

The Rt Hon James Cleverly MP
The Home Secretary
2 Marsham Street
London
SW1P 4DF

Our ref: MOPAC061023-D4741

29 November 2023

Dear James,

An Inspection of the Metropolitan Police Service's handling of the sexual and criminal exploitation of children.

Thank you for the recent inspection and for identifying the two accelerated causes of concern, which have been issued to the MPS, whilst we await the publication of the full report. In bringing these accelerated causes of concern to the forefront, the MPS can effectively prioritise and advance change as soon as is practicable, to better ensure the safety of children in London. It was the Mayor and I, who had raised concerns about the MPS's ability to identify and understand the scale of Child Exploitation and their approach to multi agency working. Those concerns, alongside the wider public protection issues that HMICFRS raised in the MPS Peel 2021/22 report led to MOPAC commissioning this inspection by HMICFRS.

Since the accelerated causes for concern were published on the 6th October 2023, the MPS have responded and I will address the two specific accelerated causes of concern, summarising actions being undertaken and proposed by the MPS:

Cause of concern

The force needs to improve how it identifies and assesses risks, and how it responds, when children are reported missing.

Recommendation

By 31 December 2023, the MPS should make sure that, in respect of missing children:

- Those responsible for grading the risks to which each missing child is exposed are sufficiently trained and able to appropriately assess the risks, using all relevant information held by or available to the force;*
- It appropriately assesses risk in all cases; and*
- It investigates cases of missing children effectively from the first point of contact and that its response is proportionate to the level of risk.*

The MPS are responding by having consolidated the staffing of the Resource and Demand Teams, who receive all of the Missing Person reports from the 101/999 call handling team, to remove rotation and build expertise. Those officers and staff are receiving new bespoke training, alongside other identified officers and it will focus on providing clarity regarding the need to consider 'serious harm' when grading high risk cases and ensure the MPS is fully adopting the College of Policing APP in this area.

The MPS are seeking to ensure that the response to high risk missing investigations, including children will be a co-ordinated response drawing on multiple policing resources to ensure actions are swiftly progressed. Additionally, where investigations relating to missing children involve concerns regarding exploitation there will be a requirement for specialist Exploitation teams to progress the investigation at the earliest opportunity, which ensures a response that reflects the additional complexity of the concerns.

Enhanced levels of supervision for those missing children, which are not graded as high risk, have been introduced with the Detective Inspector reviewing them and a discussion at the public protection pacesetter meetings. Whilst those graded as high risk will continue to be subject to Senior Leadership oversight. An audit team will oversee progress and increase consistency.

In conjunction with the more immediate actions, the MPS are working through a proposal for a longer-term solution, with the introduction of a Central Vulnerability Hub.

Cause of concern

The force should improve its investigations when children are at risk or, or harmed by, criminal or sexual exploitation.

Recommendation

By 31 December 2023, the MPS should make sure that:

- *It allocates exploitation investigations to officers and staff who have the appropriate knowledge and skills;*
- *Supervisors review investigations regularly, clearly record any work that is still needed and monitor deadlines for completion;*
- *It follows all reasonable lines of enquiry to identify suspects;*
- *It pursues evidence-led prosecutions and appropriate disruption activities in circumstances when a victim doesn't support an investigation; and*
- *It complies with the requirements for forces established in the Code of Practice for Victims of Crime in England and Wales.*

The MPS have responded with mandatory training being scheduled across November and December and with new terms of reference and toolkits being developed. Performance data will be included in the monthly public protection pack, overseen by the Commander Public Protection and used locally to monitor and drive improvement. Similarly, to the response to Missing People, audits will be completed in relation to exploitation investigations to monitor both compliance and quality of supervision. Regarding certain policing operations, work will commence to expand the terms of reference to include all forms of child exploitation.

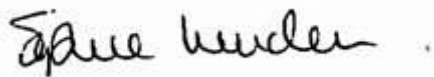
In the longer-term the MPS are developing a new target operating model for public protection and a new programme of training.

MOPAC has been engaged with the MPS since the causes of concern were published, including reviewing their immediate plan to implement the required changes and providing feedback. I expect the MPS to now share with MOPAC on a quarterly basis their wider strengthening public protection programme plan, including details of how the required improvements in tackling child exploitation and responding to missing children will be implemented as part of overall reform in this area.

The scale of the challenge is significant and one we do not underestimate. The MPS has numerous vacancies in public protection posts and difficulties in recruiting experienced investigators. The cultural change required will also not be easy, with the MPS needing to focus on how they deal with officer's preconceptions and approach to children, as identified in the concerns. This is all within the context of providing a response to the challenging wider London policing issues.

The Mayor and I are committed to providing support and challenge to the MPS in this area. The recent establishment of the London Policing Board provides a key mechanism for the Mayor to hold the MPS to account in public. The Board will be keen to ensure that children in London are protected and the MPS puts in place reform around both systemic and cultural practices. I will use this and our oversight meetings to hold the Commissioner and his senior team to account on this important issue for Londoners.

Yours sincerely,



Sophie Linden
Deputy Mayor for Policing And Crime

Cc: Lee Freeman KPM
HM Inspector of Constabulary and HM Inspector of Fire & Rescue Services