

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Background

On Thursday 4 August 2011, Mark Duggan was shot by police officers in Ferry Lane, Tottenham Hale, London. The incident was immediately referred to the Independent Police Complaints Commission. On Saturday 6 August, the family and supporters of Mr Duggan, numbering around 120, marched from the Broadwater Farm estate to Tottenham police station to protest about the shooting. It was a peaceful protest but, later in the evening, violence broke out. By the early hours, rioting had spread to nearby areas. By Sunday 7 August the riots had spread to 12 areas within London and by Monday 8 August, the riots had spread nationally and eventually 66 areas experienced rioting.

The riots across England lasted for five days in total. Five people lost their lives and hundreds more lost their businesses and homes. There was widespread arson and looting. We estimate that the total cost of the riots will be more than half a billion pounds.

This Panel was established to listen to the views of communities and victims about what caused the riots and what we can do to prevent them from happening again. Since we launched our call for evidence on 16 September 2011, we have visited 20 areas and spoken with thousands of people who were affected by the riots and some who were not. We have sought views via radio, television, the internet and in public meetings.

This interim report is the product of those investigations. It is written from a national perspective and does not aim to analyse the riots at a local level. Its purpose is to capture our overarching findings, while highlighting important local differences.

Section One: Context

What happened when: questions and answers about the riots

Between 6-10 August 2011, we estimate that 13,000 - 15,000 people were actively involved in the riots. More than 4000 suspected rioters have been arrested. Nine out of ten were already known to the police.

In total, more than 5000 crimes were committed, including five fatalities, 1860 incidents of arson and criminal damage, 1649 burglaries, 141 incidents of disorder and 366 incidents of violence against the person.

The overwhelming majority of those brought before the courts so far have been male and had a previous conviction. At least eighty-four people had committed 50 or more previous offences each. Three-quarters were aged 24 or under.

Of children brought before the courts, two thirds had Special Educational Needs and on average missed almost one day of school a week. They were also more likely to live in the 10% lowest income areas, to be receiving free school meals and to have been excluded from school at least once. Only 11% had achieved 5 or more A*-C GCSE grades including English and Maths.

Whilst these are striking statistics, the vast majority of people we spoke to were clear that not having a good education or a job was not an excuse to do wrong:

'How does not having GCSEs give you the right to riot?'

There appears to be a link between deprivation and rioting. Our unique analysis shows that 70% of those brought before the courts were living in the 30% most deprived postcodes in the country. Although many deprived areas did not riot, of the 66 areas that experienced riots, 30 were in the top 25% most deprived areas in England. Job Seekers Allowance Claimant Rates are 1.5 percentage points higher among 16-24 year olds in riot areas (7.5%) than non riot areas (6%).

Rioter behaviour profiles

We know that the rioters were not a homogenous group of people all acting for the same reasons. They acted differently depending on why they decided to riot and what they wanted to get out of it.

We break down those present at the riots into five broad categories:

- Organised criminals, often from outside the area.
- Violent aggressors who committed the most serious crimes, such as arson and violent attacks on the police.
- 'Late night shoppers' – people who deliberately travelled to riot sites in order to loot.
- Opportunists – people who were drawn into riot areas through curiosity or a sense of excitement and then became caught up in the moment.
- Spectators – people who came just to watch the rioting.

Section Two: Analysing the findings

Rioting in Tottenham – what were the causes?

The riots which began in Tottenham spread across the country with unprecedented speed. Understanding what sparked them is fundamental to any effort to prevent riots in the future.

In our view they were triggered by the police handling of the death of Mark Duggan, in particular communication with his family, which was caused by the breakdown of their protocols with the IPCC. This was set against a historic backdrop of antipathy between some members of the black community and the police; some felt that these underlying tensions in the community had been rising for some time. Also a factor were rumours which circulated about the death of Mark Duggan, including allegations of 'his assassination'.

The rumours surrounding the shooting were not countered effectively. This was exacerbated by the release of information concerning an "exchange of fire" which had to be later retracted. In this "information vacuum" unfounded reports via social media could gain currency.

The speed at which rumours can spread makes rapid, informed communication vital in tense, inflammable situations. Currently there is a fault line running between the IPCC and the police in this area.

We recommend that the IPCC and police urgently review their existing protocols and ensure that they are adhered to in the future. This will help ensure that deliberate false rumours and unintended inaccuracies do not go unchallenged in future.

How the riots spread within an area

The vast majority of people we spoke to believed that the sole trigger for disturbances in their areas was the perception that the police could not contain the scale of rioting in Tottenham and then across London.

Lack of confidence in the police response to the initial riots encouraged people to test reactions in other areas. Most of the riots began with some trouble in retail areas with a critical mass of individuals and groups converging on an area. Rioters believed they would be able to loot and damage without being challenged by the police. In the hardest hit areas, they were correct.

How the riots went viral – the role of the media

A defining characteristic of the riots was the blanket media coverage. We witnessed 24-hour rolling news and near-constant reporting of events on social media channels such as Twitter, Facebook and BlackBerry Messenger.

It seems clear that the spread of rioting was helped both by televised images of police watching people cause damage and looting at will, and by the ability of social media to bring together determined people to act collectively.

However, we do not believe that the Government should simply shut down social networks in the event of rioting. Social media was also used by family members, community groups and authorities to dissuade people from going out onto the streets and to provide reassurance to communities. It did good as well as harm.

What is clear from the riots is that there is no simple 'switch off' solution to the use of social media. Viral silence may have as many dangers as viral noise.

Why didn't the riots happen everywhere?

As the riots spread, some areas remained unaffected. Significantly, people in many areas felt they too would have experienced rioting if the disturbances in other areas had continued for much longer. Few people ruled out the prospect of riots in the future.

We heard a number of possible reasons why some communities experienced little or no rioting. These included the level of deprivation, the amount of social capital people had invested in their local communities, the physical environment, transport links and the preventative actions of local services and people.

We cannot hope to predict where any future riots will take place. We identify a number of practical, short-term actions central government and local communities can take to try and prepare for, and prevent, future riots.

We heard some harrowing stories on our visits to areas affected by rioting. Lives were lost. Parents had to carry children out of burning homes leaving a lifetime of possessions behind to be destroyed. Shopkeepers lost everything they had built up over many years. The consequences of the riots are still being felt. In many areas, there is an overriding sense of despair that people could destroy their own communities.

Why did people riot?

There was no one single motivating factor for the riots. We heard a range of motivations from the need for new trainers to a desire to attack society.

Many people asked how a wider collapse in values may have contributed to this situation. They were shocked to see so many of their fellow citizens engaged in criminal, sometimes violent behaviour, apparently oblivious to the consequences for themselves and for others. They questioned whether the issues of Bankers' bonuses, MPs' expenses, and a lack of personal responsibility had created a moral vacuum in society.

'Stop and search' was cited as a major source of discontent with the police. This concern was widely felt by young Black and Asian men who felt it was not always carried out with appropriate respect. We were told that, in at least some instances, this was a motivating factor in the riots, including some of the attacks on the police.

We know from rioters' criminal histories that most rioters had committed offences before. The chance to do so en masse, apparently increasing the number of opportunities and reducing the chances of being caught, seems to have represented a significant motivating factor for many.

But these were not just 'the usual suspects'. A third of under-18s seen by the courts had not committed a previous offence. We know that the great majority of these youths were not considered 'at risk' of offending by local area Youth Offending Teams. This suggests that

a significant number of these young people made bad decisions after getting caught up in the moment.

The fact that many people abused society's moral and legal codes when the opportunity arose paints a disturbing picture. Most disturbing to us was a widespread feeling that some rioters had no hope and nothing to lose.

'Some people get to 14 or 15 years old without ever being told they're good at anything. They feel a sense of worthlessness.'

Having a stake in society is important. We spoke to many individuals from similar backgrounds who didn't riot. They told us that they had a place in society that they did not want to jeopardise. They showed an awareness of shared values. They had the resilience to take the knocks and create opportunities for themselves. The fact that these people, who had similar disadvantages in life to many of those who chose to riot, felt able to look positively to the future greatly impressed us.

Addressing riot myths

As well as describing the experience of the riots for people around the country, we also want to establish what the riots were not.

These were not riots committed by children, but – largely – by young adults. We do not believe that these were race riots. Most convicted rioters were not gang members. Our conclusion is that there was no single cause of the riots and no single group was responsible.

How did public services perform?

The police have acknowledged that mistakes were made. The riots developed at an unprecedented scale and speed and police emergency plans were not always well adapted to cope.

The police decision to withdraw to the periphery of riot-hit areas left many communities feeling they had been abandoned. All the seriously affected communities felt that police numbers were not high enough and that the police did not act quickly enough to engage with the rioters.

There is still much distress and anger in communities about the police response. It is crucial that the police rebuild trust. This can start by ensuring plans are in place to deal with the risk of future disturbances, pursuing people who committed the crimes during the riots and supporting communities as they rebuild.

We are aware that as a consequence of these riots, the police have begun a review of their tactics on how to handle future riots.

Similarly, whilst there were some examples of good practice, all the local authorities we spoke to felt they had lessons to learn. In particular, there is scope to improve the effective use of social media both as a tool to gather and use information and to communicate messages to communities, businesses and individuals. We recommend that this is addressed urgently.

The scale of the London Olympics next summer will present a significant challenge for public services. It is critical that police and the relevant local authorities carry out proper resilience planning, incorporating scenarios which reflect the risk of a repeat of the August riots during the Olympic Games.

Financial recovery for individuals and businesses

Three months after the riots, there are still small businesses which have yet to receive a penny in compensation for the losses they have experienced. This is threatening the viability of some businesses and needs to be addressed urgently.

The insurance industry has not performed well. We are concerned at the large number of complaints we have received about the role of insurers. We heard repeatedly about delays and difficulties people and businesses were having dealing with insurance company. In most cases, the small businessman had fared worse, with the larger, national companies being best looked after.

Similarly, the Riot Damages Act (RDA) is not working. We did not hear of anyone who had received a payment under the Riot Damages Act. On current forecasts, in London, by 31 March 2012 – over six months after the August riots – nine out of ten of the largest claims will still not have been processed and barely half of people with the smallest claims will have been paid.

It will take time for the full picture of the financial effect of the riots on local people and businesses to emerge but it is clear, now, that the current system for financial compensation does not get money quick enough to those who need and deserve it most.

Riot heroes

We heard some amazing stories about individuals and groups organising large scale clean-ups after the riots to help their communities. We recommend that these people should be honoured both nationally and locally for this work.

Section three: Actions

We set out our key themes for our next phase of work:

- **‘Hopes and Dreams’** – the absence of hopes and dreams amongst many we spoke to is a danger for society. We need young people who are able to improve their education, get a job that fulfils their ambitions and allows them to achieve their potential. We were concerned at the level of despondency and anxiety amongst the young in particular;
- **Building personal resilience** – we heard a lot about the sense of hopelessness felt by young people in many areas. We want to look at how we can help all young people become more responsible, ambitious, determined, and conscientious members of their community
- **Children and parents** – we were frequently told by communities that poor parenting was the underlying cause of the riots. We want to consider what more we could do to improve parenting, achieving the right balance between individual responsibility and the role of public services in supporting parents;
- **Riots and the ‘Brands’** – the rise in consumerism was raised as a concern by many people. The latest brand or gadget increasingly defines an individual’s identity. We want to explore how commercial brands’ can use their powerful influence positively for the good of the community
- **‘The Usual Suspects’** – a common view focused on the relatively small number of people who commit multiple crimes and our inability to prevent re offending. We want to explore what more can be done to improve rehabilitation to better protect communities from repeat offenders;
- **Public and the Police** – good relationships are at the heart of maintaining order. We are disturbed at the reports we heard about the breakdown in trust between some communities and police. We want to explore what more we can all do to improve relationships across communities.

We also make a number of recommendations for immediate action which seek to achieve the following:

- Unblock the RDA system and ensure that victims of the riots receive compensation quickly;
- Prompt the insurance industry to root out the cases where service has been poor and to ensure that customers who are facing severe trauma are dealt with effectively;
- To honour the riot heroes – those that supported communities during the riots and in the clean up
- To honour the service personnel who protected communities at great risk to themselves;
- Stop and Search needs immediate attention to ensure that community support and confidence is not undermined
- Call on all local and police authorities to immediately review their emergency plans to ensure they properly cover public disorder on the scale of the August riots.
- Clear plans from Public services, including the probation service, youth offending teams and local government to deal with the return of rioters to reduce the potential for re-offending and to safeguard communities.
- Central and local government and the police should ensure all victims who want to face people who committed crimes against them can have the opportunity to do so.
- Some high streets continue to suffer financially. The government should start a fund to support struggling high streets, including using any potential underspend from the various support schemes to provide extra help.
- The police need to ensure they achieve the right balance in prioritising the protection of individuals and residential areas over commercial property in tackling riots.
- Local authorities and emergency services should review their processes for how to assist and/or evacuate residents and bystanders caught up in riot areas, including through designating particular sites ‘safe haven

We will publish our final report and recommendations in March 2012.

‘The absence of hopes and dreams amongst many we spoke to is a danger for society.’

OUR RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMMEDIATE ACTION

This section reflects the thoughts of communities and victims about issues they believe need to be addressed immediately. Some of these are covered elsewhere in this report, while others we introduce here for the first time. Following our recommendations, the next section of the report outlines the longer-term focus of our work.

Recommendations to support victims and communities

Theme	Issues	Recommendation
Community heroes	Those service personnel who put themselves at risk to try and protect communities, the people who mobilised communities to action to defend areas against rioting and the people who helped to clean up afterwards were all 'riot heroes' and their contribution should be acknowledged.	Riot heroes should be honoured nationally and locally.
Bringing rioters to justice	It is important to communities and victims that justice is done and seen to be done. Those involved in the riots must be caught and punished for their actions.	The police must continue to prioritise the pursuit and arrest of suspected rioters and should ensure victims are kept up-to-date about the progress of their cases.
Restorative justice	There have already been some small-scale efforts to allow victims who express an interest in doing so to meet people who committed crimes against them. Some evidence on restorative justice shows that it can be effective in reducing re-offending rates.	Central and local government and the police should ensure all victims who want to face people who committed crimes against them can have the opportunity do so.
Release of rioters who have completed their sentences	<p>Managing the return of people who are released after serving a custodial sentence for riot-related offences will present immediate challenges both to communities and public agencies. They will need to look at the potential risks and develop clear plans to deal with the return of rioters in a way which helps to reduce the potential for re-offending and safeguards communities.</p> <p>We are particularly concerned to note that some local authorities say they are facing difficulties getting information about the release dates of local riot offenders.</p>	<p>Public services, including the probation service, youth offending teams and local government, should develop strategies which ensure:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – a clear system of 'wrap around' support is put in place which starts before release and continues until ex-offenders are resettled; – arrangements are made immediately to ensure local authorities are provided with information about offenders' release dates; – that youth offending and the probation service are able to deal with any spikes in demand; – the transition for 18-year-olds to the adult justice system is well managed.

Theme	Issues	Recommendation
Review of IPCC and police protocols on how complaints about police action are handled	The speed at which rumours can spread makes rapid, informed communication vital in tense, inflammable situations. It is important that clear information is made available to the media and public at the earliest possible stage.	Police authorities and the IPCC should urgently review their communications protocol to ensure they remain fit for purpose and are being correctly adhered to.
Stop and search	Stop and search is a necessary part of police processes. However, if searches are not carried out correctly, there is a risk that communities' belief in stop and search as an effective policing method will be eroded. Although there are already complaint processes people can use if they feel searches are not handled well, some young people we spoke to did not have confidence in the system.	The police should urgently work with communities and across forces to improve the way in which stop and search is undertaken to ensure confidence in the police is widespread.
Communication policy	During the riots, many people called for mobile networks to be temporarily shut down. Since then, the Home Secretary has announced a review of police powers to intervene in mobile communications.	The Government should ensure that the evidence and experiences of public authorities, community organisations and other affected by the August riots is considered when new principles are being developed.
Broadcast media	Many people we spoke to felt that 24-hour rolling news exaggerated the extent of rioting where they lived.	Broadcast media coverage should continue to work to ensure that TV coverage is accurate, the highest journalistic standards are maintained and that the link between the issue being reported and the accompanying images is clear.
Riot (Damages) Act 1886 (RDA)	The deadline for submitting claims under the RDA was extended from 14 days to 42 days shortly after the riots. However, it is still too short a time for some businesses. The Panel is also concerned that, after all of our visits, we are yet to hear from anyone who has received a payment under the RDA. The delays in processing these claims need to be urgently addressed.	The Government should fix the deadline for submission of a claim under the RDA to 90 days. Any delays in processing legitimate claims need to be urgently addressed.

Theme	Issues	Recommendation
Scope of insurance cover	As we have noted, many businesses were not insured for direct or indirect loss of trade following the riot. This is also not covered under the RDA.	The Government should either extend the scope of the RDA to include loss of trade, or conduct an awareness-raising campaign to encourage businesses to review their insurance arrangements and ensure their coverage is sufficient.
Complexity of different compensation processes	<p>While we welcome the different initiatives set up by central and local government to support people who were affected by the riots, it has made the process of financial recovery for many somewhat confusing. The various different ways of claiming for compensation and/or support need to be made clearer.</p> <p>The Panel were told that at least some insurance companies only pay out for lost trade if shops are closed under police orders. Police were often reluctant to do this. This required shopkeepers to make difficult decisions balancing personal risk with lost earnings.</p>	<p>The Government should work with insurers, local authorities and other relevant organisations to find ways to streamline compensation and support processes following disturbances.</p> <p>Each local authority should identify an officer who can provide a knowledgeable single point of contact on financial recovery to local people and businesses affected by the riots.</p> <p>The police should discuss these issues now with local businesses and ensure insurance considerations are taken into account in responding to future disturbances.</p>
Insurance	The Panel is concerned by the number of complaints it has received about the handling of insurance claims and is particularly concerned about the position of small businesses, which have reported that they have yet to receive any financial help from their insurers.	<p>The Panel seeks further information from insurers about the handling of insurance claims relating to the riots.</p> <p>Any delays in processing legitimate claims need to be urgently addressed.</p>
Supporting high streets	Some high streets continue to suffer financially. A number of shopkeepers have reported that they are still seeing fewer customers due to the riots.	The Government should start a fund to support struggling high streets, including considering using any potential underspend from the High Street Support Scheme (or other earmarked funds) to provide extra help to areas still struggling to recover.

Practical measures to help reduce the future risk of riots

The police and other public organisations, including local authorities, agree that we must learn from the August disturbances in order to reduce future riot risk. The following table makes some specific recommendations to the police and to local authorities. In some cases, our recommendations are also relevant to other local public service providers such as housing associations.

Theme	Issues	Recommendation
Physical environment	The layout of some town centres was felt to make them easier targets for looting.	Local emergency plans should include a full threat assessment and review of town centre layouts. Use of Dispersal Orders as a tool to prevent rioting should be reviewed.
CCTV	Use of CCTV footage has proved very important in bringing rioters to justice.	Local authorities and other relevant organisations should review local CCTV coverage and consider if it needs to be extended.
Effective partnerships	It is vital for local communities to build strong, functioning alliances between organisations and individuals who would be likely to assist in preventing a repeat of the riots. This may include youth groups, traders' associations, local authorities, church leaders and the police.	Local authorities should engage all frontline workers (eg, neighbourhood wardens) when there is a risk of rioting, for example to patrol the streets. Local authorities should consider asking charities and housing associations to help prevent disturbances. They should get local communities involved by creating 'community gold commands' which reflect the police 'gold command' emergency response teams and forming community reference groups.
Information management	Traditional ways of gathering and processing intelligence were too slow to compete with the speed at which rumours circulated and took hold.	The police should look at mechanisms, including links with frontline services, to improve the speed at which information can be confirmed as correct and acted on.
Trusted information sources	People were unsure about where to go for trusted information.	Local authorities and the police should draw up plans to reach key target groups when trouble is brewing, for example via detached youth workers; messages to social housing residents; messages to parents.

Theme	Issues	Recommendation
Speed of communication	Fast communication was vital, both to transmit practical messages to the public and to rebut rumours (especially via social media).	Local authorities and the police should ensure information can be spread swiftly in an emergency situation.
Access to information	Some local authorities were unable to contact key groups of people during the riots, to keep them safe or to dissuade them from rioting.	Local authorities and the police should ensure that mechanisms are in place to contact key groups of people if there is a risk of rioting.
Social media	The inability of the police and public services to use social media effectively was clearly identified as a major weakness in most areas.	Local authorities and the police should urgently review how they use social media and assess if they need to improve their capabilities.
Broadcast media	It was important to have a clear plan for engaging with local media to provide safety advice, contradict inaccurate rumours and encourage people to stay at home when trouble started.	Local authorities and the police should check if they need to revise their current media handling plans.
Appropriate messaging	It was important to provide different messages which were relevant to different groups. For example, outlining the consequences of rioting to younger adults was effective, as were messages to parents advising them to keep children indoors.	Local authorities and the police should consider in advance the messages they should provide to different groups of people if there is a risk of rioting, to ensure they can act quickly in an emergency situation.
Practical measures	<p>Some but not all local areas took precautionary measures when they identified a risk of rioting.</p> <p>In some places, there was a lack of diversionary activity.</p> <p>Riot spectators got in the way of the police and some became involved in the rioting.</p>	<p>A number of practical measures should be deployed more widely:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – removing street debris; – monitoring access to petrol, which can be used to start fires; – blocking road access to key areas; – increasing police visibility; – increasing the presence and visibility of frontline public service workers on the street. <p>Local authorities should review the use of diversionary activity when there is a risk of rioting. This could include voluntary as well as local authority services.</p>

Theme	Issues	Recommendation
Emergency plans	<p>All areas need to make sure their emergency plans can deal with the scale and changing nature of any future riots. The Panel notes that in seemingly similar circumstances police forces often responded differently in relation to the issues we highlight here.</p>	<p>Police, local authorities and other relevant organisations should immediately review their emergency plans to ensure they properly cover public disorder on the scale of the August riots.</p> <p>Police forces and HMIC may want to consider the following issues:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Should town centres be closed to the public in the run up to and during disturbances? – How can police work with large retail chains to agree on action locally? Some national chains made company-wide decisions about how to handle the riots. – Should non-riot trained officers including PCSOs and specials be utilised in dealing with riots and respond to the riot response, to what extent and in what circumstances. – When is it, and isn't it, appropriate for police to engage in riot situations, and with what equipment? – How should public transport be handled when a riot is taking place – for example should transport hubs such as rail links be shut? – How to ensure especially during peak holiday periods that police have sufficient senior officers on standby. – How can police balance the desire of people to protect their property and communities with the fact that this may have unintended consequences, including hampering police actions? – When Police and Crime Commissioners are introduced, the new arrangements will need to ensure there is adequate provision of public order trained officers and to guarantee their strategic deployment across the country when needed. <p>All methods developed to deal with rioters should bear in mind that there may also be innocent bystanders in the streets.</p> <p>In future disturbances, the police should ensure transparency in their determining the relative priority attached to defending different districts e.g, commercial / residential.</p>

Theme	Issues	Recommendation
Protecting bystanders	<p>As a result of transport companies' emergency plans, some members of the public were asked to get off public transport (for example, buses) in riot areas.</p> <p>Residents in some areas were forced onto the streets by the actions of the rioters – for example, because their homes had been set alight.</p>	<p>Transport services should ensure their emergency plans always consider the needs and safety of the travelling public.</p> <p>Local authorities and emergency services should review their processes for how to assist and/or evacuate residents caught up in riot areas.</p> <p>Local authorities should consider designating particular sites (for example community centres or churches) as potential 'safe havens' during future public disorder situations so that stranded citizens, especially children or vulnerable adults, have somewhere to go.</p>
Olympics	<p>The scale of the London Olympics already presents a significant policing challenge for next summer. It will be essential to have enough emergency services personnel available to deal with riots at the same time, if necessary.</p>	<p>Local authorities which may be affected (e.g. London authorities) should carry out proper resilience planning, incorporating scenarios which reflect the risk of a repeat of the August riots during the Olympic Games.</p>

BUILDING SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC RESILIENCE

In this chapter, we explore some of the underlying issues that we and many of the people we spoke to believe ultimately led to the riots.

Many people who spoke to us were concerned that the riots were indicative of a wider collapse in morals and values. Bankers bonuses, MPs expenses, consumerism, a lack of personal responsibility or appreciation of right from wrong demonstrated that too many individuals and organisations were taking more out of the country than they put in. This was having a corrosive effect on society. This issue is significant and complex. But the goodwill people and businesses displayed after the riots is a sign that we are all willing to do more for our communities. In the next phase of our work, we want to consider across our themes ways we can provide the right conditions for more individuals and organisations to contribute positively to society.

We recognise that there is a lot of work and effort already targeted at addressing some of the themes we identify here. We are interested in gaining further insight into the range of activity in Government, the wider public and voluntary sectors as well as the contribution that businesses can make. Clearly the perspective of think tanks and academics is also valuable. We see our role in the next few months to bring together the key players to take stock of the response to the challenges facing communities, to review what more can be done and to report on our findings in March 2012.

In considering what more we can do to address these issues, we are mindful of the tightened economic circumstances we live in. Nevertheless, we do still spend significant sums of money on public services. In addition, few we spoke with believed that solutions were entirely down to the Government; both individuals and communities recognised the need for them to share the responsibility in realising them.

Hopes and dreams

On our visits, we asked what people needed to succeed in life. We were struck by a common theme, best described in one young man's words: 'people need hopes and dreams'. This sense of injustice, powerlessness and lack of opportunity weighed heavily in their minds. They did not feel they had a stake in society.

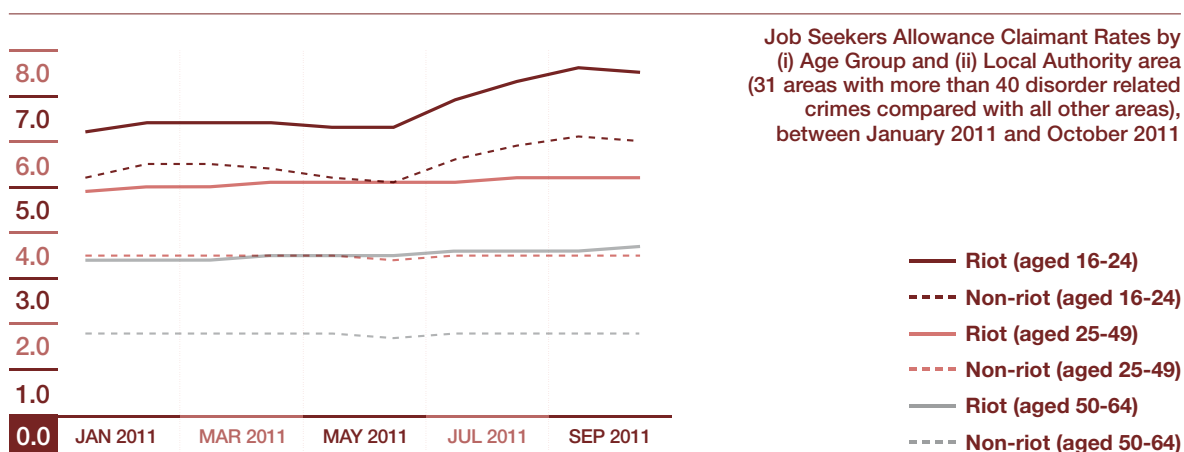
Young people across the country are worried about the prospect of long-term unemployment. While the vast majority of people we spoke to were clear that not having a job was not an excuse to do wrong: 'How does not having GCSEs give you the right to riot?', people felt that this was a significant national issue. Worklessness particularly affects deprived areas (see chart x below) and those – like the majority of the younger rioters – who have poor school records and extensive criminal records.

We acknowledge the range of employment support available through Job Centre Plus and the Work Programme launched earlier this year, as well as the recently announced Youth Contract Programme. We are also aware of the Government's imminent Youth Participation Strategy. Nonetheless, with youth unemployment over one million we believe we should consider what more can be done, particularly to help young adults furthest from the job market.

Alongside this, there is much that local public services and businesses can contribute. In riot-hit areas, entrepreneurial spirit, economic growth and job creation will be vital in order to break a cycle of long-term poverty, lack of ambition and youth unemployment.

We heard some encouraging stories. Some councils told us about projects working with local businesses which had helped create new jobs, improving whole areas; the panel are interested in the Portas review and its work looking at ways to improve local high streets in this respect and will pay close attention to its findings. There were also examples where councils had cut business rates and rents for riot - affected businesses.

We also heard about the creation of enterprise and regeneration zones, improved business/local authority cooperation and better training and education as ways of creating sustainable growth and opportunity.



Building personal resilience

In our visits to many deprived areas, we observed a sense of hopelessness. Many young people we met felt that goals many people take for granted such as getting a job or going to college or university were unachievable for them.

They believed that they were bearing the brunt of cuts caused by irresponsible bankers who had enriched themselves at the cost of others: 'There are double standards in morality' and were bitter about the rise in tuition fees and the removal of the Educational Maintenance Allowance.

Poor schools and a poor education system were also highlighted. Occasionally, people commented that failing students did not receive enough support at school: 'No one asks why you have a problem'.

However, we also talked to people who were ambitious and determined to succeed, regardless of their background.

Individuals, sometimes in the same school class as those who felt helpless, expressed optimism, self-sufficiency and a belief that hardship could be overcome: 'It's an individual choice, you deal with your own circumstances...start your own business'.

Many people spoke of a common awareness of community pride, shared values and a strong understanding of right and wrong. This was shown by the large numbers of highly motivated and passionate residents of all ages who volunteered to help clear up riot-affected areas.

The fact that these people, who had similar disadvantages in life, felt able to look positively to the future greatly impressed us.

It is clear that young people can be responsible, ambitious, determined, conscientious – all the things which their parents, schools and the community want them to be. The question is how more young people can be encouraged to develop a positive mindset even in difficult circumstances.

“There are double standards in morality.”

Children and parents

During our call for evidence, we met many people who were shocked to see so many of their fellow citizens engaged in criminal, sometimes violent behaviour, apparently oblivious to the consequences for themselves and for others. Many asked how the failure of family values may have contributed to this situation.

Two distinct messages came across everywhere we visited: firstly, children and young people telling us they feel demonised and blamed for the riots (and everything else wrong with society) and secondly, adults telling us that some children and young people are out of control.

We do not want to demonise young people. It is clear that the great majority of children and young people in this country are not causing problems. In our call for evidence, we heard many heart-warming stories of young people helping support their communities, from baking cakes for fire-fighters to turning out to clean up their neighbourhoods after the riots. But we also heard from a significant number of adults who see a problem with some young people lacking discipline, respect and values, most often evidenced through persistent low-level anti-social behaviour.

Some people believe it is the job of parents to tackle this, but many people also told us that the wider community need to take responsibility too. Adults should be willing to challenge anti-social behaviour when they see it and to support authorities who are trying to impose order, whether in school or in public.

It is clear that a small number of children do lack adult guidance or control. Both CCTV footage and eyewitness accounts showed that during the riots, a number of children, some quite young, were out on the streets without adult supervision until late at night. Whether or not those children were involved in any criminal activity, many people asked why they were allowed out at night by their parents.

At the same time, we heard from many school-age young people who were not involved in the riots. Even though they were often sympathetic to those who did take part, when we asked them why they themselves had not got involved, they usually cited their parents – either because they had been brought up with clear values which enabled them to make good choices or simply because their parents had made sure they were safely at home during the disturbances. This indicates that strong, principled parenting can be effective in helping children to stay out of trouble.

However, there are children, some as young as 11 who committed crimes during the riots and some ended up in custody. The evidence on what happens in later life to young offenders suggests that the life chances of those children could be seriously damaged by their actions during the riots. As a panel, we want to discuss further what can be done to ensure that all children get the right support, control and guidance from parents or guardians to give them the best possible chance of making the most of their lives. We would also like to understand more about the circumstances that lead to children ending up in prison and to examine what could have been done earlier in these children's lives to help them stay out of trouble.

Riots and the brands

'You are what you own'.

Over the last 20 years, we have witnessed the rise of the brands. They have employed creative marketing strategies which positioned products not only as symbols of success but also as markers of individual self-esteem. Increasingly we live in a society where conspicuous consumption and self worth have become intrinsically interlinked. Some would argue consumerism is the 'new religion'.

In the Panel's conversations with communities and young people, the desire to own goods which give the owner high status (such as branded trainers and digital gadgets) was seen as an important factor behind the riots. In addition, the idea of 'saving up' for something has been replaced by the idea that we should have what we want when we want. Levels of personal debt are in part a scary testimony to this. When asked why he rioted, one rioter responded simply 'greed'.

In our conversations both with rioters and with young people who did not riot, it was clear that brands and appliances are strongly associated with their sense of identity and status. In these riots certain brands and products were repeatedly targeted.

The anger and violence of the riots was mostly directed not towards police, homes or onlookers but towards retail and the high street. In particular, certain brands and products were repeatedly targeted. These included JD Sports, Footlocker, designer wear and mobile and electrical products.

As CCTV footage unfolded, images of rioters trying on trainers and carrying flat screen TVs and iPads frequently appeared. The ownership of luxury branded goods confers instant status. It is therefore perhaps not surprising that these goods became the rioters' main objectives.

This is not unique to young people or those who live in deprived areas. We all know that social standing in society is strongly calibrated by ownership of certain goods and brands – from luxury brands such as Louis Vuitton and Mercedes cars to Nike trainers or Diesel jeans.

Deprivation can be looked at in a variety of ways, but it is important to remember that it is relative – people understand their value not in relation to their next door neighbour but to those who are at the top of the pyramid.

As one rioter tweeted in response to the question 'Why?' – 'Because we are worth it'.

It is important to clarify that we are not in any way condoning this behaviour, it is wrong to steal, nor do we blame the brands for what happened. Rather, we are considering all the features which made these riots so extraordinary, in order to help prevent events like these from happening again.

Increasingly, the private sector, led by business leaders such as Sir William Castell, the Chairman of the Wellcome Trust, has been looking at the role of business as a response to the riots. With other companies, he has helped establish a fund to support small businesses which suffered during the riots.

Businesses and brands do not operate in a moral vacuum where right and wrong do not apply. We want to explore how ethical thinking influences the way business operates, especially given the challenging economic times we are now experiencing

Brands have a special relationship with their customer and the Panel is keen to explore how brands could use their powerful influence positively for the good of the community.



**Damage to Tottenham
Hale Retail Park, London**

'The usual suspects'

Many communities felt that the current system to help individuals turn themselves around didn't work. This could have a devastating local effect; there were simply too many people leading destructive lives within these areas.

Communities felt that rioters needed to be punished, but they also recognised that these people, primarily young men, had been punished many times before and it had not changed their behaviour. The average riot offender has committed 11 previous crimes. As the Panel were told, 'You can't punish someone back into society'.

People also talked about persistent low level crime and anti-social behaviour that was not being dealt with – shopkeepers told us that they face constant theft which they no longer report. We were told that support for people to turn their lives around, especially for those who had committed serial low level offences, was either non-existent or inadequate, especially for some young adults moving from the youth to the adult justice system.

The problems faced by many of these people are complex. They have often faced very difficult childhoods. Many are unhappy with their lives, but don't know how to turn them around. Some organisations, including those that involve local communities in their work, show significantly lower reoffending rates by bringing people back into society.

'The police are the public and the public are the police'

It is not surprising that police and policing has featured throughout our meetings and in the evidence presented to the panel.

At the outset it is important to explain and clarify our remit. The panel has not been established to address the tactical decisions made by police forces across the country; these will necessarily be the subject of other investigations. In particular the MPS has a major internal review underway.

Our role is to understand the extent to which perceptions of policing acted as an accelerator of disorder, the experience of policing by victims and communities, in riot areas and lessons for the future.

It is fair to say for the police, the summer riots will totally change the policing of public disorder for the foreseeable future. The HMIC will be making recommendations in a report to be shortly published.

In our analysis the images of police being seen to 'back off' in Tottenham and their rapid circulation across social media and broadcast news services conveyed a loss of control of the streets. This combined with a febrile rumour environment created an unprecedented explosive cocktail.

'The streets were there for the taking.'

It began to build a perception (and ultimate reality) that the street was no longer defended or defensible once resources were split. Second, the ability of social media to act as a platform for mobs to regroup and move at fast speed across the cities in ways which in effect outpaced traditional policing.

Third by the creation of endless rumour which has its own 'credibility' in the viral space, making emergency services decisions and police deployment extremely challenging.

The need for effective communication and a greater use of social media to challenge rumour and to inform the public is a major area for the MPS and other police authorities to consider in their internal reviews.

One of the complex issues to emerge is whilst there may well have been good tactical reasons for the policing decisions made initially at Tottenham. The perception of retreat acted as a call to arms throughout the country. In talking with local commanders in London and across the country all believed that the 'contagion' would not have spread if Tottenham had been contained.

The thin blue line evaporated. In effect the policing of perceptions may well have to play a role in the future. This raises complex questions for police authorities but it is crucial.

In the Panel's meetings with victims and communities there has been a significant theme of abandonment.

For many the absence of police on the streets was deeply shocking.

We heard from individuals who were trapped in their homes, calling the police services to inform them of criminal activity, of rioters throwing petrol bombs, of widespread disorder and the police service unable to respond and as one resident told us as her door was being kicked in 'the police said they were sorry but they had no one to send'.

The relationship between the police and the public, the DNA of British policing is built on confidence and consent. The August riots seriously challenged this consensus.

The panel would also wish to state that there were acts of outstanding bravery by police officers and ultimately order was restored by national support with police from around the country and Scotland sending resources to London.

There are discussions underway on the future governance and structure of leadership across the police service. This is a major debate and one which the Panel can only make a limited contribution.

The one point we would wish to stress is the requirement for the country to have a police service where in high stress situations major strategic decisions on deployment of resources can be made through a clear and simple command structure. Any reorganisation should pay real attention to how this can best be served.

Finally there will be reviews in the police on levels of force to be used. Again these are tactical matters but proportionality has been at the heart of the policing relationship with the public.

More widely, the panel were disturbed to find that a significant number of people in some communities are sceptical or even hostile to the Police.

'When I was young, I was told "If you're in trouble, go to your family, not the police" I now might need to tell my own child the same thing.'

Many people believe the police have significant work to do to rebuild trust and genuine cooperation.

Yet the Panel have also seen good examples where communities and the police – have built up strong relations, even around stop and search. One police force talked with some pride about the fact that some local groups had deliberately avoided getting involved in the disturbances because 'they felt they would be letting us down'.

We have been told by a number of officers that they feel there has been a breakdown in one of the founding police principles: 'the police are the public and the public are the police'. In some communities, the police are no longer seen as members of the public who work full-time on duties which are also the responsibility of every citizen.

'In some communities, the police are no longer viewed as they once were.'

CONTACT DETAILS

If you were affected by the riots and have a view on the themes raised in this report we want to hear from you, so please get in touch.

You can submit a detailed response or just one or two lines. It is all important.

There are several different ways to have your voice heard.

You can:

- respond via the online form linked to this report at www.5daysinaugust.co.uk
- email your views to riotspanel@communities.gsi.gov.uk
- follow us on Twitter - @riotspanel
- write to the Panel at:
Riots Panel
6th floor
Eland House
Bressenden Place
London
SW1E 5DU

If you are writing or emailing us please include your age and where you live. This will help us to see how views vary across different groups and areas.

We expect to receive evidence from organisations too, for example faith groups, businesses, charities and community groups, who will all wish to take views from their members and communities.

Deadline for submitting evidence

The deadline for submitting evidence to be included in the final report is 1 February 2012.

Personal information

By providing personal information to the Riots Communities and Victims Panel it is understood that you consent to its disclosure and publication. If this is not the case, you should limit any personal information provided, or remove it completely.

If you want the information you provide, or any part of it, to be kept confidential, you should explain why as part of your response. However, we cannot guarantee confidentiality as all information contained in your response may be subject to publication or disclosure if requested under the Freedom of Information Act 2000. Nor can we give assurance that any disclosure you make which could implicate you in any criminal activity will not be disclosed in the event of criminal proceedings being brought against you in relation to that activity.