



Shaun Bailey AM

Chair of the Police and Crime Committee

Sadiq Khan
Mayor of London
Greater London Authority
(Sent by email)

11 August 2021

Dear Sadiq,

Countering terrorism in London

The Police and Crime Committee has been investigating London's preparedness for future terrorist attacks, including MOPAC's and the Met's approach to countering terrorism.

The Committee's investigation centred on its meeting on 7 July 2021, which marked the 16th anniversary of the tragic terrorist attacks in London. At the meeting, we heard from Commander Richard Smith, Head of the Met's Counter-Terrorism Command; Kenny Bowie, MOPAC's Director of Strategy; Oliver Levinson, MOPAC's Head of the Countering Violent Extremism programme; and Robin Merrett, MOPAC's Head of Operational Oversight. Their evidence to the Committee has informed the findings and recommendations contained in this letter.

Prevent

The Committee heard about the successes and challenges associated with London's contribution to the *Prevent* programme. Whilst recognising the significant role the programme had played in transforming young people's lives, MOPAC conceded that awareness of the programme is not as high as it should be and that trust and engagement with local communities is critical to build confidence in the programme. It was noted that referral rates to *Prevent* from friends and family only

accounted for approximately 2 per cent of all referrals to the programme.¹ The Committee also heard that the way in which the programme was structured – in local authority areas with arbitrary administrative boundaries that do not reflect the nature and scope of the threat – presented challenges to its success.

The Committee welcomes MOPAC's recognition of the inadequacies and challenges facing *Prevent* and the steps it has taken to contribute to the wider review of the programme at a national level. The Committee hopes to see a refreshed *Prevent* programme that builds on its achievements in countering terrorism but which learns from the issues that have arisen over recent years. The Committee is particularly keen to see the proportion of referrals from friends and family members to the programme increase. **The Committee recommends that the Mayor writes to the Government to request increased investment in communications within the Prevent programme budget with the aim of increasing referrals from friends and families of at risk individuals.**

Enabling Londoners to play their part in countering terrorism

Enabling Londoners to support statutory services in identifying suspected terrorists is vital to London's success in countering terrorism. The Committee welcomes the action MOPAC and the Met have taken to encourage Londoners to report suspected activity, such as through social media campaigns and the development of targeted apps. However, the Committee is concerned that specific initiatives, such as the *iREPORTit* app, may not have the funding guaranteed to ensure their sustainability and impact over the longer term.

Whilst recognising the need to maintain a level of operational confidentiality, the Committee believes it is important that Londoners can see the performance and impact of initiatives designed to counter terrorism in the capital. The Committee was pleased to hear about the increase in referrals during the 3 month pilot of the *iREPORTit* app. This needs to be followed up with a full evaluation of the *iREPORTit* app, in order to understand the impact of referrals through the app on subsequent investigations, arrests and convictions of terrorists. The Committee requests sight of the review of the pilot, when it is available.

Rise of online extremism since COVID-19

It has been widely reported that COVID-19 has exacerbated the threats posed to countering extremism and terrorism in London. Children and young people have been increasingly exposed to extremist material online during lockdown, and at our 7 July meeting, the Committee heard that there has been a decline in terrorism-related arrests and referrals to *Prevent*.² This decline is considered to be primarily due to schools and colleges being closed for long periods, with children and young people out of contact with those who would normally be able to spot and refer those of concern.

The Committee heard the Met's concerns about the risks posed by technology companies' desire to move towards end-to-end encryption, which makes it difficult and sometimes impossible for authorities to track and intercept terrorists through communication channels. At the Committee's 7

¹ London Assembly, [Police and Crime Committee meeting](#), 7 July 2021

² London Assembly, [Police and Crime Committee meeting](#), 7 July 2021

July meeting, Commander Smith said he was “*extremely concerned about the direction of travel*” regarding end-to-end encryption, and indicated that the move would permit “*a dark space*” where “*terrorists can operate with impunity*”.³

Whilst recognising the fundamental right to privacy, the Committee believes more needs to be done to challenge the trajectory within technology companies of further encryption. The Mayor has a unique role in convening partners around shared priorities. **The Committee recommends that the Mayor uses this function to engage technology partners in a roundtable conversation about online extremism and terrorism threats.** The roundtable event should include discussions about how authorities, such as the Met, and technology companies can work together both to reduce the risks of online radicalisation of children and young people and to better identify and remove suspected terrorist and extremist activity online.

Additional requests

The Committee questioned MOPAC on the take-up of counter terrorism e-learning during the Euro 2020 tournament. MOPAC agreed to share data on the take-up during the tournament period. We would be grateful if you could please provide data on the take-up of this online training.

The Committee requests an update on the recommendations made in the first Harris Review, detailing those not actioned and why.

The Committee is concerned about the availability of updates on meetings of the London Contest Board. Can you please confirm when the Board met during 2020 and to date in 2021 and ensure the minutes are published on the website.

Police and Crime Plan

The Committee is acutely aware that, with a new Mayoral term, you are developing a revised Police and Crime Plan for the coming three years. It is crucial that the Plan reflects the current scope and nature of the threats posed by extremism, radicalisation and terrorism to Londoners. **The Committee recommends that the Plan should:**

- **be updated to include improvements from the Government’s review of the Prevent programme when these are available; and**
- **include actions to engage with and promote referrals from friends and families of at risk children and young people, especially via the *iREPORTit* app, because those who are the closest to young people are the best placed to understand when their behaviour is out of the ordinary.**

The Committee also heard about the emerging findings from the Fishmongers Hall inquests and those from the Manchester Arena Inquiry. **The Committee recommends that these findings are reflected and incorporated in the new Police and Crime Plan.**

The Committee looks forward to engaging with the draft Police and Crime Plan when it is shared for consultation in the coming months.

³ London Assembly, [Police and Crime Committee meeting](#), 7 July 2021

We would be grateful if you could please respond to the Committee's recommendations and requests **by 8 September 2021**. Your response to these recommendations should be copied to Janette Roker and Philippa Goffe, the Committee's Senior Policy Advisers (janette.roker@london.gov.uk) (philippa.goffe@london.gov.uk).

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'S Bailey', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Shaun Bailey AM
Chair of the Police and Crime Committee