

Review Recommendations: Keeping London's Children Safe: The Met's role in Safeguarding Children

In July 2014 the Police and Crime Committee for the Mayors Office published a review titled 'Keeping London's Children Safe. 'The Met's role in safeguarding children'. The review focussed on the Met's approach to safeguarding children.

The report commends the progress made by the Met and states while these improvements are welcome, the need to safeguard children is ever more challenging. The PCC expect allegations of abuse to continue to rise as confidence in the Met's performance increases.

In a letter dated 24th July 2014 the PCC wrote to Mr Rowley enclosing a copy of the report and its recommendations for the MPS. The letter states that the PCC expects that the Met faces the immediate challenge of ensuring that its child abuse teams are fully resourced. In a letter to AC Rowley it states *'teams must be comprehensively staffed and immediate action is needed to increase the number of officers dedicated to safeguarding children. We have made a number of recommendations to the Met and MOPAC to ensure an approach that fully protects and safeguards children in London.'*

The following recommendations are directed to the Met. The recommendations in 'grey' are in the PCC report but not aimed at the MPS, they have been included in this document for information.

Recommendation 1:

- As part of its response to this investigation, the Met should publish its strategic review of demand and staffing levels. It should increase the number of officers in order to meet current demand, including an option to overstaff to help fulfil the immediate challenges facing the command.
- The Committee recommends that MOPAC, as an oversight body, monitors these staffing issues closely and considers a long - term plan of action to ensure SOECA is comprehensively staffed, with proper levels of supervision and robust management structures now, and in the future.

Response

The MPS has recognised the additional demands placed upon its Child Abuse Investigation Teams (CAITS). As a result of these increasing demands the MPS has taken a number of actions:

- Implemented a daily review process for a Detective Superintendent to review crimes / resources throughout the day which allows additional resources to be redeployed across the command and bid from Met tasking where required.
- Reassigned complex historic cases of child abuse to dedicated teams outside of CAIT. This allows CAIT staff to concentrate on the most current and most high risk investigations and ensures safeguarding.
- Implemented a monthly review process linking staffing level within CAITs in line with demand trend data to allow staff to be re deployed fast time.
- Posted the entire select list for DCs / DSs awaiting transfer into CAITs to ensure sufficient staffing levels above current agreed limits
- Ring fenced staff within the CAITs to ensure the CAITs maintain knowledge and experience
- Reviewed the flexible working across the Command and to ensure it was in line with business needs. (additional 8000 hours gained)
- Posted additional Detectives (20) from the Homicide Command to CAIT teams to support child abuse investigations. The posts have now been transferred so this is a permanent increase and this months posting panel has again posted more officers to deal with Child abuse.
- Attached officers (40) from across SCO for six months to the command to assist with the increase in historic child abuse investigations.
- Funded agency workers who have experience working within child protection to support investigations within CAITs where required.

The MPS has submitted a paper to MPS Management Board outlining a request for additional staff. This paper has been agreed, extra staff will be approved to start in April 2015.

Recommendation 3:

- The Met should include a robust evaluation of how child protection and safeguarding services have been affected by the changes to intelligence services in its formal review and impact assessment of the new intelligence model.

- By January 2015, the Met should provide the Committee with a report on the impact of the new intelligence model on child protection and safeguarding services

Response

Current position and update from Met intel

The new Met Intel model went live in February 2014 which has a borough, area and central footprint. The reorganisation is complete following extensive engagement with practitioners and senior stakeholders at all levels.

To provide the PCC with a more meaningful response Met Intel have requested that it would be useful if they could provide an update by 1st April 2015. At that stage they will be in a stronger position to report on impact and any adjustments agreed by Change Board.

SOECA now has a Grip and Pace unit through which risks are identified and managed and this is supported by a dedicated Local Intelligence Team which is specifically deployed to provide an intelligence function for this command.

Recommendation 4:

- The Met should work with partner agencies to explore opportunities to increase its investment in multi-agency training, in particular, Multi Agency Critical Incident Training(MACIE).

Response

The MACIE training is a course owned by the College of Policing and is arranged through LSCB s. Historically the MPS have provided the classroom space which we will continue to offer. There are two MACIE courses running in March 2015 at Hendon for Harrow and Camden boroughs. There is no cost to the MPS for these courses.

The MPS fully supports multi agency training. At present all officers with the CAIT teams attend the Specialist Child Abuse Investigator Development Programme. The aim of the programme is to achieve, develop and maintain professional competence and registration as a child abuse investigator.

The course lasts for two weeks and consists of sixteen students that are made up of police, NCA and social services. It is owned by the MPS but is delivered by social services and police.

The course covers:

- Plan and conduct allocated child abuse investigations
- Demonstrate co-operative working practice with other agencies, partnerships and communities within safeguarding children procedures

- Plan, conduct and evaluate interviews of child victims and witnesses in accordance with tier 3 of the ACPO National Investigative Interviewing Strategy (NIIS)
- Plan, conduct and evaluate investigative into serious or complex allegations of child abuse
- Supervise referrals of child abuse, child abuse investigations and child abuse investigation staff (Supervisors Only)

Locally staff from CAITs work alongside a variety of multi agency partners to receive and deliver a variety of joint training. One of the challenges is balancing additional training with the demands placed upon all staff due to increased workloads.

The MPS are keen to explore with its partners all opportunities for multi agency training.

Recommendation 5:

- We recommend that the Met determine how it can bring the CAITs and MASH closer together to ensure a better working relationship and efficiencies across commands, including the possibility of the CAITs sitting within each MASH.
- The importance of the MASH for the police should be reflected by the appointment of a more senior police officer with the authority to be able to direct resources and secure the confidence of the CAITs in the MASH.

Response

It is clearly recognised by the MPS the need for MASHs and CAITs to develop a closer working relationship.

The MPS now have a MASH in every OCU across London. At present many of these MASHs are in their infancy and the MPS is keen to ensure a consistent level of service and response. The team developing the MASHs within the MPS is looking to work with the CAIT training unit to develop a bespoke training course for all staff within the MASH. The next phase will be for this team to review compliance / quality assurance to ensure that police staff are working within the prescribed police processes.

The MASH and the CAIT referral desks all have a Sergeant as the manager. This is a supervisory rank and the officers are practitioners in their fields. They identify solutions by working together with the agencies present especially childrens social care managers. The officers have line managers of Inspector grade who can direct MPS resources should they be required.

In the short term a small project team has been developed to establish existing good practise, seek the views of partnership agencies and make recommendations. It is expected many of these recommendations will be able to be implemented at little or no cost and within a relatively short time frame.

In the medium term this project team will look at how the MPS can best integrate staff from both its CAIT and CSE teams with the MASHs.

The vision of CAIT staff within the MASH is something the MPS are committed to working towards.

Recommendation 6:

- The Met should, within 12 months, review the evidence and impact of the CSE Protocol on reporting and identification of CSE in London and the level of resource dedicated to tackling CSE. The Committee would welcome regular updates on progress.

Response

The review of the Pan London CSE protocol is scheduled to start in January 2015 which will be eleven months after its launch. Alongside this will be published a good practice guide.

The first problem profile in relation to CSE based on the last 12 months figures has also now been completed. However it has to be taken into account that this includes a period prior to the protocol launch where only certain boroughs were recording data in the way that all boroughs have been recording data since the launch.

The initial assessment team within the Pan London Sexual Exploitation Team is established and reviews all recorded cases of CSE on a daily basis.

Since the beginning of February 2014 until the end of October 2014 there have been 1800 referrals in all three categories under the protocol. This breaks down to:

- **65% Category 1;** A vulnerable child or young person, where there are concerns they are being targeted and groomed and where any vulnerability factors have been identified. However, at this stage there is no evidence of any offences.
- **25% Category 2;** Evidence a child or young person is being targeted for opportunistic abuse through the exchange of sex for drugs, perceived affection,

sense of belonging, accommodation (overnight stays), money and goods etc. The likelihood of coercion and control is significant.

- **10% Category 3;** Evidence a child or young person whose sexual exploitation is habitual, often self denied and where coercion / control is implicit.

The central MPS Sexual Exploitation team now have 54 Detectives and are therefore able to provide a link into each of the 32 boroughs, attending local monthly Sexual Exploitation Meetings (MASE) as well as give advice and guidance to local officers. Links have also been established with a number of key agencies.

To support a prevention strategy the MPS is launching operation Makesafe in Waltham Forest in Oct 2014 which will then be rolled out across the MPS. This is a preventative operation providing training to hotels, licensed premises and mini cab companies and providing them with instructions on how to communicate concerns or allegations to police. When police operators receive a 'Makesafe' call they have all been trained in how to respond using a pre-determined Trigger plan.

One of the first larger scale CSE investigations by the Sexual Exploitation Team has just been for trial (Op Baker/Brocken) and involves Care Homes in Hillingdon. 5 males were convicted in relation to sexual exploitation of 4 young females (aged 15 at the time of the offence) including rape and sexual activity with a child under 16 and being concerned in the supply of cannabis. One male was convicted of witness intimidation in relation to threats of kidnap and torture made against one of the victims. This is an excellent example of the Police and Local authority working together.

Recommendation 7:

- MOPAC and the Met should conduct a mapping exercise to understand the nature of FGM within different communities in London, to identify which children are at risk, and to establish the extent to which FGM is practised in the capital in order to target resources

Response

The MPS has been tackling FGM from a variety of approaches, working with both professionals and communities to educate them of the health risks and illegality of the practice both in an effort to prevent the practice and to increase referrals. Equally a number of arrests have been made via both overt and covert operations and cases submitted to the CPS. The MPS have worked closely with local and national media. In addition a number of live interviews have been conducted on National Asian and Somalian TV channels.

SOECA is the lead for the MPS and each of the CAIT teams have been trained and have an officer who performs the role of SPOC. Partnership and strategic direction is provided centrally by Project Azure.

The MPS is the only agency to have maintained records since 2009 which limits the opportunity to establish the London offending profile. Since 2012 SOECA have been engaged in a campaign with charities to raise the profile and secure a joint agency approach. Health, Education and Social services have previously not engaged at an appropriate level and as such have not maintained any referral data. Due to the engagement of the MPS and engagement at government level the other agencies are now instructed to maintain records. It is anticipated that the NHS will be in a position to provide some data by the end of the year.

MOPAC and PCC are aware of our activity and have been engaged with the MPS and have been present during operations such as OP Limelight based at Heathrow.

MET Intel has completed the problem profile for Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) but again based on limited MPS data. The findings however identified a number of MPS intelligence gaps and key recommendations one of which is Targeting 9 key boroughs overtly

The target boroughs and SPOCs are :

Hounslow
Lambeth
Islington
Newham
Croydon-
Waltham Forest
Ealing
Brent
Camden

These boroughs have been chosen not just for referrals and CRIMINTs but their community background. Boroughs with high referrals such as Lewisham and Southwark were not chosen as referrals were from the Borough hospitals.

It has been agreed that the overt aspect will be driven by the key Boroughs supported by Project Azure. Various tactics will be employed such as community engagement, partnership work and delivery of awareness packages which will in turn increase the intelligence flow.

OCU Commanders have received a briefing document and borough leads have been nominated.

All Borough leads and key partners have been tasked to attend monthly progress reviews at Cobalt Square, which will be chaired by Met Intel. The main aim of these reviews is to ensure the overt intelligence gaps and awareness issues are being Gripped and driven forward. This will ensure the issues are understood as the work will entail attending meetings and presenting on the subject if asked to do so, both to professionals and the community. It is envisaged that the commitment will be achievable at the

moment but as knowledge on the subject increases it is anticipated demand will also increase.