

DMPC Decision – PCD 1608

Title: Improving support for girls and young women affected by gangs, violence and exploitation

Executive Summary:

This decision outlines the proposal to initiate a commissioning process to develop and deliver a range of activities to improve identification, awareness and support for girls and young women affected by gangs, violence and exploitation.

There are significant barriers currently to identification of girls and young women in this situation. Services can only support those that are identified and referred. Building on learning from the evaluation of VRU commissioned programmes such as Maia and recent work by MOPAC's Evidence & Insight team it has been highlighted there is considerable work to be done in raising awareness and improving identification. The three strands of work outlined below aim to increase awareness, improve identification, quality and quantity of support available across MOPAC, the VRU and other partners.

The proposed commissioning activity includes:

1. Creation, development and support of a network of linked girls and young women's groups within local communities, which will provide a safe space for positive peer connection for those who have been impacted by violence and exploitation, to support trauma-responsive individual development and co-development of proposals to improve systems and services for girls and young women. These groups will also have the opportunity to work together to collaboratively co-develop ideas, proposals, recommendations and resources and so will operate as an 'eco-system'.
2. Improving understanding of how to define and identify girls and young women affected by violence and exploitation with the creation of a gendered risk and needs assessment framework.
3. Funding analytic activity with the MPS to bring together data across building capability and capacity in the gathering and analysis of data relating to girls and young women impacted by violence and exploitation.

These new work streams align with existing commissioned services within the VRU (Violence Reduction Unit), MOPAC's Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) commissioned services and will ensure that they are developed with a collaborative approach and a commitment to sharing learning throughout.

The activity outlined in work strand (1) builds on, expands and adds value to MOPAC's recently commissioned Violence and Exploitation Service, which provides a gender specific response to the harms experienced by girls and young women in relation to gangs, violence and exploitation.

Recommendation:

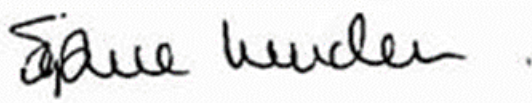
The Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime is recommended to:

1. Approve a budget of up to £1,000,000 to develop an eco-system of girls and young women's groups to include grant funding of local community organisations and contracted co-ordination of these grants across 2024/25, 2025/26 and 2026/27.
2. Approval to proceed to procurement via the following routes
 - Proceed to procurement for a coordinating provider (workstream 1)
 - Proceed to a competitive grant process (workstream 1)
 - Proceed to advertised Request for Quote (RFQ) for £70,000 (workstream 2)
 - Proceed with a Service Level Agreement with the Metropolitan Police Service (workstream 3)
3. Delegate authority to sign the associated contract and agree the specific funding amounts related to the work described to the Director of Commissioning & Partnerships.

Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime

I confirm I have considered whether or not I have any personal or prejudicial interest in this matter and take the proposed decision in compliance with the Code of Conduct. Any such interests are recorded below.

The above request has my approval.

Signature 

Date 30/07/2024

PART I - NON-CONFIDENTIAL FACTS AND ADVICE TO THE DMPC

1. Introduction and background

- 1.1. Reducing and preventing violence and protecting people from being exploited or harmed are key priorities in London's Police and Crime Plan (PCP) 2022-25. There is a key focus on preventing and reducing violence affecting young people and making London a city in which women and girls are safer and feel safer. Tackling violence is a top priority for the Mayor and the PCP commits to continuing to invest in the provision of support for children and young people impacted by violence – including those seen to be offenders but have also often experienced victimisation – to reduce the risk of violence to both themselves and others.

- 1.2. MOPAC has been commissioning support for girls and young women impacted by violence since 2016 through London Gang Exit (LGE) and Empower and since 2018 through Rescue and Response. These services support girls and young women, as part of wider provision, aiming to reduce violent victimisation, reduce violent offending and reduce harmful behaviours in relation to violence and exploitation.
- 1.3. An Alliance model has now been procured and is in the process of mobilisation with the aim of continuing this work. The new violence & exploitation services will continue to provide direct 1:1 support to girls and young women (as did the successor services) however, it is recognised that these services and the systems within which they operate are mostly designed with the needs of young men and boys in mind (notably those presenting as both victims and perpetrators of serious youth violence), leaving young women and girls at risk of violence and exploitation related harm. They also focus on 1:1 intervention at the point of active harm.
- 1.4. Both 1:1 and group work support for girls and young women have been commissioned by the VRU, through programmes such as Maia which operates at a prevention and early intervention stage to deliver direct support. Learning from this programme, and others in the VRU such as Lift and MyEnds will continue to inform understanding of what works and what is needed.
- 1.5. As evidenced by the recent research conducted by MOPAC's Evidence and Insight team, there is at present a lack of data and literature relating to girls and young women who have experience of gangs, violence and exploitation. This 'invisibility' of girls and young women leads to a limited and inaccurate understanding around the risks, impact and needs that they face.
- 1.6. The number of girls and young women in London who are associated with gangs and/or group offending is not currently known. Official statistics from the Metropolitan Police show 0.2% of those recorded on the Gangs Violence Matrix are femaleⁱ and only approximately 20/1500 of gang flagged offences that are proceeded against yearly are for femalesⁱⁱⁱⁱⁱ. However, research has shown that an estimated 30-50% of gang members nationally are female^{iv v vi} suggesting that current London data capture mechanisms may not be reliable.
- 1.7. It is also recognised that gang association or membership is just one metric to understand the impact of gangs, violence and exploitation on girls and young women and does not fully encompass their experiences or associated harms. Data from MOPAC commissioned services working to support young people affected by gangs and/or group offending also highlights there are significant numbers of girls and young women involved; 38% of new starters within Safer London's LGE service were female during FY2022-23.
- 1.8. Due to the complexity of their experiences, their cases are not presenting in a unified, cohesive way on a single system, but rather presenting in a range of areas including but not limited to: missing persons, child sexual exploitation, criminal exploitation, domestic abuse, stalking, online harms, homelessness, modern slavery, and serious youth violence.
- 1.9. MOPAC Evidence and Insight (E&I) have recently produced an interim research report to establish a baseline of available evidence and identify interconnected issues that affect girls and young women in terms of group offending and/or gang association. Early insights from this interim report highlight the need to promote a shared

awareness and understanding of girls and young women involved or affected by gangs and/or group offending across the sector and the need to better understand what current response at a local level looks like. There are also some emerging insights related to commissioned provision, including the need for delivery that would support understanding around the drivers and needs of young women and girls in this context.

2. Issues for consideration

- 2.1. A new approach to commissioning across two years (2024/25, 2025/26 and 2026/27) is being proposed with the following overarching outcomes being sought across this programme:
 - 2.1..1. Improved, contemporary understanding of the needs of this cohort beyond the gang member narrative.
 - 2.1..2. Improved identification of girls and young women impacted by gangs, violence and exploitation.
 - 2.1..3. Improved understanding of 'what works' to best support this cohort.
 - 2.1..4. Reduction in gang, violence and exploitation related harm experienced by girls and young women.
- 2.2. This approach has been informed by the interim learning from the Evidence and Insight commissioned research by the University of Bedfordshire, and a collaborative development process that has involved the VRU, VAWG team and other internal MOPAC stakeholders. There is agreement that this approach does not duplicate existing programmes and offers an opportunity to add value and expand learning and impact.
- 2.3. There are three identified strands to the proposed commissioned delivery that collectively contribute to the above outcomes and sit alongside existing commissioned delivery.
- 2.4. The primary and multiyear activity is to establish and support an eco-system of girls and young women's groups to provide a safe space for positive peer connection for those who have been impacted by violence and exploitation, to support trauma-responsive individual development and co-development of proposals to improve systems and services for girls and young women.
- 2.5. This approach is underpinned by international evidence on the value of group spaces for girls and young women, a theme that also emerged from MOPAC Evidence and Impact commissioned research undertaken by the University of Bedfordshire. It will likely be co-developed with funded groups/projects, underpinned by the principle aim of reducing harm and future risk of violence and exploitation perpetration and victimisation for girls and young women. The aim of the work is to create safe spaces for connection, peer identification, support and post-trauma recovery and growth; to create a network of girls and young women affected by violence and exploitation who can inform, advise and co-create approaches to effective and impactful support; and to create the foundations for the next generation of practitioners. The programme will be trauma-informed, rooted in an understanding of intersectionality, and underpinned by youth work principles.

- 2.6. The second area of commissioned delivery is focused on an improved risk/needs framework. We know that the current risk assessment frameworks traditionally applied to girls and young women (e.g., the Domestic Abuse, Stalking Harassment and Honour Based Violence Assessment or those carried out within existing Child Protection frameworks), are not effective in identifying those affected by gangs, violence and exploitation and that the existing/emerging mechanisms for identifying that cohort such as Multiagency Child Exploitation Panels (MACE) are often focused on boys and young men often resulting in girls and young women falling through the gaps and not getting the support they need.
- 2.7. This work therefore aims to deepen and improve our understanding of how to define and identify girls and young women affected by violence and exploitation with the development of gendered risk and needs assessment frameworks. This is likely to include a scoping and assessment exercise, the development of a new needs and risk assessment, and/or the development of a toolkit for providers and public sector agencies to respond appropriately to this cohort of children and young people.
- 2.8. The third strand is also focused on bettering our understanding of the issues through improved research & data profiles. As above this area is not currently well understood in London. There is a shared commitment between MOPAC and the Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) to explore opportunities and options to improve the evidence and analysis profile of young women and girls who have experienced gangs, violence and exploitation through the gathering and analysis of data. The current option being explored is the potential funding of a fixed term MPS intelligence analyst to proactively join up a range of MPS data sets (e.g., missing people, gangs, firearms) to try and create a better joined up picture of what is known, alternative options to fulfil this function within Evidence and Insight are also being explored as we await updates from the MPS. If the MPS were able to commit to the delivery of this work without budget allocation as part of this proposal this would increase the value of the peer support work element.

3. Financial Comments

- 3.1. The total budget requirement for this work is up to £1,000,000. The programme will be funded from within the Commissioning & Partnership Directorate's core funding across financial years 2024/25 (£500,000) and 2025/26 (£500,000) with spending rolled forward into 2026/27.
- 3.2. The table below sets out estimated budget allocations for 2024/25 and 2025/26:

Proposed Expenditure	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	Total
1) Eco-system creation, development and support	£93,750 - £116, 250	£375,000 - £465,000	£281,250 - £348,750	From £750,000 and not to exceed £930,000

2) Risk and Needs Assessment Framework	£70,000	N/A	N/A	£70,000
3) Data analysis in partnership with the Met	TBC	TBC	N/A	Up to £70,000 (budget requirement to be confirmed)

- 3.3 If the estimated budget allocations are correct and due to the delay in the start in the commission process then there will need to be some carry forward of the 2024/25 budget to 2025/26 and then in to 2026/27, subject to DMPC approval.

4. Legal Comments

- 4.1. MOPAC's general powers are set out in the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011 (the 2011 Act). Section 3(6) of the 2011 Act provides that MOPAC must "secure the maintenance of the Metropolitan Police Service and secure that the Metropolitan Police Service is efficient and effective." Under Schedule 3, paragraph 7 (1) MOPAC has wide incidental powers to "do anything which is calculated to facilitate, or is conducive or incidental to, the exercise of the functions of the Office." Paragraph 7(2) (a) provides that this includes entering into contracts and other agreements.
- 4.2. Section 143 (1) (b) of the Anti-Social, Behaviour Crime and Policing Act 2014 provides for MOPAC to provide or commission services "intended by the local policing body to victims or witnesses of or other persons affected by, offences and anti-social behaviour."
- 4.3. There are further relevant powers set out in the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 at sections 17(1) (a) to (c) which place MOPAC under a duty to exercise its functions with due regard to the likely effect of the exercise of those functions on, and the need to do all it can to prevent, crime and disorder (including anti-social and other behaviour adversely affecting the local environment), reoffending in its area, and the misuse of drugs, alcohol and other substances in its area. The proposed arrangements are consistent with MOPAC's duties in the Crime and Disorder Act 1998.
- 4.4. Under MOPAC's Scheme of Consent and Delegation, the DMPC has delegated authority for the award of contracts with a total value of £500,000 or above.
- 4.5. The delegation of responsibility for the finalisation of planning and of contracts and other arrangements, including relevant terms and the signing of agreements, to the Director of Commissioning & Partnerships is in accordance with the general power of delegation in paragraph 1.7 of the MOPAC Scheme of Consent and Delegation.

5. Commercial Issues

- 5.1. This Decision seeks to proceed to procurement for a lead/coordinating provider and to proceed to a competitive grant process to provide support for girls and young women affected by gangs, violence and exploitation, at a combined value up to £930,000.

- 5.2. Further, this Decision seeks to proceed to procurement for an advertised request for quotations process for the delivery of a risk and needs assessment framework, at a value up to £70,000.

This Decision also seeks to establish an SLA with the MPS for provision of data analysis services in this area, up to a value of £70,000.

An indicative timetable is provided below:

Programme Area	Market Warming	Publish Tender	Evaluation	Delivery Start
Eco System	May 2024	September 2024	October 2024	January 2025
Risk and Needs Assessment	July 2024	September 2024	October 2024	December 2024
Data and Analysis	N/A	N/A	N/A	December 2024

- 5.3. All three procurement processes were approved at the Procurement, Contract and Grants Board at MOPAC on 13th February 2024. In accordance with MOPAC's Scheme of Delegation, requests to go out to tender between £50k and £499k must be approved by the Chief Executive, and requests in excess of £500k must be approved by the DMPC.
- 5.4. Professional, technical advice has been sought from MOPAC's Procurement Team. The actions proposed can be taken in compliance with procurement legislation and MOPAC's Contract Regulations.

5. Public Health Approach

- a. City Hall's public health approach to violence recognises the tiers of intervention/opportunities to act. The Violence Reduction Unit looks at violence as a preventable consequence of a range of factors, such as adverse early-life experiences, or harmful social or community experiences and influences intervening early when issues start to emerge and resolving them prior to escalation.
- b. The ambition of the programme is to improve understanding of the experiences of girls and young women. The focus will be engaging those who have experienced harm but with learning drawn from across primary, secondary and tertiary delivery and engagement including VRU programmes such as Maia.
- c. The outputs and outcomes from the programme will inform and support development of future responses to gang, violence and exploitation related harm experienced by girls and young women at all levels of the public health approach and across both MOPAC and the VRU.

6. GDPR and Data Privacy

- 5.5. MOPAC will adhere to the Data Protection Act (DPA) 2018 and ensure that any local authorities who are commissioned to do work with or on behalf of MOPAC are fully compliant with the policy and understand their GDPR responsibilities.

7. Equality Comments

- 5.6. MOPAC is required to comply with the public sector equality duty set out in section 149(1) of the Equality Act 2010. This requires MOPAC to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations by reference to people with protected characteristics. The protected characteristics are: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.
- 5.7. This decision supports initiatives for young victims, but particularly those victims of more serious crimes, vulnerable and repeat victims, and particular sections of the community who are over-represented amongst victims of crime.
- 5.8. Violence, exploitation and related criminality involving children and young people are areas of continuing concern, both nationally and in London – particularly in the context of groups and gangs.
- 5.9. Whilst well documented rises in violent crime since 2014 appear to be stabilising – especially for the most serious weapon enabled offences – such criminality remains a significant problem in London, and one that disproportionately impacts specific areas and groups, notably young people in areas of high deprivation.
- 5.10. The recent Serious Youth Violence Problem Profile of Violence, Gangs and Young People found disproportionality across violent crime. Half of weapon enabled robbery suspects (50%) and nearly half (46%) of homicide suspects were Black. Victim profiles are more diverse (42% of weapon enabled robbery victims were white) but the majority of youth homicide victims are male (93%) and Black (60%).
- 5.11. Youth homicide has increased with 23% of homicides having teen victims. Those in their late teens are more likely to be the victims of violence with those 18yrs of age most likely to be victimised for both homicides and overall violence. Teenage violence is largely a peer-on-peer offence, with 77% of the accused also being teenagers.
- 5.12. Ethnicity data from MOPAC's commissioned services also indicate disproportionality within the cohort of children and young people accessing and being referred into these services. The 2022 Rescue & Response Strategic Assessment indicated that referrals for White, Asian and Other ethnicities are under-represented compared to the London population. Referrals for Black or Mixed ethnicities are over-represented compared to the London population.
- 5.13. The London Gang Exit Impact Report reflects this disproportionality, identifying 63% of the cohort accessing interventions through LGE were Black, compared to 13% of the cohort who were White.

- 5.14. The gendered nature of violence and exploitation demands any service that aims to tackle these issues possesses a thorough understanding of how different mechanisms by which young men and boys and young women and girls are exploited, and how this exploitation can manifest. Findings from the Children's Commissioner in 2019 indicated that girls accounted for approximately 34% of the 6,830 children aged under 17 in England assessed by councils as being involved in gangs (2019).
- 5.15. This decision focuses on the specific needs of girls and young women, with recognition that the racial disproportionality that is described in point 8.7 is likely to apply to this cohort, and that the lack of intersectional data (data that considers both gender and race) will be a key requirement for focus within the proposed data analysis function of this proposed commissioned activity.
- 5.16. It is critical that the service in this decision seeks to provide intersectional interventions to address and respond to the needs and demands of all children and young people, as highlighted by current literature. This extends to the mechanisms by which the service reaches out to the children and young people in need of these interventions, but also as to how the service continues to listen to and adapt to the ever-changing needs of the children and young people who will benefit from this service.

8. Background/supporting papers

Appendix 1 – [Serious Youth Violence Problem Profile](#)

Appendix 2 – [London Gang Exit Impact Report](#)

Appendix 3 – [Rescue & Response - Strategic Assessment \(2022\)](#)

Public access to information

Information in this form (Part 1) is subject to the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA) and will be made available on the MOPAC website following approval.

If immediate publication risks compromising the implementation of the decision it can be deferred until a specific date. Deferral periods should be kept to the shortest length strictly necessary.

Part 1 Deferral:

Is the publication of Part 1 of this approval to be deferred? NO

If yes, for what reason:

Until what date:

Part 2 Confidentiality: Only the facts or advice considered as likely to be exempt from disclosure under the FOIA should be in the separate Part 2 form, together with the legal rationale for non-publication.

Is there a **Part 2** form – NO

ORIGINATING OFFICER DECLARATION	<i>Tick to confirm statement (✓)</i>
Financial Advice: The Strategic Finance and Resource Management Team has been consulted on this proposal.	✓
Legal Advice: Legal advice is not required.	✓
Equalities Advice: Equality and diversity issues are covered in the body of the report.	✓
Public Health Approach Due diligence has been given to determine whether the programme sits within the Violence Reduction Unit's public approach to reducing violence. This has been reviewed and supported by a senior manager within the VRU.	✓
Commercial Issues The Procurement Contract and Grants Team has been consulted on the commercial issues within this report. The proposal is in keeping with the GLA Group Responsible Procurement Policy.	✓
GDPR/Data Privacy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> GDPR compliance issues are covered in the body of the report. A DPIA is not required. 	✓
Drafting Officer Nicky Hill has drafted this report in accordance with MOPAC procedures.	✓
Director/Head of Service: The Head of Policy and Commissioning has reviewed the request and is satisfied it is correct and consistent with the MOPAC's plans and priorities.	✓

Chief Executive Officer

I have been consulted about the proposal and confirm that financial, legal and equalities advice has been taken into account in the preparation of this report. I am satisfied that this is an appropriate request to be submitted to the Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime.



Signature

Date 30/07/2024

ⁱ Metropolitan Police Service Gangs Violence Matrix Q4 2021/22 data, accessed at <https://www.met.police.uk/police-forces/metropolitan-police/areas/about-us/about-the-met/gangs-violence-matrix/>

ⁱⁱ MOPAC Gang Crime and Serious Youth Violence Dashboard <https://www.london.gov.uk/what-we-do/mayors-office-policing-and-crime-mopac/data-and-statistics/crime%20gangs-dashboard> (Accessed 22/06/22)

ⁱⁱⁱ Questioning the Mayor at Mayor's Question Time 17th October 2019, <https://www.london.gov.uk/questions/2019/199764>

^{iv} Auyong, ZE, Smith, S, Ferguson, CJ (2018) Girls in gangs: Exploring risk in a British youth context. *Crime and Delinquency* 64: 1698–1717. <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/0011128718763130>

^v Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW) estimates of the distribution by sex of children aged 10 to 15 years who are gang members or know a gang member, year ending March 2016 to year ending March 2018: <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/crimeandjustice/adhocs/009891crimesurveyforenglandandwalescsewestimatesofthedistributionbysexofchildrenaged10to15yearswhoaregangmembersorknowagangmemberearendingmarch2016toyearendingmarch2018>

^{vi} Eshalomi, F. (2020). Gang Associated Girls: Supporting young women at risk. London Assembly report. https://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/gang_associated_girls.pdf