as a warning or a caution.

The attitude of individual officers is critical in determining their subsequent decisions on search

Persons aged 18-24 found guilty at all courts or cautioned for indictable offences spanning the years 2007-2011

Figure 1

Source: http://www.justice.gov.uk/statistics/ criminal-justice/criminal-justice-statistics

and arrest. It may also influence future contact; bad experiences may make victims less willing to ask the police for help and witnesses less willing to cooperate. A hostile or prejudicial attitude may escalate a relatively benign encounter into a serious confrontation, while conversely a positive interaction may ensure that potentially criminogenic situations are averted. Changing police attitudes and behaviours can therefore have a significant impact on outcomes for young adults, including whether they end up in the criminal justice system.

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[8] Proven re-offending is defined as any offence committed in the year following a court conviction, caution, reprimand or warning.

The attitudes of young people towards the police are equally critical in determining the outcomes of encounters. Where young people have no respect for police authority, lack trust in their capacity to protect them or deal fairly with them or are overtly hostile and antagonistic towards them, the risk that such encounters might escalate into aggressive exchanges and potentially violent conflict increases. This becomes particularly critical where such antagonism is rooted in a history of poor community-police relations and entrenched negative stereotyping by both parties.

Young adults, like juveniles, are also more likely to take risks than older adults. The peak age of onset for class A drug misuse is around 20 (Hales et al, 2009) and two in five young adults aged 18-24 are binge drinkers (i.e. get very drunk at least once a month) (Richardson, and Budd, 2003); both are closely related with offending. It is therefore hardly surprising that the police tend to see young adults as a high risk group. But although young adults are more likely than older adults to offend, they are also more likely to be the victims of crime and/or witnesses to crimes, especially if they live in high crime neighbourhoods. Some of the most prolific young adult offenders are also those most likely to be victimised, but they are also the ones least likely to report an incident and least likely to complain about police misconduct (Herrington et al, 2007). Their need for protection tends to be overshadowed by the potential threat they may pose; in short, they are over-policed and under-protected.

Changes to policing

The police service is currently facing major reforms. Police forces and their public sector partners in health, local authorities and probation will have to manage with reduced budgets, although public expectations remain high. Various policing bodies are being abolished (e.g. National Policing Improvement Agency) or replaced (e.g. Association of Chief Police Officers, Serious Organised Crime Agency) and new ones are being set up in their place (e.g. National Crime Agency). And the Crown Prosecution Service is relinquishing some of its powers back to the police, raising the possibility of greater police discretion in dealing with charging decisions. But the most significant change is the introduction, for the first time, of elected Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs) in November 2012. This shift towards greater local accountability will require the police to develop better ways of engaging with local communities, including young adults, in setting local priorities, but may put forces under pressure to address populist concerns about the most visible forms of crime and disorder with which young people are often associated. Young adults are the least likely age group to participate in processes of community engagement, so ensuring their voices are heard will be a challenge for police forces and PCCs.

These changes will influence what the police do and do not do, what resources they will have and how they will deploy them. But of specific interest to this study are the changes that are taking place in relation to stop and search following the critical review in 2010 on the use of stop and search powers by the Equality and Human Rights Commission (2010). A number of forces, including the Metropolitan Police Service (MPS), are now reviewing their stop and search policies, particularly in relation to the disproportionate targeting of black and Asian individuals.

In response to pressure to reduce police bureaucracy, the government also introduced changes to the PACE Code of Practice A in March 2011. Police forces no longer have to record stop and accounts and can record less information on stop and searches, such as the name of the person stopped, whether they found anything as a result of the stop/search and whether any injury/damage had been caused by the search. In those forces which implement these changes it will become more difficult to hold the police to account in the use of these powers. This sits uncomfortably alongside the government's intention to improve local accountability through the introduction of elected PCCs.

3. Encounters between young adults and the police

With an increasingly extended transition to adulthood now characterised by a greater range of risks and a decline in the capacity of informal sources of social control (i.e. the family, the school and the local community) to mitigate such risks, society relies increasingly on more formal mechanisms of social control (i.e. the police and other public agencies) to regulate the behaviour of young people and protect both them and society from their worst excesses. Challenging authority and taking risks is part of growing up, but the life chances of young people can be seriously compromised if this process is not carefully managed. The age of automatic deference to authority is long gone, so part of the challenge for the police in a democratic and open society is to be authoritative without being authoritarian.

The extended transition means that many if not most young adults are still in the process of questioning parental and other forms of authority, testing the boundaries of right and wrong; something which previous generations tended to do when they were younger. At the same time, they are exploring newly granted freedoms as 'adults', so it is perhaps not surprising that encounters with the police are often fraught. Research shows this is common to many western countries (see for example Dirikx et al, 2012).

Overall, members of the public who have had contact with the police tend to hold more negative views of them than those who have had little or no personal contact. Furthermore, the adverse attitudes that result from personal encounters significantly outweigh more positive views (Skogan, 2006). This is likely to particularly be the case for young adults who frequently come into contact with the police, so influencing the views and attitudes of young adults towards the police through minimising the number and extent of negative encounters is important.

Most young people tend to have a mixture of both positive and negative attitudes towards the police, with the latter sometimes being simply a reflection of youthful rebelliousness.

"…whereas for many youths their negative evaluations of the police are mainly an expression of youthful rebelliousness, for others they are a genuine reflection of negative beliefs and experiences. Whereas the former are likely to grow out of their attitude, the latter, especially if they live in high crime neighbourhoods, are at risk of having their attitude confirmed and reaffirmed into adulthood." (Dirikx et al, 2012).

There are however specific groups of young adults who hold particularly negative views of the police based on their own experiences. Newburn (2011), for example, reports that young working class males, especially from ethnic minorities, who have an active street life are particularly likely to experience adversarial contact with the police and that once identified as a trouble-maker, contact increases whether or not they continue to be involved in serious levels of offending.

Those who experience negative encounters (or who have friends and family members who have) are more likely to think that the police discriminate against them (Dirikx et al, 2012), especially BME youths who often believe the police target them because of their race. BME youths in particular tend therefore to lack trust and confidence in the police and are

consequently less likely to report crimes to the police or assist them in their investigations, even in relation to serious crimes (Sharp and Atherton, 2007).

The views of the young adults contacted for this study tended to confirm the findings of other research. Many of their personal experiences of interacting with the police are negative, especially regarding stop and search. Those who lived in less affluent neighbourhoods believed the police stereotyped young people and tended to hold more negative views. They disliked being treated as a suspect in public and being talked down to and those who were frequently stopped and search were indignant, resentful and generally hostile towards the police. The following are examples of the kinds of negative views expressed in interviews:

"If you grow up in (certain neighbourhood) you grow up anti-police. They represent power over other people.

Talking to the police is a complete waste of time; they never say sorry or explain themselves and take their authority for granted.

The police would at best ignore you or goad you a bit so you have to deal with everything yourself.

They want you to react so they can arrest you.

They need to learn respect and not just rely on their uniform.

They worry about unimportant things and don't deliver on serious stuff, like domestic violence.

They can sometimes go over the top on purpose and create trouble, especially at kick-out time.

In theory they are there to protect, but we don't feel protected; we would go to our family, not police, for protection."

Both female and older (more experienced) police officers tended to be viewed differently. Female officers were generally seen as less threatening, antagonistic or confrontational, but no less effective in carrying out their duties.

"Female officers, they like to talk to you…but it seems like they deal with it much more slowly and calm and they reassure you a lot as well, when they chat to you, unlike male officers."

On the whole, young adults thought that female police officers were better at communication; they were not seen as 'softer', but as less likely to be confrontational and cause resentment. However, with the exception of research on prostitution and domestic violence, there seems to be a paucity of research on young women's views of and interactions with the police. The young adult women interviewed as part of this study had experienced fewer encounters with the police, but seemed to hold similar views to the young men, often based on the messages they get from their brothers, other family members and friends. They were more concerned about protection issues, expressing for example their fear of being attacked in poorly lit areas, but were reluctant to report rape and other forms of serious sexual violence to the police.

"There's no point in going to the police to report sexual assault if you're drunk as they might think it was your fault."

Most police officers thought that experience counted in difficult situations, and younger officers were more likely to resort to the letter of the law and their uniform as their sources of authority. However newly appointed officers are themselves young adults and views differed as to whether, in encounters with other young adults,

this was an advantage or a disadvantage. On the one hand, they have no more authority – other than that conveyed by their uniform – than those they are policing. On the other, they are more likely to be able to identify with and understand the attitudes and behaviour of those they encounter and sympathise more readily with their values and beliefs.

"I think people are more responsive to being dealt with by police officers who are similar to them, so I think a 20 year old probably would respond better to a 20 year old police officer in the same way. The 20 year old policeman and the 20 year old suspect, they'd know where they're coming from and all so they should be on the same wavelength because they're the same generation."

Older, more experienced officers have that experience to draw on while a younger police officer may lack the self-confidence or sense of personal authority that the older officer takes for granted.

"I'm in the job way over 20 years, so I can sum somebody up and decide, generally speaking, right this attitude will work with this person."

"I can get my weaker officers and put them with the 'oldies' who know what they're doing, who have the confidence and the skills and the attitude to deal with people on the street."

Some research comparing how (i) older and younger and (ii) male and female officers handle encounters, negotiate their authority and use their formal powers could prove productive.

Overall, young people seem to be most concerned with how the police behave – how they treat them, whether they are helpful and concerned about their needs – rather than with

how effective they are at tackling crime (Dirikx et al, 2012). They believe the police should be polite, fair and respectful and should treat people equally. However, although young people tend to have a less positive attitude towards the police than adults (Hurst, 2007) and display lower levels of trust (Sharp and Atherton, 2007), their views about the police tend to improve with age (Hurst and Frank, 2000, but see also Hurst, 2007).

"Then I felt I was being stereotyped but now as I'm older, I can see why they have to do it because it's part of their job and they have to protect the community and keep things safe."

It would be useful to know more about why some young people's attitudes improve and others do not, what the reasons for this might be and what role, if any, different kinds of police contact play in this as well as different kinds of officers (male/female, neighbourhood/response, young/older).

Young adults (together with juveniles) are more at risk of being victimised than any other age group but they are reluctant to ask the police for help and protection; their experiences of encounters lead them to believe that the police are not there to protect them. So, for example, a number of the young adults interviewed for this study had had their phones stolen on the street, with threats of violence involved, but had not reported such incidents to the police, which was simply considered pointless. Too often, where bicycle and phone thefts had been reported, there had been no successful resolution.

"(Young) people don't necessarily feel that anything is going to happen or that perhaps they won't be believed, or that they won't be taken seriously. And it's really important that when

people sort of find the confidence and the courage to report things to the police, that they feel they're treated with respect and they're believed and people take on board what they say."

Thus outcomes from encounters, not just the way in which they are handled, also matter, as this young man who had been seriously assaulted explains:

"From the time when that happened, from the time the police arrived, I felt that, yes, they did offer support and that but after a few days we stopped hearing from them and my mum was just continually pestering them about if they had any news or anything, but she just stopped contacting them and just lost all faith."

Poor police follow-up in terms of support for victims only helps to exacerbate any negative views they might hold and undermine police/youth relations more generally as the message is passed around to friends and family. In this case, both the young man and his mother wanted some kind of reassurance that it was unlikely to happen again.

"I think when something like that happens, you just kind of lose like your safeness in your area, so you don't feel as safe as you usually would. So you just need a bit of reassurance…for my mum as well – after that, like, she was very wary about me going out at night."

The outcomes from encounters will in part be determined by how areas are policed overall and not just how individual officers handle street encounters. The culture of policing in different teams – particularly response teams as opposed to neighbourhood policing teams – can be very different, and this affects interactions with young adults. Response teams are there to react fast and

'deal with' a problem; neighbourhood police are more likely to be involved in a longer-term partnership approach. If response teams turn up to handle reports from members of the public about 'groups' of youths, those young people are likely to face a different kind of encounter to one involving neighbourhood police officers. Where response teams are commonly called into areas, their actions can potentially undermine the building of trust that underpins effective neighbourhood policing.

The contemporary context within which encounters between the police and young adults take place also plays a part, albeit indirectly, in determining their outcome. Young people are persistently demonised by the media and politicians and often innocent behaviour and boisterousness by groups of youngsters, even just hanging around on street corners, is frequently misunderstood by adults as threatening. The police are often called to deal with what they view as low level antisocial behaviour when they would rather be doing 'proper police work'. This places pressure on the police to respond to a call for service in a professional manner and 'get a result'.

"I'd say that the hardest thing when I started was figuring out how to deal with a group that haven't necessarily committed any crimes, but you feel you've got to achieve something, because you've been called."

"When you start, especially, you feel there's got to be some result from this, so often, especially when you're a less experienced officer, you think, all right, search them."

It also offers them an opportunity to hit one of their targets with 'an easy search or arrest'. As one officer said, *"you must get five stops a month and you've got to get three arrests."*

Furthermore, the police are conditioned to look for and question any suspicious behaviour, to look out for trouble. Young adults are at the peak age for offending, and therefore easy to suspect. A group of young people sitting on a corner is automatically a source of risk, of suspicion, that requires 'keeping an eye on'.

"What you're looking for is how they are acting on the street, to see if they arouse suspicion. If you see a gang of lads and they're not congregating or talking to each other, clearly they're ready to intercept people and rob them; why are they standing in a line a number of yards away from each other? That's not what normal people do. Normal people will be in a group talking or walking together. They're not going to be standing ten metres apart, up the street, waiting for drunks to come along. That's the act of somebody who's on a criminal enterprise."

This predisposition to see young adults as suspects leads some officers to be similarly suspicious of the motives of someone who questions why they are being stopped. This can lead the officer to think 'why are you challenging my authority? Have you got something to hide?' So while young people may be innocently questioning an officer's request and actually exercising their right to do so, asking for explanations can inadvertently reinforce an officer's initial suspicions.

Police officers are loath to back down once they are committed as they see this as undermining their authority. Once an officer has decided to undertake a search, for whatever reason, or to question someone as a potential suspect, then the encounter effectively becomes non-negotiable. As one young adult noted:

"Once they've started something it's almost impossible for a policeman to say 'oh I'm sorry, I've made a mistake'; they feel they can't do that."

Most young people recognise this; they realise that challenging the reasons for a stop is futile. But this is not always unproblematic – passively accepting a search request without voicing any sort of objection can lead to loss of face for a young person in front of their peers, especially in a public place. Nobody likes being treated as a suspect, so the temptation to show dissent, to query the decision, is for many young adults almost irresistible.

Negative stereotyping by young adults of police and vice versa leads to negative encounters and outcomes and can even become a self-fulfilling prophecy. Young adults resent yet another stop, and do not listen properly to the reasons given. Police know that some young adults are prolific offenders and may be carrying weapons, illegal drugs or stolen goods; so they see stopping and searching them as rational. It also allows them to do something. If nothing is found, this does not stop the police feeling suspicious next time; if something is found, it simply confirms their negative perceptions.

Stops have a tendency to generate their own circularity. A car stopped once means a future request about that number-plate will generate the information that it has been stopped before, 'justifying' a future stop. A stop can lead to an arrest that has nothing to do with the original reason for the stop. How often do stops initiated on the grounds of looking for stolen goods lead to an arrest for possession of cannabis? How often is this then used to justify an arrest? And how often does this then lead to the person stopped

swearing at the police officer and escalating the incident into a public order offence? It would be useful to undertake research to address questions such as these.

A risk-based approach targets previous offenders. So one stop that does result in recorded action, even if the offence was not of itself serious, means a further stop is more likely. This increases the feeling of being picked on for those stopped, particularly if they have done nothing wrong. And if they are previous offenders, it may make continued offending more likely, as individuals end up conforming to the police view of them as permanent suspects.

This mirrors the findings of the Edinburgh Study of Delinquent Development, which found, albeit for juveniles and not young adults, that once young people come under the spotlight of the police, they (and their close associates) become part of a permanent suspect population. Repeated exposure to the police reinforces hostility towards the police which in turn exacerbates their offending and leads to a mutually reinforcing vicious circle. Working rules based on previous 'form' and suspiciousness were therefore found to effectively contribute to the very behaviours that policing aims to control or eradicate (McAra and McVie, 2005). Whether the same processes apply to young adults is of course unknown, but undertaking research to find out might well be worth pursuing.

Once a young adult has a court conviction they are not only disadvantaged in the labour market by having a criminal record, but also if they subsequently become a witness or a victim, they are less likely to be believed in court. Defence lawyers invariably raise the fact that a witness or victim was previously convicted and so is unreliable. This presents another reason for not reporting a crime or cooperating with the police and the courts as a witness or a victim. Where a whole community fundamentally mistrusts the police this becomes increasingly common and in extreme cases can lead to extra-judicial forms of social control, as in Northern Ireland.

To break the cycle of negative perceptions, spiralling conflict and damaging outcomes, a way has to be found to change the way police: young adult encounters are perceived, initiated, handled and monitored. A useful first step might be to initiate some research on different types of encounters in different settings involving different kinds of actors, followed by the piloting of different approaches. But to secure sustainable change, the lead has to come from the police. Change will take time and need constant reinforcement; for both young adults and police officers current attitudes and behaviours are deeply engrained.

Given that it is in the nature of police authority to stick with a decision, the key to change must be to train police to exercise their authority appropriately, to learn when and how to use it effectively, to judge when to invoke the law and when to refrain from doing so. What are the best ways of managing encounters with young adults, diffusing risky situations, avoiding escalation and cementing rather than undermining their own authority and, ultimately, the authority of the rule of law? Can this be accomplished through training and supervision or can it only be learnt through years of experience? How suitable is the guidance for police officers on decision-making provided by the Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) (known as The National Decision Model) for this particular age group? These are undoubtedly difficult questions, some of which are returned to below.

4. Young adults and stop and search

Many of the views expressed above are mirrored in the research that has been undertaken on stop and search, which plays a vital role in determining relations between young adults and the police, particularly young people from BME communities. A full review of the literature on stop and search is beyond the scope of this report,[9] but there are some key issues which need to be highlighted here as young people, especially young men, are disproportionately stopped and searched (see, for example, Waddington, 2004).

In the last decade, the number of stop and searches in England and Wales has nearly doubled while the proportion of searches resulting in an arrest has declined (Police Foundation, 2012). Young adults (but also those under the age of 18) are more likely than any other age group to be stopped in the street or in a vehicle and to be subjected to a search, which tends to reinforce the police perception that young adults are first and foremost suspects. Research suggests that stop and search can be a major cause of friction between young people and the police[10] and can, in extreme cases, lead to young adults being arrested for public order offences or even assault (Dirikx et al, 2012). As stated by the Equality and Human Rights Commission (2010):

"In the most extreme cases, the inappropriate use of stop and search carries the risk of creating confrontations between police and public that can trigger disorder".

Current legislation on stop and search provides the police with the powers to allay or confirm suspicions about individuals and detect, for example, those suspected of carrying drugs, stolen goods or weapons or going equipped to steal[11]. Over the years, these powers have often been the focus of considerable controversy. Following the Brixton riots in 1981, Lord Scarman criticised the over-use of stop and search powers and its negative impact on relations with the public (Lord Scarman, 1981). Nearly twenty years later, Lord Macpherson, in his Inquiry into the murder of Stephen Lawrence, identified the disproportionate use of stop and search among members of black and Asian communities and the damage this caused to relations with the police. In 2010 the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) raised the same issue and most recently, following the summer riots, the Riots, Victims and Communities Panel (2012) highlighted the role of stop and search as a major source of discontent with the police among BME communities.

There is unequivocal evidence that shows that black and to a lesser extent Asian people are more likely to be stopped and searched than white people. According to the Ministry of Justice, black people are seven times more likely to be stopped and searched than white people and Asian people are twice as likely to be stopped and searched as white people in England and Wales (Ministry of Justice, 2011). A detailed analysis of stop and search statistics by the Equality and Human Rights Commission (2010) concluded that the police use of the powers in England and Wales is disproportionately weighted against black and Asian people. Whether this level of disproportionality amounts to racial discrimination is hotly disputed, but what is indisputable – and is important for this study – is that the disproportionate use of stop and search on BME communities is perceived by them as racially motivated and essentially unfair.

There is also evidence to suggest that stop and search powers are used excessively or wrongly

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9   For a recent review of the UK research on the impact of stop and search on individuals and communities, see Bradford (2011).

10 Most recently see: 'After the Riots: The final report of the Riots, Communities and Victims Panel', which examined the causes and consequences of the summer riots of 2011.

11 The legislation in this area is covered by several Acts of Parliament. The main Act is the Police and Criminal Evidence Act, 1984. Some of the powers conferred under different Acts require reasonable suspicion, others do not. For a good summary of the legislation and the different powers available to the police, see Police Foundation (2012).

and are relatively ineffective in terms of detecting and preventing crime. In 2009/10, there were approximately 1.35 million searches conducted in England and Wales, nearly twice as many as in 2000/01. Concerns that stop and search powers were being used for the wrong reasons led the Commissioner of the MPS to announce in 2011 that his force would be substantially reducing the use of stop and search in order to improve relations with BME communities. This followed the ruling of the European Court of Human Rights that since searches undertaken under section 44 of the Terrorism Act 2000 were not based on 'reasonable suspicion' they were in breach of human rights and hence unlawful. The government has since repealed section 44.

There is some evidence that searches play a role in preventing crime, but the impact is generally modest at best. A study of the effectiveness of stop and search found that searches reduced the number of 'disruptable' crimes by just 0.2 per cent and that searches were largely ineffective in undermining drug markets or reducing drug-related crime (Miller et al, 2000). The impact of section 44 of the Terrorism Act would seem to be equally small, with only 0.6 per cent of searches carried out in 2008/09 leading to an arrest (Home Office, 2009).

This is not to suggest that stop and search is never effective. The Metropolitan Police Service's operation to tackle knife crime in 2009 resulted in 14,700 arrests and the recovery of 7,500 knives from a total of 380,000 searches (Metropolitan Police Service, 2009), a success rate of about six per cent. In 2009/10, nine per cent of searches under PACE 1984 and other legislation resulted in an arrest, a fall of four per cent from ten years previously (Home Office, 2011). Searches made

under the suspicion of possessing stolen property tend to have a higher arrest rate (12 per cent in 2009/10) than drugs (seven per cent in 2009/10). The NPIA Next Steps initiative, which is intended to help police forces reduce rates of disproportionality in stop and search, concluded that greater emphasis should be placed on maximising the quality of arrests derived from searches and focus on prolific offenders rather than cannabis users.

Ultimately any benefits of stop and search need to be carefully weighed against the potentially negative impact stop and search can have on public confidence in the police. Most people accept the principle of the power of stop and search (Stone and Pettigrew, 2000); without it, the only options available are do nothing or make an arrest. A power which essentially allows police officers some flexibility in responding to incidents has obvious advantages and young adults understand, more so than juveniles, that the police may have good reasons for stopping them and asking questions. But if a young adult believes that the police use powers such as stop and search unfairly, disproportionately, excessively or wrongly, they already start from a position of not wanting to cooperate with the police or comply with the law. The importance of this cannot be over-estimated as the consequences of failing to do so undermines the trust and the confidence that people have in the police and hence the legitimacy of their authority to enforce the law.

Research consistently shows that in their dealings with the police, people are most concerned about being treated fairly and respectfully (Bradford, 2011). A single negative interaction can affect an entire community (e.g.

Stone and Pettigrew, 2000), so how stop and searches are carried out is critical. Courtesy and respect matter to young adults; like anybody else, they do not want to be talked down to or disrespected. But the very nature of police encounters with young adults, especially in connection with stop and search, can often create conflict even where police action is well conducted and appropriate. Where a young adult already feels resentful at being stopped and no plausible reason is given (from their point of view), then that resentment is only likely to increase, however courteous the officer is.

Stop and search constitutes an interference with individual freedom and its use has to be seen as rational and reasonable and comply with human rights. The police therefore have to be able to clearly justify their use of the power. They do not always do so, or at least not in a way that is convincing to those who are stopped and searched.

"I think they have an obligation, a kind of responsibility to explain to you why it's necessary... why they're interrupting your day to do this, what the basis for the stop is. They should be explaining why it is necessary, that an incident has happened, or is about to happen, and they're needing (sic) to check for knives or weapons or something."

If young adults are to be treated as suspects they expect to know what it is they are being suspected of. However some of the police officers interviewed for this study acknowledged that some of the grounds they offered were sometimes too broad or variable: *'being black, being young, being a prolific offender, wearing a hooded sweatshirt, just being in a particular (large) area…broadly fitting a broad description….'*

The absence of any explanation, or the lack of a believable or reasonable explanation, was a constant theme in comments made by young adults. Coupled with this was a sense of aggrieved injustice – there was rarely if ever an apology for time wasted or inconvenience suffered when a search showed nothing, or a trip to the police station led to no further action. Young adults also wanted to know why the police were not doing more important things, like catching 'real criminals.'

Given the critical significance of how, how often and why the police power to stop and search is used in encounters with young adults, their training in its use should reflect this. Training in how to conduct a stop and search seems to focus primarily on the legal requirements, such as what constitutes reasonable suspicion and under what circumstances is it justifiable to use reasonable force. But the officers we spoke to reported that as probationers, they never observed a real stop and search or had enough training on it.

"We didn't observe any actual stop and searches. I would like to have watched someone do several stop and searches just to see, when you're on street duties and being operational yourself, what a real stop and search actually looks like."

"I just do not think they've had enough training on it, to be honest. I think a bigger input into stop and search, a practical input, as in being on the streets with a tutor or somebody like that, to see how it's actually done."

The supervision of probationers in relation to stop and searches also seems to be inadequate. As one officer said, *"they just sign it off."*

The evidence that stop and search can alienate young people and their families, and the lack of proof that a higher quantity of stops is actually effective, has led some forces to shift away from achieving large numbers of stops and towards a focus on higher quality interactions with better outcomes. When led from the top, rapid change is possible. Middlesborough has moved from being a zero tolerance force with high numbers of stops to a community-orientated approach, with far fewer stops and Leicestershire is seeking to change the target culture that pervades the use of stop and search, as the example below illustrates:

Reforming stop and search in Leicestershire

In 2010/11, Leicestershire police force recognised that changing their approach to stop and search would require a cultural shift, so the force decided to retrain all their officers to achieve fewer but higher quality searches. The aim was to ensure that searches are productive, effective, and efficient and contribute to force priorities.

An analysis of current practice revealed that the high number of stops was target driven and that officers were largely unaware of the importance of justifying the use of the power in writing. The training programme, drawing on the PACE Code of Practice, emphasised that searches should only be instigated if there is a 'realistic' expectation that something will be found. A low arrest to search rate is a good indicator that this is probably not happening, so the large number of arrests for cannabis possession, for example, has been reversed. While the

percentage of stops leading to arrests is still used by management, it is not publicised and therefore not viewed as a target. Officers now need to have a good reason for a search, which sergeants are expected to check.

The approach is now essentially client-centred – young adults are seen as customers and like any other customer they want a good service – so the police conduct random customer satisfaction checks. Initial results show a significant fall in the total number of stops and searches from a peak of 27,750 in August 2010 to just over 8,000 in July 2012. During the same period, the arrest ratio has increased from 5.1 per cent to 10.1 per cent and crime has fallen.

The influence of targets on police culture and its manifestation at the front line comes out repeatedly in the interviews with police.

"I have to say, certainly when I was in the response team, we were under pressure to get a certain amount of searches each month. So it's much easier, when you've got a group of kids engaging in a bit of antisocial behaviour, albeit very low level, there's a smell of cannabis, you think great, here's my chance. You can justify it very easily and it's an easy win for a young police officer, so in that respect young people are treated differently because they're an easy target for searching."

Stopping and searching young people for cannabis, and making associated arrests for personal possession, is an easy hit.

"I think young people are treated differently because they're an easy target for searching,

they're not subtle about what they're doing. You smell cannabis, so there is something to put down and you know you're safe, but it doesn't achieve anything. If anything it breaks down the relationship between young people and the police. Does it achieve anything for society? No, but you might get an arrest. You might get a stop and search, so I think it's that sort of performance culture that does have a bit of a negative effect on young people."

Despite the PACE Code of Conduct, officers all said it was easy to find a justification for a stop and search if they needed to. In many forces officers had both individual and team stop and search and arrest targets, so looked for opportunities to achieve both. Targets rather than need drove the decision to stop and search, which no doubt helps to explain the almost doubling in the number of stop and searches conducted in the last decade (see above).

Although the current Home Secretary has abolished previous national targets and reduced the need for police forces to record 'stop and accounts', the target culture is still pervasive. Sergeants interviewed talked about a numbers game and too many arrests. Police who do not stop and search or make arrests look as if they are not doing anything. If an officer needs to up his or her numbers, a young adult is an easy target for a stop and search. And even without the pressure of targets, where police are called to an incident there is a natural tendency to want to 'do something,' to demonstrate to the public that action has been taken, especially for response teams.

The combination of Next Steps and EHRC pressure has led to most forces giving undertakings to review stop/search targets and

change current practice. The threat of prosecution for racial disproportionality has been a key trigger here, but forces are also looking at the relative inefficiency and ineffectiveness of their stop and search activities. Some forces are now trying to become more outcome focused, moving beyond arrests as a measure of success: *"A success may be nothing happening, police defusing trouble... everyone having a good time and getting home safely; or as one sergeant put it, 'success is often...quite a boring day, really."* It would be useful to look at the effectiveness of current attempts by forces to reduce their use of stop and search and to identify best practice in changing a high stop and search culture.

5. Young adults and the night-time economy

The last decade has witnessed the proliferation of licenced entertainment outlets in many city centres across the country. This has resulted in large numbers of people, many fuelled by alcohol, descending on town centres at weekends.[12] This presents the police with significant challenges and ties up considerable resources. Drunken and disorderly behaviour is commonplace and often accompanied by interpersonal violence, criminal damage and antisocial behaviour; one in five of all violent incidents occur in or around pubs or clubs (Department for Culture, Media and Sport, 2007).

In contrast to stop and search, there has been relatively little research on policing the night-time economy. Although some of the key messages from the research evidence presented above may well apply here, particularly a concern that the police will act fairly and offer protection, there is little empirical evidence on which to draw. There are many studies that look at the drinking habits of young people which link violent incidents with alcohol consumption and the night-time economy (see for example Finney, 2004), but little research on alcohol-related crime and disorder that focuses specifically on young adults and the night-time economy.

Most research in this area has focused on multi-agency approaches to managing risk and tackling night-time disorder through prevention (see Police Standards Unit, 2006; Lister, 2009). There is however one study that looks specifically at the involvement of young adults in drinking and crime. This shows that young adults are more likely than any other age group to binge drink (defined as getting very drunk at least once a month), with 48 per cent of young adult men and 31 per cent of women admitting to binge drinking, a fifth of them drinking nearly every day (Richardson and Budd, 2003). The reasons for drinking are varied, but the most prevalent are 'being sociable' and 'enjoying going to pubs and clubs'. Three out of four young adults say that young people drink to get drunk. Compared with regular drinkers, binge drinkers are more likely to think young people drink in order to get drunk, are more likely to visit nightclubs or go to parties and are much more likely to get into arguments, commit offences and engage in violence (predominantly assaults).

Whereas stop and search powers are mainly used on young males, policing the night-time economy involves as much interaction with young women as with young men. Similarly, whereas stop and search is disproportionately likely to affect those from BME communities and those in more deprived inner city areas, the consumers of the night-time economy are likely to include all ethnicities, with those with least disposable income and those from some minorities most likely to be under represented.[13] This is reflected in the overall approach to policing the night-time economy, which draws on a wide range of strategies, from prevention and law enforcement to public order maintenance and promoting public health. The primary aim of the police (and their partners) is to keep everyone safe.

"Actually the police have become remarkably good at dealing with it, particularly at some cities. And what they've realised is that they have to… the aim has got to be, have a good time and get home safely."

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12 Although there is no age breakdown of those who participate in the night-time economy, it is probably safe to assume that the majority will be young adults.
13 For example, women from some minorities are less likely to be allowed out to / go to night clubs, and members of some religions will be less likely to drink even if they do go out.

"When it comes to night clubs and things, we do a lot of crime prevention days, especially outside tube stations. Theft of mobile phones, we give out these little anti-robber repels, we give out rape alarms and stuff. We give out awareness about date drugs within the West End at night-time; that's the way you can protect that age group."

The approach of the police towards young adults in this context is therefore quite different, with more emphasis on them as potential victims – particularly victims of alcohol-related or induced incidents – rather than as suspects.

"A lot of the reason why they're victims of crime is because they're the ones who go out and get drunk and are out late at night and that's where a lot of the robberies happen in the West End, and that's where the fights happen, when alcohol is involved. They're easier targets at that age."

As with other areas of policing, no real distinction is made on the grounds of age.

"You get nice happy drunks, don't you, and you get very aggressive drunks and the night-time economy, if they're all drinking, then I do not think you can differentiate between an 18 year old and a 35 year old."

In some night-time situations, such as when the pubs and clubs are closing, the police may even be quite reluctant to make arrests as the time taken to process arrests takes officers off the streets. The emphasis, again, is on keeping people safe by keeping the peace, which often means protecting young adults from unscrupulous licensees or taxi drivers.

"You get taxi touts who are not licensed taxi cab drivers. They hang around, they park up and then they'll go round where the clubs are and find

drunk women and say 'do you want a taxi?' But they're not licensed and that could end up in sexual assault, rape or even being robbed, so clubs and vice do a lot of work around that."

Young adults are important customers and commercial interests prevail. Resort towns like Blackpool are especially experienced and advise many Mediterranean summer resorts on how best to handle large numbers of alcohol-induced young adults out to have a good time. This means that the police are also as far as possible good-natured: 'a smiley face and a horse' is seen as a good recipe for maintaining order.

Partnership working with local councils, licensees, local health services and voluntary groups is clearly important to managing the night-time economy, but different partners see young adults differently. Licensees and taxi drivers see them as customers; health services see them as patients; the police see them as potential victims or offenders. So while there is agreement on the need to manage alcoholism, disorder and antisocial behaviour, most partners have little interest in criminalising their behaviour. They want to keep the vast majority of young adults onside. This means that partners tend to adopt a problem-solving approach rather than looking to enforce the law. So arguments over who gets the next taxi are resolved by effective marshalling of taxi queues, not by arresting queue jumpers.

Community safety and policing plans for the night-time economy tend to adopt a problem solving approach. In Darlington, for example, an army barracks is a major contributor to the local young adult drinking population so the local police and the local council work together with the military police to prevent violence and disorder.

Late night taxi queues can be a flashpoint for trouble, so partners often provide marshals to minimise arguments about who is at the front of a queue. Broken glass can cause terrible injuries in brawls so in Cardiff a surgeon has pioneered a scheme whereby local pubs have replaced glass with plastic glasses. To minimise the pressure on A and E units, some health services (e.g. Bath) provide mobile triage services. Street pastors from various churches also provide support to young people coming out of pubs and clubs after a night of heavy drinking. An audit of good practice in this area of policing might be useful, but this may not throw up much specific information on the policing of young adults as a particular group.

Overall there have been major changes in the approach of the police and their partners to maintaining order in city centres on Friday and Saturday nights over the past twenty or so years. The emphasis now is on proactively preventing trouble, assessing and managing risks, and getting everyone home safely rather than on waiting and responding to crime and disorder. Nevertheless, the policing of the night-time economy takes up considerable resources and further research in this area could help to improve resource allocation and identify best practice.

6. Young adults and police training

The previous sections have focused on the extended transition to adulthood, the involvement of young adults in crime and the criminal justice system and the nature of encounters between young adults and the police. They show that in terms of taking better account of the specific characteristics of this age group, the police are behind their fellow CJS partners, perceiving young adults largely in terms of the risk they pose rather than in terms of the protection they need. This is no better illustrated than in the excessive use of the power to stop and search, where the perception of young adults as suspects predominates. Police targets that reflect these perceptions merely serve to confirm them.

A number of interconnected factors affect police attitudes and behaviour. Culture, force priorities, leadership and management all play a part. But one of the keys to change must be police training and in particular how to train police officers to exercise their authority and their discretion appropriately and effectively, to judge when to invoke the law and when to refrain from doing so. This section looks at the training and supervision of police officers with a view to assessing to what extent they are part of the problem but could also be part of the solution.

Police training focuses primarily on the law and how to apply it. It therefore covers the legal rights of juveniles, but not young adults as they do not constitute a separate legal category. There is generally no training on how to interact or engage with young people (let alone young adults); people skills do not seem to be a high priority. Police officers commented that in training they never observed any real stop and searches, even on video, and there was little early job shadowing.

This can make it difficult for probationers when they first start to patrol on the streets and have to deal with real live situations.

"When you get on the street the kids are totally different because they are genuinely hostile towards you. When I first joined, I was ill-prepared to tell you the truth."

New recruits seem to receive little guidance on defusing risky situations, reflecting on and understanding their impact on others, or engaging with a wide spectrum of diverse communities and nationalities, building trust and establishing legitimacy. For some these skills may come naturally, but for others they do not.

Many new police recruits first work in areas very different from those they grew up in, especially those who join the MPS. Dealing with very diverse communities where there is often a history of poor community/police relations puts additional pressures on new recruits with limited experience of such communities.

Some officers felt that new recruits learn best by being thrown in at the deep end; if they couldn't show they were any good they wouldn't get much support to improve. While this sink-or-swim attitude might be a way to ensure newcomers learn quickly, it also means that their learning will be at the expense of members of the public.

Young adults are not always easy to deal with. Many will not have learnt to be in full control of their emotions or manage personal feelings of resentment. Some will still be learning to deal with authority while others may have built up considerable antipathy towards the police as a result of past experiences. Empathy develops with

emotional and cognitive maturity, so some young adults will have more difficulty than others in understanding the position of a police officer and the pressures they might be under. Officers who recognised the peer pressure young people experienced and how this could lead them to 'perform' in front of their peers, including answering the police back, sometimes acknowledged this.

Some officers said they drew on their previous experience in other jobs, where they had to deal with people or defuse difficult situations or where they had worked with young people from deprived neighbourhoods with difficult family backgrounds or personal circumstances. Others had been Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs), who had spent time patrolling and interacting with the public and believed this helped them in one to one situations. With falling police budgets and numbers it may be that a higher percentage of recruits over the next few years will have wider experience, but there could also be scope for developing recruitment policies that not only favour those who have had previous experience as Special Constables, as recommended by Tom Winsor (Winsor, 2012), but also target potential recruits with specific people skills, such as nurses or youth workers.

The officers we talked to had not been given a formal opportunity to observe real situations on the street, potentially violent encounters between police and young adults or how youth workers engage with young people. Formal observation is a key element of many other professional training programmes and there may be scope for developing it to help new police recruits. Police training does include opportunities for on the job

support and mentoring, but the officers we spoke to, who all felt that the main way of learning was by watching and listening to more experienced officers, thought this needed to be given more priority.

*"I think it's observation and watching more experienced colleagues, providing they're doing it right, so you've got someone with you to say, 'what the f*** do we do?' for want of a better phrase. Because there are times when you go, I have no idea. And then you look to your colleagues to say 'well, how was that?' Then the follow-on would be supervision, where they actually turn round and go 'that went really well, but for future reference'…"*

Police interviewees felt there was a greater need for one-to-one mentoring when new recruits were posted to specific teams. Some were particularly critical of the new single patrol policy that was being introduced in response to demands for efficiency savings, which they saw as further restricting on the job learning. While such a policy clearly extends the capacity of the police service to provide a visible presence on the streets, it also reduces the opportunity for new recruits to watch and learn from more experienced officers. But it is also important to ensure that new recruits do not learn the wrong skills; not all experienced officers will necessarily be good mentors. A more flexible approach to patrol that took account of the learning needs of new recruits might be helpful.

Mentoring alone is unlikely to substantially change the way the police interact with young adults unless the issue of overall force culture, particularly target chasing, is addressed. A supportive, outcome focused culture that helped newcomers

to learn how to deploy their legal powers, develop good interpersonal skills and avoid unnecessary confrontation and maximise positive outcomes might be a step in the right direction. The role of senior management here is critical in setting a new tone and ensuring that this is understood and pursued by the inspectors and sergeants responsible for supervising front line officers. Young adults who had attended consultative meetings with the police expressed concern that what they heard from senior officers was often different from what they experienced on the streets. This is not new; the Macpherson Inquiry similarly noted a worrying disconnect between senior officer statements and actual police practice over many years (Macpherson, 1999).

The only official mentoring role referred to by officers was one occasionally played by sergeants, although some probationers receive advice and support from more senior constables when commencing street duties. But sergeants do not really have the time to go out and supervise new recruits on the streets on a regular basis and tended to see their role more in terms of a trouble-shooter – only intervening when problems arise. Sergeants would pick up performance issues regarding newcomers rather than coach and develop and respond in an ad hoc way rather than systematically. Thus new police recruits might get guidance on, for example, poorly completed stop and search paperwork, but not on how they manage encounters with the public or conduct a stop and search on the street. There are no meetings to enable them to reflect on their practice or to check whether they're doing the right things. It might be useful to trial peer-to-peer mentoring in a couple of forces, with a higher status given to

mentoring as an important skill for more experienced officers to develop and be recognised for. But a more important issue is the lack of developmental and supportive supervision for newly trained officers.

The absence of effective frontline supervision has been identified by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC) in its thematic report (HMIC, 2008), the findings of which are especially pertinent given the budget cuts that the police service are currently facing. The report recognised that sergeants were the linchpin of the Police Service, leading, managing and setting standards for police officers and staff who are the first point of contact with members of the public. It documented how the role of the frontline sergeant has become more complex, demanding and bureaucratic, with many forces unclear about what they expect of them and many sergeants lacking in experience and fundamental skills. Nearly two thirds (63 per cent) of sergeants across England and Wales said they had received no role-specific training.

"The necessary capability and confidence are not being acquired, nor adequate training provided, in order for frontline sergeants to be as effective in their role as they could, and indeed should be. There is an urgent need to re-examine processes for preparing frontline sergeants for the role and for the significant responsibility it carries." (Ibid)

The thematic report made 27 recommendations, including:

- that forces clearly articulate the importance of effective frontline leadership and supervision and the priority they place on sergeants as leaders, coaches and mentors;

- that forces develop a culture that enables frontline sergeants to exercise discretion, professional judgement, risk management and intrusive supervision; and

- that senior management develop effective ways of monitoring, scrutinising and supporting frontline supervisory activity.

Since HMIC's report was published, ACPO has developed guidance on supervision and there is now a set of national standards for the role of frontline sergeant, but how well this is being implemented on the ground is unknown and, apart from a number of individual Force initiatives, many of HMIC's other recommendations remain unimplemented (Giblin, 2011).

Officers fully recognise that encounters with young adults work both ways. *"It's a communication thing. But then that's down to them (young adults) as well."* However this perpetuates the view that it is as much down to young adults to change their attitudes and behaviour as it is for police officers. Since in reality this is unlikely – apart from anything else, some young adults are deeply suspicious and resentful towards the police – the onus must rest with the police service. Further education colleges and youth clubs offer opportunities to engage with young adults on an informal basis, where they can listen to young people's views and develop relationships with them. There are some good examples from which to draw.

"I thought, what can we do to break the barriers down, so I started a boxing club. I went and got funding from the council. We bought equipment, hired premises; it's been running for three years now and I have between 40 and 50 kids, the youngest is about five and the oldest is probably

in their late twenties. The majority are between 15 and 20. We've got so many interactions with different people. You've got the parents (who) come in that are bringing young children so you build up a rapport with them. What I try to do is teach a lot of the young boys how to be young men, like to have morals, like shake your hand, you know? We've had a few gang members come in here and the rule is whatever problems there is outside stays outside."

"When I was finishing my training, they brought in a whole lot of youths between 16 and 20 and they basically did role plays with us. They took on the police officer role and we took on their roles and we just played out how we perceived them and they perceived us. It was mostly to do with stop and searches that police do on the streets. We hadn't been out on the streets yet and hadn't really encountered the youth. They wanted us to get an idea of how they feel when we stop them and how we feel when they give us attitude or talk back to us. Then they gave us feedback on how they feel when we searched them and we do not tell them what we're doing and what we do right and what we do wrong."

Robust exchanges of views can be tense, but well managed engagement allows some understanding and empathy to develop on both sides. This is important for bringing about change in the longer term. Positive encounters mean that other issues like protective policing can also be discussed. If police can start to better understand what local young people feel and think, how they expect to be protected, they can learn how to police them better. The Critical Encounters programme run by Second Wave in Lewisham is another example.

'Critical Encounters'

Second Wave, a youth and community arts charity in Lewisham, South London, has been running a project called Critical Encounters for the past eight years. It comprises a series of local workshops where young people and police officers meet and take on each other's roles. The project's aims are to:

- Create a safe space where young people can engage in a creative process of police/community collaboration

- Develop positive face-to-face dialogue on key issues (including 'Stop and Search')

- Identify and explore the significance and impact of 'critical encounters' involving young people and the police

- Contribute to wider consultation and information sharing on community relations, collective responsibilities and methods of policing

- Empower young people, as the next generation of community leaders, to influence policy and practice in their neighbourhoods

- Design and develop appropriate methods of recognition and accreditation for skills in community leadership, neighbourhood safety and youth engagement.

Originally initiated in response to the pressures and anxiety that young people experienced from being persistently stopped by the police, the workshops are now fully supported by the Borough Commander and embedded in local police

training. Project staff believe that newly recruited officers are now more attuned from the start to the idea that policing requires the support of the community and that this requires effort. Second Wave now runs workshops for Special Constables and is helping to improve local interactions between young Muslims and the police.

The work of Second Wave has not been independently evaluated, is not instantly transferable and should not be seen as a panacea. But because the charity is embedded in the locality – it has been there 30 years – and has been able to build strong links with the local council and the police force, it would seem that it is making positive improvements to police: young people relations in a poor inner city area with a significant BME population and a history of tensions with the police. There are still significant local tensions in Lewisham and many young adults are subject to stop and search, but there is also a better dialogue between them and the police, with more emphasis on engagement and protection than simply law enforcement. Disappointingly, attempts to incorporate Critical Encounters into the MPS's police training curriculum have so far faltered on the grounds that there is no room for training material that extends beyond the basic legal system and the powers conferred on the office of constable.

There seems to be very little evidence of what works in police training, although a systematic review carried out by the National Policing Improvement Agency (NPIA) in 2010 concluded that classroom-based training alone is not a particularly effective way to improve interpersonal

skills or to change behaviour (Wheller and Morris, 2010). The review found strong evidence in a health context that integrating training into routine practice is more effective at changing people's attitudes and behaviour than traditional classroom based approaches and that collaborative continuous professional development improves the learning and behaviour of pupils and the practice, attitudes and beliefs of teachers. Whether the same might apply to police officers is unfortunately unknown.

7. Young adults and community engagement

Community engagement enables citizens to be actively involved in policing and to help in tackling crime. There are different ways of engaging with local communities, some formal, others more informal, and different levels of engagement, ranging from simply providing citizens with information to giving them real financial and decision-making powers. The police tend to adopt a formal, consultative approach to engagement, such as Independent Advisory Groups, but research suggests that they are often unrepresentative and not very effective (Lloyd and Foster, 2009).

One of the most frequent criticisms of community engagement is that it fails to include the harder to reach groups, which are often the very same groups with whom the police most need to engage. Formal consultative committees tend to be made up of older individuals and young adults tend not to turn up. So while young adults are a major client group for the police, there do not seem to be specifically developed strategies for engaging more effectively with this age group.

Some forces have reference groups for stop and search activities that specifically seek to involve young people and although these may work – there does not seem to be any evidence on whether they do or do not – they are likely to come up against the common problem of ensuring they are not just made up of the usual suspects. Leicestershire force has developed a local reference group that includes younger adults after seeing how Suffolk did this and there are other examples of local practice from which to learn. And the Howard League has recently launched a campaign to persuade the newly

elected PCCs to consult with young people on their policing plans and how they should spend their budget. Based on its three year project U R Boss, which helps young people in contact with the criminal justice system to communicate their experiences to professionals, it will also try to encourage police officers to use their discretion to resolve matters informally where possible.

Where there are tensions between young people and police, trusted intermediaries such as youth workers (especially detached youth workers) may be able to broker relations between the two. In London, a new pilot scheme run by the Safer London Foundation and the MPS is being set up in three boroughs (Southwark, Newham and Ealing) whereby young people run training sessions for the police to improve community relations. It will focus on encouraging police officers to listen to the concerns of young people in order to understand how best to improve relations in their communities. The pilot scheme was initiated in response to a poll in London, Birmingham and Manchester, which found that approximately half of the 1,000 young people interviewed believed that relations with the police were poor (Safer London Foundation, 2012).

More specifically, in Shropshire the police are launching a series of open door sessions for young adults aged 18-25 following the success of the exercise with a group of local people aged over 55. Young adults will get the opportunity to experience how different departments within West Mercia Police work to tackle crime and improve the quality of life for the residents of Shropshire over a period of 10 weeks. Referred to as 'police academies', they now form a part of the force's

community engagement programme to improve confidence and satisfaction.

In response to calls from the police themselves to equip officers with specialist 'youth training' to improve relations between the police and young people, the National Youth Agency (NYA) is intending to work with ACPO to provide youth work training for all police officers. Drawing on the success of an initiative in Rotherham, where two officers have secured youth work qualifications, the NYA hopes to improve officers' understanding of the nature of adolescence and how to create better relationships with young people. Although focusing on a younger age group, this could easily be extended to improve officers' understanding of the process of maturity and the transition to adulthood.

As the above illustrates, there are grass roots initiatives which aim to improve how the police relate to and interact with young people, but there is a general absence of robust, independently evaluated initiatives in this area, (including 'Critical Encounters'). This needs to be addressed if the policing of young adults is to become more evidence based and hence more effective.

8. Developing a distinct approach to young adults

Young adults are more likely to come into contact with the police than most other age groups for a number of reasons, but predominantly because they often congregate and occupy public space and because the transition to adulthood is commonly characterised by risk-taking behaviours, such as substance misuse and associated criminal behaviour. The police, for their part, tend to view young adults as potential suspects at risk of offending rather than potential victims who need to be protected. In reality, they are both. Young adults, in the main, understand what the police have to do, but dislike the way they do it; a minority actively despise and fear them. These largely negative stereotypes create a poor basis for cooperative relations and need to be challenged. Without this, the incidence of mutual negative perceptions fuelling interpersonal conflict and delivering damaging outcomes will continue to prevail.

Badly conducted stop and search often lies at the root of poor police/young adult relations and impacts in particular on young adult males living in deprived inner city areas with a large BME population. It creates hostility and undermines trust on the one hand and can all too easily lead to a criminal record for a minor offence on the other. A changed approach here could, over time, reduce antagonism between the police and young people and the potential damage this can do to the life chances of young adults, particularly BME youths living in deprived neighbourhoods. There are signs that this is already beginning to happen.

Similarly, the police need to develop more imaginative and effective ways of engaging with this age group, particularly those who are openly hostile towards them. Many young people are now either in full or part time education well beyond the official school leaving age of 16 and one place where the police might concentrate their efforts is FE Colleges. As every good youth worker knows, effective engagement with young people means contacting them informally, on their terms, on their patch and there are signs that the police, working in partnership with youth workers, are learning how to do this better. But what is urgently needed is a commitment to develop a stronger evidence base on the effectiveness of different approaches to what works with this age group.

In contrast to stop and search, the police appear to have developed a very different approach to the way they police young adults in the night-time economy. Here, they recognise that young adults are just as likely to be victims in need of protection as potential offenders in need of control. As a consequence, they have developed relatively sophisticated multi-agency strategies for coping with the multitude of often alcohol-induced incidents that occur every Friday and Saturday night in city centres up and down the country. By working in partnership, the police are exposed to other agencies that may view young adults differently and adopt different, more positive approaches. The balance between prevention, protection and law enforcement appears to be better and there may be broader lessons here for policing young adults generally.

Although there is no statutory recognition of the transitory status of young adults, different parts of the criminal justice system are beginning to accept that their needs and circumstances are different from fully mature adults. The sentencing

guidelines now suggest that when sentencing adults for committing a criminal offence the judge should take into account 'age and/or lack of maturity'. More recently, the National Offender Management Service has announced that it will produce a commissioning strategy specifically tailored for this age group and the CPS draft code of conduct, currently out for consultation, suggests that consideration of maturity should be a factor in determining culpability. The police however do not seem to be keeping pace with these changes and don't see young adults as a specific age category requiring a distinctive approach.

"To be honest with you, what we look at is the points to prove the offence and their previous convictions. You wouldn't go on what their age is…age doesn't come into it at all, not once you've arrested someone."

"…for us in the response team it's far more about their previous, not necessarily their age group… age isn't necessarily a factor."

That is not to say that police officers always engage with young adults in the same way as they would a juvenile or an older person. Although there seemed to be little formal knowledge about the neurological aspects associated with maturation, the police are aware that young adults are not the same as older adults and sometimes they reflect this in their attitudes and behaviour towards them. They generally recognise that some young adults may still be less mature (but also that some juveniles may be more mature for their age) and that this should better inform how they interact with them and how they use their discretion. Hence in some circumstances (like night-time city centres) they are 'managed' in a

particular and targeted way. But while offences, places, times and particular crime victims can all receive targeted police approaches, police officers (and lawyers for that matter) seem sceptical about how maturity might be assessed and measured and hence formally operationalised.

"It is very, very difficult to define what is meant by a lack of maturity. To an extent it is in the eye of the beholder."

So although the idea of emotional immaturity among some young adults is acknowledged, there is no age related planning beyond juvenile/adult distinctions. Some officers even equated making allowances for immaturity with being 'soft' on crime and there was concern that defence lawyers might use the concept as a way of requesting leniency. Others were concerned that telling a young adult that they had the maturity of a sixteen year old could actually be counter-productive in terms of improving relationships.

"I would say I undoubtedly treat a group of young adults of 16 to 25 differently to a group of older adults. Mainly because the life cycle of a criminal, they tend to start at 14, when they hit puberty, get progressively worse until they're 17 or 18 and then, between 18 and 21, I'd say that's when they're involved in more serious criminality; and I think by the time they're 30 they've calmed down."

"The people who are the real problems when I started have now had kids, they're around their late 20s, 30s, and have just calmed down generally. They may still be involved in criminality but it's not as obvious as the younger people."

There was also little support among police officers for extending the juvenile justice system to older

teenagers, as happens in some European countries (see above).

"To be perfectly honest, most of the clients that we have are well known to us before they get to the age of 18, so all you're doing is starting the youth model again. They've already done YOTs, triage, they've already had their first reprimand, final reprimand, and they might even have gone to a Young Offenders Institute, so changing the way we deal with, by adding that extra portion of 18 to 24, no, I do not think it would change anything."

"I think juveniles get so many chances already, I do not really know what it would achieve, giving them more and more chances into adulthood. If they've had so many chances already and failed to take them, how are they going to change?"

The above illustrates how the deterrent model of criminal justice tends to prevail in the police service. They do not feel that a formal change in the age of attaining adulthood for the purposes of criminal justice is either desirable or practical. There is a strong belief that once someone has been given a couple of chances and failed to change, particularly as a juvenile, then they should be subjected to the full force of the law. There seems to be little tolerance or understanding of the specific difficulties some young adults face and how these need to be addressed if they are to change their behaviour and desist from offending. That is not to say that the current status quo cannot be improved upon, particularly from the bottom up through better training and ultimately more professional practice. The police are able to exercise considerable discretion in their actions and could, at least in theory, consciously develop a different approach to the way they police young adults without any changes

to the law. Some of these changes have been highlighted in this study.

Given the unlikelihood that young adults will be formally recognised as a separate legal category for the purposes of criminal justice in the near future, one opportunity for improving the policing of young adults would seem to lie with better training and supervision of front line officers. Initial police training does not seem to prepare new officers very well for avoiding or defusing difficult encounters. Key aspects of stop and search are either not taught or not taught or supervised effectively. Training focuses on the legal, not the interpersonal, supervision focuses on trouble-shooting, not mentoring. There seems to be a disjoint between legally required procedures (taught at police college), formally trained behaviours (which could be taught through observation and early mentoring) and individually developed routines (which are developed through experience).

Although potentially a powerful influence, the supervision of front line officers is not only inadequate but lacks a clear understanding of the need for and difference between mentoring and supervision for new and existing officers. It would be useful to revisit HMIC's thematic on frontline supervision to see which recommendations are still unimplemented and whether the new national standards on the role of the frontline sergeant are being achieved.

Training can make an important contribution to changes in police practice, but there is no substitute for practical experience. Better ways of supporting probationers could be developed, including a more flexible and balanced use of the single patrol policy. The current reduction in

recruitment presents a good opportunity to focus on improving in-service training and mentoring over the coming years. Thus initiatives like Critical Encounters run by Second Wave could be extended beyond new recruits to encompass a wider range of officers and there may also be ways of tapping the tacit knowledge of older, more experienced officers or learning from the rather different (but allegedly more effective) approaches of female officers. On the other hand, cuts in policing budgets may fall disproportionately on the rank of sergeant, as illustrated by the recent announcement by the Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime in London, which will reduce their capacity to exercise effective supervision. But perhaps most importantly, the introduction of PCCs might offer an excellent opportunity for new local thinking on how to engage with young adults and develop new and better approaches.

A future research agenda

Finally, this study has shown that there is very little research that specifically focuses on the policing of young adults and has identified some of the gaps in knowledge that need to be addressed. Little is known about how different kinds of officers – male/female, older/younger, PCSOs/PCs, response/neighbourhood – handle encounters, negotiate their authority and use their formal powers in encounters with young adults, why some young people's attitudes towards the police are better than others and what role (if any) different kinds of police contact play in this. There is a paucity of research on young women's views of and interactions with the police, but also no research on why, in general, young adults are reluctant to report certain offences to the police or lodge official complaints.

Given the critical importance of stop and search in determining the nature and quality of relations between young adults and the police, there is an urgent need to develop a stronger evidence base on the effectiveness of different approaches to what works with this age group. It would be useful to know more about the outcomes of stop and search in relation to the original reasons given for the stop/search (e.g. how often do stops initiated on the grounds of looking for stolen goods lead to an arrest for possession of cannabis?) and to assess the impact of current attempts by forces to reduce their use of stop and search, including why some forces are more successful than others in using such powers. This might also include an assessment of whether the disproportionate number of BME young adults stopped and searched and caught up in the criminal justice system reflects their pattern of offending or racial discrimination.

Other gaps in knowledge and good practice that this study has identified include the provision of better data on young adults in general, but also a need to make better use of existing data sets – the BCS, recorded crime statistics and self-report data – to see whether they can answer some of the questions raised here, such as the disparity in the trend data on 18-20 year olds and 21-24 year olds found guilty or cautioned.

In terms of police training and supervision, this study suggests that more could be done to identify and test new approaches (e.g. observation, shadowing, peer-to-peer mentoring) and to examine ways of broadening the training curriculum to ensure new police recruits are better equipped to deal with encounters with the public. The curriculum seems to be heavily biased

towards learning the law and how to enforce it at the expense of learning how to develop their interpersonal skills to better handle public encounters. Given the lack of evidence on effective ways of engaging with young adults, it might also be worth piloting and evaluating a range of alternative approaches.

9. Concluding remarks

This modest scoping study has highlighted some key issues and challenges in the policing of young adults. In so doing, it has talked to a number of people, including young adults and members of the police service, about the nature of encounters between them, the tensions caused in particular by stop and search and how these might be mitigated in a new world of fewer police resources. The nature of the problem is relatively straightforward: young adults today take longer to reach maturity and independence than we thought they did or used to do and consequently face a number of issues which the criminal justice system in general and policing in particular fails to address. In terms of what practitioners do, the police seem to be marginally behind other agencies which in turn lag behind what is happening in other European countries, where the needs of this age group are better recognised. The nature of the solution is however less straightforward.

Policing is currently in a state of transition itself. As well as the changes that the budget cuts will deliver, there are the government's reforms to the architecture, organisation, governance and workforce conditions to consider. It is within this rapidly changing context that improvements to the policing of young adults have to be considered.

There are some signs of progress. As ACPO and HMIC announce reviews of stop and search, the ineluctable rise in the use of such powers has ground to a halt. With the freeze on officer recruitment, the average age of front line officers is rising. And there are some promising grass roots initiatives that show imagination and determination. But perhaps the most significant opportunity for improving the policing of young adults (indeed all policing) rests with the introduction of PCCs. Since November 2012 newly elected PCCs replaced the old police authorities, which will fundamentally alter the relationship between the police, the government and the public.

Given their mandate to hold the police to account, oversee the policing budget and reflect the wishes of local citizens in their plans, PCCs hold the key to whether young adults will form part of these new governance, budgetary and consultative arrangements or become marginal to them. They hold the key to whether resources are invested in the right kind of training, supervision, management and leadership that will produce a step change in how young adults are policed or succumb to more populist demands that all too often reflect negative stereotypes and prejudice. In reality, there is neither the budget for over-policing nor any excuses for under-protection. But perhaps the main conclusion of this study is that the policing of young adults should be fundamentally constructed around the principal of procedural justice, namely that people's belief in the legitimacy of the police and hence their motivation to trust and cooperate with them, depends on how fairly and respectfully they are treated by them. As Loader (2012) said in his opening address to the Police Foundation's Annual Conference, *"respect doesn't cost money"*.

Annex 1: List of interviewees

One-to-one interviews

Crown Prosecutor
Defence Solicitor
Community Safety Advisor
Youth Project Coordinator
Professor of Criminology
Chief Inspector
Assistant Chief Constable
Police Sergeants (x2)

Group interviews

3 Young adults, mixed gender, 1 BME 2 White (London, Deptford)
6 Young adult women, 4 BME 1 White (Manchester)
6 Young adult men (4 BME, 2 White) (Manchester)
7 Response officers (London, Westminster)
4 Neighbourhood policing officers, including one PCSO (London, Westminster)

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