Police and Partner Preparedness for Climate Change in England and Wales

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UK Response to Climate Change

- Climate Change Act 2008 & Independent Committee on Climate Change

- 2010-2024 Conservative government
  - Successful track of emission reduction BUT stemmed from coal phase out
  - 'Cancellations, delays, exemptions and inconsistent messaging' re key policies
  - UK not on track to meet 2030 target, only third of reductions required covered by credible plans ((Climate Change Committee, 2024)
  - Third National Adaptation Programme facing legal challenges

- 2024 Labour government: energy transition and net zero key policies, committed to some rollbacks of prev. government decisions, new legislation

- Assessing the risk:
  - Independent Assessment of UK Climate Risk (Climate Change Committee, 2021) identifies 60 major risks across all aspects of life
  - National Security Risk Assessment → National Risk Register → Community Risk Registers → practical preparedness??

Ministry of Defence

Trends that require action

Increasing environmental stress. Human influence on the climate system will have far-reaching consequences as floods, drought, storms, heatwaves and heavy rainfall become more intense and possibly more frequent. Transport and trade routes, including key chokepoints, are likely to be disrupted affecting global markets and supply chains. Rising sea levels will increase the risk of flooding with low-lying tropical island communities and coastal cities (especially in developing countries) at particular risk. Pollution, habitat destruction and over exploitation will lead to significant reductions in biodiversity and increase the risk that some ecosystems will rapidly collapse. The demand for food and water will increase but some crops will fail and water shortages will become more frequent. The destruction of homes and livelihoods due to natural disasters could also lead to increasing migration and increased tensions. Better management of water and improvements in agriculture (including through technology) could meet rising demand, but this will require investment and action. If not handled effectively, it could lead to disputes, and possibly conflict.

College of Policing

Policing in England and Wales

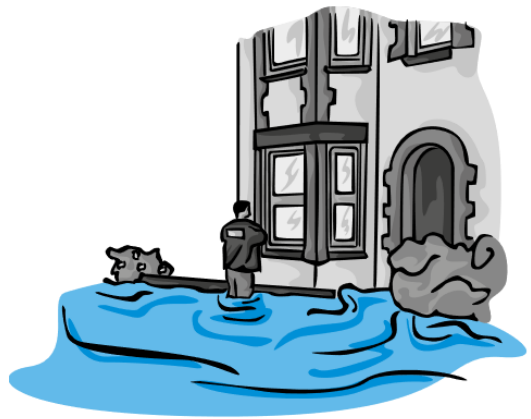
Future Operating Environment 2040

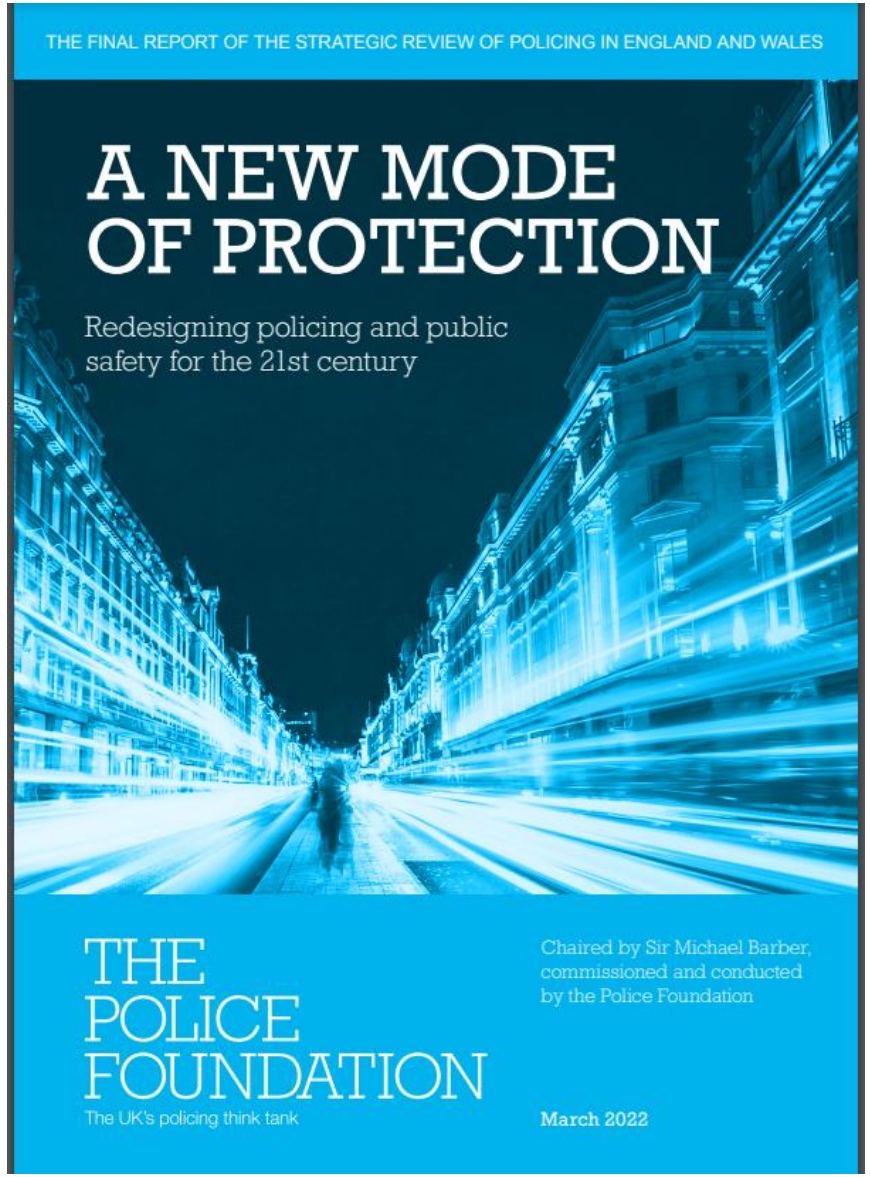
college.police.uk

Trend 10: Climate change, environmental decline and competition for resources

Summary

Climate change, environmental decline and increasing demand and competition for resources are already having a severe impact on people, economies and ecosystems around the world. While the UK will be spared the worst effects of these developments over the next 20 years, the disruption caused by rising sea levels, extreme weather events and increasing resource scarcity will affect many aspects of people's lives and livelihoods. As time passes, the social and economic costs of climate change and environmental decline will increase, as mitigation becomes increasingly complex and expensive. Meanwhile, increasing global demand and competition for resources will drive international competition and could give rise to market volatility, geopolitical tensions and violent conflict.





2.3 ENVIRONMENTAL CHANGE

We live in the geological epoch known as the Anthropocene, an era defined by the degree to which human activity is transforming the natural environment. This has led to a loss of biodiversity, an accelerated rate of species extinction, changes in the distribution of organisms around the world, deforestation and most significantly of course, climate change.

Few of these matters are traditionally thought to concern the police, but they will increasingly pose significant risks to public safety. We highlight two forms of environmental change that will pose an increased risk to human safety in the years ahead: climate change and pandemics.

2.3.1 Climate change

The global temperatures are rising as a result of human activity. Global warming is likely to lead to more frequent and more intense extreme weather events such as floods, droughts, storms, heat waves and heavy rainfall. Drought and heat stress will be disruptive for agriculture, causing problems with food supply.

Between 2005 and 2014 there was an average of 335 climate and weather-related disasters globally per year, which is an increase of 14 per cent compared to the period 1995-2004, and almost twice the level recorded during 1985/95 (CRED and UNISDR, 2015). For the UK specifically we will see changing rainfall patterns, rising sea levels and a greater likelihood of extreme flooding. The summer 2007 floods claimed 13 lives, led to 7,000 people being evacuated by emergency services and cost the UK economy £3.2bn, or droughts such as that in 2003 which led to 2,000 deaths (Cabinet Office, 2017).

The College of Policing states that this creates a "*potentially significant operational and financial risk for the service*" (College of Policing, 2015). For example, it is estimated that the 2015-2016 winter floods cost the emergency services £3m (Environment Agency, 2018).

QAA MEMBERSHIP

QAA

Subject Benchmark Statement

Policing

In partnership with

College of Policing

March 2022

Sustainability and horizon scanning

Sustainability

1.24 Policing programmes leading to a Level 6 (FHEQ) or Level 10 (FQHEIS) award need to develop students' knowledge and understanding within the framework of sustainable development. This process is one of addressing wider social, environmental and economic concerns, which leads to an improved worldwide society.

1.25 Education for sustainable development is the process of creating curriculum structures and subject relevant content to support and empower learners with knowledge, skills, values and attitudes to take informed decisions and responsible actions for environmental integrity, economic viability and a just society.

1.26 Programmes should be designed with reference to the United Nations 17 sustainable development goals (SDGs) (United Nations, 2021) from which the following provide the opportunity to be explicitly placed within the Policing curricula:

- Promoting the benefits of healthy lifestyles and wellbeing for all
- Ensuring education is inclusive, equitable and accessible, while promoting the benefits of life-long learning
- Reducing inequality and ensuring equity of opportunity
- The direct links between economic vitality, entrepreneurship, job market skills and levels of education
- Ensuring the sustainability of communities by making them safe, inclusive and resilient
- Considering the impact of policing on environmental sustainability
- Ensuring peaceful and inclusive societies with access to equitable justice for all
- The benefits of partnership working locally, nationally and internationally.

Horizon scanning

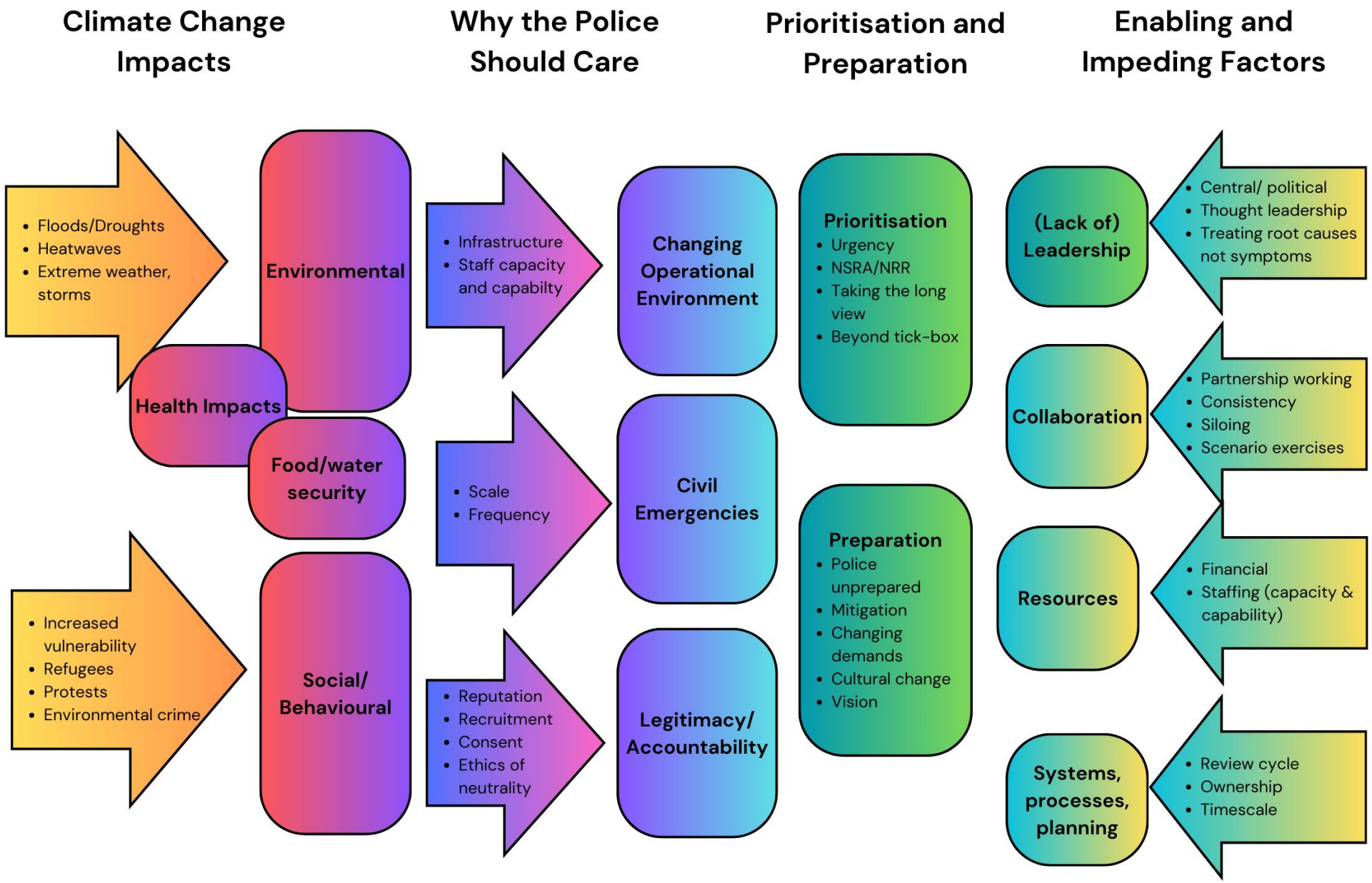
1.27 To ensure a contemporary and relevant Policing Level 6 (FHEQ) or Level 10 (FQHEIS) qualification, the current and future challenges to policing, and the wider criminal justice system, should inform the ongoing review of programmes, thus enabling future graduates to be equipped with the required up-to-date knowledge, understanding and skills for their chosen or future careers.

1.28 The College of Policing (2020) identify a number of current key trends that are likely to affect future policing and the associated development of learning; these being climate change, economic transitions, rising inequality and social fragmentation, technological change and convergence.

1.29 Additional changes which may impact on the characteristics of a Policing programme include any reorganisation of the police service, evolution of the demographics of the police service and an evolving culture. This can be linked to financial investments in police constable, staff and volunteer recruitment, along with their required education, training and continuing professional development. Changes in the landscape of crime, criminals and the legal framework, along with possibilities for regional, national and international cooperation in policing and criminal justice, could also impact on the characteristics of a course.

The Research Project

- **Lydon, D., Hallenberg, K.M, & Kapageorgiadou, V.** (2024). 'This is not a drill': police and partnership preparedness for consequences of the climate crisis.' *International Journal of Police Science & Management.* https://doi.org/10.1177/14613557241248295
- Internally funded small-scale scoping study
- Self-selected cohort 13 participants, most involved in Local Resilience Forums
  - Police
  - Local authorities
  - Utility providers
  - Specialist government contractors
  - Environment Agency
  - Ministry of Defence
  - National Preparedness Commission
- Online, semi-structured interviews, thematic analysis


Climate Change Impacts
Why the Police Should Care
Prioritisation and Preparation
Enabling and Impeding Factors
Floods/Droughts
Heatwaves
Extreme weather, storms
Environmental
Health Impacts
Food/water security
Increased vulnerability
Refugees
Protests
Environmental crime
Social/ Behavioural
Infrastructure
Staff capacity and capabilty
Scale
Frequency
Reputation
Recruitment
Consent
Ethics of neutrality
Changing Operational Environment
Civil Emergencies
Legitimacy/ Accountability
Prioritisation
Urgency
NSRA/NRR
Taking the long view
Beyond tick-box
Preparation
Police unprepared
Mitigation
Changing demands
Cultural change
Vision
(Lack of) Leadership
Central/ political
Thought leadership
Treating root causes not symptoms
Collaboration
Partnership working
Consistency
Siloing
Scenario exercises
Resources
Financial
Staffing (capacity & capability)
Systems, processes, planning
Review cycle
Ownership
Timescale

Climate Change Impacts

"Flooding, severe weather, you know, heat wave. Those ones, they aren't named climate change, but they are a result of climate change" (Participant 13)

"It's also more of an infra and a working environment issue. Because we all know that infrastructure, particularly for emergency services, is quite old. Old police stations, that sort of thing. So, you've got people working in unpleasant conditions."
(Participant 7)

"people are going to get more desperate […] because they feel that they aren't getting heard and that the actions aren't being taken."
(Participant 2)

"It's generally law-abiding people like my mom and dad, for example, who care about the environment and are willing to put themselves into the fray really, in relation to things they believe in. And that does make it really challenging because we've seen the images on bridges in London and with vicars and old ladies being carried off the bridge. Is that what policing wants to be seen to be doing? Ideally not. But of course at the same time we've got to enforce the law, we've got to prevent disruption."
(Participant 9)

Why Should the Police Care?

'How are you coming to work to deal with something if you are food insecure? If you can't fuel your car or you are displaced because the environment that you called home, even in the UK, is now somewhere that you cannot be stable and live in?' (Participant 12).

Our children or the generation of children now are going to look back at us, us as a council, us as emergency responses and say why didn't we do more when you knew. Because we did know, we've known for a long [time], we've known for forty years. Why aren't we? Why are we clamping down on protest at a time when protest is needed? So, I do worry that we're going to damage that kind of social contract if we are not careful. (Stage 2, Participant 1)

"Are there going to be performance indicators for policing around how green it is and its environmental impact? So actually if we want to have legitimacy and trust and confidence with the public, that's really important to show that we are taking it seriously." (Participant 9)

"Practitioners shouldn't be arbiters of what's right and wrong. [...] We've got to be balanced. We've got to be making sure we're policing for everyone, absolutely, that is for us. But that's operating within society's framework. You know, what is society's framework? What is acceptable levels? You know that is also applying that ethical test that's given to us, I think in fairness, I think what that ethical test is, isn't for us." (Participant 8)

"if they don't [care], they're gonna be in trouble. I think that's probably the answer to that question, isn't it? You know, if your operating environment is gonna change, you need to be able to adapt to it and that doesn't matter whether it's climate change or something else." (Participant 7)

Prioritisation and Preparedness

'people don't see it as a burning platform [...] and they should. They should definitely be responding and doing things right now.' (Participant 1).

'being the leading partner standing up globally and saying ''we must all do this", like at COP 26. And yet, at home not doing it. So, where you've got other countries with really good Disaster Risk Reduction strategies at national level, increasing at their local level. Here we just haven't really got that.' (Participant 3).

"I think it's a whole way of thinking that culturally the police just don't get. [..] I think it's gonna require a skill set that we don't have, and culturally, will be quite painful." (Participant 8)

"It takes a lot of energy for people to get up and turn their head to something that they don't want to see in their lifetime or conceptualize within their career. I don't want to, again, be too doom and gloom, but the funding is ridiculous that, you know, time dedicated and spent to counterterrorism operations versus time dedicated and spent to things that would kill just as many people, preparing for rare incidents, suicides on level crossings or landslips and derailments. It's pennies to pounds. And again, that really does take someone strong and in a strategic position to say, you know, 'I see what you're doing and we're going to do more'." (Participant 12)

Enabling and Impeding Factors

'more people with different backgrounds and experiences around the table […] who's not a closely involved expert and can just see things from a different perspective, brings a whole different lens to the problem.' (Participant 3).

"Everywhere that's publicly funded at the moment is saying, 'Is it a statutory responsibility?' And if the answer is no, it goes on page 2, doesn't it? And sometimes never comes off page two of the To-Do list….Unless it is in the rulebook, unless it is a specific mandatory requirement, it wouldn't get addressed, and not get done." (Participant 6)

"I think my problem with climate change strategy at the moment is, it's very big picture at the moment, it's very difficult to translate that down to a more granular level as to how services contribute towards that. I'm not seeing at the moment a link or a correlation between the Council's climate change strategy and fire and rescues and police, and that and the NHS. All of those kinds of things. Again, it's all very individual. There's not a lot multiagency." (Participant 5)

'takes someone bold to stand and say this is the biggest factor for policing, it's not just about short-term crime trends or public confidence or things that we can do in a week of action.' (Participant 12).

'[there's] a lack of thought leadership, that strategic level longer-term thinking, it's not there. It's not anywhere frankly. Certainly not there in government.' (Participant 4).

Recommendations

1. Redefining planning parameters
2. Strengthening central government engagement
3. Amplifying awareness and understanding of trend analyses
4. Prioritization of ‘futures’ thinking
5. **Ethical considerations**
6. Collaborative preparedness

Thank You!

- Interested in collaborating on future research?
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