

London Partners
By email

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Today, the Met is sharing the results of Operation Reckoning - our latest period of intensification against mobile phone theft across London. This is a significant operation on an issue we know matters to Londoners. However, before I share those results with you, I wanted to take this opportunity to reflect on last week's BBC Panorama and the terror attack in Manchester.

BBC Panorama:

As you will know from the previous correspondence you received from the Met last week including my open letter to the Mayor and Home Secretary, last Wednesday BBC Panorama's 'Undercover in the Police' aired. The programme has once again placed a spotlight on the culture and standards of the Met. The behaviours of some of the Met officers and staff featured in the show are reprehensible and completely unacceptable.

In the programme we saw appalling, potentially criminal, behaviour from officers, that lets down our communities and will cause Londoners to question if they are safe in our custody, and whether they would be believed and respected as victims of crime. **This damages trust and confidence, and I have apologised to those we serve.**

It's my expectation that for those involved, where there is incontrovertible evidence of racism, misogyny, anti-Muslim sentiment or bragging about excessive use of force, they will be put on a fast-track hearing within weeks and on a path to likely dismissal. We stand ready to work with the IOPC to make this happen.

As Commissioner, **I have been candid about the longstanding systemic, cultural, leadership and regulatory failings that have allowed misogyny, racism and a lack of public service ethos to put down deep roots.** We are part way into conducting what is already the biggest corruption clear-out in British policing history, more robust than the Met has been historically, and relentlessly arresting and sacking officers and staff - with nearly 1,500 removed so far.

Since 2020, we have seen forced exits treble with circa 550 officers and staff being removed last year. We have also dedicated a further 200 officers to proactively uncover and deal with wrongdoing. **Alongside this, our officers and staff are increasingly confident to report wrongdoing.** Thanks to their courage and conviction we have seen internal reporting treble since 2021/22.

As you will have seen in light of the deep concern that Londoners will have had watching the programme, I wrote an open letter to the Mayor and Home Secretary¹ which set out the immediate steps we took upon being alerted by the BBC; providing an update on our relentless focus on culture and standards, and share how this focus will continue as we deliver New Met for London 2 - the next phase of our reforming strategy.

The events unveiled at Charing Cross show that our work is far from complete, and for the appalling behaviour displayed, which damages the trust our communities put into the Met, we are truly sorry.

Manchester Terror Attack:

This week marks two years since the horrific attacks of October 7. I recognise for many in London's Jewish communities, this anniversary is not just a moment of remembrance, it is a time of deep pain, renewed fear, and profound reflection. The surge in antisemitism since that day has been staggering, and its impact on Jewish Londoners has been both visible and deeply personal.

Thursday's horrific and tragic terror attack in Manchester has only intensified those concerns, and brought Jewish Londoners continued concerns about their personal safety, once again, in to sharp focus. Our hearts go out to the victims, their families, and the communities affected. It was a stark and painful reminder of the threats we continue to face and of the urgent need to stand together against hate in all its forms.

It is utterly unacceptable that Jewish communities in London should live in fear. Whether walking to synagogue, attending school, or simply going about daily life, no one should feel unsafe because of their faith or identity. We have increased visible patrols and our protective security around synagogues, Jewish schools, and community centres. Since Thursday, and over the weekend, we put 350 extra officers out in communities dedicated to this.

Our reassurance activity also includes visits and visible patrols around mosques and Muslim community centres, as we know that some may seek to exploit these tragic events. **The arson attack at a mosque in Peacehaven on Saturday is also deeply worrying and we know that Jewish and Muslim Londoners will be concerned about their safety in the days and weeks ahead.**

Concerningly over the last two years, since October 7 2023, arrests for antisemitic and anti-Muslim crimes have increased by 10.5% and 11.5% respectively with the number of individuals charged for such offences also increasing by 32.6% for anti-Jewish hate crimes and by 27.2% for anti-Muslim hate crimes. The Met continues to ensure that reports of a hate crime is treated with the seriousness it deserves.

Over the coming weeks will continue to work closely with community leaders, faith organisations and statutory partners to provide a joined-up response. London is a city of many communities, many faiths, and many stories. Its strength lies in its mutual respect and the shared belief that everyone deserves to live free from fear. The Met will continue to play its role, alongside others, throughout this period of concern and uncertainty.

¹ Available online at: www.linkedin.com/pulse/letter-home-secretary-mayor-london-sir-mark-rowley-jvoee/

Mobile Phone theft:

You may have seen that today we have shared with Londoners the results of our latest period of intensification against mobile phone theft in London. Last year alone, we saw approximately 80,000 phones stolen in London, making up over 50% of Personal Robbery and 66% of Theft from Person. The surge in phone theft is not unique to London; other European cities are having to respond to this challenge. Early next year, the Met will lead an international conference which will serve as an opportunity for law enforcement and industry from across the globe to share best practice and discuss the ongoing challenges that continue to prevent smartphone theft and robbery from taking place.

This will build on the work the Met has done over the last two years to seek sustainable and long-term solutions to mobile phone theft. You may remember that two years ago, the Mayor of London and I convened a meeting with phone manufacturers to discuss how we can work better together to find the most effective deterrent to mobile phone crime and ultimately significantly reduce mobile phone robberies in London and beyond. This included calls for the mobile phone industry to play their part and deliver innovative and technical solutions to help tackle the rising number of robberies and thefts. Since then, progress with industry has been slow.

Meanwhile the Met has continued its dedicated work to meet this challenge and pursue perpetrators and target mobile phone crime hotspots, through robust enforcement and strategic partnerships. We are already beginning to see sustained improvements in acquisitive crime performance. **So far this year, personal robbery is down by nearly 13% (11,173 compared to 12,815 in 2024) and Theft from Person is down more than 14% (38,259 compared to 44,786 in 2024).**

In January, the Met began an intensification of operational activity in the form of Operation Reckoning, beginning the Met's largest ever coordinated and intelligence-led response to phone theft across London. This has taken a pro-active and pan-London wide response to tackling and disrupting the Organised Crime Groups (OCGs) that are behind the criminal networks handling stolen devices and has been delivered in three phases.

Phases one and two were delivered in January and late April/early May respectively. The focus of these phases was to help improve awareness of phone theft and robbery and our investigative response, with a robust approach to arrest the street offenders committing the theft and robbery of smartphones on the streets of London. **During these initial two phases, a total of 526 arrests were made, over 1,000 stolen phones were seized, over 3,000 IMEI checks were made in custody, and over 200 intelligence reports were created to help gather crucial information for future interventions in dismantling theft networks.** This successfully led to 63 new suspects being identified for smartphone theft.

Building on these previous two phases of operational activity, the Met has just concluded a third phase of Operation Reckoning activity that took place throughout late September and early October. In total, this phase led to a further 46 arrests, 49 search warrants being executed, the recovery of thousands of stolen devices and £200,000 in cash. The focus of this third phase has been to target the OCGs, from street level offenders, through to the middle-market handling networks and those responsible for the export of stolen devices. **By mobilising the combined resources of the Met and specialist capabilities to maximise operational visibility, this phase of Reckoning has been successful in disrupting multiple OCGs, including one that we believe was responsible for exporting as much as 40% of all smartphones that are**

stolen across London (equating to 35,000-40,000 stolen handsets) to destinations such as Hong Kong and China.

This particular outcome as part of phase three of Reckoning was the result of an investigation that lasted nearly a year which started last December, when a box containing around a thousand iPhones was intercepted at a warehouse near Heathrow Airport. Officers discovered almost all of the phones had been stolen and this resulted in specialist detectives being involved to track down the suspects. Further shipments were intercepted and forensic testing on the packages were able to identify two men. Detectives carried out further enquiries over the following months as more packages were sent out of the country.

In September, these two men were arrested in north-east London on suspicion of handling stolen goods and have been subsequently charged and remanded into custody. **During their arrest, around 2,000 more devices were found at properties linked to these suspects and £80,000 in cash.** After further enquiries, officers uncovered details of the street-level offenders linked with these two men. This led to a further 15 arrests on Suspicion of Theft, Handling Stolen Goods and Conspiracy to Steal as part of the same OCG.

The success of all the Reckoning activity so far has been underpinned through strong partnerships, working in collaboration with the CPS, and other law enforcement agencies. I am determined that the Met continues to build on these successes, and the Home Office has rightly identified phone theft and robbery as a key priority area of focus that needs to be addressed. The Met is already beginning to evaluate its strategy to determine the planning for the next phase of Operation Reckoning.

While the Met remains committed to tackling smartphone theft and robberies and will continue to do it all can, industry players such as Apple, Google and Samsung must do more and step up to work in partnership with law enforcement to design out this type of crime. This includes the active collaboration of industry to improve the detection of stolen devices through improved IMEI visibility and blocking devices to prevent them from accessing global cloud-based services.

This crime can be designed out. The Met remains unwaveringly committed to delivering on our part to tackle this problem, and we hope that the phone manufacturers will step up to support these efforts and help keep London safe.



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