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Date: 19/02/2025

Dear Susan,

I am writing to you in your capacity as Chairman of the London Assembly's Police and Crime Committee. In particular, I am responding to the Committee's report on preventing violence and protecting young people which was sent to me by your predecessor.

I note the report included a number of recommendations for the MPS. For ease, our response to these recommendations is enclosed in the annex.

Please accept my apologies for the delay to this reply. As a result of the London Assembly elections in May and restructuring within some MPS teams since then, it has taken us longer than we would have liked to come back to you. However, as you will see, yet again we have been extremely active in this space and I am pleased to share a number of significant updates with you and other Committee members.

Yours sincerely,

Commander Kevin Southworth – Head of Profession (Public Protection)

Recommendation 2 – It is vital for the Met to prioritise safeguarding children and young people, finding the right balance between prevention and enforcement. This should be reflected in the Met’s new Children and Young People’s Strategy which is due for publication shortly.

The MPS prioritises the safeguarding of children and young people. This is embedded in the MPS’ Children’s Strategy, which was published in September 2024.

The strategy makes clear our safeguarding responsibilities, as well as also making clear where enforcement activity is needed, this will be delivered through a safeguarding lens.

In addition, the strategy includes detailed commitments regarding deferred prosecution and diversion schemes, ensuring a strong focus on prevention and opportunities for children and young people.

Recommendation 3 – The voices and experiences of young people must be at the heart of the delivery of the Met’s Children and Young People’s Strategy. The Met must engage with the VRU’s Young People’s Action Group (YPAG) to ensure the voices of children and young people in London are heard. The Met should establish its own diverse youth panel representative of London to support delivery of its strategy, drawing upon the expertise and experiences of the VRU’s YPAG, amongst others. The YPAG should be consulted on the design of the panel.

To ensure the voices of children and young people in London are heard, the MPS engaged extensively with a number of children’s forums as part of drafting the Children’s Strategy. Everyone consulted was also invited to attend the launch event in September 2024 in recognition of their contribution.

Further, as part of the strategy, there is a commitment for each of London’s 12 Basic Command Units (BCUs) to develop local forums to ensure children’s voices are heard locally.

This will also be replicated at a London-level. Plans for this are being considered at present with a view to progressing this year.

Recommendation 4 – By the end of December 2024, the Met must set out a plan and timetable to train every frontline officer in youth engagement as it embeds its child-first approach; the Children and Young People’s Strategy; and the New Met for London programme. This should include training to develop cultural competence, to avoid “adultification” and criminalisation of children and young people as it continues its journey to fix the foundations of the Met.

As part of *A New Met for London*, we are investing in our workforce through 2.5 dedicated days of training for 32,000 colleagues focused on culture, diversity, inclusion, our values and

services to the public. Almost 11,000 officers and staff have completed this training as of December 2024.

In addition, we have trained more than 11,000 of our workforce in the identification of child exploitation.

Through Phase 2 of *A New Met for London*, we will training more than 20,000 officers and staff on adultification, victim-blaming language and communicating with children in a trauma informed way. This will launch in April with a view to training approx. 900 officers and staff each week until the end of summer 2025.

Recommendation 7 – The VRU should provide a forum for Met officers, schools and youth practitioners to come together to explore how they can strengthen the support they are providing to children and young people impacted by violence.

We are working with the VRU to review best practice from local partnerships. We will communicate and promote examples of where officers and youth workers have worked effectively in partnership, with a view to holding a best practice conference this year, bringing together senior local policing leaders, local authorities and youth workers.

Recommendation 8 – The Met should conduct a thorough review of the role of Safer Schools Officers and how they are supporting children and young people affected by violence. This review should include the voices of teachers, youth practitioners, children, young people and their family networks. The Met should publish the findings of the review by 31 December 2024.

In line with *A New Met for London*, we are launching a new youth policing model for London.

Whilst our Safer Schools Officers have done great work, their role across the capital varies significantly. In particular, in some cases officers have taken on the role and responsibilities better suited to other agencies. As such, we have moved away from core policing responsibilities in some areas, creating disparities in the service we are providing to Londoners.

In spring, our Safer Schools Officers will transition to become Dedicated Ward Officers, strengthening our neighbourhood policing teams. The new model will maintain strong links with schools, whilst focusing on boosting police presence in the community and those places where people face the greatest risk, for example, in those transitional spaces, like the journey from home to school.

For the avoidance of doubt, although officers will no longer be permanently based in schools, every school will still have a dedicated point of contact.

Our new approach reflects community feedback showing the great value the public puts on visible policing and action to address neighbourhood crime. It also draws on a significant amount of research, including the report by the London Policing Ethics Panel.

Recommendation 9 – The Committee recommends that the Met reviews its knife imagery policy; and reiterates its recommendation that the Met ceases sharing such images, in line with the Motion passed by the London Assembly at its Plenary Meeting on 2 December 2021.

We fully appreciate that there is an important and ongoing debate around sharing images of knives on social media. We also appreciate that a number of pieces of research have been carried out in this space and we continue to engage with various agencies, groups and sections of the public to understand the different points of view.

Historically, the MPS has shared images to highlight the work of our officers and their successful results. This has helped to reassure communities that we are committed to targeting those carrying weapons and fuelling violence on our streets. There is also research to suggest this is important to communities.

The MPS continues to keep its approach on this matter under review.

Recommendation 10 – The Mayor should work with the Met to prevent disproportionality in the use of stop and search; and continue to use his oversight powers to hold the Met to account for the use of stop and search.

We know that support for Stop and Search varies amongst communities, especially those who are disproportionately impacted by its use. In particular, Black Londoners have told us how Stop and Search creates a void between communities and the police. With street violence disproportionately impacting young Black men across the capital, our activity is often focused on those areas suffering greatest harm. This means greater contact between the police and London's Black communities, which is why it is so vital we build trust in our approach, and garner their support for the tactics we use to keep London safe.

The new Stop and Search Charter, which has been co-created with Londoners, including communities most impacted by its use, is an important step in showing that the MPS is listening, committed to rebuilding trust and will work with communities to ensure that the power is used fairly, whilst still reducing violence on our street.

Recommendation 11 – The Met should publish the results of its Stop and Search Charter survey as soon as reasonably practicable, including any proposals arising from the outcome of the survey. The Met should confirm the timeline for finalising the Charter.

We plan to launch our Stop and Search Charter later this month. This is something we committed to in *A New Met for London*. It also follows a recommendation that came out of the Casey Review.

Launching the charter is an opportunity to tackle complex narratives between community trust and community safety. It will make commitments to Londoners about how stop and search should be undertaken, supervised and scrutinised.

It has been co-created through 18 months of significant engagement with the public, including those most affected by its use.

Out of this extensive engagement, eight themes emerged where Londoners felt we need to focus to rebuild trust and confidence. We tested these themes with 8,500 Londoners in a series of surveys and last May, 80 young people between the ages of 16 and 23 were invited to New Scotland Yard to interpret feedback and write the charter.

We believe the Stop and Search Charter will be an important step to rebuilding trust and confidence with Londoners, creating a fairer and better governed process, whilst giving officers the guidance and support they need to do their job. At the same time, we will also make the case for increased use of stop and search by demonstrating its impact on reducing crime and saving lives. We will make it clear we will support our officers to use it with respect and precision, in line with our values.

Following publication of the charter, consideration will be given to publishing the results of the aforementioned surveys.

Recommendation 12 – The Met should work with the VRU to identify opportunities to work in partnership with youth workers to prevent violence, support children and young people affected by violence and to improve police understanding of young people.

We have been working closely with the VRU to embed and improve our Divert and Engage Projects. For example, we are working to embed youth workers as part of local police custody teams. To drive this effort forward, our Met Detention team has set up a regular custody/diversion services group, which includes Engage, ADDER, Learning and Development and Divert.

According to the latest data provided by the VRU, youth workers embedded in police custody are reaching 10,000 young people at a point of crisis, with two-thirds achieving positive outcomes in terms of reintegration into education, training or employment.

For individuals aged 18 and younger where there has been engagement with a youth worker, VRU data shows almost 90 per cent of young people arrested for violent offences have not gone on to reoffend in the 12 months following the engagement.

We are also continuing to work with the VRU to strengthen the relationship between youth workers in hospitals and local policing teams. For example, where youth work teams have a concern about police conduct or use of force, we have created new pathways for them to raise these concerns. We will also review cases and share feedback with officers and youth work teams, where appropriate.

We are currently working to arrange local seminars where officers and youth workers can learn from each other, enhancing awareness of trauma.

Please also refer to our response to Recommendation 7.