


New Year, new Home Sec, new police service?

 After rumblings of mutiny amongst the Labour back benches and ahead of the publication of the Budd Report Mr Blunkett stood down as Home Secretary last month. Within hours the announcement came from Downing Street - the king is dead, long live the king - Charles Clarke is the new Home Secretary.

Mr Clarke takes the reigns at one of the most important times for policing in England and Wales since modern policing began with radical plans for an overhaul of the police service. The Government's proposed policies for Police Reform will substantially change nearly two centuries of policing traditions.

In interviews immediately following his appointment Mr Clarke rightly identified this is an

important time for policing, with a number of Home Office Bills before Parliament. The Serious Organised Crime and Policing Bill is arguably one of the most important, providing the infrastructure for a new national policing agency to tackle serious and organised crime. So, here are some suggestions for Mr Clarke's New Year resolutions for the police service.

This month Jan Berry, Police Federation Chairman, tells *Police* that the creation of the Serious Organised Crime Agency (SOCA) and the rationalisation of the organisations that currently exist is absolutely right, but it must not just become a stand-alone Agency. It must be integrated into, and complement, the current policing structure if it is to

work effectively. Mr Clarke must also stop current plans to make NCS and NCIS officers who transfer to SOCA Agency staff and no longer independent, impartial sworn officers of the crown. Mrs Berry states that as fighting serious and organised crime is a key policing activity SOCA must be incorporated into the police structure and staffed by fully sworn apolitical police officers.

Mr Clarke also needs to stop the proposal to civilianise the role of custody sergeants. Custody is a core policing function, not merely a processing operation. Custody officers make decisions about whether someone should be detained or go free, whether arrests are lawful or not. Only police officers have the authoritative accountability to carry out

such an important and responsible role. To civilianise the position of custody sergeant will place in jeopardy the well being of police officers and prisoners.

Let us hope that we get an early assurance from the new Home Secretary that he intends to uphold his predecessors promise of a minimum of 140,000 fully sworn police officers to form the foundation on which a modern police service is built.



What do you think?
We would like to hear your views on the issues discussed in this month's magazine.
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In Focus



Keeping up with criminals and the sophisticated technologies they employ to be able to commit crime requires the police service to be one step ahead predicting future crimes. **Page 14**



Metropolitan Police Commissioner, Sir John Stevens, who retires this month looks back at changes in the police service and plans for the future. **Page 19**



Syreeta Lund reports on why Liverpool City Council want to be the first to introduce a managed zone where prostitutes can work freely, but where they also have support to leave a life on the game. **Page 22**