

Safer Neighbourhood Boards

Two years on

December 2015

Police and Crime Committee Members

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Role of the Police and Crime Committee

The Police and Crime Committee examines the work of the Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime (MOPAC) and reviews the Police and Crime Plan for London. The Committee can also investigate anything that it considers to be of importance to policing and crime reduction in Greater London and make recommendations for improvements.

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Chair's foreword



Safer Neighbourhood Boards (SNBs) are one of the few ways in which people can engage with their local police on crime reduction issues. As a key Mayoral policing initiative it is only right that we have reviewed how they are operating on the ground. We have found that there are a number of concerns about how well they are functioning. Instead of bringing greater co-ordination between the different community engagement mechanisms, as the Mayor promised, they seem more disparate than the bodies they replaced. Most striking is the inconsistency in how they engage with the public.

While some hold as many as seven public meetings a year, others hold only one, and conduct the majority of their business in private.

We recognise that some SNBs may wish to hold more meetings but are restricted because of funding pressures. Over the two years we have been reviewing the progress of SNBs, funding has been the biggest issue. From a survey we did of the 32 SNBs almost all said the core funding the Mayor's Office of Police and Crime (MOPAC) provides them with was not enough to allow them to function effectively.

Looking ahead, we remain concerned about the capacity of SNBs to deliver the types of projects MOPAC expects from them. Delivering diversion opportunities for gangs, for example, is likely to be extremely challenging for SNBs, bearing in mind SNBs are predominantly made up of volunteers from the local community. Those that can undertake such activities are likely to be those with active support from their local authority. We are concerned that this could lead to a two-tier system of SNBs with those supported by their local authority being in a stronger position to bid for and deliver the projects MOPAC expects. We would urge MOPAC to reflect on the demands it is placing on SNBs and ensure it provides effective support for those SNBs that cannot rely on the help of their local authority.

While we remain concerned about SNBs' capacity to deliver large-scale crime prevention projects, it does not diminish our respect for the hard work and dedication of those Londoners running SNBs. They do valuable work and their efforts do not go unnoticed.

Joanne McCartney AM, Chair of the Police and Crime Committee

1. Introduction

Background

- 1.1 Lord Scarman first proposed Community and Police Engagement Groups (CPEGs), following his report into the 1981 Brixton Riots. Scarman's report identified how a collapse in community-police relations led to the riots, and how the police did not have an effective mechanism to communicate with local people to help stop the violence. A breakdown in communication between the police and communities has also been at the centre of some of the biggest policing incidents in recent years most notably, the investigation into the murder of Stephen Lawrence and the riots following the shooting of Mark Duggan in 2011.
- 1.2 CPEGs were subject to various changes over their lifetime. The Met Police initially funded them. But in 2000, the now disbanded Metropolitan Police Authority (MPA) took over their management. In 2007-08, CPEGs were the subject of a large-scale review to bring more professionalism and accountability to their work. Subsequently, the MPA introduced Service Level Agreements with CPEGs to outline the activities they were expected to undertake annually, and made specific requirements about the diversity of their membership. In 2012, MOPAC took over the CPEG network under similar terms.
- 1.3 Despite these changes to their governance and accountability arrangements, CPEGs always sought to maintain their independence. With a membership drawn from the local community and independent of police and police authorities, their independence was viewed as crucial in ensuring they had credibility in holding the Met to account. And this, it was hoped, would help build public confidence in the police.
- 1.4 At their best, CPEGs helped to set local priorities and give communities greater ownership of crime reduction policies. They played an important role in developing neighbourhood policing. They also helped to identify and monitor issues such as stop and search, as well as trialling and running innovative crime reduction measures.
- 1.5 CPEGS also had flaws. Many provided strong community engagement bodies with deep local roots, but some boroughs had no functioning community engagement structures. The cost that some CPEGs incurred was also a concern. And when the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act was passed, which introduced new operational policing and governance structures, MOPAC decided there was an opportunity for change.

Safer Neighbourhood Boards

- 1.6 Safer Neighbourhood Boards (SNBs) were set up with the aim of improving the quality and consistency of community-police engagement across London. According to the Mayor in 2013, SNBs would bring "greater accountability at a local level"; provide a new engagement mechanism that is "aligned to MOPAC's mission"; and bring "greater co-ordination between the different engagement mechanisms." They would also have to carry out a wide range of consultative duties and deliver crime reduction projects, as well as contribute to MOPAC's overall cost reductions.
- 1.7 The introduction of SNBs has not gone smoothly. When we first reviewed MOPAC's proposals for SNBs in June 2013, a number of concerns were raised relating to the proposed governance, structure and funding for SNBs. Our <u>report</u> – published in August 2013 – recommended MOPAC provides further guidance to clarify areas of uncertainty, and address issues including: the independence of SNBs; how they would be expected to work with existing community engagement groups; recruitment and membership; and funding arrangements. The Mayor published new guidance in October 2013 as part of his response to our report, but there were still a number of outstanding issues not least the lack of progress some boroughs were making in setting up SNBs. In December 2013, we discussed these concerns further with MOPAC and representatives from three SNBs. And while we were encouraged by the progress being made, we still felt concerned that some of the key roles and responsibilities of SNBs had not been fully developed or properly considered by MOPAC.
- 1.8 This report is a stocktake: an assessment of where SNBs currently are in their development. We focus predominantly on governance and funding issues, as some SNBs have only just started to meet. We also consider the future role of SNBs. To support our work, we surveyed all 32 SNBs on the key issues identified in our previous report. We received sixteen responses. The responses identify a number of unresolved issues. There is a lack of consistency in how SNBs engage with the public. There are also differences in the support SNBs receive from their local authority. And almost all SNBs agree there is a need for more funding for the administrative tasks that allow them to function.

2. The governance and funding of SNBs

Holding meetings in public

- 2.1 There is inconsistency in how SNBs engage with the public. According to the responses we received, all SNBs hold at least one public meeting a year as stipulated by MOPAC guidance. But while some SNBs only meet once, other SNBs hold as many as seven public meetings a year (see chart on page 9). When we questioned the Deputy Mayor for Policing in Crime (DMPC) in September 2015, he said he wanted SNBs to be public-facing, and primarily holding meetings in private was not in line with MOPAC guidance. But MOPAC's guidance to SNBs states that ward panels provide greater opportunities for the public to engage with the police and other partners, rather than SNBs.
- 2.2 The Met runs ward panels. The panels are made up of local people who live or work in that ward. They provide a forum for local people to discuss concerns about crime and anti-social behaviour with the local police. But, separately, we have heard concerns that ward panels do not function in all wards across London. The limited and out-of-date information about ward panels on the Met's website also suggests they are in decline. While we recognise ward panels, when functioning properly, can play an important role in providing a direct link between the police and public, it should not preclude SNBs from conducting their business in public. The community should have the opportunity to see the work SNBs do, if not to directly influence it. The decline in ward panels must also be addressed if MOPAC is serious about ward panels being the main access point for local community engagement. There needs to be greater clarity.

Recommendation 1

Holding one public meeting a year is not enough. MOPAC should support SNBs to hold the majority of their meetings in public.

Recommendation 2

The Met and MOPAC should identify the boroughs in which ward panels are no longer functioning, work to address the reasons why these ward panels are not functioning, and help to re-establish them.

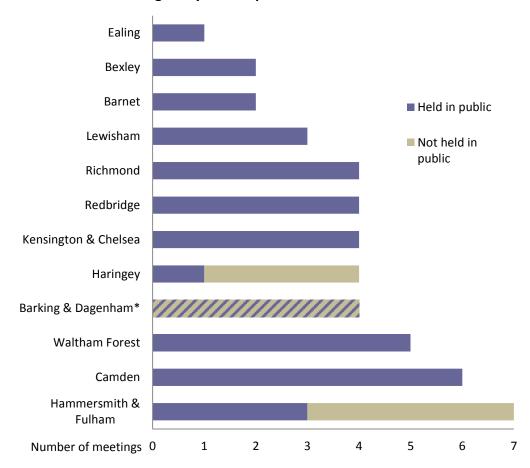
2.3 For those SNBs that do regularly meet in public, the effectiveness of how their meetings are marketed varies sharply. Camden SNB, for example – which is set up differently to many SNBs as it is a registered charity and a company limited by guarantee – has its own Twitter page to advertise meetings. It also has a well-developed website. Other SNBs rely on promotion through their borough or local police websites, which can make it difficult to find

- information about SNBs. Ealing said publicity was a serious problem: "We currently have no website or other means of communicating directly with the public."
- 2.4 The DMPC indicated SNBs should care less about self-publicity and concentrate more on crime-reduction projects. He said it was up to MOPAC to publicise the work SNBs were doing. We agree. However, there is little evidence of this happening at present. As SNBs develop further, we would like to see MOPAC using its website and social media channels to promote the work of the SNBs. It could also provide links to SNB websites or even host specific pages for SNBs. MOPAC provides SNBs with end-of-year monitoring forms to assess the outcomes of projects. MOPAC should publish these forms to help promote SNBs' roles to demonstrate whether they are operating effectively.

Recommendation 3

MOPAC should promote the work SNBs do through its website and social media channels, as well as hosting links to SNB websites or providing specific pages for SNBs. MOPAC should also publish SNBs' end of year monitoring forms to enable the public to see the types of projects SNBs fund and their outcomes.

How often SNBs meet varies from borough to borough, as does the number of meetings they hold in public.



^{*}Barking & Dagenham SNB hold its meetings in private but time is reserved at the end of every meeting for the public to attend.

Wandsworth, Bromley, Havering and Merton SNBs did not specify the number of meetings they hold. Bromley said half of its meetings are held in public. Wandsworth, Havering and Merton all hold one public meeting a year.

Source: Police and Crime Committee survey of SNBs and individual SNB websites

Representation

2.5 Some SNBs are struggling to improve the diversity of their membership. While MOPAC's only specific requirement for SNB membership was that young people, victims of crime and the local authority should be represented, MOPAC's guidance states that SNBs should look like the community they represent. Achieving this appears to have been challenging for some SNBs. Barking & Dagenham SNB said it had found it difficult to encourage wider representation, but holding part of its meetings in public was attracting a more diverse audience. Havering and Waltham Forest SNBs both said they were keeping their membership under review in recognition of this issue. The

latter said it was planning to change its terms of reference to make it easier to recruit a wider membership. Camden's membership is more diverse, but this is likely to be a result of it having a much larger membership (up to 45 groups) than MOPAC had prescribed in the original guidance (between 12 and 25 people).¹²

Recommendation 4

MOPAC should help SNBs to carry out a "diversity audit", and develop an action plan to widen the representation of their membership.

Funding

- 2.6 Unsurprisingly, funding is the biggest concern for the majority of SNBs. SNBs receive £5,200 a year (the equivalent of 50 hours a month at London's Living Wage – £8.55 at the time the guidance was drawn up) to "specifically support administration and management of the boards."13 The funding is ring-fenced from an overall pot of £1 million for SNBs. Our previous report argued this core funding was inadequate. And the responses from SNBs would suggest this is still a contentious issue. Kensington and Chelsea SNB said a lack of core funding had prevented it from holding more than one meeting this year. Waltham Forest SNB described the funding available as "woefully inadequate." Redbridge, Havering and Camden SNBs also complained the core funding was not sufficient. The London Communities Policing Partnership (LCP2), which acts as an umbrella body for SNBs, raised some of these complaints at a meeting with MOPAC in July 2015. 14 According to the notes of the meeting – seen by MOPAC – SNBs were finding it difficult to carry out the responsibilities of the ten MOPAC SNB key functions, as well as project development, management and monitoring, with the limited resources available to them. They also complained they were using much of their core funding to pay for venue hire. Responding to these complaints, the DMPC was unsympathetic, saying he did not think £5,200 was an "unreasonable amount for administrative support for organisations that have a duty to organise a minimum of one public meeting a year." 15
- 2.7 We remain concerned the core funding for SNBs is inadequate. SNBs should be given the priority they deserve. In his Police and Crime Plan 2013-16, the Mayor challenged the Met to increase public confidence in the police by 20 per cent. But public confidence in the Met has remained largely flat since early 2012. SNBs can play an important role in improving public confidence by giving people a greater say in local policing priorities. While we recognise the funding pressures placed on police forces across the country, SNBs represent a relatively small investment, which could yield significant dividends in the future. We therefore urge MOPAC to review its core funding allocations to SNBs.

Recommendation 5

MOPAC should carry out a public review of the core funding it provides to SNBs, to ensure it is adequately supporting them to carry out their key functions (including holding meetings in public, publicity, and administrative tasks) effectively.

Access to information

2.8 Overall, SNBs are satisfied with MOPAC's provision of crime and performance data. Most said they received the data from MOPAC one week before their meetings. The reports are broken down into six categories: recorded crime, anti-social behaviour, public confidence and victim satisfaction, complaints and borough satisfaction, stop and search and independent custody visitor reports. There was some concern about the timeliness of the data and the need for training in how to interpret it, but broadly SNBs were happy with the content. The umbrella body, LCP2, did report at its meeting in July 2015 that SNBs wanted more data on online crime. This was an issue we picked up in our report, <u>Tightening the Net</u>. We recommended that MOPAC should help SNBs raise awareness about online crime and the role of Action Fraud by providing SNBs with borough-level fraud and online crime statistics to help them to identify vulnerable groups in their area. MOPAC said it was looking to develop a programme of engagement around SNBs for online crime, and will be updating its data packs to provide fraud information relevant to particular boroughs. 16 Havering has recently started running a theatre forum/roadshow which looks at online scamming of vulnerable people, and has bid for funding to run a similar project for young people this year. It is hoped that more SNBs will look to run similar projects in the future, given the scale of online crime as identified by the latest Crime Survey for England and Wales.

Additional responsibilities

2.9 Very few SNBs appear to be actively engaging with Community Payback. 17 This is not a surprise. While we welcomed public oversight of Community Payback, there was concern about the level of commitment likely to be secured from Serco – which was running the project at the time – to engage with SNBs. There was also a lack of clarity about what SNBs were expected to do in overseeing Community Payback. As the project currently stands, any member of the public can nominate projects for Community Payback but MOPAC said it wanted SNBs to play a strategic role to add value to the scheme. Judging by the responses we received, SNBs have not played a significant part in Community Payback projects. Only two SNBs said they had any meaningful contact with Serco about Community Payback projects. The responsibility for the programme now rests with the newly-formed London Community Rehabilitation Company (CRC). And while there are some encouraging signs it may be more willing to work with SNBs - Barking and Dagenham SNB said a representative from CRC attends every meeting and

provides a written report on the work being carried out across the borough – there are still reports of difficulties with the project. Hammersmith & Fulham described it as a "bit of a shambles." Bromley said it had asked the CRC to sit on its Board, but the CRC said it did not have the resources to accept the invitation.

Recommendation 6

MOPAC should ensure the London Rehabilitation Company is engaging with SNBs on Community Payback.

2.10 Custody is another issue SNBs are expected to engage with through the Independent Custody Visitor (ICV) scheme. ICVs are volunteers appointed by MOPAC from local communities. They are required to make weekly unannounced visits to every custody suite in London, although it is not clear whether this happens in practice. ICVs report to MOPAC on the welfare of detainees and any concerns regarding custody in the borough. However, in our report into the healthcare of detainees in 2014, we found very little information about how ICV reports were acted on or how information was shared. MOPAC's guidance said ICVs would report to SNBs, but there was a lack of clarity about how this would work in practice. According to the responses we received, many SNBs do have ICVs as members. However, some SNBs told us they had raised concerns with MOPAC that ICV reports had very little detail and were difficult to scrutinise. Other SNBs said they had had little or no contact with ICVs.

Recommendation 7

We remain concerned that very little information is made publicly available about ICVs either through SNBs or more generally. MOPAC is statutorily responsible for ICVs and must do more to demonstrate it is making effective use of this valuable and important resource.

3. The future role of SNBs

- 3.1 As SNBs become more established, their success will be measured by the projects they commission. In addition to the £5,200 ring-fenced for administrative support, SNBs can bid for extra funding to run specific projects. The amount each SNB can bid for is calculated on a formula basis to reflect different levels of demand from an overall pot of £1 million each year. The DMPC wrote to SNBs in March 2015 to confirm that funding allocations for 2014-15 and 2015-16 would be combined into a two-year funding offer. The DMPC confirmed that approximately £1.7 million has so far been committed to projects. ¹⁸
- 3.2 Yet the parameters MOPAC has set for the types of projects it will provide funding for could present challenges for SNBs, which are, after all, made up of volunteers. According to MOPAC's guidance it will not support capacity-building projects such as:
 - Setting up a website.
 - Developing smartphone apps.
 - Buying IT equipment.
 - Funding staff costs.
 - A poster, leaflet or newsletter campaign "that simply raises awareness of issues or organisations."

Instead, only the following types of projects will receive financial support:

- Crime prevention advice and/or materials in areas where there is evidence they are targeted for specific types of crime.
- Specific pieces of engagement or development work to be conducted by organisations connected to the SNB functions.
- Police and public engagement events.
- Diversion opportunities to identified groups who may be at risk of committing crime.¹⁹
- 3.3 Some of these are easier for SNBs to respond to than others. Expecting SNBs to deliver diversion opportunities for gangs, for example, would, on the surface, appear to be extremely challenging for SNBs. Bearing in mind SNBs are predominantly made up of volunteers from the local community, it is doubtful they would have the experience or resources to identify, commission and monitor such projects. However, this expectation may be a reflection of the changing make-up of SNBs, where many are now managed by the local authority, which do have that expertise. This issue could highlight the potential imbalance that may develop between SNBs: those supported by

- their local authority being in a stronger position to deliver the projects MOPAC expects, compared to those not supported by their local authority.
- 3.4 In a similar vein, the bidding process for funding is a challenge for some SNBs. While MOPAC has provided training, which many SNBs said they found useful, some SNBs said they did not have the skills or resources to engage with the bidding process adequately. Waltham Forest said it had spent "every spare minute" arranging funding applications. Ealing referred to the challenge of identifying projects that met MOPAC's requirements:

"At times it has felt like we are being kicked in the teeth for our difficulty in concocting projects that fitted MOPAC's strict (and often unclear or changing) rules. We are all volunteers and expect significant support from MOPAC, rather than being treated as being rather inadequate."

LCP2 has also heard complaints about funding and the bidding process, specifically the time lag between the bidding process starting and funds being paid for approved projects.

3.5 MOPAC should not lose sight of these issues as it supports the ongoing development of SNBs. Clearly, some SNBs are in a better position to deliver these projects than others and MOPAC must find a way to support those that cannot rely on the support of their local authority. There may also be opportunities to encourage collaboration between those more developed SNBs and those still in their infancy.

Recommendation 8

MOPAC should set up an online forum for SNBs to share best practice. This forum could include, for example, access to template leaflets or event ideas to support the work of SNBs.

Conclusion

While we are encouraged by the progress some SNBs have made, our survey shows many still require significant support. LCP2 indicated to us that MOPAC is acting on some of the complaints we have heard, and this is welcome. But we also urge MOPAC to rethink some of the basic specifications it has set. For example, we do not think requiring SNBs to meet in public only once a year is good enough. MOPAC's guidance states that SNBs "are the primary boroughlevel mechanism for local engagement." And the DMPC has said himself that SNBs should be public-facing. Therefore, leaving this role to ward panels — whose roles are primarily to solve local crime and anti-social behaviour issues — is not good enough in our opinion, particularly if ward panels are no longer functioning in some boroughs. MOPAC must rectify this.

Similarly, almost every SNB we heard from has complained that core funding is not enough to allow SNBs to carry out the duties expected of them. This issue is particularly acute for those SNBs that cannot call on local authority support to hire meeting venues or submit funding bids. MOPAC should review its core funding allocation process and look to make some of the extra funding available to support basic administrative tasks.

It will be interesting to see how SNBs develop in the future, and we commend the effort that has been put in by local volunteers to set them up. However, we remain concerned about their capacity to deliver large-scale crime prevention projects. We will monitor their progress with interest.

Appendix 1 – Recommendations

Recommendation 1

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Recommendation 2

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Recommendation 4

MOPAC should help SNBs to carry out a "diversity audit", and develop an action plan to widen the representation of their membership.

Recommendation 5

MOPAC should carry out a public review of the core funding it provides to SNBs, to ensure it is adequately supporting them to carry out their key functions (including holding meetings in public, publicity, and administrative tasks) effectively.

Recommendation 6

MOPAC should ensure the London Rehabilitation Company is engaging with SNBs on Community Payback.

Recommendation 7

We remain concerned that very little information is made publicly available about ICVs either through SNBs or more generally. MOPAC is statutorily responsible for ICVs and must do more to demonstrate it is making effective use of this valuable and important resource.

Recommendation 8

MOPAC should set up an online forum for SNBs to share best practice. This forum could include, for example, access to template leaflets or event ideas to support the work of SNBs.

Appendix 2 – Endnotes

- ¹ Q&A: The Scarman Report BBC Online 27 April 2004
- ² The Met still runs its own borough network of community engagement structures. Independent Advisory Groups (IAGs) are the responsibility of each borough commander and provide advice and guidance to the police to help prevent critical incidents escalating (these may be external or internal incidents) and act as a sounding board for the police to understand the potential impact on communities of police practices and operations.
- ³ MPA Review into Community and Police Engagement Groups, MPA Archive website
- ⁴ MOPAC website Safer Neighbourhood Boards
- ⁵ As highlighted by Steve O' Connell, MOPAC's advisor on neighbourhoods, at the Police and Crime Committee Meeting on 13 June 2013.
- ⁶ Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011
- ⁷ Letter from the Mayor of London to the Chair of the Police and Crime Committee, p72 [dated 31 October 2013]
- ⁸ Police and Crime Committee meeting (24 September 2015)
- ⁹ Safer Neighbourhood Board guidance (updated March 2014)
- ¹⁰ Informal discussions with LCP2
- ¹¹ Safer Neighbourhood Board guidance (updated March 2014)
- ¹² Safer Neighbourhood Board guidance (updated March 2014)
- ¹³ Safer Neighbourhood Board guidance (updated March 2014)
- ¹⁴ The LCP2 is a charity whose main aim is to "promote for the benefit of the public within [Greater] London improved strategic community engagement with the police..."
- ¹⁵ Police and Crime Committee meeting (24 September 2015)
- ¹⁶ MOPAC response to the Police and Crime Committee's report, Tightening the Net.
- ¹⁷ Community Payback is unpaid work like removing graffiti, clearing wasteland or decorating public places and buildings. Offenders can be required to do 40 to 300 hours of Community Payback, depending on the severity of the crime they committed.
- ¹⁸ Police and Crime Committee meeting (24 September 2015)
- ¹⁹ Safer Neighbourhood Board additional funding guidance (March 2015)

Orders and translations

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Chinese

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Vietnamese

Nếu ông (bà) muốn nội dung văn bản này được dịch sang tiếng Việt, xin vui lòng liên hệ với chúng tôi bằng điện thoại, thư hoặc thư điện từ theo địa chỉ ở trên.

Greek

Εάν επιθυμείτε περίληψη αυτού του κειμένου στην γλώσσα σας, παρακαλώ καλέστε τον αριθμό ή επικοινωνήστε μαζί μας στην ανωτέρω ταχυδρομική ή την ηλεκτρονική διεύθυνση.

Turkish

Bu belgenin kendi dilinize çevrilmiş bir özetini okumak isterseniz, lütfen yukarıdaki telefon numarasını arayın, veya posta ya da e-posta adresi aracılığıyla bizimle temasa geçin.

Punjabi

ਜੇ ਤੁਸੀਂ ਇਸ ਦਸਤਾਵੇਜ਼ ਦਾ ਸੰਖੇਪ ਆਪਣੀ ਭਾਸ਼ਾ ਵਿਚ ਲੈਣਾ ਚਾਹੋ, ਤਾਂ ਕਿਰਪਾ ਕਰਕੇ ਇਸ ਨੰਬਰ 'ਤੇ ਫ਼ੋਨ ਕਰੋ ਜਾਂ ਉਪਰ ਦਿੱਤੇ ਭਾਕ ਜਾਂ ਈਮੇਲ ਪਤੇ 'ਤੇ ਸਾਨੂੰ ਸੰਪਰਕ ਕਰੋ।

Hindi

यदि आपको इस दस्तावेज का सारांश अपनी भाषा में चाहिए तो उपर दिये हुए नंबर पर फोन करें या उपर दिये गये डाक पते या ई मेल पते पर हम से संपर्क करें।

Bengali

আপনি যদি এই দলিলের একটা সারাংশ নিজের ভাষায় পেতে চান, তাহলে দয়া করে ফো করবেন অথবা উল্লেখিত ডাক ঠিকানায় বা ই-মেইল ঠিকানায় আমাদের সাথে যোগাযোগ করবেন।

Urdu

اگر آپ کو اس دستاویز کا خلاصہ اپنی زبان میں در کار ہو تو، براہ کرم نمبر پر فون کریں یا مذکورہ بالا ڈاک کے پتے یا ای میل پتے پر ہم سے رابطہ کریں۔

Arabic

الحصول على لماخص لهذا المهستند بباغتك، فسرجاء الالتصال بسرقم الهائتف أو الالتصال على العنوان المبسريدي العادي أو عنوان المبسريد البالكتسوري أعلاه.

Gujarati

જો તમારે આ દસ્તાવેજનો સાર તમારી ભાષામાં જોઈતો ક્રોય તો ઉપર આપેલ નંભર પર ફોન કરો અથવા ઉપર આપેલ ૮પાલ અથવા ઈ-મેઈલ સરનામા પર અમારો સંપર્ક કરો

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